

**A CENTURY OF RUSSIAN MARTYRDOM**  
***A Selection of the Lives of the Holy New Martyrs and***  
***Confessors of Russia***

**Volume 1**

**Compiled by Vladimir Moss**

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## FOREWORD

This book is a collection of one hundred lives of holy martyrs and confessors who suffered for Christ in the Russian Church in the twentieth century. The roll-call begins with the murder of Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich, the uncle of the tsar, in 1905, at the beginning of the abortive 1905 revolution, and ends with the death of the most recent confessor, Archimandrite Nectarius of Jerusalem, at the beginning of what might be called the third Russian revolution, that of Putin. An introductory chapter describes the significance of the feat of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia for our time.

The new martyrs and confessors number in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, and the lives recorded in this book constitute only a small portion of them. They have been selected according to three main criteria: their importance in the history of the Church in this period, their diversity in space and time, in rank and occupation, and the intrinsic interest and instructiveness of their lives. Very many lives of equal interest have had to be omitted from what is already a very large book, which is highly regrettable. Nevertheless, we can only rejoice in such an *embarras de richesse*. Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, and of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us!

*October 19 /November 1, 2020.  
St. John of Kronstadt.*

## INTRODUCTION: WHAT DID THE MARTYRS DIE FOR?

The Apostle Paul writes: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things..." (Philippians 4.8). In the terrible twentieth century, there was nothing more true, more pure and more lovely than the feats of the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia. Their faith, their virtue, their love of God and man warms hearts grown cold from the icy breath of the prince of this world and protects them from the power of satan. Truly, with their heart they believed unto righteousness, and with their mouth they confessed unto salvation (Romans 10.10). And so they are with the Lord, Who said: "Whosoever shall confess in Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father Who is in heaven" (Matthew 10.32).

When we look down the roll-call of Christian martyrdom, we are struck by the great variety of reasons for which the martyrs suffered. Some were killed for what were clearly reasons of faith - because they confessed the One God against the pagans, or Christ against the Jews, or one or another dogma of the faith against the heretics. But others suffered to defend their chastity (e.g. the Martyr Thomais), or because they rebuked injustice (e.g. St. John the Forerunner), or because they refused to return evil for evil (e.g. Saints Boris and Gleb), or simply because they were *there*, unwitting obstacles to the impious designs of evil men (e.g. the 14,000 innocents of Bethlehem, St. Edward the Martyr). The Holy Church accepts all of them as martyrs because, even if they were not killed specifically for their confession of the faith, nevertheless they died for Christ, being true Christians who suffered an unjust death at the hands of the evil one. They witnessed for Christ in the sense that they imitated Him in life and death, and thereby witnessed to the power of His Resurrection.

The holy new martyrs of Russia present a similar apparent variety in the reasons for their martyrdom. This has led to some to wonder whether they are all really martyrs for Christ. In particular, some have cast doubt on the sanctity of at least some of the Russian new martyrs and confessors on the grounds that they suffered for "political" reasons, for their pronouncements against the crimes of Soviet power or in favour of monarchism.

### *Martyrs or Political Criminals?*

Now we are familiar with this argument in relation to the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas, an argument that was well refuted by Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles: "We will speak to the point, in a way that befits an honest, believing Christian. The Tsar-Martyr, and his family as well, suffered for Christian piety. He was opposed to the amorality and godlessness of the communists, both on principle and by virtue of his position - on principle, because he was a deeply believing Orthodox Christian; by virtue of his position, because he was a staunch Orthodox Monarch. *For this he was killed.* To ask him anything concerning the faith was unnecessary, because he gave witness before the tormentors to his steadfastness in Christian principles by his entire previous life and works, and especially by his profoundly Christian endurance of the moral torments of

his imprisonment. He was a staunch defender and protector of the Christian faith, preventing the God-haters from beginning a vicious persecution against believers in Christ and against the whole Orthodox Church. *For this reason he was removed and slain...*

"It is also known from witnesses still alive that prior to the Revolution it was proposed that the Tsar repeal the strictures against anti-Christian secret societies, and it was threatened that if he refused he would lose his throne and his life. The sovereign firmly refused this proposal. Therefore, they deprived him of his throne and killed him. Thus, he suffered *precisely* for the faith."

However, it is not only the Tsar's canonization that has been labelled as a "political" act, an attempt to rehabilitate a "political criminal" or political programme. Since so many of the non-royal martyrs were also condemned as "political criminals", it is necessary to defend them, too, from this charge.

Thus A. Zhuravsky writes in his book on the martyrs of the Kazan diocese in 1918: "To the present day many of our contemporaries have preserved the conviction that the majority of those clergy who suffered in 1918 suffered torments not so much for the faith as for their 'political' pronouncements, which were expressed in Church sermons against the violence of atheism, of the Bolshevik terror, of the trampling on the norms of Christian morality and even against Soviet power. Therefore there exists the opinion that it is not worth canonizing this or that group of martyrs only because they suffered for 'political crimes', or, on the contrary, suffered as it were by chance, only because they happened to be servants of the cult. In the latter case, it is said, the very fact of 'witnessing' for the truth of Christ is absent."

Zhuravsky goes on to refute these charges as follows: "As regards those who 'suffered by chance', let us point out only that everything happens in accordance with the Providence of God and the 'witness' is priesthood itself, clerical rank, belonging to Orthodoxy, for which these righteous ones were doomed to torments by the Godless. Let us also remember that since the times of the persecutions against the first Christians the Eastern Church has maintained the position that the single fact of martyrdom communicates holiness. Moreover, if we turn to the Lives of the Saints, we shall find tens of short descriptions of 'facts' of martyrdom, when both the names of the saints and the circumstances of *their* martyric deaths remained unknown. For the first Christians it was clear - if the Christian died in the faith and from the pagans, then he died for the faith and for Christ, and consequently, was worthy of veneration, as having already acquired for himself the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. For that reason the Orthodox Church chants in the troparion to the martyrs: 'In your sufferings you acquired unfading crowns...'

"As regards politics, things are not quite so unambiguous. If we turn to the history of the persecutions against the first Christians, we discover to our amazement the wonderful similarity of the position (and reasons for persecution) of the Christians in the conditions of the Roman empire and of the Soviet state. According to Roman legislation, the Christians were persecuted, not for their convictions (for Roman law did not punish convictions, but actions), but for their refusal to bow down to the cult of the emperors. And the Christians were judged as hostes Caesari and hostes rei

publicae, that is, as political prisoners, opponents of the authority of Caesar, and as 'enemies of the people!' In the trials of the Christians three main accusations were brought forward: that they were opponents of the state religion (sacrilegium - godless ones), as non-venerators of the cult of Caesar (crimen laesae majestatis) and as secret plotters (they formed secret societies). But that is exactly what we see in the 20th century! The Orthodox Christians and the clergy were also judged, not for their religious convictions (after all, freedom of confession was guaranteed by the Constitution), but for 'political' anti-Soviet activity, for refusing to bow down to the idol of the Bolsheviks' dreams. And so is it the case that the first Christians, who refused to bow down to the statue of Caesar and rebuked the pagan abomination of idol-worship, differ so much from those pastors of 1918, who rebuked another idol (but also pagan), and other disorders (but of the same kind and nature), witnessing their zeal for their faith with every sermon? As Prudentius, the Christian poet and hymnographer, justly remarked: '*Despising the temple* (the pagan temple - A.Zh.) *means rejecting the emperors.*' But we can make almost the same remark with regard to the 20th century: Despising (that is, rejecting) state atheism (Godlessness, materialism) means rejecting the revolution (from the point of view of the authorities such a person was a 'counter-revolutionary'). Already from the end of the 1920s Christians began to be accused of, amongst other things, secret plots aimed at the overthrow of the existing system. Let us note that the latter had much in common with the Roman empire. In the Roman empire there was no pagan church: '*That which, among the Christians, related to the sphere of Church activity, in Rome related to the sphere of activity of the state. The priests, pontifexes and flamens were state functionaries; therefore by dint of historical necessity that challenge which the Christian Church hurled at the pagan faith and to which the pagan church had to reply was accepted by the state.*'

"But, you know, the Soviet state did not have its own 'institution of the Church'. The role of that institution was played by the communist ideology, whose 'ideological clergy' (commissars, party secretaries, popularisers of 'Marxist-Leninist' philosophy, etc.) were also employed by the state. The Soviet state, like the Roman empire (its much more likeable forerunner), took the challenge of the Church of Christ to the bearers of Godless (antichristian) ideology as a challenge to itself, a challenge to Bolshevism, a challenge to the initiators of the mindless plan to erect a new tower of Babylon of the future. And insofar as the state authorities had religious functions, it descended with all its strength upon its 'rival' and rebuker - the Orthodox Church. All this completely explains why we cannot reject the fact of martyrdom solely because at its base their lies the authorities' declaration of the passion-bearer's 'political guilt'. Every case must be examined individually."

### Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union

Zhuravsky's point is well taken. And yet, in order to understand what precisely it was that the Russian New Martyrs died for, and the great difficulties they had in defining their relationship to the State, it is necessary to consider the *differences* between the situation of the confessing Christians in Old Rome and in the Soviet Union. For since Christ had been born in the Roman Empire and had explicitly commanded the giving to Caesar of what was Caesar's, and the Apostle Paul had had no hesitation in using his Roman citizenship to defend himself against the Jews, the Roman Empire

was natural and lawful for Roman Christians in a way that the Soviet state, for many powerful reasons, could never be for Russian Christians.

Thus Tertullian once said to the Roman pagans: "Caesar is more truly ours (than yours) because he was put into power by our God". Emperor-worship was not part of the original constitution of the Roman Empire; such famous emperors as Tiberius, Trajan and Marcus Aurelius explicitly rejected it; and in the case of those who tried to enforce it, such as Nero and Domitian, it was in essence an *import* from the eastern pagan theocracies, an heretical *aberration* from the fundamental Roman conception, which was that the emperor is subject both to his own laws, of which he is the main custodian, and to the laws of God, being emperor "by the will of God" and not "as a god". "In fact," as Professor Sordi writes, "the imperial cult had never been imposed formally, or even encouraged, by any of the emperors to whom the Christian apologists from Aristides to Quadratus, from Melito to Athenagoras, were addressing their works."

Thus the early Christians could quite clearly and sincerely distinguish the honour in which they held the institution of the empire and the emperor himself from the disgust they felt for the cult of emperor-worship during the few reigns in which it was imposed; which is why they refused to offer incense to the emperor's statue, while continuing to pay taxes and carry out military service.

Soviet power, however, was established by the overthrow of the Christian Roman Empire and in direct opposition to everything which that Empire stood for. Unlike the pagan Romans, the Bolsheviki did not acknowledge that their power had been established "by the will of God"; nor did they consider themselves subject to any laws, human or Divine. Of course, no society can exist without laws, and the Bolsheviki did create a code of laws; but since the essence of their state was "the mystery of lawlessness" (II Thessalonians 2.7), they had no compunction in breaking their own laws whenever it suited them - which, in the case of relations with the Church and Christians, meant most of the time.

This placed the Christians before a most acute dilemma. Their first instinct - an instinct which found expression above all in the decrees of the Local Council of the Russian Church - was to refuse any kind of recognition for the Soviet state. Thus on November 11, 1917 the Council addressed a letter to the faithful, parts of which hinted at a complete rejection of the Bolshevik regime: "To our grief, as yet no government has arisen which is sufficiently one with the people to deserve the blessing of the Orthodox Church." Again, on January 19, 1918 Patriarch Tikhon issued his famous anathema against the Bolsheviki and their co-workers, adjuring all Christians "*not to commune with such outcasts of the human race in any matter whatsoever*". A few days later, the Council endorsed the Patriarch's anathema in even stronger language.

This first instinct of the Russian Church in the face of Soviet power has never been extinguished among Russian Christians. It continued to manifest itself both at home and abroad (for example, in the First All-Emigration Council of the Russian Church Abroad in 1921), both in the early and the later decades of Soviet power (for example, among the "passportless" Christians of the Catacomb Church). However, it was very



soon tempered by the realisation that publicly and on a large scale such outright rejection of Soviet power could be sustained only by *war* - and after the defeat of the White Armies in the Civil War there were no armies left to carry on the fight against the Bolsheviks.

Therefore from the early 1920s a new attitude towards Soviet power began to evolve among the Tikhonite Christians: loyalty towards it as a political institution ("for all power is from God"), and acceptance of such of its laws as could be interpreted in favour of the Church (for example, the law on the separation of Church and State), combined with rejection of its atheistic world-view (large parts of which the renovationists, by contrast, accepted).

In essence, this new attitude involved accepting, contrary to the decrees of the Local Council of 1917-18, that the Soviet State was not Antichrist, but Caesar - no worse in principle than the Caesars of Ancient Rome. Therefore some things were due to it - "to Caesar the things that are Caesar's". This presupposed that it was possible, in the Soviet Union as in Ancient Rome, to draw a clear line between politics and religion.

But in practice, even more than in theory, this line proved very hard to draw. For to the Bolsheviks there was no such dividing line; to them, *everything* had to be in accordance with their ideology, there could be no room for disagreement, no private spheres into which the state and its ideology did not pry. Unlike most of the Roman emperors, who allowed the Christians to order their own lives in their own way so long as they showed loyalty to the state (which, as we have seen, the Christians were very eager to do), the Bolsheviks insisted in imposing their own ways upon the Christians in every sphere: in family life (civil marriage only, divorce on demand, children spying on parents), in education (compulsory Marxism), in economics (dekulakization, collectivization), in military service (the oath of allegiance to Lenin), in science (Lysenkoism), in art (socialist realism), and in religion (the requisitioning of valuables, registration, commemoration of the authorities at the Liturgy, reporting of confessions by the priests). Resistance to any one of these demands was counted as "anti-Soviet behaviour", i.e. *political* disloyalty. Therefore it was no use protesting one's political loyalty to the regime if one refused to accept just one of these demands. According to the Soviets, such a person was an *enemy of the people*.

In view of this, it is not surprising that many Christians came to the conclusion that, as the English saying goes, "hung for a penny, hung for a pound" - it was less morally debilitating to reject the whole regime that made such impossible demands, since the penalty would be the same whether one asserted one's loyalty to it or not. And if this meant living as an outlaw, so be it. Such a rejection of, or flight from the state had precedents in Russian history; and from as early as 1918 we find priests, such as Hieromartyr Timothy Strelkov of Mikhailovka (+1930) and bishops, such as Hieroconfessor Amphilochius of Yeniseisk (+1946), adopting this course.

Nevertheless, this path required enormous courage, strength and self-sacrifice, not only for oneself but also (which was more difficult) for one's family or flock. It is therefore not surprising that, already during the Civil War, the Church began to soften her anti-Soviet rhetoric and try once more to draw the line between politics and

religion. This is what Patriarch Tikhon tried to do in the later years of his patriarchate - with, it must be said, only mixed results.

Thus his decision to allow some, but not all of the Church's valuables to be requisitioned by the Bolsheviks in 1922 not only did not bring help to the starving of the Volga, as was the intention, but led to many clashes between believers and the authorities and many deaths of believers. For, as the holy Elder Nectary of Optina said: "You see now, the patriarch gave the order to give up all valuables from the churches. But they belonged to the Church!"

The decision to negotiate and compromise with the Bolsheviks - in transgression of the decrees of the 1917-18 Council - only brought confusion and division to the Church. Thus on the right wing of the Church there were those, like Archbishop Theodore of Volokolamsk, who thought that the patriarch had already gone too far; while on the left wing there were those, like Archbishop Hilarion of Verey, who wanted to go further. The basic problem was that the compromises were always one-sided; the Bolsheviks always took and never gave; their aim was not peaceful co-existence, but the complete conquest of the Church.

However, the Patriarchal Church remained Orthodox under Patriarch Tikhon and his successor, Metropolitan Peter, for two major reasons: first, because the leaders of the Church did not sacrifice the lives of their fellow Christians for the sake of their own security or the security of the Church organization; and secondly, because, while the Soviet regime was recognised to be, in effect, Caesar rather than Pharaoh, no further concessions were made with regard to the communist *ideology*.

But everything changed in 1927 with the notorious declaration of the deputy head of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Sergius of Nizhni-Novgorod. By declaring that the Soviet regime's joys were the Church's joys, and its sorrows the Church's sorrows, Sergius in effect declared an *identity of aims* between the Church and the State. And this was not just a lie, but *a lie against the faith*, a concession to the communist *ideology*. In fact, it implied that communism as such was good, and its victory to be welcomed.

Moreover, Sergius followed this up by committing *the sin of Judas*; he placed all those who disagreed with him under ban and in effect handed them over to the GPU as "counter-revolutionaries". Far from "saving the Church", as he claimed, he condemned its finest members to torture and death. And then his successors in the present-day Moscow Patriarchate (MP) followed this up with *the sin of Pilate* - the criminal indifference to the truth manifest in their participation - under pressure from the communists as Pilate had been from the Jews - in the "heresy of heresies", ecumenism.

In order to protect the flock of Christ from Sergius' apostasy, the leaders of the True Church had to draw once more the line between politics and religion. One approach was to distinguish between *physical* opposition to the regime and *spiritual* opposition to it. Thus Archbishop Barlaam of Perm wrote that physical opposition was not permitted, but spiritual opposition was obligatory. This criterion allowed Christians quite sincerely to reject the charge of "counter-revolution" - if "counter-revolution" were understood to mean *physical* rebellion. The problem was, as we have seen, that

the Bolsheviks understood "counter-revolution" in a much wider sense...

Another, still more basic problem was that it still left the question whether Soviet power was from God or not unresolved. If Soviet power was from God, it should be counted as Caesar and should be given what was Caesar's. But bitter experience had shown that this "Caesar" wanted to seat himself in the temple as if he were God (II Thessalonians 2.4). So was he not in fact Antichrist, whose power is not from God, but from Satan (Revelation 13.2), whose power *allowed*, but by no means *established* by God for the punishment of sinners? If so, then there was no alternative but to flee into the catacombs, rejecting totally the government of Satan on earth.

In the early years after Metropolitan Sergius' declaration, many Catacomb Christians, while *in practice* not surrendering what was God's to the Soviets, *in theory* could not make up their minds whether the Soviet regime was Caesar or Antichrist.

Thus Hieromartyr Joseph (Gavrilov), superior of Raithu Desert (+1930), confessed at his interrogation: "I have never, and do not now, belong to any political parties. I consider Soviet power to be given from God, but a power that is from God must fulfil the will of God, and Soviet power does not fulfil the will of God. Therefore it is not from God, but from Satan. It closes churches, mocks the holy icons, teaches children atheism, etc. That is, it fulfills the will of Satan... It is better to die with faith than without faith. I am a real believer, faith has saved me in battles, and I hope that in the future faith will save me from death. I firmly believe in the Resurrection of Christ and His Second Coming. I have not gone against the taxes, since it says in Scripture: 'To Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'"

From this confession, impressive though it is, it is not clear whether Hieromartyr Joseph recognised the Soviet regime as Caesar, and therefore from God, or as Antichrist, and therefore from Satan. In the end the Bolsheviks resolved his dilemma for him. They shot him, and therefore showed that they were - Antichrist.

In the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR), meanwhile, a consensus had emerged that the Soviet regime was not Caesar, but Antichrist. This was the position of, for example, Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava, Metropolitan Innocent of Peking and Archbishop Averky of Jordanville. As Archbishop Theophanes put it in the same critical year of 1927: "The Bolshevik authorities are in essence antichristian, and there is no way in which they can be recognised as being established by God."

The same conclusion was reached by the Catacomb Church inside Russia. Thus the Catacomb Council of Ust-Kut, Siberia, in July, 1937, decreed:

"1. The Sacred Council forbids the faithful to receive communion from the clergy legalized by the anti-Christian State.

"2. It has been revealed to the Sacred Council by the Spirit that the anathema-curse hurled by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon is valid, and all priests and Church-servers who have dared to consider it as an ecclesiastical mistake or political tactic are placed under its power and bound by it.

“3. To all those who discredit and separate themselves from the Sacred Council of 1917-18 – **Anathema!**”

Thus we come to the conclusion that the confessing Christians of the Soviet Union suffered and died precisely for Christ and against the Antichrist. This was not a political struggle because the Antichrist is not a purely political figure. In his kingdom there is no sustainable boundary between religion and politics; everything is *both* religion *and* politics; for he claims to be both *lord* (of the bodies) and *god* (of the souls) of his subjects. This being so, it is impossible to resist the Antichrist in one sphere while cooperating with him in another - the totalitarian man-god must be rejected *totally*. It is the glory of the holy new Martyrs and Confessors of Russia that, having exhausted all attempts to achieve some kind of honourable modus vivendi with the Antichrist (more often than not, for the sake of others rather than themselves), when they were finally presented with the stark choice between the man-god and the God-Man, they boldly and unswervingly chose the latter, proclaiming: "*Thou art my Lord and my God*" (John 20.28).

### *The Martyrs and the Moscow Patriarchate*

In November, 1981 the Russian Church Abroad, meeting in New York, canonised the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia. This act proved to be very popular not only in the Russian Church Abroad and the Catacomb Church, but also among ordinary believers in the Moscow Patriarchate – that church organisation founded by Metropolitan Sergius and Stalin which had become the “official church” of the Soviet Union since 1943. Over the next twenty years, under pressure from these believers in its own ranks, the MP began to follow the Russian Church Abroad’s example, glorifying first some of the major martyrs who died before 1927, such as Great Princess Elizabeth and Patriarch Tikhon, and then, in its “Jubilee Council” of the year 2000 – the Royal Martyrs and several of the martyrs who died after 1927.

How was it possible for the MP to glorify Tsar Nicholas, which, following communist ideology, it had condemned as a “blood-sucker” for so many years?

The decision to glorify Tsar Nicholas was a compromise, reflecting the very different attitudes towards them in the patriarchate. The Royal Martyrs were called “passion-bearers” rather than “martyrs”, and it was made clear that they were being glorified, not for the way in which they lived their lives, but for the meekness with which they faced their deaths. This allowed the anti-monarchists to feel that Nicholas was still the “bloody Nicholas” of Soviet mythology, and that it was “Citizen Romanov” rather than “Tsar Nicholas” who had been glorified - the ordinary layman stripped of his anointing rather than the Anointed of God fulfilling the fearsomely difficult and responsible role of “him who restrains” the coming of the Antichrist. Of course, even if the Tsar had committed the terrible sins he was accused of (nobody denies that he made certain political mistakes), this would in no way affect his status if he was truly, as all the Orthodox believe, martyred for the sake of the truth. After all, many of the martyrs lived sinful lives, and some even temporarily fell away from the truth. But their sins were wiped out in the blood of their martyrdom. However, this

elementary dogma was ignored by the MP, which wished, even while glorifying the Tsar, in a subtle way to humiliate him at the same time.

How was it possible for the MP to glorify the martyrs after 1927, when these rejected Metropolitan Sergius and were condemned by him as graceless schismatics - for example, Hieromartyr Victor of Glazov, whose relics are incorrupt and wonderworking, but who said that Metropolitan Sergius' betrayal was "worse than heresy"? After all, as late as 1992 "Patriarch" Alexis II was declaring that the Catacomb Church was uncanonical. How could an "uncanonical" and "graceless" Church produce martyrs?

The short answer is that, as in the case of the Royal Martyrs, the people already venerated them, and it was impossible to deny their manifest holiness any longer... However, since to glorify only the true martyrs would be to admit that they themselves were schismatics, the MP hierarchs proceeded also to glorify a series of *false martyrs* - hierarchs and priests who remained in communion with Metropolitan Sergius and shared in his sin of Judas. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of Fr. Oleg Oreshkin: "I think that some of those glorified will be from the sergianists so as to deceive the believers. 'Look,' they will say, 'he is a saint, a martyr, in the Heavenly Kingdom, and he recognized the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, so you must be reconciled with it and its fruits.' This will be done not in order to glorify martyrdom for Christ's sake, but in order to confirm the sergianist politics."

This position had been anticipated by "Patriarch" Alexis II in 1993, when he declared: wrote: "I believe that our martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for us." It became official at the Council of 2000, as Sergius Kanaev writes: "In the report of the President of the Synodal Commission for the canonisation of the saints, Metropolitan Juvenaly (Poiarkov), the criterion of holiness adopted... for Orthodox Christians who had suffered during the savage persecutions was clearly and unambiguously declared to be submission 'to the lawful leadership of the Church', which was Metropolitan Sergius and his hierarchy. With such an approach, the holiness of the 'sergianist martyrs' was incontestable. The others were glorified or not glorified depending on the degree to which they 'were in separation from the lawful leadership of the Church'. Concerning those who were not in agreement with the politics of Metropolitan Sergius, the following was said in the report: 'In the actions of the "right" oppositionists, who are often called the "non-commemorators", one cannot find evil-intentioned, exclusively personal motives. Their actions were conditioned by their understanding of what was care for the good of the Church'. In my view, this is nothing other than blasphemy against the New Martyrs and a straight apology for sergianism. With such an approach the consciously sergianist Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), for example, becomes a 'saint', while his ideological opponent Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, who was canonized by our Church, is not glorified. For us another fact is also important, that Metropolitan Seraphim was appointed by Sergius (Stragorodsky) in the place of Metropolitan Joseph, who had been 'banned' by him."

The canonisation of *both* the true *and* the false martyrs downgraded the exploit of

the true martyrs without denying it completely. It was as if the MP were saying: "Yes, these were good men, and we give permission for them to be venerated and prayed to as saints. But it would have been better if they had followed the lawful hierarchy!"

Some, seeing the glorification of the Catacomb martyrs by the successors of those who had persecuted them, remembered the words of the Lord: "Ye build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets'. Therefore ye bear witness against yourselves that ye are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up the measure of your fathers!" (Matthew 23.29-32).

As the Kaliningrad parish of the ROCOR wrote on November 1/14, 2000: "What throng of new martyrs was canonized by the Moscow Patriarchate if, in that multitude, there are 'saints' who fought against the Church, and who later suffered at the hands of their masters - but not for Christ, having become, rather, victims who were offered up upon the altar of the revolution, just as were thousands of other bolsheviks and liberal dreamers? A throng of new martyrs in which victims and executioners, holy martyrs and 'Christians' (at whose orders these new martyrs were shot and sent to prisons and labour-camps), find themselves side by side?"

The 20<sup>th</sup> canon of the Local Council of Gangra declares: "If anyone shall, from a presumptuous disposition, condemn and abhor the assembly [in honour of] the martyrs, or the services performed there, and the commemoration of them, let them be **anathema**...." And again, Canon 34 of the Council of Laodicea decrees: "No Christian shall forsake the martyrs of Christ, and turn to false martyrs, that is, to those of the heretics, or those who formerly were heretics; for they are aliens from God. Let those, therefore, who go after them, be **anathema**."

This act of canonising both the true and the false martyrs has further absurd consequences. First, it means that, if any one was still tempted to consider that the official acts of the MP had any validity at all, he can now be assured that even the MP itself does not believe in them. For consider: Archbishop Victor, Metropolitan Cyril and the whole host of Catacomb confessors were defrocked, excommunicated and cast out of the community of the "faithful" by official acts of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod. But if these "defrocked" and "excommunicated" people are now saints in the Heavenly Kingdom, this only goes to show, *as the MP now implicitly admits*, that the actions of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod were completely uncanonical and invalid!

Secondly, it also shows that *the MP does not know what martyrdom is, and looks upon it in an essentially ecumenist spirit which deprives it of all meaning*. Some years ago, a writer for the *Anglican Church Times* was reviewing a book on the "martyrs" of the Anglican Reformation. In the spirit of that ecumenism that has been at the root of Anglicanism for centuries, this reviewer claimed that both the Catholics who died for their faith at the hands of the Anglicans and the Anglicans who died for their faith at the hands of the Catholics died for the truth as they saw it and so were martyrs! For it was not important, wrote the reviewer, who was *right* in this conflict: the only thing that matters is that they were *sincere* in their beliefs. And he went on to deny that heresy in

general even exists: the only real heresy, he said, is the belief that there is such a thing as heresy!

The act of the MP presupposes a very similar philosophy. It presupposes that you can be a martyr whether you oppose the Antichrist or submit to him, whether you confess the truth or lie through your teeth, whether you imitate the love of Christ or the avarice of Judas. This is the perfect philosophy for our lukewarm times! But if the Lord Himself spews such lukewarmness out of His mouth, then so should we. And if the anathema on those who venerate false martyrs does not frighten us, let us at least pay heed to the words of St. Paul: "If a man strive for mastery, yet he is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (II Timothy 2.5)...

### **The Purpose of This Book**

Better than all theoretical considerations, however, in deciding who is a true martyr and what true martyrdom is, is the reading of the Lives of the Martyrs themselves. The purpose of this book is to provide a representative selection of the vast rollcall of the Russian New Martyrs and Confessors from every province of the vast land of the Soviets, and throughout the period of the Soviet yoke, from the revolution of 1917 to 2000. While the lives of some well-known martyrs are included, several other chapters describe the exploits of some that are less well-known, whose memory has been preserved only in the depths of the Russian True Orthodox Church.

# **1. HOLY TSAR-MARTYR NICHOLAS II AND HIS FAMILY** **(+1918)** **and those with them**

## **Early Years**

Tsar-Martyr Nicholas was born in St. Petersburg on May 6, 1868, the feast of St. Job the Long-Suffering. And how prophetic this coincidence turned out to be! For, as he himself intuited, Nicholas was destined to follow the example of this great Old Testament Saint both in his sufferings and patience. The Lord allowed Job to suffer many things, trying him in the fire of calamity to test his faith and show him forth to succeeding ages as a pillar of patience. In the same way, Nicholas was tried and tempted, but emerged as a crown-bearing victor over temptation and a holy martyr.

His grandfather was Tsar Alexander II, the liberator of the peasants, who loved him and called him "sun ray". "When I was small," said Nicholas to his daughters, "they sent for me every day to visit my grandfather. My brother George and I had the habit of playing in his study while he was working. His smile was so pleasant, although his face was usually handsome and calm. I remember that it made a great impression on me in my early childhood... Once my parents were away, and I was at the all-night vigil with my grandfather in the small church in Alexandria. During the service there was a powerful thunderstorm, streaks of lightning flashed one after the other, and it seemed as if the peals of thunder would shake even the church and the whole world to its foundations. Suddenly it became quite dark, a blast of wind from the open door blew out the flame of the candles which were lit in front of the iconostasis, there was a long clap of thunder, louder than before, and I suddenly saw a fiery ball flying from the window straight towards the head of the Emperor. The ball (it was of lightning) whirled around the floor, then passed the chandelier and flew out through the door into the park. My heart froze, I glanced at my grandfather - his face was completely calm. He crossed himself just as calmly as he had when the fiery ball had flown near us, and I felt that it was unseemly and not courageous to be frightened as I was. I felt that one had only to look at what was happening and believe in the mercy of God, as he, my grandfather, did. After the ball had passed through the whole church, and suddenly gone out through the door, I again looked at my grandfather. A faint smile was on his face, and he nodded his head at me. My panic disappeared, and from that time I had no more fear of storms."

When he was aged ten, Nicholas Alexandrovich was handed over to the care of General G.G. Danilovich, who invited a series of specialists to come to the palace and instruct him in various subjects - Russian, French, English, German, mathematics, history, geography and chemistry. His favourite subject was history, and at the age of sixteen he became a member of the Imperial Historical Society. He read the historians Karamzin and Soloviev, and his favourite novel was Tolstoy's historical novel, *War and Peace*.



He was particularly close to his English tutor, Charles Heath, and General V.N. Voeykov, the last Commander of the Imperial Palaces, who was the first to comfort him after his abdication, commented that "one of the Emperor's outstanding qualities was his self-control. Being by nature very quick tempered, he had worked hard on himself from his childhood under the direction of his tutor, the English Mister Heath, and had achieved a tremendous degree of self-possession. Mister Heath frequently reminded his imperial pupil of the English saying that aristocrats are born but gentlemen are made." Another great quality of his was love of the poor: he often wore patched clothing while spending his personal allowance to help poor students to pay for their tuition.

Above all the creatures of the earth, Nicholas Alexandrovich loved birds. When he heard them singing, he would become so absorbed that his playmates often commented on it. Once, when a young sparrow fell from its nest, little Nika, as his friends called him, said:

"It is necessary to pray for the little sparrows. May Dearest God not take it - He has enough sparrows."

On March 13, 1881, the Tsar-Liberator Alexander II was murdered by a revolutionary fanatic. On a Petersburg street, in broad daylight, a bomb was thrown which injured some of the guards but left the Tsar unhurt. With no regard for his personal safety, he left his carriage and was attending to the injured when a second bomb was thrown, fatally wounding him and many others. He was rushed to the Winter Palace where he died in the presence of his grief-stricken family. Later, on the spot of the murder, there was built a magnificent church, Christ the Saviour "Upon the Blood", which became the main stronghold of the Catacomb Church in Petrograd after 1927.

"We were having breakfast," said St. Nicholas, "in the Anichkov palace, my brother and I, when a frightened servant ran in and said:

"An accident has happened to the Emperor! The heir [Nicholas' father, the future Tsar Alexander III] has given the order that Great Prince Nicholas Alexandrovich (that is, I) should immediately go to the Winter palace. One must not lose time.'

"General Danilov and I ran down, got into a carriage and rushed along Nevsky to the Winter palace. When we were going up the staircase, I saw that all those who met us had pale faces and that there were big red spots on the carpet - when they had carried my grandfather up the staircase, blood from the terrible wounds he had suffered from the explosion had poured out. My parents were already in the study. My uncle and aunt were standing near the window. Nobody said a word. My grandfather was lying on the narrow camp bed on which he always slept. He was covered with the military greatcoat that served as his dressing-gown. His face was mortally pale, it was covered with small wounds. My father led me up to the bed:

"Papa,' he said, raising his voice, 'your sun ray is here.'

"I saw a fluttering of his eyelids. The light blue eyes of my grandfather opened. He tried to smile. He moved his finger, but could not raise his hand and say what he wanted, but he undoubtedly recognized me. Protopresbyter Bazhenov came up to him and gave him Communion for the last time, we all fell on our knees, and the Emperor quietly died. Thus was it pleasing to the Lord."

Submission to the will of God was the distinguishing characteristic of Tsar Nicholas II's character. His faith in the Divine wisdom that directs all things gave him that supernatural calm which never abandoned him. We fear catastrophes, but, as St. John Chrysostom said, there is only one thing that is truly fearful - sin. The Lord is in control of everything; everything is either blessed by Him or allowed by Him.

Nicholas' parents were Tsar Alexander Alexandrovich and Tsaritsa Maria Fyodorovna. Alexander was a man who feared God and became one of Russia's great Tsars, though his reign was short (1881-1894). Nicholas' mother, formerly Princess Dagmar of Denmark, was a loving and supportive wife and mother who accepted her adopted faith, Holy Orthodoxy, into her soul and along with Alexander transmitted it to her children.

The activity of the hate-filled revolutionaries was to plague Nicholas and his family throughout their lives. In 1888, while Tsar Alexander III and his family were travelling towards Kharkov, the imperial train was rocked by two explosions and derailed. Only the level-headedness and great physical strength of the Tsar kept the Royal Family from being killed.

Despite such difficult circumstances, Nicholas, now the Tsarevich, was being formed in all the Christian virtues. During his youth his kindness to others and selflessness impressed all who met him. While living frugally himself, he gave freely to those less fortunate. It is known that he often anonymously gave scholarships and other gifts through the agency of one of his childhood teachers. More than once he said:

"When I become Tsar, there will be no poor or unfortunate people. I want everybody to be happy!"

The Tsarevich entered military service, and always afterwards remained devoted to the army, taking a detailed interest in the life of the soldiers.

In 1894 the health of Nicholas' father, Tsar Alexander, began to fail, and on October 20 he reposed as a result of kidney disease under the loving hand of his confessor, St. John of Kronstadt.

By this time the Tsarevich Nicholas was already engaged to Princess Alexandra (Alix) of Hesse in Germany; and they were married one month after Alexander's repose. The couple had met several years before and fallen in love, but there had been obstacles to their marriage. Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich, Nicholas' uncle, and his wife, Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna, Alix's sister, had done everything they could to bring the couple together. But Tsar Alexander III and his wife had been

opposed to it, as had been Kaiser Wilhelm. However, the major obstacle had been the Princess' faith. She had been born and raised as a Lutheran and was very devoted to her faith, but she needed to convert to Orthodoxy in order to become Empress of the Russian nation. Being a highly principled woman, she did not take this as a light matter and at first resisted. Thus in November, 1893 she had refused the Tsarevich, writing:

“Dear Nicky, you, having such a strong faith, will understand that I consider it a sin to change my faith, and I would be unhappy to the end of my days, being conscious that I had committed a great sin. I am sure that you would not want me to go over to your faith against my convictions. What happiness can marriage give if it begins without the true blessing of God? And I consider it a sin to change the faith in which I have been brought up and to which I belong now. I could never acquire peace of soul, and so I, though called to help you in everything, would never be for you a real companion in life...”

But God in His loving-kindness did not abandon her. She was greatly helped by her sister, Great Princess Elizabeth, who had converted to Orthodoxy two years before; and soon, after a number of meetings with an Orthodox archpriest who expounded to her the Faith, she gladly accepted baptism. Her conversion was anything but nominal. The depth of her embrace of Orthodoxy was to be a spiritual reproach to the Russian nobility and "intelligentsia", who, listening to the spirit of antichrist, had gradually become ashamed of their faith, considering it something "outdated". The young Empress had a secret chapel in her palace in Tsarskoye Selo, and her bedroom walls were covered in icons. She read the Holy Fathers assiduously, and her greatest joy was to have discussions with religious people of all classes. By contrast, life among the aristocrats of St. Petersburg was a great burden to her. She was shy by nature, and at first she did not speak Russian fluently (with her husband, as his diaries shows, she always spoke in English). But the root of the matter was that she was of a different spirit from the worldly aristocratic society of St. Petersburg. She sensed it, and they sensed it; and this meant that she was unpopular with them for the rest of her life, even to the extent of suffering the most disgusting slanders from them.

However, to the poor and suffering of Holy Russia she was much closer. Even when on holiday in Crimea, she would go with her daughters on visits to hospitals and sanatoria, and they all acted as theatre sisters in the First World War. She was also closely involved in famine and unemployment relief, and in professional training for girls.

### *His Most Pious Majesty*

The official coronation of the Tsar and Tsarina took place in May of 1896 in the Moscow Kremlin. As Tsar Nicholas was crowned, he knelt and prayed aloud: "O Lord God of our fathers, and King of kings, Who created all things by Thy word, and by Thy wisdom has made man, that he should walk uprightly and rule righteously over Thy world; Thou has chosen me as Tsar and judge over Thy people. I acknowledge Thine unsearchable purpose towards me, and bow in thankfulness before Thy Majesty. Do Thou, my Lord and Governor, fit me for the work to which Thou hast

sent me; teach me and guide me in this great service. May there be with me the wisdom which belongs to Thy throne; send it from Thy Holy Heaven, that I may know what is well-pleasing in Thy sight, and what is right according to Thy commandment. May my heart be in Thine hand, to accomplish all that is to the profit of the people committed to my charge, and to Thy glory, that so in the day of Thy Judgement I may give Thee account of my stewardship without blame; through the grace and mercy of Thy Son, Who was once crucified for us, to Whom be all honour and glory with Thee and the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, unto the ages of ages. Amen."

During the days of the coronation a great tragedy occurred. At Khodynka field, people had been lining up to receive free gifts. Pressure built up, some people fell, and hundreds were crushed to death. The Tsar, on hearing the news, immediately wanted to cancel his official engagements and go to the hospital where the injured were being looked after. But his entourage, belittling the seriousness of the event, discouraged him.

This was later held against the Tsar, and the tragedy was seen as a bad omen for the coming reign...

The Royal couple settled into their life of responsibility and took the lead in setting an example of godliness and true pastoral care for their enormous flock. Nowhere was this more evident than in their love and care for the Holy Orthodox Church. They gave much money and support to monasteries and to the building of churches. The Tsar considered it his sacred duty to restore to Russia her ancient traditional culture, which had been abandoned by many of the "educated" classes in favour of modern, Western styles. He encouraged the building of churches in the ancient architectural styles, rather than in the styles favoured since the disastrous "reforms" of Emperors Peter I and Catherine II. He commissioned the painting of large numbers of icons in the Byzantine and Old Russian styles, adorning many churches with them. In the words of Archpriest Michael Polsky, "In the person of the Emperor Nicholas II the believers had the best and most worthy representative of the Church, truly 'The Most Pious' as he was referred to in church services. He was a true patron of the Church, and a solicitor of all her blessings."

During the reign of Tsar Nicholas II, the Russian Church reached her fullest development. The number of churches increased by more than 10,000. There were 57,000 churches by the end of the period. The number of monasteries increased by 250, bringing their total up to 1025. Ancient churches were renovated. The Tsar himself took part in the laying of the first cornerstones and the consecration of many churches. He also stressed the importance of educating the peasant children within the framework of church and parish schools. By 1912, there were 1,988,367 children in these schools, in spite of a campaign by the Duma to close them. He also opened special industries for the city poor to help them earn their own living.

Christian literature flourished at this time. Excellent journals were published, such as Soul-Profiting Reading, Soul-Profiting Converser, The Wanderer, The Rudder, The Russian Monk, and the ever-popular The Russian Pilgrim. The Russian people were surrounded by spiritual nourishment as never before.

Tsar Nicholas visited churches and monasteries in all parts of the country, venerating their saints. There was no tsar in whose reign more saints were glorified (canonized) than that of Nicholas. His love of Orthodoxy and the Church's holy ones knew no bounds; among those glorified during his reign were: St. Theodosius of Chernigov (glorified in 1896), St. Isidore of Yuriev (1897), St. Seraphim of Sarov (1903), St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk (1909), St. Anna of Kashin (1910), St. Joasaph of Belgorod (1911), St. Hermogenes of Moscow (1913), St. Pitirim of Tambov (1914), St. John (Maximovich) of Tobolsk (1916) and St. Paul of Tobolsk (1917).

Being a peace-maker by nature, the young tsar made an unprecedented suggestion to the world early in his reign - that all nations come together and meet in order to cut their military forces and submit to general arbitration on international disputes.

The result of his proposal, the Hague Peace Conference, was convened on May 18, 1899, and served as the precedent for the later League of Nations and United Nations. In 1921, the American President, Warren Harding, officially acknowledged the Tsar's noble efforts towards the limitation of armaments by way of binding agreements among the Powers.

In 1901 the Tsar removed the phrase in the Basic Laws of the Empire that called the Tsar the "Supreme Judge" of the Church. In this way he showed his great concern that the Church should be truly free of state interference; it was he who took the first steps towards restoring Church-State "symphony". In 1906 he convened a Pre-Conciliar Convention, whose aim was to prepare for the first truly independent Church Council since 1682 and elect a patriarch. By God's Providence, this Council did not take place until August, 1917, when the Tsar had already abdicated and was in prison.

The Tsar was unparalleled among the Russian tsars for his mercifulness. He pardoned criminals, even revolutionaries, and gave away vast quantities of his own land and money to alleviate the plight of the peasants. It is believed that he gave away the last of his personal wealth during the Great War, to support the war effort.

The Tsar took great interest in the strivings of the people for a better life. He changed the passport system introduced by Peter I and thus facilitated the free movement of the people, including travel abroad. The poll tax was abolished and a voluntary programme of hospitalisation insurance was introduced, under which, for a payment of one rouble per year, a person was entitled to free hospitalisation. The parity of the rouble was increased greatly on the international markets during his reign. In 1897, a law was enacted to limit work hours; night work was forbidden for women and minors under seventeen years of age, and this at a time when the majority of the countries in the West had almost no labour legislation at all. As William Taft commented in 1913, "the Russian Emperor has enacted labour legislation which not a single democratic state could boast of". He also introduced important changes in the countryside, helping peasants to migrate and set up business on state lands in Siberia, thereby relieving the pressure of population in European Russia.

In 1903, at the insistence of the Tsar himself, St. Seraphim of Sarov was glorified, and a huge celebration was organized in Sarov monastery, to which hundreds of thousands of people came from all over Russia. The Tsar and the Great Princes mingled easily and freely with the peasants, all one in the great Christian family that was Holy Rus'. Many miracles of healing were performed at the relics of the great saint; and nobody who was present remained unmoved.

During this feast, the Tsar was made aware of the future apostasy and downfall of the Russian nation and Church through a prophetic letter written by St. Seraphim himself. Shortly before his death in 1833, the saint had written this letter, sealed it with five wax seals and addressed it "to the Tsar in whose reign I shall be glorified". He then gave it to Elena Motovilov, the young wife of N.I. Motovilov, who is now well-known for recording his conversation with the saint about the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. She kept that letter for seventy years and gave it to the Tsar at the glorification ceremony. While the exact contents are today unknown, it is nevertheless certain that St. Seraphim prepared the Tsar for the coming tribulations.

Furthermore, on the return trip from Sarov, the Royal Family visited St. Seraphim's Diveyevo Convent where Blessed Pasha (Parasceva) the Fool-for-Christ spoke to them several hours; it is said that she foretold to them their own martyrdom as well as that of Holy Russia.

The Tsarina nearly fainted and said: "I don't believe you, it cannot be!"

Now the Royal Couple desperately wanted a son. Between 1895 and 1901 four daughters had been born to them: Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia. These were beautiful and pious girls, greatly loved by their parents and future martyrs for the Lord; but they could not provide what Russia needed most of all – an heir to the throne. Since, according to the Basic Laws, only a male could succeed to the throne, the heir apparent was Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich, the Tsar's brother. However, he later contracted an illegal, morganatic marriage, which caused him to be exiled from the country until the beginning of the Great War. In fact, he became technically Tsar for a very short time in March, 1917; but the Provisional Government then forced him to abdicate. So if the Royal Couple had not given birth to a son, the throne would have passed to a younger brother of Tsar Alexander III, Great Prince Vladimir, and his descendants. However, this branch of the Royal Family were on very bad terms with the Royal Couple, and in particular with the Tsarina. Moreover, in 1917 Great Prince Kirill Vladimirovich deserted the defence of the Tsarina and her children, tied a red ribbon to his car and joined the revolution in the Tauris Palace in Petrograd. So a great deal depended on the birth of a male heir to the Tsar and Tsarina.

So the good news that Blessed Pasha of Sarov gave to the Royal Couple in August, 1903, was of extreme significance. Getting up from her bed with a piece of red material in her hands, she said: "This is for some little trousers for your son, and when he is born, you will believe what I have been telling you." A year later, in August, 1904, the Tsarevich Alexis was born...

With the succession apparently secured, the Tsar now attempted to solve the other great need of the country – the restoration of the patriarchate. Shortly after the birth of the Tsarevich, according to the Procurator Lukyanov, he went to the metropolitan of St. Petersburg and asked for his blessing that he abdicate from the throne and become a monk. But the metropolitan refused to bless this. According to another version of this story, in 1906, during the Church's pre-conciliar assembly, he asked the Synod whether they had a candidate for the patriarchate. When they said no, he offered himself as a candidate. The bishops were shocked and refused his offer. The Tsar, being a humble man, never brought this subject up again.

But soon they noticed that Alexis was a haemophiliac... This cast the succession again into doubt. For how could a person with such a serious, incurable illness be an effective ruler, even if he lived a full natural span of years (which was unlikely)?

It also imposed an enormous physical and psychological burden on his parents. The child had to be watched constantly in case he fell and incurred the painful internal bleeding that was characteristic of the disease. Moreover, his condition had to remain a state secret in case the knowledge of it among the people would become yet another excuse for attempts to overthrow the monarchy and the dynasty.

The Tsar maintained extraordinary emotional self-control in keeping up the appearance that everything was well – as his wife wrote to him, “you will always keep a cheery face and carry all hidden inside.” But she had greater difficulty in maintaining appearances, fell ill herself and frequently had to withdraw from public life for long periods. This only increased her unpopularity. Moreover, she had the added burden of feeling guilty for her son's condition; for the haemophiliac gene had been passed down from the female members of the English side of her family, from Queen Victoria, her grandmother, her mother and herself. As the Grand Duchess Olga, the Tsar's sister, commented, “the birth of a son, which should have been the happiest event in the lives of Nicky and Alicky, became their heaviest cross.”

During his reign the Tsar sought the advice of Blessed Pasha on all serious questions. He used to send the Great Princes to her, and according to her cell-attendant, Eudocia Ivanovna, one would no sooner depart than another arrived. After the death of Blessed Pasha's cell-attendant, Matushka Seraphima (Bulgakova), they would put all their questions to her through Eudocia Ivanovna, who relates that she once said:

"Your Majesty, come down from the throne yourself!"

Not long before her death in August, 1915, Blessed Pasha was continually making prostrations to the ground in front of the portrait of the Tsar. When she was worn out, her cell-attendants lifted her up.

"Mamashenka, why are you praying to the Tsar?"

"Stupid, he will be higher than all the tsars."

There were two portraits of the Tsar: one of him with the Tsaritsa and the other of him alone. But she kept prostrating to the one of him alone. Again she said about him:

"I don't know, a monk saint, perhaps a martyr!"

The tragedy of Alexis' haemophilia was followed by a succession of other tragedies, even a small number of which would have broken a lesser man. But for the Tsar they only served to further refine the nobility of his soul. First there was the disastrous war with Japan of 1904-05 during which the Russian fleet was destroyed and many thousands of soldiers killed.

Although the Russo-Japanese war was a bloody failure, the Tsar refused to allow the official record to whitewash anything. He said: "The work must be based exclusively on the bare facts... We have no need to keep silence because more blood has been shed than was necessary.... Heroism is worthy to be noted on an equal footing with failures. It is, without exception, necessary to aim at recording the historic truth inviolably."

The year 1905 was to be a "rehearsal" for the bloody events that took place twelve years later. On January 6, 1905, at the feast of the Blessing of the Water at the Winter Palace, during the salute of the guns of the Peter and Paul fortress, one of the guns was loaded with grape-shot, and the grape-shot struck the windows of the palace. Part fell near the procession where the clergy and the emperor's and empress's suite was. The calmness of the emperor's reaction was so striking that it drew the attention of the members of his suite. He didn't move a hair and only asked:

"Who commanded the battery?"

And when they gave the name, he said with evident sympathy:

"Ach, poor (so-and-so), how sorry I am for him!"

They asked the emperor what effect this incident had had on him. He replied

"I fear nothing until 1918..."

A few days later, while the Tsar was out of St. Petersburg, a political demonstration led by the revolutionary priest Gapon was fired upon by troops in the city and hundreds were killed. "Bloody Sunday" was blamed on the Tsar, although he was not even in the city at the time. Encouraged by Lenin and Trotsky, a campaign of disorders was begun all over the Empire; the 1905 revolution had begun. The revolutionaries instigated mutinies, strikes, riots and assassinations. Many high government officials were murdered in the streets, among whom, in February, 1905 was Nicholas' uncle, the **Great Princess Sergius**, husband of the Empress' sister, **Great Princess Elizabeth**. The house of the Prime Minister, **Peter Arkadievich Stolypin**, was blown up and many in his family were injured.



Unfortunately, many in all classes of society supported the revolutionaries, fulfilling in themselves the words of St. Paul concerning the men of the last times: "... lovers of their own selves, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady, highminded..." (II Timothy 3.2-4).

The great prophet and wonderworker St. John of Kronstadt repeatedly exhorted his countrymen to repent and support the God-anointed ruler or face a terrible disaster. In 1905 he said: "We have a Tsar of righteous and pious life. God has sent a heavy cross of sufferings to him as to His chosen one and beloved child, as the seer of the destinies of God said: 'Whom I love, those I reproach and punish' (Revelation 3.19). If there is no repentance in the Russian people, the end of the world is near. God will remove from it the pious Tsar and send a whip in the person of impure, cruel, self-called rulers, who will drench the whole land in blood and tears."

On one occasion, the emperor was talking about the sufferings that lay ahead of him with his prime minister, Stolypin. "It was not for nothing," he said, "that I was born on the day of Job the Much-Suffering." And on another occasion he said: "I have more than a presentiment that I am destined for terrible trials, and that I shall not be rewarded for them on this earth... Nothing that I have undertaken succeeds for me; I have no successes. Man's will is so weak... How many times have I applied to myself the words of the holy Job, 'For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.'"

Once, having prayed a little before an important decision, the emperor said to Stolypin: "Perhaps an atoning sacrifice is necessary for the salvation of Russia. I shall be that sacrifice. May the will of God be done!"

Stolypin later recalled: "He made this triumphant declaration to me in the simplest, calmest and most even voice. There was a strange mixture in his voice, and especially in his look, of decisiveness and meekness, at the same time unshakeable and passive, unclear and well-defined; as if he was expressing, not his own will, but was rather bowing to some external power - the majesty of Providence."

After the disturbances of 1905-06, Russia entered into a period of great prosperity. The Tsar had been forced to grant some liberal freedoms and a parliament (Duma), which the enemies promptly used against him. Nevertheless, with the wise and dynamic assistance of Stolypin, the Tsar led the nation through a time of such growth - agricultural, economic, educational and industrial - that had the First World War not occurred, Russia would have undoubtedly become the leading nation of the world.

But the Tsar never pursued industrial growth at the expense of his people. In 1908 he was presented with a huge plan for industrialisation which demanded far more money than was available. The Tsar replied: "Peter I had little money and so he used forced labour and this cost him the lives of a million of his subjects... The realisation of this project would cost between 10 and 15 millions of the premature deaths of my

subjects... I cannot in conscience sacrifice millions of my subjects, and therefore we must endure (without industrialisation)."

When he was advised that the success of future wars depended upon industrialisation, he replied: "We will hope in God. If the war is short, we will win, but if it is long, then such is our fate."

Again, the head of the police promised the Tsar that there would be no revolution in Russia for a hundred years if he would permit 50,000 executions. The Tsar quickly refused this terrible proposal. After the revolution, however, the Bolsheviks thought nothing of butchering many millions of people for acts of "civil disobedience".

The Tsar tried to heal the revolutionary illness with mercy and forgiveness. One student was sentenced to death, but on the eve of the execution, his fiancée petitioned the Tsar for a commutation of his sentence. The Tsar was reached by having his personal attendant call him from his bedroom. He received the petition and sent off a telegram commuting the sentence. He praised the attendant for his daring and even had the student sent to the Crimea for treatment of his tuberculosis.

The Tsar was always careful not to be vindictive, saying: "Irritation solves nothing, and besides, a sharp word from me would sound more offensive than from anyone else."

In 1911, during the performance of Glinka's opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, in Kiev, at which the Tsar was also present, Stolypin was assassinated. Before he fell to the ground, he turned to his sovereign in the balcony and, blessing him with the sign of the Cross, said: "May God save him!" The death of Stolypin was a huge blow to the state - never again would the Tsar find such a loyal, wise and courageous Prime Minister...

In 1913 the Royal Family travelled extensively through Russia to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Romanov dynasty. In 1613 the Russian people had not only raised Michael Romanov to the throne: they had also called down a fearful anathema on any who should be unfaithful to the Romanov dynasty. The execution of the fearful anathema was close to fulfilment...

N.V. Khvostova recounts the following incident that took place in 1914, before the War: "The Imperial Family was spending the summer in Livadia. The Empress used to like very much to take walks by herself; and for this reason she would drive out of Livadia in an open carriage; after going a few miles she would get out of the carriage and walk on foot in the company of one of her ladies in waiting. Always modestly dressed - in a plain summer dress, sandals and without a fancy hat - she would sometimes go down to Yalta, drop by some church in order to pray unnoticed by others. This she also did on the day about which I am now going to recount. The Empress stopped by the Autsky Church, prayed for a while and put some candles by the holy icons. In the church there stood a group of very poorly dressed people who had come to baptize a child. The priest had already put on his vestments, but the people evidently were awaiting someone and thus he did not begin the service. The

Empress had already intended to leave when the priest approached her and asked her to take the place of the terribly late godmother. The Empress kindly agreed, and taking the child in her arms she stood together with the child's father, a poor shoemaker. To the question directed to the Empress concerning how she would like the little girl to be called, she answered simply: "Alexandra". And then, in the course of the service she performed everything that is required of sponsors, i.e. together with the shoemaker she walked around the font three times, holding the child in her arms, in accord with the Church typicon. After the baptismal ceremony, the Empress jotted down simply in the metrical book of the Autsky church: "Alexandra Romanova". In parting, she shook the hand of everyone who had come for the christening, and having asked the address of her goddaughter, she set out on foot. The next day, an imperial coach drove up to the poor house of the shoemaker, the father of the newly-baptized, which was on the outskirts of Yalta, and the lady-in-waiting who had accompanied the Empress the day before brought Shurochka (little Alexandra) an entire trousseau and for her parents a gift of 500 rubles from the Most-august godmother. Up to the Revolution the Empress, no matter where she was living, not only remembered her god-daughter, but also took care for her and for all her many brothers and sisters, the children of the poor shoemaker. Of course, when the Revolution broke out, one can surmise that Shurochka – the Imperial goddaughter – as everyone called her, and her whole family had to suffer much on account of her father's spiritual relationship to the Russian Empress. This is, of course, far from being the only incident told me by the eyewitness of it, my sister-in-law, who was that lady-in-waiting who had the good fortune of accompanying the Empress and being present with her at the baptism of the shoemaker's child. The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna was the incarnation of modesty and of feminine angelic goodness, and her good deeds she strove to do unnoticed by others."

### *The First World War*

On August 1, 1914, the feast of St. Seraphim of Sarov, Russia was forced to declare war on Germany and Austria. As Great Princess Elizabeth testified, the peace-loving Tsar did not want this war, but aggression against Orthodox Serbia by the Germanic nations left him no other honourable choice.

At the outbreak of the war, the Liturgy was celebrated in the Winter Palace. The French Ambassador observed that "Nicholas II prayed with a holy fervour which gave his pale face a movingly mystical expression". The tsar's devotion to prayer was commented on by many; his private car included a "veritable chapel", and he never missed a service while in army headquarters.

When the war broke out, the Tsar ordered that all the money he had deposited in Britain be returned to Russia. The British did not want to comply. The Tsar then called a conference of bankers and merchants of the highest rank. He put 92 million roubles on the table and asked them voluntarily "to give money for the military victory of which the Russian people will be proud." The merchants and bankers refused to give any money. But the Tsar expended the whole of his fortune on the war effort.

As soon as the war broke out, the Tsarina and the four daughters became nurses; and hospitals were opened at Tsarskoye Selo, near the family's residence, where wounded soldiers were brought. They worked long hours, diligently and tirelessly following the commandment of Christ to visit the sick.

Anna Vyrubova, the Tsarina's closest friend, wrote that she was a "born nurse", who "from her earliest accession took an interest in hospitals, in nursing, quite foreign to native Russian ideas. She not only visited the sick herself, in hospitals, in homes, but she enormously increased the efficiency of the hospital system in Russia. Out of her own private funds the Empress founded and supported two excellent schools for training nurses, especially in the care of children.": "I have personally seen the Empress of Russia in the operating room, assisting in the most difficult operations, taking from the hands of the busy surgeon amputated legs and arms, removing bloody and even vermin-ridden field dressings."

The Empress herself wrote to the Emperor: "This morning we were present (I helped as always giving the instruments and Olga threaded needles) at our first big amputation (whole arm was cut off). Then we all had dressings (in our small hospital), very serious ones in the big hospital. I had wretched fellows with awful wounds... scarcely a 'man' any more, so shot to pieces, perhaps it must be cut off as it's so black, but [we] hope to save it - terrible to look at, I washed and cleaned and painted with iodine and smeared with Vaseline, and bandaged all up - it went quite well - and I feel happier to do the things gently myself under the guidance of a d.[octor]. I did three such... One's heart bleeds for them, I won't describe any more details as it's so sad, but being a wife and mother I feel for them quite particularly..."

There was a young soldier, still a boy, of whom she wrote that he "kept begging me" and was "gradually getting worse". When he died, the Tsarina was overcome with grief: "I came home with my tears... Never did he complain, never asked for anything, sweetness itself - all loved him and that shining smile... Another brave soul left this world..."

At first the war went well, and the country was united heart, soul and body in patriotic fervour behind their Tsar. But soon, due to poor communications, mismanagement and subversive treachery, problems arose in supplying the armed forces with ammunition and food. The army began to suffer defeats, and many men were killed. It was at this crucial time that the Bolsheviks, fuelled by German money, went to work spreading discord and defeatism among the troops and at home.

In 1915, tens of thousands of Serbian troops, fleeing from the Germans, began to die during a forced march to the Albanian coast. The western allies looked upon them with indifference from their ships, moored in the Adriatic Sea off Albania. The Tsar informed his allies by telegram that they must immediately evacuate the Serbs, otherwise he would consider the fall of the Serbs as an act of the greatest immorality and he would withdraw from the Alliance. This telegram brought prompt action, and dozens of Italian, French and English ships set about evacuating the dying army to Corfu. But western propagandists could not forgive the Tsar for his intercession and rumours that he wanted a separate peace began to seep out.

Once, during manoeuvres, the Tsar and his suite were brought breakfast. However, when he discovered that nothing had been prepared for the soldiers who were holding his horses, he would not eat until all the soldiers had received their rations.

In 1915, the following event described by Count Sheremetev took place when the Tsar and his family arrived in Sebastopol: "His Majesty, who loved to make long drives in the car in the environs of Sebastopol after breakfast, ... unexpectedly set off with the Empress to the monastery of St. George, where he had been for short periods in earlier years, but where nobody expected him this time. The abbot and brotherhood were very surprised and delighted by the visit of their Majesties...

"We went into the church, and a moleben began. The harmonious voices of the monks immediately changed in mood: it was as if we had come into a quiet bay after a storm. Everything was so prayerful, penetrating and quiet... Suddenly beyond the doors of the church, which were very small, there was an unusual sound, loud voices and a strange turmoil - in a word, something that did not correspond to the seriousness of the moment or the usual monastic order. His Majesty turned his head in surprise, knitted his brows in displeasure and sent to find out what had happened and from where this incomprehensible disturbance and whispering to each other was coming from. I went out of the church and learned the following from the monks who were standing there: in the rocks of the cliffs to the right and left there lived two schema-monks whom none of the monks had ever seen, and who were known to be alive only from the fact that the food which was placed for them on the narrow path in the rocks would be taken by some invisible hand by morning...

"And then an improbable event took place which shook all the monks of the monastery: two elders in the clothing of schema-monks were quietly climbing the steep steps that led upwards from the direction of the sea. They could have known nothing about the arrival of his Majesty, for neither the abbot nor the brothers themselves, nobody knew about the visit of his Majesty, which had been decided on quite suddenly, at the last minute. That was what caused the disturbance among the brotherhood. I told his Majesty about this and saw that this event made an impression on him, but he said nothing and the moleben continued.

"When the moleben had come to an end, his Majesty and the Empress kissed the Cross, then chatted for a while with the abbot and came out of the church onto the square... There, at the point where the wooden staircase ended, stood the two old elders. One had a long white beard, while the other had a short beard. When his Majesty came up to them, they both silently bowed to the earth before him. His Majesty was clearly embarrassed, but he said nothing and slowly bowed to them.

"... Now, after all that has happened, I wonder: did the schema-monks not foresee with their noetic eyes the destinies of Russia and the Royal Family, and did they not bow down to the feet of his Majesty the Emperor Nicholas II as to the great sufferer of the Russian land?"

In August, 1915, Igumen Seraphim (Putyatin) visited Blessed Pasha of Sarov. "In my presence the clairvoyant kissed the portraits of the Tsar and his family several times. She placed them together with the icons and prayed to them as to holy martyrs. Then she wept bitterly. I understood these allegorical acts only when there took place the great sorrows experienced by the Tsar and his Family and linked with the war; for although they were not torn by grenades or wounded by lead bullets, their loving hearts were torn by the unprecedented sorrows and flowed with blood. They were truly bloodless martyrs. In the same way the Mother of God was not wounded by weapons of torture, but at the sight of the suffering of her Divine Son, as Righteous Simeon said, a sword pierced her heart. Then the eldress took little icons of the Mother of God of Loving Tenderness, in front of which St. Seraphim died, and blessed them from a distance for his Majesty and his Family. Then she gave them to me and asked me to send them to them. She blessed icons for his Majesty, her Majesty, the Tsarevich, the Great Princesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia, Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna and A.A. Vyubova. I asked her to bless a little icon for Great Prince Nicholas Nikolayevich. She blessed one, but not of the Mother of God of Loving Tenderness, but of St. Seraphim. She blessed icons for nobody else, although I even asked her to bless some for some people. But my requests had no influence on her, for she acted independently..."

### *The Tsar as Commander-in-Chief*

In August, 1915, the Tsar took control of the army as Supreme Commander. Almost everyone was appalled at the decision. But "God's will be done," wrote the Tsar to the Tsaritsa after arriving at headquarters. "I feel so calm" – like the feeling, he said, "after Holy Communion". And it turned out to be the right decision...

"In the autumn," writes Robert Massie, "the Tsar brought his son, the eleven-year-old Tsarevich, to live with him at Army Headquarters. It was a startling move, not simply because of the boy's age but also because of his haemophilia. Yet, Nicholas did not make his decision impetuously..."

"The Russian army, battered and retreating after a summer of terrible losses, badly needed a lift in morale. Nicholas himself made constant appearances, and his presence, embodying the cause of Holy Russia, raised tremendous enthusiasm among the men who saw him. It was his hope that the appearance of the Heir at his side, symbolizing the future, would further bolster their drooping spirits. It was a reasonable hope, and, in fact, wherever Alexis appeared he became a center of great excitement..."

In August, 1915, 33 delegates from various left socialist parties met in Zimmerwald in Switzerland. By this time the patriotic surge that had made Lenin so isolated the year before had receded and his defeatism was becoming popular again. And so his call for immediate peace and the turning of the imperialist war into a civil one was passed, and strengthened revolutionary sentiment inside Russia.

At the same time, taking advantage of the Tsar's absence, the liberals formed a "progressive bloc" constituting a majority in the Duma, which claimed that in order

to bring the war to a successful conclusion, the authorities had to be brought into line with the demands of "society". By "society" they meant the social organizations that had come into existence during the war – the Zemstvo Union, the Union of Cities and the Military-Industrial Committee. The last was led by A.I. Guchkov, an Octobrist and therefore supposedly a rightist, but a man who hated the Tsar and wanted to introduce a constitutional monarchy. The progressive bloc also put forward several political demands: a broad political amnesty and the return of all political exiles: Polish autonomy; reconciliation with Finland; the removal of repressive measures against the Ukrainians and the removal of restrictions on the Jews; equal rights for the peasants; the reform of zemstvo and city self-administration, etc. All these were questions that the Tsar considered "important, state matters, but not vital for the present moment". He wanted all attention to be concentrated for the moment on winning the war.

Paradoxically, during the war parliaments in the West European countries had less influence on their governments as all major decisions were taken in small war cabinets, whereas in Autocratic Russia the parliamentarians demanded – and got – more and more of a voice. The progressive bloc led by Guchkov now demanded "a ministry of trust" and "a government endowed with the country's trust". Essentially, it was an attempt to seize power from the autocrat...

However, the Tsar decisively rejected the demands of the progressive bloc. He ordered the Prime Minister to suspend the Duma and sacked the ministers who supported the bloc. The liberals continued their agitation, but gradually the mood in the country turned against them...

Things were getting better at the front. Thanks to organizational changes introduced by the Tsar, the crisis in supplies that had contributed so significantly to the defeats of 1915 began to be overcome. Under the Tsar's command, the fortunes of the Russian armies revived, and in the autumn of 1915 the retreat was halted. As Hindenburg, the German commander, wrote: "For our GHQ the end of 1915 was no occasion for the triumphal fanfare we had anticipated. The final outcome of the year's fighting was disappointing. The Russian bear had escaped from the net in which we had hope to entrap him, bleeding profusely, but far from mortally wounded, and had slipped away after dealing us the most terrible blows."

In 1916, in order to relieve the Italians and save Venice, the Brusilov offensive was launched against the Austrians in Galicia. "The consequences of this victorious operation," writes Goulévitch, "were at once manifest on the other theatres of war. To relieve the Austrians in Galicia the German High Command took over the direction of both armies and placed them under the sole control of Hindenburg. The offensive in Lombardy was at once abandoned and seven Austrian divisions withdrawn to face the Russians. In addition, eighteen German divisions were brought from the West, where the French and British were strongly attacking on the Somme. Further reinforcements of four divisions were drafted from the interior as well as three divisions from Salonica and two Turkish divisions, ill as the latter could be spared. Lastly, Romania threw in her lot with the Allies..."

“Few episodes of the Great War,” writes Sir Winston Churchill, “are more impressive than the resuscitation, re-equipment and renewed giant effort of Russia in 1916. It was the last glorious exertion of the Czar and the Russian people for victory before both were to sink into the abyss of ruin and horror. By the summer of 1916 Russia, which eighteen months before had been almost disarmed, which during 1915 had sustained an unbroken series of frightful defeats, had actually managed, by her own efforts and the resources of her allies, to place in the field – organized, armed and equipped – sixty Army Corps in place of the thirty-five with which she had begun the war. The Trans-Siberian railway had been doubled over a distance of 6,000 kilometres, as far east as Lake Baikal. A new railway 1,400 kilometres long, built through the depth of winter at the cost of unnumbered lives, linked Petrograd with the perennially ice-free waters of the Murman coast. And by both these channels munitions from the rising factories of Britain, France and Japan, or procured by British credit from the United States, were pouring into Russia in broadening streams. The domestic production of every form of war material had simultaneously been multiplied many fold.

“The mighty limbs of the giant were armed, the conceptions of his brain were clear, his heart was still true, but the nerves which could transform resolve and design into action were but partially developed or non-existent [he is referring to the enemy within, the Duma and the anti-monarchists]. This defect, irremediable at the time, fatal in its results, in no way detracts from the merit or the marvel of the Russian achievement, which will forever stand as the supreme monument and memorial of the Empire founded by Peter the Great.”

The Germans were well aware of Russian strength. In his *Memoirs* Hindenburg writes that “the only solution to relieve a desperate state of affairs” was “a policy of defence on all fronts, in the absence of some unforeseen and untoward event.”

That “untoward event” came for the Germans in the form of the Russian revolution...

### Abdication

Once, in December, 1916, the Emperor and Empress went for the day with two of the Grand-Duchesses to Novgorod, where they visited some hospitals and monasteries and attended the Liturgy in the cathedral of Saint Sophia. Before leaving, the Empress visited the Yuriev and Desyatina monasteries. In the latter there lived the eldress Maria Mikhailovna, who was according to different accounts 107 or 116 years old and who for many years had been lying on an iron bed in iron chains.

According to the Empress's own account in a letter to the Tsar: "She blessed and kissed us. She sends you an apple (perhaps you'll eat it). She said that the war will soon end - 'tell him that we've had enough.' To me she said: 'As for you, beauty - a heavy cross - don't fear.' (She repeated this several times.) 'Because you came to us, two churches will be built in Russia (she repeated this twice) - don't forget us, come again.'"



According to another account, when the Empress came in, the eldress stretched out her withered hands to her and said: "Here comes the martyr - the Tsaritsa Alexandra!"

She embraced her and blessed her. A few days later she died...

It has often been asserted that the Tsar was a weak-willed man who allowed himself to be ruled by his wife in matters of State, and, through her, by Rasputin. However, General A.I. Spiridonovich, having mentioned the empress' insistence on not trusting anybody but Rasputin, Vyrubova and Sablin, comments: "The Emperor understood all this well and very frequently acted against her advice, guided by his own experience. Sometimes his decisions coincided with the Empress' wishes. But to claim indiscriminately that the Emperor acted in state matters only according to the Empress' wishes is a great mistake. This means ignoring the facts as well as the character and principles of the Emperor. Emperor Nicholas was far from being as simple-minded and weak-willed as many thought."

As for Rasputin, the Tsar's sister Grand Duchess Olga writes: "Knowing Nicky as I did, I must insist that Rasputin had not a particle of influence over him. It was Nicky who eventually put a stop to Rasputin's visits to the palace. It was again Nicky who sent the man back to Siberia and that more than once. And some of Nicky's letters to Alicky are proof enough of what he really thought of Rasputin's advice..."

The enemies accused the Empress of pro-German sympathies because of her German blood. But her letters demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt that she was completely devoted to Russia. In any case, as the French ambassador pointed out, "her education, her intellectual formation and her morals were entirely English."

In May, 1917, a Sarov archimandrite, who was sorrowing over the fate of the Royal Family, fell asleep during prayer and saw a vision of the Family together with St. Seraphim. And the saint told him not to sorrow, that God would not forsake his chosen ones, and that He had sent him, Seraphim, to comfort the Royal sufferers in the hour of their trial.

"Do you see the radiant light come from the faces of the Royal sufferers? This is a sign that they are under the special protection of God, as being righteous ones... Look at the face of the Empress and you will see that the light coming from it is brighter than the others. This is a sign that she will suffer more slander than any from the followers of the world's slanderer."

Conspiracies began to take shape among court officials, the Duma (Parliament), the generals and the nobility, even including relatives of the Tsar. This, at a time when unity was more than ever needed. The Duma deputies and army generals were putting pressure on the Tsar to abdicate. They kept reassuring him that only such an act would save Russia from bloodshed. He repeatedly asked: "Are you confident that my abdication will save Russia from bloodshed?" Again they reassured him that it would. But the Tsar knew the quality of the men who were advising him. On the very day of his abdication, while holding a bundle of telegrams from the Corps of Generals and even from his own uncle, demanding his resignation, he said: "What is left for me

to do when everyone has betrayed me? As he sadly wrote in his diary on the same day: "All around me I see treason, cowardice and deceit."

The enemies had arranged that the Emperor should not meet his strongest supporter, the Empress. She understood this and wrote: "My heart is rent with suffering, since you are completely isolated. It is clear that they do not wish to allow us to see each other before you sign some sort of paper. If they compel you to make concessions, you are under no circumstances obliged to fulfil them, because they are obtained by unworthy means. We are all of good cheer, but pressured by circumstances. We only suffer for you and endure humiliation for you, holy sufferer..."

And after the abdication, the Empress wrote to the Emperor: "You will be crowned by God Himself on this earth, in your own country..."

And so, after an entire night spent in prayer, he laid aside the crown for what he felt was the good of his country. For, as he wrote: "I am ready to give up both throne and life if I should become a hindrance to the happiness of the homeland." And again: "There is no sacrifice that I would not make for the real benefit of Russia and for her salvation."

What has been called "the Abdication Manifesto" was in fact a telegram to the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Alexeyev: "During the days of the great struggle against the external foe which, in the space of almost three years, has been striving to enslave our Native Land, it has pleased the Lord God to send down upon Russia a new and difficult trial. The national disturbances that have begun within the country threaten to reflect disastrously upon the further conduct of the stubborn war. The fate of Russia, the honour of our heroic army, the well-being of the people, the entire future of our precious Fatherland demand that the war be carried out to a victorious conclusion, come what may. The cruel foe is exerting what remains of his strength, and not far distant is the hour when our valiant army with our glorious allies will be able to break the foe completely. In these decisive days in the life of Russia, We have considered it a duty of conscience to make it easy for Our people to bring about a tight-knit union and cohesion of all our national strength, in order that victory might be the more quickly attained, and, in agreement with the State Duma We have concluded that it would be a good thing to abdicate the Throne of the Russian State and to remove Supreme Power from Ourselves. Not desiring to be separated from Our beloved Son, We transfer Our legacy to Our Brother Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich, and bless Him to ascend the Throne of the Russian State. We command Our Brother to conduct State affairs fully and in inviolable unity with the representatives of those men who hold legislative office, upon those principles which they shall establish, swearing an inviolable oath to that effect. In the name of our ardently beloved Native Land We call upon all faithful sons of the Fatherland to fulfil their sacred duty before it, by submitting to the Tsar during the difficult moment of universal trials, and, aiding Him, together with the representatives of the people, to lead the Russian State out upon the path of victory, well-being and glory. May the Lord God help Russia. Pskov. 2 March, 15.00 hours. 1917. Nicholas."

Metropolitan Anastasius writes that the emperor "was far removed from the idea of defending his authority only for the sake of the desire to rule. 'Are you sure that this will be to Russia's benefit?' he asked those who, supposedly in the name of the nation, presented him with the demand that he renounce his hereditary rights, and when he received a positive answer, he immediately laid aside the burden of royal government, fearing lest a single drop of Russian blood might fall on him in case a civil war arose."

Though he no longer had the responsibility of government, his first thoughts were for his nation, as he said to one of his officers,

"Just to think that, now I am Tsar no longer, they won't even let me fight for my country."

At the very moment of the Tsar's abdication - 3 o'clock on March 2, 1917 - a miracle took place that attested to God's love for Russia. In the village of Kolomenskoye, near Moscow, according to a revelation of the Mother of God, a search had been taking place for several days for her icon "The Reigning Mother of God". This icon had gone at the head of the Russian army in 1812 as it drove Napoleon out of Russia. But then this wonder-working icon had been forgotten and seemingly lost. No one knew about its fate. And only on March 1, 1917, did a pious widow by the name of Eudocia receive a revelation to look for the icon in the village of Kolomenskoye. She looked through both of the churches of the village, but did not find the icon. Then she asked whether they had any old icons. They told her that there were some in the basement. She asked to go there, and she and a deacon went down into the basement.

"And truly, there were many old, dust-covered icons there. They began to wipe them one by one. But they still did not find the icon they were looking for. But when she came up to the icon "The Reigning Mother of God", Eudocia cried out:

"That's her!",

although it was still covered with a thick layer of dust which made it impossible to recognise. But when they cleaned it, it was true: the wonder-working icon of the Mother of God had been found. It depicted the Mother of God seated on a throne, her countenance both stern and sorrowful, an orb and sceptre in her hands and the Christ-child giving a blessing in her lap, with God the Father looking down from above. This icon soon thereafter miraculously renewed itself and the robe of the Mother of God was seen to be blood red, something which had been foretold also in the dream. Services were written to this icon and many people made the pilgrimage to venerate it. Healings, both of physical and mental infirmities began to take place before it.

However, the attention the event deserved was given to it neither by the provisional government, which was only to be expected, nor by the people, which was less expected, nor even by the Church herself... Then the servant of God Eudocia insisted that according to the revelation the icon had to be taken round the Kremlin seven times. But they managed to take it round only once during the time of Patriarch Tikhon, that is, after the October revolution, and to the sound of gunfire. Eudocia said:

"The Mother of God said: if they take it round the Kremlin seven times, the Bolsheviks will not be able to capture it!"

But this was not done. The Bolsheviks put the icon in a museum under the title "A counter-revolutionary icon of the Mother of God". Recently, it has been returned to Kolomenskoye.

After the abdication, on March 9, the Tsar arrived back in Tsarkoye Selo, where his family were all under house arrest like common criminals. All the children were ill. Alexis, Olga and Maria had measles and were bedridden with high fevers; Tatiana and Anastasia both had painful ear abscesses.

Again the image of Job overshadowed him - all had been taken from him except his dear ones and his indomitable faith. He did not curse his fate, accepting all as the will of God, and did not even murmur against his captors who treated him with disrespect and even contempt. What greater example could the Russian people have asked for, or what nobler man could have led them as their king? Thus Christ's lament over the chosen people was fulfilled in Holy Russia as well: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23.37-38).

Not only the Tsar, but the whole of his blessed family, met their fate with truly Christian patience. Thus on March 13, 1917, the Tsarevich Alexis wrote to his sister Anastasia:

"I will pray fervently for you and Maria. With God everything will pass. Be patient and pray."

And shortly after the abdication the Empress said: "Our sufferings are nothing. Look at the sufferings of the Saviour, how He suffered for us. If this is necessary for Russia, we are ready to sacrifice our lives and everything." And again: "I love my country, with all its faults. It grows dearer and dearer to me... I feel old, oh, so old, but I am still the mother of this country, and I suffer its pains as my own child's pains, and I love it in spite of all its sins and horrors... Since [God] sent us such trials, evidently He thinks we are sufficiently prepared for it. It is a sort of examination... One can find in everything something good and useful - whatever sufferings we go through - let it be. He will give us strength and patience and will not leave us. He is merciful. It is only necessary to bow to His will without murmur and wait - there on the other side He is preparing for all who love Him indescribably joy."

From early childhood the Great Princesses had had the feeling of duty instilled in them. A defining trait of theirs was their flaming patriotism. They did not think of marrying a foreigner or non-Orthodox. They wanted only to serve Russia, to marry Russians and to have children that would serve Russia.

A. Volkov, who had been the Tsar's valet for a long time, remembered: "I cannot say much about the character of the Royal Family, because I am an unlearned man.

But I shall say what I can. I shall say simply this about them: it was the most holy, most pure family..."

For five months the Royal Family lived under virtual house arrest in the Alexandrovsky palace in Tsarksoye Selo, where there were regular services. The celebrant, Fr. Athanasius Belyaev, wrote in his diary for Great Friday, March 30, 1917: "The service was pious and compunctionate... Their Majesties stood throughout the service... Before them were placed analoys on which lay Gospels, so that they were able to follow the reading. They all stood until the end of the service and left through the general hall for their rooms. One has to have been close and seen for oneself to understand and be convinced how fervently, how in accordance with Orthodoxy, the former Royal Family prayed to God, often on their knees..."

### Imprisonment

On July 28 they learned that they were being sent, not to the Crimea, as they had hoped, but three or four days' journey away to the east. They were ordered to pack warm things and prepare for departure. During the preparations they celebrated the Tsarevich's birthday, on July 30, and gave him a book, Journey through the Urals. On the night of August 1 they were taken to the railway station, accompanied by 45 of those close to them, 330 soldiers and 6 officers. They were put in a carriage marked "Japanese Mission of the Red Cross".

On August 6 they arrived in Tobolsk on the ship "Rus", and were accommodated in a spacious house with a garden. Protopriest Vladimir Khlynov, superior of the Tobolsk cathedral, celebrated services for the Royal Family in the governor's house. Once, when he was imprisoned on Solovki, he witnessed that the Tsar had said to him:

"I can in no way forgive myself for having given up power. I never expected that power would fall to the Bolsheviki. I thought that I was giving up power to the representatives of the people..."

At first the Royal Family went to services in the cathedral. And they and all the people liked this. But once the cathedral protodeacon on the Tsar's namesday, at the end of the moleben, pronounced the "Many Years" to the Tsar with his full title. This annoyed the Tsar. After the service, on coming home, he said:

"Who needs this? I very well know that the people still love me and are faithful to me, but now there will be unpleasantnesses, and they won't let us into the cathedral again."

And so it turned out. But thanks to this, the protopriest was invited to the house to perform services, and in this way got to know the Family better. The princesses sang simply and harmoniously. They had good books in which they followed the services. The Tsar also assisted the priest during the services.

Once the Tsar sent Bishop Hermogen of Tobolsk a bow to the earth, asking him to forgive him that he had been forced to allow his removal from his see. He could not

have done otherwise at the time, but he was glad to have the opportunity of asking the bishop's forgiveness now. The bishop was very touched, and sent a bow to the earth to the Tsar together with a prosphora and asked for his forgiveness.

The late Rev. G.V. Vaughan-James, Anglican chaplain of the Convent of St. Denys, Warminster, England related the following story. He was on a British ship that was sent to a port on the Black Sea for the purpose of rescuing the Tsar and his family and bringing them to England. The crew were very excited by the mission. When they arrived at this port, Rev. Vaughan-James was told to leave the ship and get into a train without asking questions. The train travelled for some time and then stopped at a small station. A woman of striking beauty and wearing a sable coat entered his compartment. She told him that she was a lady-in-waiting of the Tsaritsa, and handed him an icon of St. Nicholas with the words:

"The Tsaritsa has asked me to give this to you. Take it back to England, and ask the English people to pray for the safety of her children."

The Rev. Vaughan-James was very surprised. The woman left the compartment, and the train returned to the port. After returning to the ship, the Rev. Vaughan-James was told that a telephone message had come from London, ordering the ship to return to England without the Tsar and his family. The rescue operation had been cancelled. No reason was given. On the way home all the crew were depressed, and while they were still at sea it was announced on the radio that the Tsar and his family had been killed.

The Rev. Vaughan-James did not know what to do with the icon, and gave it to the Admiralty, where, he said, it still hung in one of the rooms. However, a search recently undertaken at the Admiralty did not reveal the icon.

In the spring of 1918 a commissar arrived from Moscow and informed the Tsar that he was being taken away that night. The Tsar feared that he would be forced to sign the Brest-Litovsk treaty, but the commissar assured him that that was not the case. The Tsar insisted on allowing someone to accompany him, and the Tsaritsa suffered much, not knowing whether to follow her husband or to remain with her sick son. Finally, after much heartbreak, she decided to entrust her son to his tutor and to follow her spouse.

The parents and children had never been separated, but now they had to be, and this on the eve of Pascha, which they had always celebrated together. On April 13/26, the Royal Couple left Tobolsk and covered 285 versts by wagon before reaching the railhead. On April 17/30, the Tsar, the Tsaritsa and Grand Duchess Maria Nikolayevna with some members of the servants, arrived in Yekaterinburg and were imprisoned in the home of the engineer N.N. Ipatiev. On May 10, the remaining members of the family arrived.

In Yekaterinburg the Royal Family spent three hellish months of psychological torture - and yet they all retained their inward calm and state of prayer, so that not a

small number of their tormentors were softened by these valiant Christian strugglers. As Pierre Gilliard, the French tutor to the Tsarevich Alexis recalled:

"The courage of the prisoners was sustained in a remarkable way by religion. They had kept that wonderful faith which in Tobolsk had been the admiration of their entourage and which had given them such strength, such serenity in suffering. They were already almost entirely detached from this world. The Tsaritsa and Grand Duchesses could often be heard singing religious airs, which affected their guards in spite of themselves.

"Gradually these guards were humanised by contact with their prisoners. They were astonished at their simplicity, attracted by their gentleness, subdued by their serene dignity, and soon found themselves dominated by those whom they thought they held in their power. The drunken Avdiev found himself disarmed by such greatness of soul; he grew conscious of his own infamy. The early ferocity of these men was succeeded by profound piety."

When this would happen, the inhuman Bolsheviks would replace the guards who had been so touched with crueller and more animalistic ones.

Seldom being allowed to go to church, they nevertheless nourished their souls with home prayers and greatly rejoiced at every opportunity to receive the Divine sacraments. Three days before their martyrdom, in the very house in which they were imprisoned, there took place the last church service of their suffering lives. As the officiating priest, Fr. John Storozhev, related: "'It appeared to me that the Emperor, and all his daughters, too, were very tired. During such a service it is customary to read a prayer for the deceased. For some reason, the Deacon began to sing it, and I joined him... As soon as we started to sing, we heard the Imperial Family behind us drop to their knees' (as is done during funeral services)... Thus they prepared themselves, without suspecting it, for their own death - in accepting the funeral viaticum. Contrary to their custom none of the family sang during the service, and upon leaving the house the clergymen expressed the opinion that they 'appeared different' - as if something had happened to them."

The Tsaritsa wrote: "St. Paul tells us here also that he rejoiced in his thorn. He did not at first. He cried to heaven to have it removed. But when his Master told him that he needed to keep it, that he needed it, that it had in it a blessing for him, he chafed no longer. Indeed, he made friends with it quickly, accepted it, and stopped complaining about it. That is the only right and sensible thing to do with any disagreeable, uncongenial, or painful thing we find we cannot have removed. It is God's will that it should be in our life for some good reason which He knows. We should get the victory over it by taking it to our heart, by receiving it as coming from Christ. No matter how it hurts us, if we accept it in this way it will leave benediction in our life. God sends some of our greatest blessings to us in our thorns, and it would be sad if we thrust them away and missed them. There are many who are so full of themselves that they have no room for Christ. If only they could come empty, empty of self, He would fill them with Himself, and then they would have untold power for good in the world. We may safely trust Him with the enriching of our lives. He knows

when pain is needful, when loss is the only way to gain, when suffering is necessary to hold us at His feet. He gives us trouble in order to bless us in some way, and we shall always be losers when we chafe or reject our thorn."

Concerning her family, she used to say:

"We are one, and this, alas, is so rare today. We are tightly united together... a small, tightly knit family..."

Inseparable in life, they were now to remain inseparable in death.

After midnight on July 4/17, 1918, the entire family, with their doctor and two faithful servants, was brought to the basement of the house of their confinement under the pretext of moving them once again because "there's unrest in the city". There they were brutally and mercilessly murdered, the children as well as the adults, under the cover of darkness - for "men loved the darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" ([John](#) 3.19). The Tsar was shot as he stood forward to defend his family. Tsaritsa Alexandra was able to make the sign of the Cross before she, too, fell. The first bullets did not bring death to the youngest ones, and they were savagely clubbed, bayoneted and shot at point-blank range before being robbed of all their precious things.

Those killed were: the Tsar, the Tsaritsa, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, Alexis, the Tsar's physician **Eugene Botkin**, the Tsaritsa's chamber-maid **Anna S. Demidova**, the cook **Ivan Mikhailovich Kharitonov** and the servant **A.E. Trupp**, the sailor **Clement G. Nagorny**, who had looked after the Tsarevich since early childhood, and **Ivan D. Sednev**, the servant to the Grand Duchesses. **General Elias L. Tatishchev** and **Prince Basil Dolgorukov**, who had been refused permission to stay with the Royal Family at Yekaterinburg, were also shot in prison on July 10, 1918. The maid-of-honour, **Countess Anastasia V. Hendrikova**, the court teacher, **Catherine A. Schneider**, and the footman, **Volkov**, were taken to prison in Perm. On September 4 the Cheka came for them and the two women were taken out with a group of hostages and shot. Their bodies were discovered by the Whites the following May. Volkov by a miracle escaped and died in exile in Estonia in 1929. The kitchen boy **Leonid Sednev**, Ivan's nephew, was taken from the Ipatiev House the day before the shooting, but was arrested and shot by the NKVD in 1941 or 1942.

**Eugene Sergeyevich Botkin** was born on May 27, 1865, the son of an outstanding doctor. In 1889 he graduated from the Military-Medical Academy with distinction. In 1897 he became a lecturer in the Academy. He took part in the Russo-Japanese war and distinguished himself by his courage. In 1908 he was appointed a doctor to the Royal court. In May, 1917 he was placed under arrest together with the Royal Family and chose to go with them into exile, leaving his own family. The Tsar was deeply moved by his decision. He did not die immediately, but had to be shot again.

In a letter to a friend Botkin wrote: "My voluntary incarceration is limited in time to the same extent that my earthly existence is limited. In essence, I am dead - dead for my children, for my friends, for my work... I did not hesitate to leave my children



as orphans so as to fulfil my duty as a doctor to the end, just as Abraham did not hesitate, when God required it of him, to offer his only son in sacrifice. And I firmly believe that just as God saved Isaac then, He will now save my children and will Himself be to them a Father..."

**Clement Grigoryevich Nagorny** was born in Yaroslavl province, and was a sailor of the Guards crew that sailed on the Tsar's yacht "Standart". He looked after the Tsarevich Alexis. He voluntarily went with the Royal Family to Tobolsk and then accompanied the Royal Children to Yekaterinburg. On May 28, 1918 he was arrested together with the servant of the Great Princesses, **Ivan Sednev**, because they were disturbed by the behaviour of the guards and tried to save things belonging to the Royal Family from being stolen. They were both cast into prison in Yekaterinburg, where they were in the same cell as the former Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, Prince Lvov. On June 1 they were shot in the environs of Yekaterinburg.

On August 21, just before **Countess Hendrikova** was shot, she was asked if she had voluntarily followed the Romanovs to Tobolsk. She stated that she had. When asked if she would return and continue to serve them if she were set free, she said:

"Yes! Up to the last day of my life!"

On the night of July 4/17, Blessed Maria Ivanovna, the fool-for-Christ of Diveyevo, began to shout and scream:

"[They're killing] the princesses with bayonets! Cursed Jews!"

There is evidence that the murders were ritualistic. Thus strange cabbalistic symbols were found on the walls of the room where the crime took place which have been deciphered to mean: "Here, by order of the secret powers, the Tsar was offered as a sacrifice for the destruction of the state. Let all peoples be informed of this."

Again, on the wall of the death-chamber was found an inscription which fittingly sums up the deed from the point of view of the Jewish revolution. It was a quotation from the German Jewish poet Heine, slightly altered to bring out the word "tsar" and identifying the tsar with Belshazzar:

*Belsatzer ward in selbiger Nacht      On the same night Belshazzar  
Von seinen knechten umgebracht.      Was killed by his own slaves.*

But the truth was quite the opposite. Belshazzar hated the people of God, and his removal opened the way for the rebuilding of the Temple of God in Zion by the Jewish Prince Zerubbabel. The killing of Tsar Nicholas, on the other hand, opened the way to the destruction of Orthodox Russia and its transformation into Babylon.

Thus ended the life of the Christ-like Tsar, as a sacrifice for the Orthodox Faith and for the Russian people, both of whom he so fervently loved and believed in.

Martyr-Great-Princess Olga Nikolayevna wrote from Tobolsk: "Father asks the following message to be given to all those who have remained faithful to him, and to those on whom they may have an influence, that they should not take revenge for him, since he has forgiven everyone and prays for everyone, that they should not take revenge for themselves, and should remember that the evil which is now in the world will be still stronger, but that it is not love that will conquer evil, but only love..."

And in the belongings of the same holy martyr were found the following verses by S. Bekhteyev:

*Now as we stand before the gates of death,  
Breathe in the lips of us Thy servants  
That more than human, supernatural strength  
To meekly pray for those that hurt us.*

### Posthumous Glory

In 1917 Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow, who alone in the Church's hierarchy had refused to accept the Provisional Government because of his oath of allegiance to the Tsar, had the following revelation in a series of dreams: "I saw a field. The Saviour was walking along a path. I went after Him, crying,

"Lord, I am following you!"

"Finally we approached an immense arch adorned with stars. At the threshold of the arch the Saviour turned to me and said again:

"Follow me!"

And He went into a wondrous garden, and I remained at the threshold and awoke. Soon I fell asleep again and saw myself standing in the same arch, and with the Saviour stood Tsar Nicholas. The Saviour said to the Tsar:

"You see in My hands two cups: one which is bitter for your people and the other sweet for you."

"The Tsar fell to his knees and for a long time begged the Lord to allow him to drink the bitter cup together with his people. The Lord did not agree for a long time, but the Tsar begged importunately. Then the Saviour drew out of the bitter cup a large glowing coal and laid it in the palm of the Tsar's hand. The Tsar began to move the coal from hand to hand and at the same time his body began to grow light, until it had become completely bright, like some radiant spirit. At this I again woke up. Falling asleep yet again, I saw an immense field covered with flowers. In the middle of the field stood the Tsar, surrounded by a multitude of people, and with his hands he was distributing manna to them. An invisible voice said at this moment:

"The Tsar has taken the guilt of the Russian people upon himself, and the Russian people is forgiven."

In the same year Elder Nectarius of Optina said: "Now his Majesty is not his own man, he is suffering such humiliation for his mistakes. 1918 will be still worse. His Majesty and all his family will be killed, tortured. One pious girl had a vision: Jesus Christ was sitting on a throne, while around Him were the twelve apostles, and terrible torments and groans resounded from the earth. And the Apostle Peter asked Christ:

"O Lord, when will these torments cease?"

"And Jesus Christ replied: 'I give them until 1922. If the people do not repent, do not come to their senses, then they will all perish in this way.'

"Then before the throne of God there stood our Tsar wearing the crown of a great-martyr. Yes, this tsar will be a great-martyr. Recently, he has redeemed his life, and if people do not turn to God, then not only Russia, but the whole of Europe will collapse..."

The sanctity of the Tsar has been revealed in a number of miracles.

Thus in 1947 Protopresbyter Michael Polsky recounted the following story in which the intercession of the martyred Royal Family saved about a company of Cossacks who had lost contact with their transport and army, and were surrounded by the Reds in the midst of a swamp. The priest Fr. Elijah summoned everyone to prayer, saying:

"Today is the day of the commemoration of the Tsar-martyr. His son, the young Tsarevich Alexis was the honoured ataman of the Cossack armies. Let us beseech them that they intercede before the Lord for the salvation of the Christ-loving Cossack army."

And Fr. Elijah served a moleben "to the Tsar-martyr, the Emperor of Russia". And the refrain during the moleben was: "Holy Martyrs of the Royal House, pray to God for us!" The whole company sang. At the end of the moleben, Fr. Elijah read the dismissal: "Through the prayers of the holy Tsar-martyr Nicholas, the Emperor of Russia, his Heir the young Tsarevich Alexis, ataman of the Christ-loving Cossack armies, the right-believing Tsaritsa-martyr Alexandra and her children the Tsarevna-martyrs, may He have mercy and save us, for He is good and loveth mankind."

To the objection that these holy martyrs had not yet been glorified, and miracles from them had not yet been revealed, Fr. Elijah replied: "Through their prayers we shall get out... They have been glorified... You yourselves have heard how the people has glorified them. The people of God... May the holy youth Tsarevich Alexis show us. Don't you see the miracle of the wrath of God on Russia for their innocent blood?... You will see revelations through the salvation of those who honour their holy memory... There is an indication for you in the lives of the saints. You will read that Christians built churches over the bodies of the holy martyrs without any glorification. They lit oil-lamps and prayed to them as to intercessors and petitioners..."

The company and transport got out of the encirclement in a miraculous manner.

They were walking up to their knees, even up to their waist in mud. Sometimes they sank in even up to their necks. The horses got stuck, but then jumped out and went on... They didn't remember how far they went or how tired they were... And they got out... 43 women, 14 children, 7 wounded, 11 old men and invalids, 1 priest and 22 Cossacks - 98 people and 31 horses in all. They came out on the other side of the swamp, on the corner of land which was occupied by the Cossacks who were holding back the encircling movement of the Reds, straight into the middle of their own people. None of the locals could believe that they had come through by that route. And the enemy had not heard the noise made by their passage. And in the morning the Red partisans could not find any trace of where they had got away. There had been people - and then there were none!

Again, the nun Barbara (Sukhanova) writes: "In the summer of 1923 a girl known to me by the name of Irina Meier received a letter from Petrograd from her friend - also a young girl of gentry family. I am amazed that this letter got through at that time. The girl from suffering Russia openly wrote that with the help of God she had decided to choose the monastic path and was striving for it with all her heart.

"This pure soul described a recent dream she had had. She was walking in Petrograd when in front of her there rose up a new, beautiful, white church. She entered it. The house of God was amazingly beautiful. Everything in it was shining, gleaming and iridescent. The girl was struck by its majesty and asked:

"'In whose honour is this church built?'

"And an invisible person replied: 'In the name of the slaughtered Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich.'"

Again, Monk Zachariah writes: "The Serbian people loved the Russian Tsar with all their heart. On March 30, 1930, there was published in the Serbian newspapers a telegram stating that the Orthodox inhabitants of the city of Leskovats in Serbia had appealed to the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church with a request to raise the canonization of the late Russian Emperor Nicholas II, who was not only a most humane and pure-hearted ruler of the Russian people, but who also died with the glory of a martyr's death.

"Already in 1925 there had appeared in the Serbian press an account of what happened to an elderly Serbian lady who had lost two sons in the war and whose third son, who had disappeared without a trace, she considered also to have been killed. Once, after fervently praying for all who had been killed in the war, the poor mother fell asleep and saw in a dream the Emperor Nicholas II, who told her that her son was alive and was in Russia, where he had fought together with his two dead brothers. 'You will not die' - said the Russian Tsar - 'until you see your son.' Soon after this dream, the old woman received news that her son was alive, and within a few months after this she joyously embraced him alive and well when he returned from Russia.

"On August 11, 1927, in the newspapers of Belgrade, there appeared a notice under the headline, 'Face of Emperor Nicholas II in the monastery of St. Naum on Lake Ochrid.' It read as follows: 'The Russian painter S.F. Kolesnikov was invited to paint the new church in the ancient Serbian monastery of St. Naum, being given complete creative freedom in adorning the interior dome and walls. While completing this, the artist thought of painting on the walls of the church the faces of fifteen saints, to be placed in fifteen ovals. Fourteen faces were painted immediately, but the place for the fifteenth long remained empty, since some kind of inexplicable feeling compelled Kolesnikov to wait for a while. Once at dusk he entered the church. Below, it was dark, and only the dome was cut through with the rays of the setting sun. As Kolesnikov himself related later, at this moment there was an enchanting play of light and shadows in the church, and all around seemed unearthly and singular. At this moment the artist saw that the empty oval which he left unfinished had become animated and from it, as from a frame, looked down the sorrowful face of Emperor Nicholas II. Struck by the miraculous apparition of the martyred Russian Tsar, the artist stood for a time as if rooted to the spot, seized by a kind of paralysis. Then, as he himself describes, under the influence of a prayerful impulse, he leaned the ladder against the oval, and without marking with charcoal the outline of the wondrous face, with brushes alone he made the layout. He could not sleep the whole night, and, hardly had the first daylight appeared than he went to the church and in the first morning rays of the sun was already sitting high on the ladder, working with such a fever as he had never known. As he himself writes: 'I painted without a photograph. In the past I several times saw the late Emperor close up, while giving him explanations at exhibitions. His image imprinted itself in my memory.'"

The following vision was seen in 1971 by a certain Basil, a spiritual son of Archbishop Leontius of Chile of blessed memory, who had reposed that same year, at the same time when the Church was discussing the glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia: "At the beginning of this dream I saw myself in a huge temple not built by human hands. On the right kliros for quite a distance was a huge crowd of people dressed in white; I could not make out their faces. Around me there was a quiet, heartrending singing, although I couldn't see anyone there. Then both sides of the altar swung open and from them began to come out holy hierarchs and monks, fully vested in gentle blue vestments: among them I could recognise only St. Nicholas the Wonderworker of Myra in Lycia. From the door near me, among the passing bishops, Vladyka Leontius passed by and stopped near me, saying:

"'You, brother Basil, were called and you did come. You know we have a great celebration here today!'

"'What kind of celebration, Vladyka?' I asked.

"And he continued: 'The heavenly glorification of the Tsar-Martyr!'

"And having bowed to me slightly, he continued on his way to the kathedra (in the centre of the church). Finally, the holy doors of the altar opened, and out of them came the Tsar-Martyr, looking just as he appears on his official portraits during the first years of his reign - that is, very young. He was dressed in the Tsar's royal mantle, as

during his coronation, and he wore the emperor's crown on his head. In his hands he held a large cross, and on his pale face I noticed a slight wound, either from a bullet or some blow. He passed by me at an even pace, descended the step of the ambo, and went into the centre of the church. As he neared the kathedra, the singing increased in volume, and when his foot touched the step of the kathedra, it became so loud that it seemed that a whole world of people had gathered and were singing with one breath."

Again, in 1988, Claude Lopez, an Orthodox Christian from Switzerland, wrote that one day he, having great veneration for the New Martyrs, had placed a commemorative coin of the Tsar in his icon corner, along with an icon of the Royal Martyr with a halo. One day he noticed moisture on the coin and discovered that it was exuding a quantity of fragrant myrrh, which had flowed into the box in which it was kept. This obvious miracle continued until October of 1988, and resumed briefly during the autumn of 1989.

Finally, there is this testimony of a man from Spain: "I am 48 years old. I am Spanish-born from Barcelona. My name is Mateo Gratacos Vendrell. When the things I am going to mention happened, I was not a member of the Orthodox Church. Now, through God's mercy, I've become a member (August, 1989). During four years I had had a pain in the loins and in the belly on the right side. I consulted various doctors and went through the usual routine (x-rays, ecography, etc., and analyses). All the results were negative. It was deduced that my pain was psychosomatic (psychological). To calm me down, I was treated through acupuncture and laser, but in vain; my pain was still there. I was desperate. One night I was experiencing again acute pain, I started reading. To mark my page I had put a portrait of Tsar Nicholas (his icon, in fact). I looked at the icon and he (the Tsar) looked at me. I started asking him to pray to Christ our Lord; for having suffered during the last days of his life, he would have compassion. I accepted the pain that I had but I could not accept the fact that I was 'mad', because I knew that my pains were real. On the next day, after that very night, as I was on my way to a job, a client who is also a friend of mind asked how I was and upon knowing that I was still suffering, he asked whether I had consulted Dr. P. I answered no. He told me to go and see him on his behalf. I went there on the next day. When he examined me he said that there was nothing psychosomatic; I had an invisible (on the radio) kidney stone. I underwent a 'natural treatment' and the stone went out naturally after one month. During this period of time I prayed to the Lord to remember me because of my love for the Tsar. I promised to Tsar Nicholas that I would distribute and make known his icon as a 'moleben' for the mercy he showed to the poor man who suffered for four years and saw his problem solved in less than a month through his intercession. Thank you, Saint Nicholas II, I am very thankful."

## **2. HOLY MARTYRS GREAT PRINCE SERGIUS (+1905) AND GREAT PRINCESS ELIZABETH (+1918)**

**and those with them**

Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich was born in 1857, the son of Tsar Alexander II and the brother of Tsar Alexander III. He was a very religious and highly cultured man who loved reading and music. Shy by nature, he made some of those around him think he was cold. But he was not. Without advertising the fact, he helped very many people. Ludmila Koehler writes: "All available evidence shows that Grand Duke Sergius was an outstanding personality and that he was highly educated, strict and demanding, but also kind-hearted. Naturally he was disliked by liberals and especially by the revolutionaries for his firm convictions; he was therefore eliminated by them, like so many other outstanding conservatives."

The Great Prince's first educators were Anna Tiutcheva, the daughter of the great Russian poet, who taught him to love Holy Rus' and its holy sites, Naval Captain Demetrius Arseniev, the Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod Constantine Petrovich Pobedonostsev, the economist Vladimir Petrovich Bezobrazov, the historian Constantine Nikolayevich Bestuzhev-Ryumin and the talented archaeologist Alexis Sergeyeovich Uvarov. The Great Prince's favourite subject, as of his beloved nephew, Tsar Nicholas II, was history.

In 1882 Great Prince Sergius founded the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, becoming its first president, and after his death his wife inherited from him the chairmanship of the society.

Great Princess Elizabeth was born on October 20 / November 1, 1864, the second child of Prince Ludwig (Louis) and Princess Alice of Hesse-Darmstadt, being the granddaughter (on her mother's side) of Queen Victoria of England. She was named after one of her ancestors, Elizabeth of Turingen, whose life exerted a great influence on her. She was brought up in conditions of simplicity and modesty. The elder daughters themselves cleaned their rooms and stoked up the fire. The parents of Elizabeth distributed a large part of their income in charity, and every Saturday the children would go with bouquets of flowers to the hospital. They were instilled with love for people, especially suffering people, as the foundation of life. Later Elizabeth would say: "They taught me everything at home". Elizabeth's mother died when she was only fourteen, but her nobility of heart transformed this suffering into a lifelong compassion for the bereaved.

From childhood Elizabeth loved nature and especially flowers. She had an artistic gift, and throughout her life spent a lot of time drawing. She also loved classical music.

People of various characters and positions in life were very similar in their estimates of Elizabeth: "Exceptional beauty, a remarkable mind, a subtle sense of humour, angelic patience, nobility of heart", was one such estimate. Metropolitan Anastasy, second president of the Synod of the Russian Church in Exile, wrote of her: "She was a rare combination of exalted Christian spirit, moral nobility, enlightened

mind, gentle heart and refined taste. She possessed an extremely delicate and multi-faceted spiritual composition and her outward appearance reflected the beauty and greatness of her spirit."

In June, 1884, Elizabeth married Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich, having refused a whole series of other suitors, including the future German Emperor Wilhelm. The couple had no children of their own, but later adopted the two children of Great Prince Sergius' brother Paul. According to one source, Great Prince Sergius and his wife had both secretly wanted to remain virgins. Learning that they shared this secret desire, they decided to marry while living as brother and sister. However, authoritative sources do not confirm this story.

The couple were married in St. Petersburg, first according to the Orthodox rite, and then according to the Protestant rite.

Although Elizabeth remained Protestant for the time being, she studied Russian and tried hard to understand the culture and faith of her new homeland.

The couple's summers were spent in Great Prince Sergius' estate of Ilinskoye, near Moscow, and their winters in St. Petersburg. Later they built a winter residence in Usovo, but Ilyinskoye remained the favourite residence of the couple, and they were very popular with the peasants on the estate.

In 1887 the couple went to England to represent the emperor at Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. In 1888 they went to Jerusalem for the consecration of the church of St. Mary Magdalene. There Elizabeth said: "How I would like to be buried here" - and she was. The trip to the Holy Land made a deep impression on her. She wrote to her family in Darmstadt: "You cannot imagine how joyful it is to be able to see all these holy places... where our Lord walked and lived."

Soon after this, the grand duchess converted to the Orthodox Church. Already in 1890 she wrote to the Tsarevich Nicholas that she had tried with all her strength to convince her sister Alexandra (the future spouse of the Tsarevich) that she would love the Orthodox faith, "to which I also am striving to be united, the genuine and true faith, the only faith which has remained undistorted down the centuries and has retained its original purity."

On January 1, 1891 she wrote to her father: "You must have noticed how profoundly I venerate the religion here since you were here last time, more than one and a half years ago. I have been constantly thinking and reading, and praying to God to show me the right path, and I have come to the conclusion that it is only in this religion that I can find all the real and powerful faith in God that a person must have in order to be a good Christian. It would be a sin for me to stay as I am because I now belong formally and for the outside world to one church, while inwardly I pray and believe as does my husband. You cannot imagine how kind he has been: he never tried to force me in any way, presenting all this to my conscience alone. He knows what a serious step this is, and that one has to be completely convinced before deciding on it. I would have done it even earlier, only I was tormented by the thought that I would



be causing you pain, and that many of those dear to me would not understand me. But don't *you* understand, my dear Papa? You know me so well. You must see that I have decided on this step only out of profound faith, and that I feel that I must stand before God with a pure and believing heart. How simple it would be to remain as I am now, but then how hypocritical, how false it would be, and how I would be lying to everyone, pretending in all external rites that I am a Protestant when my soul belongs completely to the religion here. I have thought and thought deeply about all this, having been in this country already for more than six years... I so strongly want to receive the Holy Mysteries at Pascha with my husband... Earthly happiness I have always had as a child in my homeland, as a wife - in my new homeland, but when I saw how deeply religious Serge was, I felt so far behind, and the better I got to know his Church, the more I felt that it brought me closer to God - it is difficult to describe such a thing... This may seem sudden, but I have thought about it already for such a long time, and now, finally, I cannot put it off. My conscience does not allow me to. I earnestly beseech you, when you have received these lines, forgive your daughter if she has caused you pain. But is not faith in God and the confession of faith one of the main consolations of this world? Perhaps you can telegraph me just one line, when you receive this letter. May the Lord bless you. This will be such a consolation for me, because I know that there will be many unpleasant moments, since nobody will understand this step. I ask only for a small affectionate letter."

Her father did not send her the telegram she wanted with the blessing, but he wrote a letter in which he said that her decision caused him pain and suffering and that he could not give his blessing. Then Elizabeth Fyodorovna showed courage and spiritual firmness and, in spite of her moral sufferings, she unhesitatingly decided to become Orthodox. In general, firmness was one of the main qualities of her character: on taking a decision, she went straight for the goal no matter what the obstacles. "My conscience," she wrote to her father, "does not allow me to continue in this spirit - it would be a sin; when I remained in my old faith I was lying all the time... It would be impossible for me to continue living as I lived before."

"Dear one," she wrote to her brother, "you call me unserious, and you write that the external splendour of the church has charmed me. You are mistaken. Nothing external has attracted me, and not the services, but the foundation of the faith. The external signs only remind us of that which is inner... I am converting out of a pure conviction; I feel that this is the loftiest religion and that I will do this with faith, with profound conviction and with the assurance that God's blessing is on it."

Unlike her German relatives, her English relatives were sympathetic to her conversion - in particular her grandmother, Queen Victoria, who wrote her an affectionate, encouraging letter, which brought her great joy. As she wrote to the queen: "The only thing which made me wait so long was that I knew that so many would be pained and not understand me. But God gave me courage and I hope they will forgive me the pain I caused them, as I have my whole soul in this Church here, and I felt I was lying to all and to my old religion in continuing to be a Protestant. It is a matter of conscience whose profound importance only the person concerned can really feel."

When she told her husband of her decision, according to a former courtier, "tears involuntarily spurted from his eyes". He had not spoken a word to her about his desire that she become Orthodox. As she wrote on April 18, 1909: "He with his large heart never forced his religion upon me and found strength to bear up in this great grief of not seeing me in his faith, thanks to Fr. John [of Kronstadt], who told him: 'Leave her alone, don't speak about her faith, she will come to it of herself', and thank God it was so. Well, Serge, who knew his faith and lived in it as perfectly as a true Orthodox Christian can, brought me up and thank God warned me against this *spirit of delusion* you talk of." About her husband she wrote to her brother: "He was a real angel of kindness. How often, by touching my heart, he could have brought me to a change of religion, so as to make himself happy; and never, never did he complain. Take his side with your close ones and tell them that I adore him, and also my new country and that in this way I learned to love their religion also." Elizabeth said that it was her husband who had educated her (presumably, in the Orthodox faith).

Tsar Alexander and his wife, and all the Orthodox relatives of the Romanov house, were overjoyed at Ella's decision. Her husband was in raptures. As he wrote to Tsarevich Nicholas: "I am infinitely happy. I don't know by what right I deserve such grace. I am completely unworthy."

On March 8/20 she again wrote to her father: "Please, please forgive me for causing you so much suffering, but I feel so infinitely happy in my new faith. Earthly happiness I have always had as a child in my homeland, as a wife - in my new homeland, but when I saw how deeply religious Serge was, I felt so far behind, and the better I got to know his Church, the more I felt that it brought me closer to God - it is difficult to describe such a thing... However, in this case everything is in my hands and in God's, and I am convinced that He will bless this step; my hope depends on His strength, and I constantly pray that I will always be a good child and faithful wife and always remain a good Christian, and that in my earthly happiness I will always think of the future and my salvation and always be prepared for it (death)... Please show Alix... this letter."

She was received into the Orthodox Church by Holy Chrismation on Lazarus Saturday, April 13/25, 1891. She kept her former name, but now in honour of Righteous Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist. Now she could say to her husband, in the words of the Moabitess Ruth: "Your people has become my people, and your God - my God" (Ruth 1.16).

In the same year Grand Prince Sergius was appointed governor-general of Moscow. As she wrote to her father: "After seven years - long, happy years - of our married life, which we have spent with our dear relatives and friends here in Petersburg, now to have to begin a completely new way of life, and to more or less have to give up our cosy home life in the city, since we have to do so much for the people there, and actually we are playing the part of a ruling prince - it will be very difficult for us..."

And indeed it was difficult for both of them. Sergius loved his former post as colonel-in-chief of the Preobrazhensky regiment, and now had to govern the province of Moscow at a time of increasing revolutionary activity when society was becoming

increasingly anti-monarchist. Elizabeth had to smile to guests, dance and talk, independently of her mood or health. Often she was exhausted and had headaches. She was very popular, but also there were many slanders. Once she told her brother Ernest that she thought that every human being had to have an ideal in life. When he asked her what her ideal was, she replied: "To be a fully perfect woman, and this is not easy, for one must learn to forgive everything..."

Her sufferings, both physical and spiritual, were increased by the death of her father, to whom she was very attached... A trip down the Volga, and another to Darmstadt and England, consoled her, and she involved herself more in charities for the poor in addition to the many public engagements that she could not avoid. But her sadness lingered on...

According to the witness of Metropolitan Anastasy, the Great Prince did much to raise the level of Muscovite life. "His meek, idealistic personality was filled with instruction and a favourable influence on all Russians. The woes, sorrows and misfortunes of the people always found a ready response in his heart and speedy help." Indeed, the charitable work of the couple was amazing in its variety and extent.

Ella worked hard to bring about the union of her sister Alix (Alexandra) to Tsarevich Nicholas. As she wrote to Queen Victoria, "the world is so spiteful, and not knowing how long and deep this affection on both sides has been, the spiteful tongues will call it ambition". However, the marriage finally took place in 1894, and the two sisters were united in Russia in the Orthodox faith.

Grand Prince Sergius' brother Paul married a divorcée and a commoner, and was forced to leave Russia. And so his children Marie and Dmitri came under the tutorship of Great Prince and Princess. Elizabeth had already shown herself a wonderful mother to the poor and sick, and now became in effect the mother of two more children.

In 1903 Sergius and Elizabeth went to the uncovering of the relics of St. Seraphim in Sarov. From there she wrote: "What infirmities and what illnesses we saw, but also what faith! It seemed as if we were living in the time of the earthly life of the Saviour. And how they prayed, how they wept - these poor mothers with their sick children. And, glory to God, many of them were healed. The Lord counted us worthy to see how a mute girl began to speak. But how her mother prayed for her!"

During the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, the Great Princess became the leader of a patriotic movement that swept the whole of society: she organized sewing workshops for the needs of the army, several in the Kremlin itself, where women of all classes worked; she equipped several hospital trains excellently at her own expense, including camp churches equipped with everything necessary for the Divine services; she daily visited hospitals; and she worried over the widows and orphans of those killed in the war.

But then came the tragedy that changed her life. Great Prince Sergius had just resigned from the office of governor general of Moscow because he disagreed with the government on policy towards the terrorists, thinking that they should be treated

more severely. His letters show his complete devotion to the monarchy and to Tsar Nicholas in particular. "You know," he wrote to him in 1896, "how I love You; my whole life belongs to You and the service and works of Your Father. Believe me: Your glory is dearer to me than anything on earth." But he felt that the Tsar was being too soft, and therefore retired into private life. For some time before his death he had been receiving death threats, and when he went out he used to try to ensure that he was as far as possible alone. On February 6/18, 1905 he was killed by a bomb that exploded almost at the doorstep of the palace that he and his wife inhabited in the Kremlin. At that moment the Great Princess was leaving for her workshops. She was alarmed by the sound of an exploding bomb nearby. Hurrying toward the place (near the Chudov monastery in the Kremlin), she saw a soldier stretching his military overcoat over the maimed body of her husband. The soldier tried to hide the horrible sight from the eyes of the unfortunate wife. But the Great Princess dropped to her knees, on the street, and put her arms out trying to embrace the torn remains of her husband. The bomb had shattered his body to such an extent that his fingers were found, still in their gloves, on the roof of the neighbouring building.

After the first pannikhida in the Chudov monastery, Elizabeth returned to the palace, put on black mourning clothes and began to write telegrams. From time to time she asked about the condition of the wounded coachman of the Great Prince. They told her that his condition was hopeless, and that he could die soon. So as not to upset the dying man, Elizabeth took off her mourning clothes, put on the blue dress she had been wearing before and went to the hospital. There, leaning over the bed of the dying man, she caught his question about Sergius Alexandrovich and, so as to reassure him, she smiled and said: "He has sent me to you." Calmed by her words, and thinking that the Great Prince was alive, the devoted coachman **Andrew** died that night...

The next day St. Elizabeth received Communion in the church in which her husband's coffin was standing. On the third day after his death she felt that the soul of the deceased was asking her to do something. She understood that Sergius Alexandrovich wanted to send his forgiveness to his assassin, Kaliayev, through her. She went to the prison where he was detained.

"Who are you?" he asked upon meeting her.

"I am his widow," she replied, "Why did you kill him?"

"I did not want to kill you," he said. "I saw him several times before when I had the bomb with me, but you were with him and I could not bring myself to touch him."

"And didn't you understand that by killing him you were killing me?" ...

Then she said that she was bringing him forgiveness from Sergius Alexandrovich and asked him to repent. The Gospel was in her hands and she begged the criminal to read it. He refused, but she left it in his cell together with a little icon. Leaving the prison, the Great Princess said:

"My attempt was unsuccessful, but, who knows, perhaps at the last minute he will understand his sin and repent."

She asked the tsar for clemency for him. And he was ready to bestow it provided the bomber did not refuse it himself. (According to another source, her request was refused.) On the memorial cross erected upon the site of her husband's death, the grand-duchess inscribed the Gospel words:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do..."

Great Prince Sergius was buried in the Chudov monastery in the Kremlin; a chapel dedicated to St. Sergius, his patron saint, was built there.

Igumen Seraphim says of the Great Princess' conduct after the murder: "Like a spiritual heroine she did not break down in consequence of her great sorrow, as happens to many women. She grieved most of all about the sudden death of her husband, afraid for his fate in the world to come." And yet she herself said of him that he was "a holy person, an angel of goodness, who never did any harm to anyone". And she was comforted by spiritual elders, who told her that the blood of her husband's martyrdom would surely efface all the errors and sins of his past.

From that time on, she remained in mourning clothes, refused the food she was accustomed to, and vegetables and bread became her daily nourishment, even before she took her monastic vows. She dissolved her court, withdrew from the world and devoted herself entirely to the service of God and her neighbour. She opened two hospitals in which she looked after the sick. She divided her property into three parts, distributing it to the state, to the heirs of her husband and (the largest part) to charity. With what remained she then acquired a small estate with four little houses and a garden, and then another neighbouring plot, on the Ordynka in Moscow.

Here, with the blessing of the elders of the Zosima hermitage, to whom she placed herself in complete obedience, she founded a small monastic community, calling it the convent of Saints Martha and Mary, in order to unite in it the virtues of the two sisters of Lazarus - prayer and good works. It contained a hospital with a house church, an out-patients department, a chemist's, a refuge for young girls, a library, and a hostel for the sisters. In 1911 the main Protection church was built in the traditional Novgorod-Pskov style according to a plan by A.V. Shusev and with interior paintings by Nesterov. Protopriest Metrophanes Serebryansky, an exceptional pastor, was appointed the spiritual father of the community.

At first Elizabeth wanted to regenerate the institution of the deaconess in the convent that she founded. In early Christianity deaconesses had been widows or elderly virgins. Their main duties were to look after women entering the Church, to teach them the faith, to help them during the sacrament of Holy Baptism and to look after the sick and needy. During the persecutions against Christianity the deaconesses had served the martyrs in prison. However, the Russian Synod did not approve of her idea of regenerating the institution, and she had to put aside this thought.

In April 1909 the Great Princess wrote: "My darling Serge rests in God with so many he loved who have gone to join him and God has given me on this earth a beautiful work to fulfil. Only He knows whether I will do it well or badly, but I will try my best and put my hand in His and go with no fear whatever the crosses and criticism this world may have in store – little by little my life has turned onto this way. It is not a fantasy of the moment and no disappointment ever can come – I can be disappointed in myself but then I also have no illusion and don't imagine I am different to others. I want to work for God in God for suffering mankind, and in my old age when my body can't work anymore I hope God will let me then rest and pray for the work I began and then I will leave the busy life and prepare for that great home – but I have health and energy and there is so, so much misery and Christ's steps guide us amongst the suffering, in whom we help Him..."

The convent began its existence on February 10, 1909. At first it had only six sisters, but within a year the number had risen to thirty and continued to rise. On April 9 seventeen sisters headed by Elizabeth were tonsured into monasticism (probably the little schema). She put off her black mourning clothes, put on the white habit of a sister of mercy, and took the name Alexia after St. Alexis of Moscow, whose relics rested in the Chudov monastery. According to one source, she was tonsured by the future Hieromartyr, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev. According to another source, however, Bishop Tryphon, in the world Prince Turkestanov, gave her her monastic vestments with the prophetic words: "These vestments will hide you from the world, and the world will be hidden from you, but at the same time they will witness to your charitable activity, which will shine before the Lord to His glory."

Just before her tonsure, the Great Princess wrote: "My taking of vows is even more serious than if a young girl marries. I am espousing Christ and His cause, I am giving all I can to Him and our neighbours, I am going deeper into our Orthodox Church and becoming a missionary of Christian faith and charity work and – oh dear! – I am so unworthy of it all, and I do so want blessings and prayers..." And on the morning of her tonsure she said to the sisters: "I am leaving the glittering world where I had a glittering position. But together with all of you I am ascending to a greater world – the world of the poor and the suffering. I have lain this upon myself, not as a cross, but as certain way full of light, which the Lord showed me after the death of Serge and which for many, many years before this began in my soul..."

The community's twenty-two-bed hospital in time acquired a high reputation. The best specialists in the city worked there for nothing. Often the most seriously ill people from other clinics were brought there. Every week 34 doctors worked, also for nothing, in the out-patients' department. In the chemist's they took no money from the poor for medicines, and distributed them to others at a considerable discount. They gave the orphans a basic foundation in medicine as well as a general education. They served over 300 meals to the poor daily. On Sundays the community organized a school for illiterate factory women.

Mother Elizabeth very carefully distributed tasks among the sisters - to each according to her strength. She watched over their health and tried to see that they had enough rest. She looked after the incurably ill and helped at operations, taking all the

most burdensome tasks upon herself. At the same time, her personal life was very ascetic. She slept for no more than three hours in every twenty-four on a wooden bed without a mattress, and after praying for a long time at night, she would go round the hospital wards. For food she had a few vegetables and some milk, and kept all the fasts strictly.

However, she considered the most important thing to be not the hospital, but visiting and helping the poor in their homes. The community received up to 12,000 requests for help every year. They had to arrange treatment for some, look for work for others, send still others abroad to study. How much money, food, clothing and medicine was distributed! But "Great Matushka", as she was called, considered their main work to be bringing the love of Christ to the suffering.

She used to visit the notorious Khitrovka market, believing, as did all the sisters of the community, that everyone is made in the image of God even if that image is partly distorted by the passions of life. She tried to touch the depths of their hearts, to arouse the beginnings of repentance in people sunk in corruption. Sometimes she succeeded, and then the gradual recovery of a spiritually sick person would begin. Mother Elizabeth rescued orphans from these dens of iniquity, and tried to persuade their parents to hand them over to her for education. She set up the boys in a hostel, and one such group even formed an artel of messenger-boys. The girls were educated in the refuge and in closed boarding-schools.

The sisters did not work for personal glory, and they did not count how many people they helped. They had to endure insults and mockery, sometimes they were deceived. But they did not despair in their service. The pledge of their constancy and conscientiousness was their faith in the words of Christ: "And he who gives even one of these My little ones to drink a cup of cold water... will not lose his reward."

One of the nuns of the convent, Mother Lyubov', Euphrosyne in the world, came to the monastery in the following remarkable way. At the age of sixteen she fell into a lethargic sleep, during which her soul was met by St. Onuphrius the Great. He took her to three saints. Euphrosyne recognized one of them to be St. Sergius of Radonezh, but she did not know the other two. Then St. Onuphrius told Euphrosyne that she was needed in the Martha-Mary convent. Waking from her sleep, Euphrosyne began to ask where such a convent might be in Russia. One of her acquaintances turned out to be a novice in the convent and told Euphrosyne about it and its abbess. Euphrosyne wrote to the abbess asking whether she could be received into the convent, and received an affirmative reply. When she arrived at the monastery she went into the cell of the abbess and recognized in her the female saint whom she had seen standing next to St. Sergius. Then, on receiving the blessing of the spiritual father of the convent, Fr. Metrophanes, she recognized in him the second of the saints. Exactly six years after this St. Elizabeth received the crown of martyrdom on the day of the uncovering of the relics of St. Sergius of Radonezh, while Fr. Metrophanes later received the monastic tonsure with the name of Sergius in honour of St. Sergius... Once, when she was not yet trained in the rules of the monastic life, Euphrosyne went into the cell of the abbess without asking a blessing. She saw St. Elizabeth in a hairshirt and chains. "My dear," said the saint, "when you enter, you must knock."

Among her very varied charitable works, St. Elizabeth paid the fares of pilgrims sailing from Odessa to Jaffa, and built a large hospital in Jerusalem. She also built an Orthodox church in Bari in Italy where the relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker rested.

In spite of her many and arduous duties, she found time to go on pilgrimage to the greatest shrines of Russia, like Sarov, Pskov, Kiev, Optina Hermitage, Zosima Hermitage, Solovki, Pochayev.

Among the holy elders she knew, writes Ludmila Koehler, "the grand duchess singled out Schema-Archimandrite Gabriel. The grand duchess was in the habit of seeing him on her annual pilgrimage to the Seven Lakes Hermitage (near Kazan). There she attended all the monastery services and shared the simple food with the brotherhood. Archbishop Tikhon (of San Francisco) relates that she and her faithful cell attendant Barbara usually were present at the four o'clock tea in the Abbot's quarters.

"When Schema-Archimandrite Gabriel later stayed at the Eleazorov Hermitage (near Pskov) and his health began to fail, it was decided to add a little church to his small dwelling. The grand duchess not only contributed money but donated icons and even designed the iconostasis for the church. Schema-Archimandrite Gabriel decided to go to Moscow in order to thank her personally; on this occasion, he invited her to attend the blessing and dedication of the church, and she did. He, in his turn, visited the Martha and Mary Sisterhood at the invitation of the grand duchess for the spiritual enlightenment of the sisters.

"When Schema-Archimandrite Gabriel died (in Kazan, in 1915), the grand duchess came for the funeral service and took part (with the sisters of the Mother of God Convent in Kazan) in the funeral repast. She also accompanied the coffin up to the Monastery of our Saviour on its way to the Seven Lakes Hermitage.

"News of the impending war reached the grand duchess while she was in the province of Perm. She proceeded to Verkhoturye to venerate the relics of St. Simeon; here she took Holy Communion. Verkhoturye is located only a short distance from Alapayevsk, which was destined to be the scene of her martyrdom.

"The Grand Duchess became something of a legend in her time. It is enough to quote a few of the numerous stories depicting her selfless services to the needy. A poor woman was admitted to the sisterhood hospital, the wife of a worker who was an unbeliever. As a consequence of malicious propaganda about the Royal House, he disliked all its members. During the many hours the man spent at the bedside of his stricken spouse, he noticed one particular sister who was like a compassionate, loving mother to the sick, and to his wife in particular. She not only rendered all the usual services, but also encouraged the patient by kind, heartening words. After the dying woman had received the Final Communion, this sister spent the night with her trying to alleviate her suffering and dying agony. After the woman's death this same sister



helped others prepare the body for the funeral. When the husband found out that it was the grand duchess, he admitted his error and turned to God.

"Almedingen tells another fascinating story about a radical student, whose only sister had joined the Martha and Mary Sisterhood. When this 'republican' went to pay a call at Great Ordynka, she 'met the grand duchess, and to be in the same room with her was peace. I understood nothing about her vocation. I merely knew that she was good, creative and friendly, and I envied her the faith I did not possess.'

"She was particularly impressed when her sister told her that 'once when visiting a particularly dirty part of Khitrovka, the grand duchess sneezed, and the woman in the room at once offered her a very dirty rag, and she accepted it as though it were of finest, cleanest linen.'

"Another story concerns a woman 'who had overturned a lighted oil stove... Her clothes had caught fire and her body was a mass of burns. Gangrene had set in and the doctors despaired of saving her. With gentle but obstinate courage, the grand duchess nursed her back to life. It took two hours each day to dress her wounds, and the stench was such that several of the nurses fainted. The patient recovered within a few weeks and this was considered a miracle at the time.'"

By the middle of 1914 there were already ninety-seven sisters in the community, and there was talk of building daughter-communities outside the city.

Then the war began, and part of the sisterhood was sent to work in the field hospitals. Others served in a hospital in Moscow. Serious difficulties arose with the provision of food and clothing, but the community did not suspend its charitable work.

The Dowager Empress, the Empress and Mother Elizabeth among themselves the work of nursing the wounded according to the front lines: the German front, the Austrian front, and the Turkish front. The latter, although smaller in size of operations, was just as intense in fighting. They were able to draw all kinds of people into their organization, men of high and low ranks, officials, clerks, government workers and a whole hierarchy of women. The Red Cross on a uniform was seen on everyone who could spare any time from housework. There was no sacrifice too great - money was given freely and personal life was not important in time of war.

Together with her younger sister, the Empress Alexandra, Mother Elizabeth was slandered on account of her German blood. But she harboured no bitterness against her enemies. Once she tried to warn her sister against Rasputin, but was rebuffed.

Metropolitan Anastasy wrote: "She suffered deeply for the royal family... when the thorns of grievous slander were woven around them, especially during the war. In order not to give impetus to new evil gossip, the grand duchess tried to avoid conversations on the subject. If it so happened that because of idle people's tasteless curiosity the subject was broached in her presence, she immediately killed it by her expressive silence. Only once after returning from Tsarskoye Selo, she forgot herself

and remarked, 'That terrible man (i.e. Rasputin) wants to separate me from them, but, thank God, he will not succeed.' The occasion referred to is probably the one mentioned by several writers when the grand duchess went to warn her sister."

Rasputin was killed on December 29, 1916 by Prince Felix Yusupov. He owed much to the grand-duchess' warmth and good counsel, and considered her his second mother. She asked him to accompany her to the glorification of St. Joasaph of Belgorod, which made a great impression on him. And he was always fleeing to her when he was in distress.

"I was immeasurably grateful to the great princess," he wrote, "that she understood my despair and was able to direct me to a new life. However, I was tormented by the fact that she did not know everything about me and considered me to be better than I was.

"Once, when speaking to her face to face, I told her about my adventures, which, as it seemed to me, were unknown to her.

"'Calm down,' she smiled, 'I know much more about you than you think. It was for that reason that I called you. You are capable of much evil, and of much good if you find the right path. And great sin is not greater than sincere repentance. Remember that the reason sins more than the soul. But the soul can remain pure even in a sinful body. Your soul is important to me. And I want to open it to you yourself. Destiny has given you everything that a man could desire. But from him to whom much is given, much is required. Think that you are responsible. You are obliged to be an example. You should be respected. Trials have shown you that life is not a game. Think how much good you could do! And how much evil you could cause! I have prayed much for you. I hope that the Lord has hearkened to my prayer and will help you.'

"How much hope and strength of soul sounded in her words!"

Immediately after the February revolution Prince Felix flew to Moscow to inform her about recent events. "She embraced me," he writes in his Memoirs, and blessed me with tears in her eyes.

"'Poor Russia!' she cried. 'What terrible trials await her! And we are all powerless to resist the will of the Lord. It remains to us only to pray and hope on His mercy.'"

"She listened very attentively to my account of the tragic night [of Rasputin's killing].

"'You could not have acted otherwise,' she said when I fell silent. 'Your act was the last attempt to save the homeland and the dynasty. And it is not your fault that events did not measure up to your expectations. The guilt lies on those who did not understand their own duty. The killing of Rasputin is not a crime. You killed a demon. But it was even to your credit: in your place anyone should acted in the same way.'

“Then Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna informed me that several days after the death of Rasputin the abbesses of monasteries came to her to tell her about what had happened with them on the night of the 30<sup>th</sup>. During the all-night vigil priests had been seized by an attack of madness, had blasphemed and shouted out in a voice that was not their own. Nuns had run down the corridors crying like hysterics and tearing their dresses with indecent movements of the body.

“‘The Russian people is not responsible for everything that is happening,’ continued the great princess. ‘Poor Nicky, poor Alex! What torments are prepared for them! May the will of the Lord be done. No power of evil can overcome Holy Rus’ and the Orthodox Church. Good will triumph without fail. And those who keep faith in it in themselves will finally see the light. The Lord punishes and He has mercy.’”

“Time flies so unnoticeably that you don’t even distinguish days or years, everything merges together into one second of prayer and mercy... Today is twenty-five years since I was united to our beloved Church... Everything is merged together in the profoundest gratitude to God, to our Church and to those noble examples that I have been able to see in truly Orthodox people. And I feel myself to be so insignificant and unworthy of the limitless love of God and of that love which has surrounded me in Russia – even the minutes of sorrow were sanctified by such consolation from above, and while the petty misunderstandings that are natural for people were smoothed away with such love that I can say only one thing: ‘Glory to God for all things, for all things.’”

The Lord bestowed upon Grand Duchess Elizabeth the gift of spiritual discernment and prophecy. Fr. Metrophanes related that not long before the revolution he had a very vivid and clearly prophetic dream, but he did not know how to interpret it. It was composed of a sequence of four pictures, in colour. The first revealed a beautiful church. Suddenly, it became surrounded by tongues of fire, and the whole church went up in flames - a terrifying spectacle. The second showed a portrait of the Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna in a black frame; the corners of the frame sprouted forth shoots bearing lily buds that blossomed, becoming so large as to conceal the portrait. The third showed the Archangel Michael holding a flaming sword. In the fourth, St. Seraphim of Sarov stood on his knees on a rock, his hands upraised in prayer.

Perplexed by this dream, Fr. Metrophanes described it to the Grand Duchess one morning before the Liturgy. St. Elizabeth said she understood the dream. The first picture signified that there would soon be a revolution in Russia, that a persecution would be raised against the Church, and for our sins, our unbelief, the country would be brought to the brink of destruction. The second picture signified that her sister and the entire Royal Family would receive a martyr’s death. The third picture signified that subsequently Russia would be overtaken by frightful tribulations. The fourth signified that by the prayers of St. Seraphim and other saints and righteous ones of the Russian land, and by the intercession of the Mother of God, the country and its people would obtain mercy.

The revolution threw the country into chaos. Crowds of freed prisoners roamed round Moscow. Mother Elizabeth forbade the sisters to leave the community.

Once, as an American journalist, Rita Dorr, recounts, "a great mob went to the House of Mary and Martha, battered the gates open and swarmed up the convent steps demanding admission. The door opened and a tall, grave woman in a pale silvergray habit and white veil stepped out into the porch and asked the mob what it wanted.

"We want that German woman, that sister of the German spy in Tsarskoe Selo," yelled the mob. "We want the Grand Duchess Serge."

"Tall and white, like a lily, the woman stood there. 'I am the Grand Duchess Serge,' she replied in a clear voice that floated above the clamor. 'What do you want with me?'

"We have come to arrest you," they shouted. "Very well," was the calm reply. "If you want to arrest me I shall have to go with you, of course. But I have a rule that before I leave the convent for any purpose I always go into the church and pray. Come with me into the church, and after I have prayed I will go with you."

"She turned and walked across the garden to the church, the mob following. As many as could crowd into the small building followed her there. Before the altar door she knelt, and her nuns came and knelt around her weeping. The Grand Duchess did not weep. She prayed for a moment, crossed herself then stood up and stretched her hands to the silent, staring mob.

"I am ready to go now," she said.

"But not a hand was lifted to take Elizabeth Fyodorovna. What Kerensky could not have done, what no police force in Russia could have done with those men that day, her perfect courage and humility did. It cowed and conquered hostility, it dispersed the mob. That great crowd of liberty-drunk, bloodmad men went quietly home, leaving a guard to protect the convent."

In the spring of 1917 St. Elizabeth wrote to her sister Victoria: "God's ways are a mystery and perhaps it is a great blessing we can't know all that the future has in store for us. All our country is being snipped into little bits. All that was gained in centuries is being demolished, and by our own people, those I love from all my heart. Truly, they are morally ill and blinded not to see where we are going. And one's heart aches, but I have no bitterness. Can you criticize or condemn a man in delirium, a lunatic? You can only pity and long for good guardians to be found, who can keep him from smashing all and murdering whomever he can get at."

The German ambassador Mirbach twice tried to see her and pass on an invitation to go to Germany, but she refused to receive the representative of an enemy country and said that she categorically refused to leave Russia: "I have done no harm to anyone. May the will of the Lord be done."

In this year, Mother Elizabeth wrote to her friend, Countess Alexandra Olsufiev: "God in His great mercy has again helped us to go through these days of internal strife, and today I had the infinite consolation of praying in... and attended the divine ceremony of blessing by our Patriarch [Tikhon]. The sacred Kremlin, with visible marks of these sad days, was dearer to me than ever before, and I realized to what extent the Orthodox religion is God's True Faith. I felt such pity for Russia and her children who, at this moment, know not what they do. Isn't it a sick child that one loves a hundredfold more in the time of his illness rather than when he's gay and healthy? One would like to bear his suffering, to teach him patience, to help him. This is what I feel every day. *Holy Russia cannot perish*. But, alas, Great Russia is no more; but in the Bible God shows how He had pardoned His repenting people and once more granted them blessed power. Let us hope that the prayers, which intensify every day, and the repentance, which increases, will bring the Holy Virgin to intercede for us before her Divine Son, and that God will pardon us."

In April, 1918 she wrote to the same correspondent: "If we look deep into the life of every human, we discover that it is full of miracles. You will say, 'Of terror and death, as well.' Yes, that also. But we do not clearly see why the blood of these victims must flow. There, in the heavens, they understand everything and, no doubt, have found calm and the True Homeland - a Heavenly Homeland. We on this earth must look to that Heavenly Homeland with understanding and say with resignation, 'Thy will be done.' Great Russia is completely destroyed, but Holy Russia and the Orthodox Church, which 'the gates of hell cannot overcome', exists and exists more than ever. And those who believe and who do not doubt for one moment will see 'the inner sun' which enlightens the darkness during the thundering storm... I am only convinced that the Lord Who punishes is also the same Lord Who loves. I have read the Gospel a great deal, and, we wish to recognize that great sacrifice of God the Father when He sent His son to die and be resurrected for us, we must feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, who illumines our path. And then joy will become eternal, even if our poor human hearts and our little earthly minds will experience moments that seem very terrible... We work, we pray, we hope, and each day we feel the mercy of God. Each day we experience a constant miracle. And others begin to feel this and come to our church in order to relax in soul. Even though all the powers of hell may be set loose, Holy Russia and the Orthodox Church will remain unconquered. Some day, in this ghastly struggle, Virtue will triumph over Evil. Those who keep their faith will see the Powers of Light vanquish the powers of darkness. God punishes and pardons."

"The spring of 1917," writes Ludmilla Koehler, "marks the beginning of her slow but steady ascent to martyrdom: searches, accusations, disruptions of the welfare system so painstakingly established by her, deportation, and finally a martyr's death. God led her to her great destiny by measured steps so as to strengthen her spirit. By the end of her ordeal she was as strong as tempered steel, radiating the bright light of her sainthood. Grand Duchess Elizabeth's attitude toward the turmoil besetting Russia is seen in a letter she sent to an old friend about this time. In it she predicts the complete disintegration of Russia and accepts it with the words, 'Thy will be done.' She is, however, simultaneously convinced that the gates of Hell will not prevail over the Church, which has been promised an eternal existence. Those who believe in this will be able, according to her, 'to discern the concealed beam of light shining through

the darkness at the very height of the storm.' To be sure, she anticipated severe trials, but she looked on the approaching storm as having both 'horrifying as well as spiritualizing elements'.

"The harassment and persecution started gradually, first with a visit by a revolutionary gang under the leadership of a student who was visibly impressed by what he saw - the simple life-style of the sisters, including their Mother Superior, their activities, the relief they were able to provide to the needy. They parted in a friendly fashion, but this was just the beginning. It is obvious that the grand duchess was aware of the road ahead of her. She dampened the joyful reaction of the sisterhood to this 'peaceful' intrusion with the prophetic remark, 'Obviously we are still not worthy of a martyr's crown.' But she did not have long to wait for it.

"For a while the convent was allowed to go about its activities unhampered. The authorities largely ignored it, save for supplying it occasionally with critically needed supplies. One may speculate that at this point the authorities were afraid to attack the grand duchess and the sisterhood because of the popularity they enjoyed among the poorer inhabitants of Moscow."

At about this time, Igumen Seraphim of the Seraphim-Alexeyev monastery in Perm tried to convince the Great Princess to go with him to Alapayevsk.

"There," he told her, "I know good people in Old Believers' sketes and they can protect Your Highness."

She refused to hide from fear of repression, but added:

"If I am killed, I ask you to bury me in a Christian manner."

It was not long before Fr. Seraphim was able to retrieve her body and fulfil his promise to the Great Princess...

Another trial came at Pascha, 1918, when the chekist secret police arrested some of the sick and declared that they were transferring the orphans to a children's home. Then, on the third day of Pascha, continues Ludmilla Koehler, "on the feast day of the Appearance of the Iberian icon of the Most Holy Theotokos (March 31), Patriarch Tikhon was celebrating the Liturgy in the Iberian church across the street from the Martha and Mary Convent. After the service, the Patriarch visited the sisterhood and served a moleben, finding heartening words for the abbess and the sisters. He promised his assistance and protection should they be needed. The sisters felt greatly relieved and encouraged by this gesture but the grand duchess may have had premonitions of an impending separation from her community.

And indeed, immediately following the Patriarch's departure, she was to be cruelly torn from her sisters. Red guards intruded into the convent and ordered her to go to the station with them. The parting was agonizing. Both the abbess and her closest collaborators realized that this separation was forever. The scene must have been touching. The sisters surrounded their beloved Mother Superior and cried. There

followed and painful leavetaking and prayers. Only the departing grand duchess remained calm. She blessed all the sisters with the sign of the Cross. She could not bid farewell to each of them individually, pressed for time by her captors as she was. She was able to say only a few words, making her orders known. The emotional scene only impelled the lawless authorities to act in a still ruder fashion. Using force, they literally tore the grand duchess from the flock of sisters and dragged the innocent victim away. Patriarch Tikhon made an attempt to intercede on behalf of the Great Princess, but to no avail.

They arrested Mother Elizabeth and two other sisters - **Barbara** Yakovlevna and **Catherine** Ianysheva. Before sitting in the car, the abbess signed all the sisters with the sign of the Cross. One of them recalled: "And they took her away. The sisters ran after her as far as they could. One fell on the road. When I came to the liturgy, I heard the deacon reading the litany, but he couldn't, he was crying... And they took her away to Yekaterinburg, with someone escorting her, and Barbara was with her. They were inseparable... Then she sent a letter to us, to batyushka and each sister. 105 little notes, and every one in accordance with her character. To one a quotation from the Gospel, to another from the Bible, to another from herself. She knew all the sisters, all her children..."

During the rail journey she wrote to the sisters: "Lord, give the blessing. May the Resurrection of Christ console and strengthen you all... May St. Sergius and the holy hierarch Demetrius and St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk protect you all, my dear ones... I cannot forget yesterday, all your dear faces. O Lord, what suffering is in them, how their hearts are suffering! Every minute you become dearer to me. How can I leave you, my children, how can I console you and strengthen you? Remember, my dear ones, what I said to you. Always be not only my children, but obedient pupils. Come closer to each other and be as one soul, all for God, and say, with John Chrysostom: 'Glory to God for everything!' You older sister, unite your sister. Ask Patriarch Tikhon to take the 'chicks' under his wing. Make a place for him in my middle room. Make my cell a place for confession, and the big one for receptions... For God's sake, do not become despondent. The Mother of God knows why Her Heavenly Son sent us this trial on the day of Her feast... only don't become despondent and don't weaken in your radiant intentions, and the Lord, Who has temporarily separated us, will strengthen you spiritually. Pray for me, the sinner, that I may be counted worthy to return to my children and become perfected for you, and that we may all think how to prepare ourselves for eternal life.

"You remember how afraid I was that you rely too much on my support as a stronghold in life, and I said to you: 'You must cleave more to God. The Lord says: "My son, give Me your heart, and your eyes will see My paths". Then be assured that you will give all to God if you give Him your heart, that is, your very selves.'

"Now we are going through one and the same experience and involuntarily we find the consolation to bear our common cross of separation only with Him. The Lord has found that it is now time for us to bear His cross. Let us strive to be worthy of this joy. I thought that we would be too weak, that we had not grown sufficiently to bear a great cross. 'The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away.' As it was pleasing to

God, so has it happened. May the name of the Lord be blessed unto the ages. What an example St. Job gives us by his submissiveness and patience in sorrows. For this the Lord later gave him joy. How many examples of this sorrow do we find in the Holy Fathers in the holy monasteries, but then there was joy. Prepare for the joy of being again together. Let us be patient and humble. Let us not grumble but be thankful for all things.

“Your constant intercessor in prayer and loving mother in Christ,

“Matushka.”

St. Elizabeth and her two nuns were joined in Yekaterinburg by other royal prisoners: Great Prince Sergius Mikhailovich, the three Brother Princes Igor, John and Constantine Constantinovich, the poet Prince Vladimir Paley (who wrote about "Aunt Ella's" great kindness to him) and Prince John's wife, the Serbian Queen Elena Petrovna.

Then, on May 20, the prisoners were taken to the Urals town of Alapayevsk, where they were imprisoned in one of the city schools. For some weeks the Grand Duchess, though under guard, was able to go to church, to do some gardening, to paint and to pray. She was also in contact with her nuns in Moscow, and received gifts from the peasants of the region.

But on June 21 a stricter regime was imposed and Sisters Barbara and Catherine were taken away from their spiritual mother to Yekaterinburg. There they petitioned the authorities to be returned to Alapayevsk, and finally they were allowed back.

Soon Prince John Constantinovich's wife Elena Petrovna was torn from his side, and it was obvious to the captives what was in store for them. By the beginning of July their last contacts with the outside world were severed and the number of guards increased.

On the night of July 3-4 Tsar Nicholas and his family were executed in Yekaterinburg. On the following night, the two nuns and other members of the royal family were taken outside the building where they were staying on the pretext of an armed attack. Nobody was allowed to see them. Outside the house their hands were tied behind their backs and they were blindfolded. They were taken in a car twelve miles outside the town. The leader of the assassins was named Ryabov.

Great Prince Sergius Mikhailovich started to struggle with the assassins and was shot; the rest were blindfolded and thrown into a mine shaft that was 200 feet deep. According to eye-witnesses, Prince Igor was shot as he tried to run away. At the edge of the shaft, Mother Elizabeth pleaded with the executioners to have mercy on the other princes. But they were all thrown head first down the shaft.

Mother Elizabeth was the last. She crossed herself and prayed loudly:

"Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do."



Two grenades were thrown into the mine shaft after her; they killed **Prince Theodore Mikhailovich Remez**. The others died in terrible sufferings from hunger, thirst and wounds. The bodies of Mother Elizabeth and Prince John Constantinovich were found on a ledge only 50 feet from the top. Mother Elizabeth had remained alive for a long time. Mortally wounded herself, she had tried to bind the wounds of Great Prince John, serving her neighbour until her very death. Two grenades fell beside her, but did not explode: the Lord preserved the body of her who was pleasing to him. On her chest was an icon of the Saviour Not Made with Hands adorned with precious stones, which the Tsar had given her on day of her chrismation, and on the back of which were inscribed the words: "Palm Saturday, April 13, 1891".

According to one report from the recently published communist archives: "From beneath the ground we heard singing! I was seized with horror. They were singing the hymn, 'Lord, save Thy people'."

A peasant hid near the mine for two days, and all the while he could hear the martyrs singing. It was the cherubic hymn that they chanted from under the ground. The peasant drove to the camp of the not very far distant White Army and told them about what had happened. They reproached him for not giving any help, at least by throwing a piece of bread into the mine.

When the White Army was able to reach the spot they removed the bodies of the martyred ones. They included, besides Mother Elizabeth and Nuns Barbara and Catherine: **Princes Sergius Mikhailovich, John Constantinovich, Igor Constantinovich, Constantine Constantinovich, Vladimir Paley and Theodore Remez**. In 1945 the Soviets occupied Manchuria, and the bodies of all the princes buried in Peking disappeared.

Lubov Millar writes concerning the post-mortem on the bodies: "The Grand Duchess was severely bruised: there was a bruise the size of a child's palm on her forehead and one the size of an adult's palm on her left temple; hypodermic tissues, muscles and the cranial dome were also bruised; the skull bones were intact. Next to the martyr lay two unexploded hand grenades; the Almighty did not allow the body of His chosen one to be torn to shreds. An icon of the Saviour was found on her chest..."

**Nun Barbara**, in the world Vera Tsvetkova, was from Moscow. She belonged to a religious family of intelligentsy that greatly venerated Mother Elizabeth. After emigrating to the south of France, they found themselves in a difficult situation. They had to find a new flat, but their poverty deprived them of the possibility of finding it in such a short time. However, believing in a miracle, the daughter nevertheless began to search. On the eve of the day on which the family was to be evicted, Barbara had a dream in which she saw Mother Elizabeth, who asked: "Why don't the Tsvetkovs appeal to me for help? If I could help them earlier, now it is still easier for me to give them help." And she promised Vera to arrange everything in the way she wanted. On waking in the morning under the strong influence of her dream, Vera renewed her search. As she was passing the office where she had only recently applied for flats for sale without success, she felt an insistent desire to ask again. Vera knew that her fresh

inquiries were likely to be as unsatisfactory as her previous ones. But some clearly felt invisible force urged her to try again. Great was her astonishment when the official, seeing her arrive at the door, called her in, pulled out a map of the city and, pointing to a house and garden with his finger, said to Vera: "This village will suit you." It turned out later that a Belgian had entrusted the office with offering his dacha to needy Russian refugees. The owner of the house did his good deed in memory of the happy years he had spent in Tsarist Russia. Later, Vera became one of Mother Elizabeth's nuns with the name Barbara.

The bodies of the Alapayevsk martyrs were buried in the cathedral in Alapayevsk, on October 18. Then, when the White Army was forced to retreat, Igumen Seraphim of the Seraphim-Alexeyev monastery in Perm escorted the bodies by train, first to Irkutsk (July, 1919) and later to China (February 28, 1920). During the journey St. Elizabeth appeared several times to Fr. Seraphim.

On the arrival of the bodies in Harbin, they were met by Duke Nicholas Alexandrovich Kudashev, who reported that "the bodies were totally decayed – all, except the Great Princess Elizabeth, whose body was totally incorrupt. The coffins were opened and put in the Russian Church. The Great Princess was lying as though she were alive and had not changed at all since the day when I, before my departure for Peking, said good-bye to her in Moscow – only on one side of her face was a large bruise from when she was thrown into the mine."

On April 3, 1920, the bodies of the martyrs were buried in the church of St. Seraphim of Sarov at the cemetery of the Russian mission in Peking. The body of the Martyr Elizabeth was found to be incorrupt. She looked asleep, and the three fingers of her right hand were folded as if she had been trying to make the sign of the cross.

At the request of the Great Princess' relative, the Marquess of Milford Haven, the bodies of the Martyrs Elizabeth and Barbara were taken by an English warship to Jerusalem, where they were laid to rest in January, 1921 in the crypt chapel of the Russian convent of St. Mary Magdalene on the Mount of Olives. In 1888 the Great Princess had expressed the desire to be buried there. Later, however, she said that she would like to be buried in her Martha and Mary convent in Moscow...

On May 2, 1982, the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women, the relics of the holy martyrs were translated from the crypt of the convent of St. Mary Magdalene to the convent church. It was found that each of them had been buried in five coffins, the outer one of oak containing two further zinc caskets, a wooden one, and an inner one of metal. When the inner casket of the Great Princess was opened, the chapel was filled with a sweet fragrance, which was said to be like that of honey and jasmine. Although the chapel was open and well-aired, this fragrance remained. The clothing of the martyrs was found to be damp, although the atmosphere at Gethsemane is very dry. The material was as if some liquid had been poured over it, so moist was it, although hitherto the coffins had been sealed. When a small portion of the relics was placed in a glass-topped receptacle, the glass became moist, and it was found that the sacred relics of both the martyrs exuded a fragrant myrrh. The bodies of both martyrs were found to be in a state of partial incorruption.

In 1981 the hand of St. Elizabeth and the hand of St. Barbara were brought to the glorification of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia in New York – the only relics of New Martyrs taken beyond the borders of Russia.

St. Elizabeth once said: "It is easier for feeble straw to resist a mighty fire than for the nature of sin to resist the power of love. We must cultivate this love in our souls, that we may take our place with all the saints, for they were all-pleasing unto God through their love for their neighbour."

### **3. HOLY HIEROMARTYR VLADIMIR, METROPOLITAN OF KIEV** **(+1918)**

Metropolitan Vladimir, in the world Basil Nikiforovich Bogoyavlensky, was born on January 1, 1848 in the village of Malaya Morshka in the Morshansky uyezd of Tambov province. His father, **Nicephorus**, was a priest who later himself suffered a martyr's death. He finished his studies at Tambov theological seminary.

Unpretentiousness which bordered on timidity, complemented by eagerness and diligence in schoolwork, were the most distinctive characteristics of the child and future metropolitan. In a book dedicated to the memory of the late Metropolitan Anthony Vadkovsky, who was formerly from the same district as Metropolitan Vladimir, there appears the following story about an incident in the latter's childhood. Once Basil Bogoyavlensky's father went with him to the home of Alexander Vasilyevich Vadkovsky, the future Metropolitan Anthony. When he saw A.V. Vadkovsky's older brothers, who were theologians, Basil Bogoyavlensky was so frightened by these important persons that he ran into the barn and hid under a carriage, where they had great difficulty finding him.

Basil continued his education at the Kiev Theological Academy, from where he graduated among the top graduates in his class with the degree of candidate of theology in 1874. Several professors of the Department of Church Practices even suggested that he stay at the Academy to prepare for a professorial post. While he was still a student at the Academy, Basil ventured into the field of literature as a writer and translator. By his efforts G. Hageman's work on logic was translated from German and published in Kiev in 1874.

On leaving the Academy, on June 7, 1874, Basil became a teacher of homiletics, liturgics and pastoral theology at the Tambov theological seminary. A year later, he was appointed to teach Holy Scripture in the seminary. He also taught German at the seminary and gave lessons in geography in the girls' high school in the diocese and later in the local girls' gymnasium.

After seven years of work in education, Basil decided to dedicate himself to serving the Church as a priest. On January 13, 1882 he was ordained a priest for the Pokrov cathedral in Kozlov, Tambov diocese, and soon thereafter became a parish priest in that city. In 1883 he became rector of the Trinity church in Kozlov and the dean of the churches of Kozlov. He spent much time in preaching and in instructing the local clergy.

On February 8, 1886, after the deaths of his wife and only child, Fr. Basil was tonsured into the mantia with the name Vladimir, and the next day was raised to the rank of archimandrite, being appointed superior of the Holy Trinity monastery in Kozlov.

On October 6, 1886, he was transferred to Novgorod and appointed superior of the St. Anthony monastery in Novgorod.

On June 3, 1888, Archimandrite Vladimir was consecrated Bishop of Stara Russa, a vicariate of the Novgorod diocese in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra.

Both in Kozlov and in Novgorod Bishop Vladimir, in addition to carrying out his duties as vicar bishop under Metropolitan Isidore of St. Petersburg and Novgorod, laboured much over the preaching of the word of God and thus brought great benefits to the people. He frequently and zealously instructed the people, for he gave this priority. His sermons attracted his listeners' attention by their unusual simplicity, sincerity and candour. At this time he also began trying to organize all the preaching in Novgorod and in his diocese by gathering together all of the parish clergy. He was particularly interested in instituting informal dialogues between priests and lay people in addition to the sermons delivered during services. This practice was initiated, and Bishop Vladimir attached very great significance to it. He was always fondly remembered in Novgorod, and he similarly cherished pleasant memories of his service in Novgorod to the end of his days.

On January 19, 1891, Bishop Vladimir was appointed Bishop of Samara and Stavropol. His rather brief term of service in Samara (less than two years) constitutes a special chapter in the life of the martyr-metropolitan. It coincided with a famine in Samara, which was followed by a cholera epidemic. During these terrible calamities that befell the Samara region, Bishop Vladimir put exceptional energy into developing various means of helping the people. Through the work of a special committee which he established, he organized widespread assistance for the hungry, cooperated with the parish relief organization, and recommended that arrangements be made for partially and fully subsidized dining halls and tea rooms to feed the hungry. In all of this he not only acted as an organizer and leader of the clergy, but was also actively involved in the work. In his sermons and printed appeals he prompted the clergy and the local populace to assist their unfortunate brothers who were suffering from the famine. In his sermons and various publications, he tried to communicate to the people a healthy, proper attitude toward the epidemic and suggested effective ways of fighting against it. He organized and served at gatherings for the purpose of praying for deliverance from this terrible misfortune. He also conducted funeral services at the cemeteries for those who had died during the epidemic, and fearlessly appeared among the worshippers in places where the threat of cholera was greatest. His personal example inspired other priests to forget their own troubles and alleviate the sufferings of others.

These actions evoked sympathy for the young hierarch among the people. Thus, when on October 18, 1892 Bishop Vladimir was appointed Exarch of Georgia and elevated to the rank of Archbishop of Kartelia and Kakhetia, the people of Samara unanimously expressed their regret that Bishop Vladimir would have to leave Samara. His very appointment to such a responsible post in the Church administration reflected favourably on his work in Samara, where he had distinguished himself among the bishops of Russia.

Archbishop Vladimir served as Exarch of Georgia for a little more than five years. There he devoted special attention to the spiritual enlightenment of the ethnically heterogeneous Orthodox peoples of the Caucasus. In order to accomplish his goals, he supported increased dissemination of Christian teachings, in addition to building new churches and parish schools. Meanwhile, he persistently encouraged the clergy of the Georgian exarchate not only by his words but also by his example.

In 1897 he was appointed honorary member of the Kazan Theological Academy.

On February 21, 1898 Archbishop Vladimir was appointed Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, and on March 28 of the same year took over the administration of the Moscow diocese. The new metropolitan was immediately faced with great difficulties. Moscow was accustomed to having in this post archpastors who had great authority, as a result either of their scholarship (such as Metropolitans Plato Levshin, Philaret Drozdov and Macarius Bulgakov), or of their record of service in an academy (such as Metropolitans Joannichius Rudnev and Sergius Lyapidevsky), or who were famous for having performed some exceptional service (like, for example, Innocent Veniaminov, the apostle of Alaska). The new metropolitan did not enjoy such fame among the Orthodox, despite his meritorious service in Samara and Georgia. He was also comparatively young when he was appointed metropolitan, for he had just turned fifty.

In his leadership of the clergy in the capital, Metropolitan Vladimir maintained his usual principles. He was simple in his manner of address, yet firm and insistent when giving orders and instructions. He wanted very much to bring the clergy of the capital close to the people and for them to conduct services and deliver sermons as frequently as they could. In order to invigorate and strengthen the Muscovite clergy, Metropolitan Vladimir began making new posts in the capital's parishes and appointing new priests. At first this, in conjunction with certain of the metropolitan's personal traits, served to upset the Muscovite clergy and even the lay population of the capital. With time, however, the Muscovite flock came to understand how kind the metropolitan was, and how full of the best of intentions for the people. Moscow gradually accepted his personality and methods.

On February 4, 1905 **Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich Romanov** was murdered by revolutionaries. Metropolitan Vladimir led the ceremony of the laying of the foundation of the memorial church of Russian Sorrow, which was dedicated to the memory of the Great Prince. And on April 5, 1909, he consecrated the church in the presence of Great Princess Elizabeth, the widow of the Great Prince, and a great multitude of people. On the side walls of the memorial church were white marble slabs containing the names of 1845 people, "all those killed by the revolutionaries". Metropolitan Vladimir was soon to become one of those killed himself...

In the autumn of 1905, when revolution broke out and Moscow was seized by strikes and anarchy, Metropolitan Vladimir powerfully raised his archpastoral voice, rebuking the rebels and exposing the essence of the revolution. Thus on

October 16, after the liturgy in the Kremlin Dormition cathedral, he said: "The heart bleeds when you see what is happening around us... It is no longer the Poles, or external enemies, but our own Russian people, who, having lost the fear of God, have trusted the rebels and are holding our first capital as it were in a siege. Even without this we have been having a hard time because of our sins: first harvest failures [in 1891, 1897, 1898 and 1901], then illnesses, then an unsuccessful war [the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05], and now something unheard of is taking place in Rus': it is as if God has deprived Russian people of their minds. By order of underground revolutionaries, strikes have begun everywhere, in the factories, in the schools, on the railways... Oh if only our unfortunate workers knew who is ruling them, who is sending them troublemaker-agitators, then they would have turned from them in horror as from poisonous snakes! You know these are the so-called social-democrats, these are the revolutionaries, who have long ago renounced God in their works. They have renounced Him, and yet it may be that they have never known the Christian faith. They denounce her servants, her rites, they mock her holy things. Their main nest is abroad: they are dreaming of subduing the whole world to themselves; in their secret protocols they call us, the Christians, animals, to whom God, they say, have given a human face only in order that it should not be repulsive to them, His chosen ones, to use our services... With satanic cunning they catch light-minded people in their nets, promising them paradise on earth, but they carefully hide from them their secret aims, their criminal dreams. Having deceived the unfortunate, they drag him to the most terrible crimes, as if for the sake of the common good, and, in fact they make him into an obedient slave. They try in every way to cast out of his soul, or at any rate to distort, the teaching of Christ. Thus the commandments of Christ say: do not steal, do not covet what belongs to another, but they say: everything is common, take from the rich man everything you like. The commandments of Christ say: share your last morsel, your last kopeck with your neighbour, but they teach: take from others everything that you need. The commandments of Christ say: give to Caesar what is Caesar's, fear God, venerate the Tsar, but they say: we don't need any Tsar, the Tsar is a tyrant... The commandments of God say: in patience possess your souls, but they say: in struggle acquire your rights. The commandment of Christ orders us to lay down our souls for our friends, but they teach to destroy people who are completely innocent, to kill them only for the fact they do not agree with them, and do not embark on robbery, but just want to work honourably and are ready to stand for the law, for the Tsar, for the Church of God..."

Monk Anempodist writes: "The sermon of Metropolitan Vladimir elicited the annoyance of the liberal-democratic press, and also of the liberal clergy. The latter either read the sermon in a shortened version, or did not read it at all. In the leftist newspaper Russkoe Slovo 76 priests published a declaration regarding their 'complete non-solidarity' with 'the "Word" of Metropolitan Vladimir...'

"As a result of the actions of the priests quarrels also arose amidst their flock. The Synod, in response to this, unfortunately saw in the epistle of Metropolitan Vladimir, not a call to defend the Faith and the Fatherland, but 'a call to the local population to defend themselves in the sphere of political convictions', and in their 'Resolution of October 22, 1905 № 150' instructed the diocesan bishops and the clergy

subject to them to make efforts 'to remove quarrels in the population', which, to a large extent, were continuing because of the opposition of the liberal priests to their metropolitan.

"But nothing could devalue or undermine the influence of the epistle of Metropolitan Vladimir on the Muscovites, and the true Russian people responded to it. The day after the publication of the 'Word', the workers began to serve molebens and return to work; the city water-supply began to work, the trams began to run, etc. Metropolitan Vladimir himself went to the factories and, after prayer, conducted archpastoral discussions with the workers.

"Later, in evaluating the labours of the holy hierarch Vladimir in overcoming the disturbances of 1905, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) said the following notable words about him: 'Meek and humble, never seeking anything for himself, honourable and a lover of righteousness, Vladyka Vladimir gradually and quietly ascended the hierarchical ladder and was immediately exalted by his authority, drawing the hearts of ecclesiastical and patriotic Russia to himself during the days of general instability and treachery, when there were few who remained faithful to their duty and their oath, firm in the defence of the Orthodox Church, the Tsar-Autocrat and the Homeland... when everything began to shake in our Rus', and many pillars began to waver...' (speech of Archbishop Anthony of Zhitomir and Volynia at the triumphal dinner given by Metropolitan Vladimir in honour of Patriarch Gregory of Antioch who was visiting Russia, 22 February, 1913).

"By 'pillars' Vladyka Anthony probably had in mind the liberal members of the Most Holy Synod, who did not support their brother, Metropolitan Vladimir.

"Metropolitan Vladimir went on to take part in the movement of the right conservative forces of Russia that was being formed. Thus in 1907 he took part in the work of the All-Russian congress of 'the United Russian People'. In 1909, while taking part in the work of the First Monarchist congress of Russian People, Metropolitan Vladimir was counted worthy of the honour of passing on a greeting to the congress from his Majesty the Emperor Nicholas II in the following telegram:

"'To his Eminence Vladimir, Metropolitan of Moscow. I entrust to you, Vladyko, to pass on to all those assembled in the first capital at the congress of Russian people and members of the Moscow Patriotic Union My gratitude for their loyal feelings. I know their readiness faithfully and honourably to serve Me and the homeland, in strict observance of lawfulness and order. St. Petersburg. 30 September. Nicholas.'"

Vladyka continued to support patriotic organizations and the Union of the Russian People, for which he was highly praised by the president of the Union, V.M. Purishkevich.

Vladyka's strong monarchist convictions were apparent already at his ordination, when he said: "A priest who is not a monarchist is unworthy to stand at the Holy Altar. A priest who is republican is always of little faith. A monarch is



consecrated to his power by God, a president receives power from the pride of the people; a monarch is powerful through his carrying out of the commandments of God, a president holds on to power by pleasing the mob; a monarch leads his faithful subjects to God, a president leads them away from God.”

Vladyka spent the last few years of his service in Moscow in such relative calm that he subsequently remembered them with satisfaction as the best years of his archpastoral service. During this time, Metropolitan Vladimir signed the decrees of the Holy Synod on the uncovering of the relics of Saints Seraphim of Sarov, Pitirim of Tambov and Joasaph of Belgorod. Being the spiritual father of the future martyr, the Great-Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna, he helped her to found the Martha-Mary convent in Moscow. In 1912 he founded the journal The Voice of the Church.

Metropolitan Vladimir was particularly interested in strengthening the Church's role in education. For example, he was inspired with a desire to communicate genuine Christian morals and teachings to the workers, who were being led astray by socialist propaganda. From time to time he even attended Moscow workers' meetings and presented the Christian teachings, explanations and solutions to the social questions which most interested and troubled the working class. In order to promote among the workers and people in general a Christian understanding of the social aspect of government, the metropolitan published his own sermons and speeches, and also translated the best works of foreign literature which dealt with socialism.

The metropolitan establish the so-called "Diocese House", which subsequently acquired his name. This building became the centre not only of the diocesan administration, but also of spiritual enlightenment. Sermons were always given at the daily services in its church, and lectures on theology were read in the main hall, as well as special lectures for factory workers and speeches on theological science and religious philosophy.

As time passed and the presiding member of the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Anthony of St. Petersburg, became chronically ill, Metropolitan Vladimir had to devote much energy and attention to the highest administration of the Russian Church. And when, on November 2, 1912, Metropolitan Anthony reposed in the Lord, Metropolitan Vladimir was transferred to St. Petersburg and assumed the title and rights of the presiding member of the Holy Synod. This took place on November 23, 1912, and shortly thereafter Metropolitan Vladimir took over the administration of the capital's diocese.

His three years' service as Metropolitan of Petrograd undoubtedly constituted a most difficult period in his service to the Church. Serving as the capital's hierarch was in itself exceedingly difficult, but for Metropolitan Vladimir it was complicated by the particular problems caused by the unusual events of the time. Above all, he endured repeated and cruel attacks, both at open meetings and in the press. To some it seemed that he paid too much attention to the political aspects of his high rank, but according to others he was not sufficiently bold and decisive in

his censure of the irregularities and abuses which took place in the Russian Church and society at that time.

Once, in a private audience with Tsar Nicholas II, he expressed his opinion on the disastrous influence exerted by Rasputin. For his open non-acceptance of Rasputin he was punished by being transferred to Kiev, where he was appointed to replace Metropolitan Flavian (Gorodetsky), who reposed on November 4, 1915. Metropolitan Vladimir was appointed to serve in Kiev on November 23, 1915, but he retained the title and rights of the presiding member of the Holy Synod. On December 22, he arrived in Kiev and officially took over the administration of the diocese. He thus became the first hierarch in the history of the Russian Church to occupy all three of the leading sees of Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev - he was truly the metropolitan "of all Russia".

At first the Kievan flock genuinely sympathized with its new hierarch. He was esteemed as a victim of persecution. But they did not see the heaviness of spirit and exhaustion that was reflected in the metropolitan's speech, work and gestures...

After Theophany, 1916, Metropolitan Vladimir hurried to Petrograd to take part in a meeting of the Holy Synod. He ended up spending most of his service as Metropolitan of Kiev in Petrograd, and he was there at the time of the revolution of February, 1917.

The fall of the Tsar elicited surprisingly little reaction in view of the enormous, indeed apocalyptic significance of the event. This was owing, not so much to the fact that many members of the Church welcomed the revolution (although this was true), as to the fact that a revolution was taking place within the Church herself, and this drew the attention of the leaders of the Church away from political events.

The revolution consisted in the fact that all over the country the elective principle with the participation of laymen was taking the place of the system of "episcopal autocracy" which had prevailed thereto. In almost all dioceses Diocesan Congresses restricted the power of the bishops with special "diocesan councils" or committees composed of clergy and laity elected by the Congresses. The application of the elective principle to almost all ecclesiastical posts, from parish offices to episcopal sees, resulted in the removal of several bishops from their sees and the election of new ones in their stead. Thus the staunchly monarchist Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov was forced to retire before by the revolutionaries being reinstated at the demand of the church people. And among other changes Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin) of Lithuania was elected metropolitan of Moscow, Archbishop Benjamin (Kazansky) - metropolitan of Petrograd and Archbishop Sergius (Stragorodsky) - metropolitan of Vladimir.

These changes were in fact sometimes beneficial to the Church. Thus Rasputin's nominees, such as Metropolitan Pitirim of Petrograd, were removed. Nevertheless, the winter session of the Holy Synod, presided over by the Metropolitan Vladimir refused to sanction the results of the elections, because the hierarchs recognized, correctly, that whatever the immediate good results, the spirit behind these

changes was the spirit of the revolution. This led the new procurator of the Holy Synod appointed by the Provisional Government, Prince V.N. Lvov, to petition for the early disbanding of the Synod and the appointment of a new Synod for the summer session. Only two members of the old Synod - Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Vladimir and the Exarch of Georgia, Metropolitan Platon - agreed to serve in the new Synod; and ten years later Sergius became the main architect of the Sovietization of the Russian Church, while Platon became the architect of the schism of the American Metropolia...

On March 24, 1917 Metropolitan Vladimir returned to Kiev, where his prolonged absence had created problems among his flock. However, when the Local Council of the Russian Church opened its proceedings in Moscow in August, 1917, Metropolitan Vladimir, being Honorary President of the Council and President of the section on ecclesiastical discipline, was obliged to move to Moscow. On November 21 / December 4, 1917, he led the triumphant rite of the enthronement of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon in the Assumption Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin.

Then, with a heavy heart full of forebodings about the future, he returned again to his flock in Kiev. Already in March, on his first return to Kiev after the February revolution, he had had to hold back the waves of incipient revolution there. For an "Executive Committee of clergy and laymen" was organized in Kiev at this time, and a "Commissar for ecclesiastical affairs" was appointed. The longsuffering Orthodox city of Kiev, which had witnessed in the many centuries of its history all manner of hideous events and changes, was shocked at the spectacle of an Orthodox parish priest in the role of a revolutionary commissar, "a policeman in a riassa" as he was called. According to the brochure A True Account of the Church Advisory Council to the Metropolitan of Kiev (Kiev, 1917), he is described as "at all times of the day and even sometimes at night, always with his briefcase in his hand or under his arm, racing about in an automobile with representatives of the executive committee, either to oversee the searching of monasteries in order to discover counter-revolutionary or pogromist literature, or seizing confidential documents at the Church Consistory..." (p. 30).

In a dialogue with representatives of the executive committee, Metropolitan Vladimir stated candidly that "the Executive Committee of clergy and laymen is an illegitimate institution which is trying gradually to expand its power and to usurp prerogatives which do not belong to it."

However, in spite of this his opinion of the new organ of the Kievan Church which had been formed as a result of the revolution, Metropolitan Vladimir did not refuse in principle to work with its members to lead the Church in a new direction. He gave his blessing for "the Executive Committee of clergy and laymen" to convene, in Kiev on April 12, 1917, a "Congress of the clergy and laymen of the Kievan diocese", which was for reasons that remain unclear transformed into "the Ukrainian congress of the clergy and laymen of the Kievan diocese".

Metropolitan Vladimir had a negative opinion of this congress. During it

bishops were publicly insulted in a manner unheard of in the Orthodox Christian world; clerics in attendance branded them as "parasites". Metropolitan Vladimir likewise had a negative opinion of the resolutions which this congress passed, among which was the declaration that "the autonomous Ukraine must have a Ukrainian church which is independent of the Synod." He also opposed the formation by this congress of a so-called advisory committee to the Metropolitan of Kiev.

This is how the members of this committee characterized the metropolitan's attitude towards them in their account of a meeting which took place on July 1, 1917: "At this meeting, in the presence of three vicar bishops, the metropolitan expressed what can only be called a hostile attitude toward the Church Committee in such clear and candid terms that all of its members wished to leave the metropolitan's inhospitable chambers. One of the committee members (Archpriest E.A. Kapralov) suggested that they do so and that it be recorded in the minutes that the metropolitan's attitude precluded any possibility of cooperative and fruitful labour."

The metropolitan's feelings were best expressed in an "archpastoral address" which he published in early August, 1917, on the eve of the convocation of an extraordinary congress of the Kievan diocese: "The great misfortune of our times is that people consider it to be a virtue to have a liberal attitude toward matters of faith and morality. Many consider it their duty to implant such a liberal attitude toward faith and morality in the souls of the Russian people... To justify themselves, they present arguments that seem to merit our attention. They say: every man can judge religious matters from his own point of view and freely express his convictions, whatever they may be, according to his conscience, and he must respect the religious convictions of others. No one will object to freedom of religion and of the conscience. One must not, however, forget that Christian faith is not a human invention, but rather the word of God, and it cannot be changed to suit people's concepts. If people's convictions stand in opposition to the Divine truth, is it reasonable to recognize these convictions, to consider them correct and to guide one's life by them? We must, of course, be tolerant of those who do not agree with us, and bear with even those who have clearly gone astray, but we must turn away from their errors, and prove that they are unfounded. The pastors of the Christian Church and all sincere followers of Christ's teachings should consider this their duty...

"Our local and rapidly growing sorrows add to the misfortune experienced by the whole of the Russian land. I am speaking about a tendency which has surfaced in southern Russia and which threatens to destroy the peace and unity of the Church. It is terrible for us even to hear people talk about separating the churches of southern Russia from the one Orthodox Church of Russia. After their long cooperation, can there be any grounds for such aims? What is their origin? Did not the preachers who spread Orthodoxy throughout Russia come from Kiev? Among the God-pleasing brethren of the Kiev-Caves Lavra do we not see men who came from all corners of Holy Russia? Is it not true that the Orthodox of southern Russia have laboured in all parts of Russia, serving the Church and as scholars in various

fields? And conversely, is it not true that the Orthodox of northern Russia have laboured for salvation in various professions in southern Russia? Did they not erect the one great Russian Orthodox Church together? Could the Orthodox of southern Russia possibly reproach the Orthodox of northern Russia for falling away from the faith in some way or for distorting the teachings of faith and morality? Certainly not. Based on my personal experience I can testify that in all the dioceses where God has allowed me to serve, the Orthodox teachings of faith and morality are kept pure and unchanged, and there is everywhere unity in the Church's teachings and liturgical practices. Why should there be any separation? Where will it lead? Indeed, only the enemies both without and within will have cause to rejoice. Our love for our native soil should not suppress and stifle our love for the whole of Russia and for the one Russian Orthodox Church."

The metropolitan concluded by appealing to the clergy and laymen to "take every possible measure to promote unity among themselves and with the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church," and to "devote serious thought and proper preparation to the upcoming congress, thoroughly to discuss the issues presented there, and pass resolutions which are correct, legal, beneficial and which merit implementation."

However, the congress, which took place on August 8 and 9, 1917, took an entirely different direction. On August 9, the metropolitan was so offended by the proceedings of the congress that he fell seriously ill and had to leave the meeting immediately. In a defiant public statement, the delegates interpreted the metropolitan's departure as escapism and an expression of his lack of respect for the meeting.

In October, 1917, the Provisional Government fell. The Ukrainian government wished to use the change to turn their autonomous status into one of full independence. And the same tendencies were strongly present in the Church.

A special committee in charge of convening a Council of the Orthodox clergy and lay people of the Ukraine was organized in Kiev in mid-November of 1917 according to a resolution passed at the third Cossack military assembly. Archbishop Alexis Dorodnitsyn (formerly of Vladimir), who was in retirement in the Kiev Caves Lavra, stood at the head of this committee. This committee was joined by representatives from among the clergy of Kiev (Fathers Lipkovsky, Tarnavsky, Filipenko and others), who played active roles in the above-mentioned organizations, such as the Executive Committee, Church Advisory Council to the Metropolitan of Kiev, etc.

At a meeting on November 23, this committee "discussed the present position of the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine now that the Ukrainian government is being separated from the government of Russia, and took into account the pronouncement of the Russian Patriarch, who might extend his authority to include the Ukrainian Church as well". They passed a whole series of resolutions, which amounted to sweeping changes in the status and administration of the Church in the Ukraine. The organizational committee was renamed "the

provisional Ukrainian Orthodox Church Council", and an executive committee established to convene a provisional Ukrainian Orthodox Church Council was proclaimed "the provisional government of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church". It was also decided that this new ecclesiastical government should appoint commissars to all the dioceses of the Ukraine. The priest Fr. Pashchevsky was appointed commissar of the Kievan diocese. And the chairman of the Council, Archbishop Alexis, was forbidden to go to Moscow, where he had been summoned to become the abbot of a monastery by Patriarch Tikhon.

On November 24, a general meeting of the Orthodox parish councils of Kiev was convened at which these moves towards Ukrainian ecclesiastical autocephaly were condemned and the fear was expressed that an autocephalous Church might join the uniates and come under the Pope.

A few days later the metropolitan arrived in Kiev. On December 4 a meeting convened by the Union of Orthodox Parish Councils was held under the presidency of the metropolitan and attended by Metropolitan Platon of Georgia. In the days that followed several attempts were made by the autocephalists to remove Metropolitan Vladimir and his vicar bishops from Kiev. At one point, sharply reversing course, a member of the Church Rada called Fomenko, accompanied by a soldier, offered him the post of Patriarch of the Ukrainian Church, while at the same time demanding one hundred thousand rubles from the coffers of the metropolia. It was only with difficulty that the unwanted night visitors were removed.

At the end of the month another delegation came to the metropolitan and demanded that he leave Kiev. He replied with emotion: "I am not afraid of anyone or anything. I am at all times prepared to give my life for Christ's Church and for the Orthodox faith, to prevent its enemies from mocking it. I will suffer to the very end in order to preserve Orthodoxy in the very place where it first took root in Russia."

And then, going up to one member of the delegation and pointing at his heart, he said: "Do you know that the first revolutionary was the devil, and you are making a revolution in the Church of Christ?"

Then he wept bitterly.

The metropolitan considered the convening of an All-Ukrainian Council untimely in view of the Bolshevik seizure of power. Nevertheless, he was forced to prepare for the opening of a new Council, and opened its first session on January 7, 1918 with a moleben on Sophia square and a welcoming speech to the delegates. The metropolitan was unanimously elected to the chairmanship of the Council, and attended every single meeting until the civil war broke out in Kiev.

Artillery shells began to fall on the Kiev Caves Lavra on January 15 and continued for several days. However, the metropolitan continued with his religious duties, displaying great calm. On January 23, he celebrated his last Divine

Liturgy with the brotherhood of the Lavra. That evening, after occupying Kiev, the Bolsheviks took control of the Lavra, and violence began. Armed people burst into the churches with hats on their heads and cigarettes between their teeth. With shouting and swearing they conducted searches even during Divine services, and mocked the holy things. They stripped old monks and took off their shoes outside. Then they mocked them and cut them with whips. Officers who were found in the Lavra were killed. In spite of all the commotion, the metropolitan served an akathist to the Dormition of the Mother of God in the great church of the Lavra, which proved to be his last service on earth. Then he and Bishop Theodore of Priluki moved to the altar of the lower church, which was dedicated to St. Michael, first metropolitan of Kiev.

The night of January 25 was full of alarm. Four armed men and a woman, dressed as a Red Cross nurse, broke into the quarters of the superior, made a thorough search and took everything of value. In the middle of the night, three of them went out "for reconnaissance" and robbed the treasurer and the provost. Later, three armed Reds searched the metropolitan's rooms and, not finding any valuables, carried away a golden medal from the safe.

At half past six in the evening, the doorbell rang loudly three times. Five men, dressed in soldiers' uniforms and led by a sailor, entered the house and asked for "Vladimir, the Metropolitan". They were directed downstairs to the cell of the archpastor. The metropolitan came out to meet them, and asked:

"What do you want?"

The three murderers led Vladyka into the room, where they remained with him for some time. When he came out, he passed by Bishop Theodore and Archimandrite Ambrose, who were standing near, and said:

"They already want to shoot me, that's what they've done to me."

The sailor who was following him shouted coarsely:

"Go ahead and don't talk, who's going to kill you! You're going to the commandant."

When he had ascended to the first landing of the staircase leading to the first floor, the metropolitan stopped and, turning to his murderers who were accompanying him, said:

"Well, gentlemen, if you want to shoot me, shoot me here, on this spot - I won't go any further."

To this the sailor coarsely remarked:

"Who's going to shoot you? Go on."

The murderers led the metropolitan to his bedroom, where they remained for twenty minutes behind locked doors. There Metropolitan Vladimir was tortured and choked with the chain of his cross, insulted and ordered to give them money. Later, the attendants found on the floor of the room pieces of a broken chain, a silk cord, a tiny case with holy relics and a small icon which the metropolitan always wore around his neck.

When the metropolitan came out twenty minutes later, surrounded by his torturers, he was wearing his cassock, a panagia and a white klobuk on his head.

On the front steps he was approached by his old cell-attendant, Philip, who asked for a blessing. The sailor pushed him aside, shouting:

"Stop showing respect to these bloodsuckers. Enough of that!"

The metropolitan went up to Philip, blessed and kissed him, and, shaking his hand, said:

"Goodbye, Philip."

Then he wiped away his tears. Philip later reported that when they parted the metropolitan was calm and solemn, as if leaving for church to celebrate the Holy Liturgy.

This old, humble and innocent servant of God went to his death without any sign of weakness or fear. As he was led out of the monastery he crossed himself and softly chanted: "Noble Joseph" ...

An eyewitness relates that Metropolitan Vladimir was driven from the gates of the monastery to the place of execution. On his way from the car to a small clearing by the fortified wall, he asked:

"Is it here that you want to shoot me?"

One of the murderers answered:

"Why not? Do you expect us to stand on ceremony with you?"

When the metropolitan asked for permission to pray before he was shot, the reply was:

"Be quick about it!"

Lifting his arms to heaven, Metropolitan Vladimir prayed aloud:

"O Lord, forgive my sins, voluntary and involuntary, and accept my spirit in peace."



Then he blessed the murderers with both hands and said:

"My God bless and forgive you."

In the silent night four shots were heard, then two more, then more...

"They are shooting the metropolitan," said one of the monks at the Lavra.

"There are too many shots for one murder," replied another.

At the sound of the shots, some fifteen sailors with revolvers and lanterns ran into the yard of the monastery. One of them asked:

"Did they take the metropolitan away?"

"They led him out of the gates," replied the monks timidly.

The sailors ran out, and in about twenty minutes returned.

"Yes, we have found him," they said, "and we'll take every one of you out in the same way."

The murdered man was found lying on his back covered with a coat; his panagia, klobuk, stockings, boots and golden watch and chain were not to be found. He had been both shot and bayoneted, to make it look as if he had been killed by some mob. The fingers of his hand were formed as for a blessing.

There is another account of the metropolitan's death. Archimandrite Nicanor Troitsky recalls that when he was a boy his mother hurried with him to the Lavra, where a ring of soldiers were holding a crowd back from the scene of the execution. He recalls that the metropolitan was given a series of questions, and each time he gave an (unsatisfactory) answer a bayonet was thrust into his body until he became a fountain of blood. After the execution the crowd burst through the cordon of soldiers. Then Fr. Nicanor's mother told him to put his fingers into the blood of the martyred metropolitan, make the sign of the cross with them on his forehead, and remember that he had witnessed the death of a true martyr, to whose confession he must remain faithful for the rest of his life...

The silence was not broken again that night. The monastery slept, and no one seemed to realize that only a thousand feet from the northern gates of the Lavra, in a pool of blood, lay the shattered body of the holy metropolitan.

At sunrise, some women pilgrims appeared at the Lavra gates, and the monks learned from them where the mutilated body of the metropolitan was to be found. The brotherhood decided to bring the body into the monastery, for which permission from the communist authorities was obtained. At nine o'clock, Archimandrite Anthimus, accompanied by four medical orderlies, went to the scene of the murder.

The metropolitan was lying on his back covered with an overcoat. Missing were his panagia, his klobuk and cross, galoshes, boots, socks, gold watch and chain. The autopsy showed that he had been shot with exploding bullets and stabbed in several places with cold, sharp weapons. His hands were frozen in the position of blessing.

After serving a litiya at the spot where the metropolitan had died, they laid the body on the stretcher and, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, they brought it into the church of St. Michael, where the murdered metropolitan had spent the last few hours of his life. As Archimandrite Anthimus was lifting the body, he was surrounded by about ten armed men who started to mock and insult the remains.

"You want to bury him! But he deserves to be thrown into the ditch! You intend to make holy relics of him, that's why you are picking him up!" they shouted.

As the mournful procession was making its way to the Lavra, pious women who were passing by wept and prayed, saying:

"The sufferer and holy martyr, may God's Kingdom be his!"

"A heavenly kingdom! His place is in hell, at the very bottom of it," replied the fanatics.

After the metropolitan's body had been photographed and dressed in the proper vestments, the deputy abbot of the Lavra, Archimandrite Clement, and the senior brethren of the monastery served a panikhida. On January 27 / February 9, Metropolitan Platon of Tbilisi, who was representing the Russian Patriarchate at the Ukrainian Council, served a panikhida for the metropolitan in Kiev. On January 29 / February 11, the body was transferred to the Great Church of the Kiev Caves Lavra, and after the burial service it was buried in the church of the Elevation of the Cross in the Near Caves.

On February 15/28, 1918, a session of the Russian Church Council meeting in Moscow was dedicated to the memory of the murdered metropolitan. A commission headed by Archbishop Cyril of Tambov was sent to Kiev to investigate the murder, but was not allowed into the city by the Bolsheviks. However, there can be no doubt that the murder was planned by the higher Bolshevik command. As in the cases of several later martyrdoms, it is probable that it was first demanded of the hierarch that he join the side of the revolution, and then, when he refused, he was executed.

Metropolitan Vladimir was the hierarch who bore the brunt of the first revolutionary assault on the Russian Church in 1905. It was therefore fitting that he should become her first hierarchical new martyr. And on April 5/18 the Russian Council decreed that the Sunday nearest the date of his martyrdom, January 25 / February 7, should become the date of the annual commemoration of all the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia.



#### **4. HOLY HIEROMARTYR NIKON, ARCHBISHOP OF VOLOGDA** **(+1918)**

Archbishop Nikon, in the world Nicholas Rozhdestvensky, was born on April 4, 1851, in the family of a poor junior deacon of the village of Chashnikov, Verei uyezd, Moscow region. Having successfully completed his studies at the Zaikonospasskoye spiritual school, he entered the Moscow theological seminary, from which he graduated as the best student in 1874. They tried to persuade him to enter the academy; but he refused, saying that he was ill: the academy led to the episcopate, while his soul was inclined towards monasticism.

In 1877 he was received into the ranks of the novices of the Holy Trinity - St. Sergius Lavra, and in 1880 was tonsured into monasticism. His spiritual instructor was the rector of the Lavra, Archimandrite Leonid (Kavelin). In 1885 Fr. Nikon's book, The Life and Struggles of St. Sergius, Abbot of Radonezh, was published; it became very well-known. On the 500th anniversary of the death of St. Sergius, Fr. Nikon was raised to the rank of archimandrite. Fr. Nikon was especially noted for his literary and publishing activity. In 1879 with the blessing of Metropolitan Innocent (who was glorified in 1994), he undertook the publication of the Trinity Leaflets, which were widely spread among the population. In a period of 25 years, 114.5 million of these leaflets and booklets from the Trinity bookshop were published.

In March, 1904, Archimandrite Nikon was consecrated Bishop of Murom, and soon he was appointed Bishop of Serpukhov, a vicariate of the Moscow diocese, and rector of the Moscow Danilov monastery. By this time his fearless sermons had acquired particular force. Like St. John of Kronstadt in Petersburg, Vladyka Nikon played an exceptionally important role in dispersing the disturbances in Moscow in 1905. Thus on October 16, 1905 he delivered a speech against the strikes of the workers, which were aiming to paralyse the life of the capital and thereby overthrow the Autocracy. Vladyka's sermon was read out in the all the churches of the capital, and on the next day the workers began to ask for the serving of prayer services and return to work...

In 1909 his articles, which later were brought together under the general title My Diaries, were published.

In 1913, Vladyka Nikon was sent by the Holy Synod to Mount Athos to try and persuade the heretical "name-worshipping" Russian monks to repent and accept the teaching of the Church. In spite of violence directed at him by the monks, and a vicious campaign of slander against him in the Russian press, he succeeded in convincing a number of monks of the error of their ways.

In the same year Vladyka was raised to the rank of archbishop and placed by the Tsar at the head of the Publishing Council attached to the Most Holy Synod. Vladyka felt the coming catastrophe more and more strongly, and his threatening prophetic words sounded throughout Russia:

"Prepare yourselves to confess the Faith, prepare yourselves for martyrdom! God's thunder is all around us!"

He took part in the All-Russian Local Council in 1917-18.

Archbishop Nikon was buried in the Holy Trinity - St. Sergius monastery. According to the official version he reposed peacefully in December, 1918. But according to an oral tradition preserved by the brotherhood of the Lavra, he was killed towards the beginning of 1918 as he was coming out of church. A Jew came up to him and stabbed him in the stomach. He died on the spot.

## **5. HOLY HIEROMARTYR JOHN VOSTORGOV OF MOSCOW (+1918)** **and those with him**

Archpriest John Ivanovich Vostorgov was born on January 20, 1864, to the family of Fr. John Vostorgov, the priest of the church of the Archangel Michael in the village of Kiprilskoye in the diocese of Stavropol. He lost his father at an early age, but remembered him with great affection as an exceptionally mild and good man. His widowed mother was persuaded by the parishioners to stay in the parish as a baker of prosphoras, and they helped her to raise her three children. Both her sons graduated from seminary.

In 1887, on completing his studies at the Stavropol seminary, John Ivanovich was anxious to continue his education, but life made its own demands on him. His aged mother urged him to accept ordination to the priesthood and appointment to a parish as quickly as possible, so as to be able to support her and his younger brother and sister. But in this he encountered an obstacle - the bishop hesitated to bestow the priestly rank on such a young man, and offered him instead the post of reader until such time as he came to "fully mature manhood". But the salary of a reader was not sufficient for the Vostorgov family, and on August 15, 1887 he was appointed supervisor of the Stavropol theological school, becoming instructor of Russian and Church Slavonic in the lower classes on September 30, 1887. He worked zealously and successfully in this post, as attested by Bishop Vladimir (Petrov). To this period also belongs Fr. John's first written work, "The Schismatic Austrian Hierarchy from the point of view of the Church Canons".

Meanwhile, his sister managed to obtain a public scholarship at the institute at which she was studying, and his brother took the position of reader in their native village and moved in with his mother. This accorded John the possibility of realizing his cherished dream, and he prepared himself for the examination which would qualify him to teach Russian on the district level. But he was not destined to teach. His younger brother, the reader, died unexpectedly, and his mother was forced to insist that he leave his teaching position and appeal for ordination. The parishioners of the village of Kiprilskoye petitioned that he be assigned to his father's old parish, and so he was ordained to the diaconate on August 1, 1889, and to the priesthood on August 6.

Fr. John was very successful in this, his first pastoral appointment. People became more God-fearing, more people came to the church, and there were fewer drunkards and hardened sinners in the parish. Also, about one hundred Old Ritualist schismatics were joined to the True Church. Fr. John opened a church-parish school, and on November 6, 1889 the diocesan school council appointed him teacher of the Law of God and teacher in this school. He also founded a temperance society.

But the young priest did not long remain in the village. On May 12, 1890 the diocesan school council appointed him overseer of all the church-parish schools in the twelfth deanery of the Kuban province. Also, he was appointed teacher of the Law of God at Stavropol men's gymnasium on September 15, 1890. So successful was he in

this post that on August 21, 1891 Bishop Eugene of Stavropol and Yekaterinodar appointed him rector of the church in the Stavropol men's gymnasium. And on December 6 he was given a nabedrennik "for zealous performance of his duties, for preaching the Word of God, zealous teaching of the Law of God, and for the conversations with students of the gymnasium that he started".

On August 24, 1893 Fr. John was made a member of the council of the Stavropol diocesan women's school for three years. On October 2 he was elected a member of the board of the Stavropol theological seminary. And on May 14, 1894 Bishop Agathodorus awarded him with a velvet skufya.

On September 29, 1894 he was appointed teacher of religion in the Yelisavetpol (now Gyandzha) high school in Azerbaijan. On July 17, 1897, he was appointed teacher of religion in the First Tiflis women's high school, and on August 20, 1898 - teacher of religion in the First Tiflis men's classical high school.

On December 21, 1900 Fr. John was appointed diocesan supervisor of the church parish schools in the Exarchate of Georgia. Within three years the number of schools in the Exarchate had doubled to eight, and the number of students had reached five hundred. Twenty per cent of the students were children of sectarians.

On January 6, 1901 he was raised to the rank of protopriest by Archbishop Flavian, exarch of Georgia. On February 13, the Holy Synod appointed him editor of the journal, Dukhovnij Vestnik Gruzinskoj Ekzarkhata. In August he was appointed district supervisor of all the church parish schools in the Exarchate. In three years of service in this post the number of schools in the diocese rose from 160 to 300, and the money given to them was tripled.

In 1902 Fr. John was also appointed president of two trusts attached to two Tiflis churches.

Fr. John began to study the language of Persia's Syro-Chaldeans, who were adherents of the Nestorian heresy, and on August 21, 1901 was sent to Urmia in Persia to oversee the work of the Russian Orthodox Mission and began to labour for the conversion of the Syro-Chaldeans to Orthodoxy. For several years he waged a determined battle, the result of which was that three bishops - Mar Elijah, Mar John and Mar Marian - expressed their desire to be united to the Church. Thus was initiated the Syro-Chaldean Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In 1904 the Holy Synod sent Fr. John to the North Caucasus to supervise the non-Russian church-parish schools and the situation of the Ardon theological seminary. The next year he was sent on a long and very difficult journey to get to know the needs of the church educational establishments in the Irkutsk, Trans-Baikal and Amur regions.

The future Hieromartyr, Metropolitan Vladimir, Exarch of Georgia, on being transferred to the see of Moscow, invited Fr. John to serve there as diocesan missionary. On June 6, 1906 the Holy Synod appointed him missionary preacher for

Moscow diocese, in which position he remained until his martyrdom. On the same day he became a member of the Preconciliar Consistory attached to the Holy Synod. He was also a member of the Brotherhood of St. Peter the Metropolitan.

Archpriest John shone forth with particular brilliance during the abortive 1905 revolution. With the complete approval of Metropolitan Vladimir, he took as active a part as possible in monarchist gatherings, and was therefore hated and slandered in leftist circles. Fr. John's sermons, which were designed to expose sectarians and the teachings of the socialists, left a tremendous impression upon those who heard them. He also published the newspapers Tserkovnost' and Russkaya Zemlya, and the journals Poteshnij and Vernost'. As a result of his appeals to the teaching of Christ and to common sense, Fr. John acquired for himself countless enemies among all the sectarians, dissenters and socialists of all persuasions and classes. "Member of the Black Hundreds" and "obscurantist" were but two of the epithets laid at the door of this eminent man who was possessed of a vast intelligence and an exceptional talent as a preacher, writer and seer. But such nonsense did not daunt a fearless and idealistic man such as Fr. John. He kept unwaveringly to the straight path, and his discourse succeeded in arousing many a soul to a patriotic consciousness.

On Great Friday, March 31, 1906 he said the following in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour: "Our homeland has entered upon a new path of life, before and ahead of us is - a new Russia.

"Forgive us, forgive us, old, thousand-year-old Russia! Before our eyes they have judged you, condemned you and sentenced you to death... Threatening and merciless judges have spat in your face and have found nothing good in you. The judgement was strict, implacable and merciless. Everything has merged into the cry: 'Take her, crucify her!'

"We also know that nothing human was alien to you; we know that you had many faults. But we also know and see that you made Russia holy, and her people - a God-bearing people, if not in actuality, at any rate in the eternal, undying ideal of the people's soul; you gave birth to and raised a mighty people, preserving it in its bitter fate, in the crucible of its historical trials through a whole series of centuries; you gave birth to and raised an array of saints and righteous ones; you did not perish under the blows, the heavy blows of destiny, but became stronger under them, strong in faith; with this faith, this great power of spirit, you endured all the burdens, and yet you created, and entrusted to us and left behind, a great kingdom. For all this we bow down to the earth in gratitude..."

Fr. John was a great admirer of St. John of Kronstadt, who in turn admired him, and shortly before his death he compared him with the evil genius of Russian life, Lev Tolstoy: "The one - a son and humble servant of the Church, the other - her embittered and very proud enemy and slanderer, excommunicated and removed from God's people by the court of pure justice. And in truth: a future historian of Russian life will note - he cannot fail to note - 'the signs of the times', the two major personalities of the last 40-50 years that Russian society has lived through, the two prophets: the one - of the Lord, the other of Baal, the one - a servant of Christ, the other - of Antichrist,



the one – a servant of spiritual edification, the other – a dark genius of denial and destruction: Father John of Kronstadt and Count Tolstoy...”

Fr. John travelled constantly throughout the villages and cities of the immense Russian land, delivering sermons, making appeals, holding discourses everywhere. In August, 1907 he took part in the missionary conference in Nizhni-Novgorod, and on October 29 of the same year was made Synodal missionary-preacher. In 1908 he took part in the Fourth All-Russian missionary conference in Kiev. On January 4, 1909 he became the president of the Brotherhood of the Resurrection of Christ in Moscow.

On August 12, 1909 he was placed in charge of pastoral courses in Moscow. On September 9, 1909 he was appointed rector of the Prince Vladimir church attached to the Moscow diocesan house. On October 6, 1909 he was elected an honorary member of the Kazan Theological Academy. In 1910 he took part in the missionary conference in Irkutsk, and later that year organized the Brotherhood of the Resurrection of Christ in the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Harbin, Manchuria, entrusting its members with the task of tending the graves of the Russian soldier who had fallen in battle in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War. On October 5, 1910 he was placed in charge of the Higher Theological Course for Women in Moscow.

In January, 1911, following a number of attempts by the Palestine Society over the years, he succeeded in purchasing a plot of land in Bari, Italy, where the relics of St. Nicholas of Myra rest, and established there a hostel for Russian pilgrims. On his return, on May 12, 1911, he was put in charge of the courses preparing readers for service in Siberia and the Far East, and on August 25 he became a cleric in the church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils in Moscow. In September he took part in the festivities surrounding the opening of the relics of St. Joasaph of Belgorod.

The State set the Church the difficult task of serving the spiritual needs of those migrating to Siberia and the establishment of Church life in the new settlements. There were not enough priests, and it was necessary to train in a year's time as many as were needed. At the behest of the Synod, this labour was undertaken by Archpriest John Vostorgov on February 1, 1912. He dealt efficiently with this task, selecting able readers and village teachers to be priests and preparing them in special seminary courses. About 500 priests and 100 readers were prepared by him for the churches of Siberia. Especially striking were the results of his instruction in homiletics. Within a year, his students had completely mastered the art of ecclesiastical oratory by employing his methods. In fact, his sermons were reworked by his students, printed and distributed in church after they had been delivered.

From May 31, 1913 he became rector of St. Basil's cathedral in Red Square, and in the same year began to edit the newspaper Tserkovnost' in Moscow. From 1917 to 1918 he was secretary of the Missionary Council attached to the Holy Synod.

At that time the relics of the holy youth Gabriel, who had been murdered by the Jews, were in the cathedral. The frequent molebens Fr. John performed before his relics served as a reason for his later arrest and execution.

Fr. John made St. Basil's cathedral the focus of healthy ecclesiastical and political forces. All of Moscow knew that, on visiting that church, one would find spiritual courage in listening to Fr. John's inspiring discourse.

After the overthrow of the Tsar in the February revolution, Fr. John, following the Holy Synod, declared his loyalty to the Provisional Government: "Our former Emperor, who has abdicated from the throne, transferred power in a lawful manner to his brother. In his turn the brother of the Emperor, having abdicated from power until the final decision of the Constituent Assembly, in the same lawful manner transferred power to the Provisional Government, and to that permanent government that would be given to Russia by the Constituent Assembly. And so we now have a completely lawful Provisional Government which is the powers that be, as the Word of God calls it. To this power, which is now the One Supreme and All-Russian power, we are obliged to submit in accordance with the duty of religious conscience; we are obliged to pray for it; we are obliged also to obey the local authorities established by it. In this obedience, after the abdication of the former Emperor and his brother, and after their indications that the Provisional Government is lawful, there can be no betrayal of the former oath, but in it consists our direct duty."

However, Fr. John remained devoted to the monarchy, and on March 25-26, in a small journal intended for soldiers and workers, he published an appeal to remain faithful to the anointed of God. On March 27 this appeal was noted and condemned during a meeting of Council of the United Clergy and Laity of Moscow, and the resolution was passed that "Fr. Vostorgov should be removed completely from the clergy of the Moscow Church as an element in it that is strange and undesirable". And so on May 13 Fr. John was removed from the posts of supervisor of church schools of the Trans-Volga and Urals dioceses and synodal missionary-preacher.

The Bolsheviks' seizure of power did not bring with it any abatement in his anti-revolutionary activity. At all his services he delivered denunciatory sermons, knowing full well that there were chekists in the crowd that filled his church to overflowing. On Sundays at four o'clock he served a moleben in Red Square, and again thundered against the chekists, who, walking along the Kremlin wall, could always hear him. He was well aware that martyrdom awaited him.

On February 25, 1918, he delivered the following sermon "On Meatfare Sunday and the anniversary of the revolution": "The Russian monarchy, fanned by faith and the mystical Divine anointing, like ancient Israel, had great tasks and the greatest calling from God, the greatest religious destiny, which compelled many to serve it in a religious spirit. It is impossible to serve any other power in this way. A certain mystical and providential atmosphere surrounded it, as it did the ancient God-chosen Israel, the ancient theocracy and God-anointed theocratic kingdom. But let us admit the bitter truth - in its bearers it often departed from its destiny, and often, too often repeated the words of the ancient Israel which so embittered the Prophet Samuel and God Himself: 'Give me a king, *such as the pagan peoples have*'. It began to take its content and spirit from unchristian sources; it changed its nature. The people often turned to it only as a weapon for the exercise of power, for the sake of earthly and personal ends; one estate often unrighteously suppressed the others; it chained the Church of God

to the footstool of vain earthly power'; the spiritual enlightenment of the people was forgotten; it often tried to ingratiate itself with the enemies of Christ, it went along its historical path in accordance with their command, and, when it was necessary, under the influence of indistinct murmurings from below, to make compromises, it always hastened to compromise something of the Church's breadth of action... And the judgement of God was accomplished! It placed its hope on the nobles, and gave them most privileges in life, but the nobles betrayed it and sold it and formed, together with the intelligentsia, who were mainly from their own estate, a political party which for a hundred years corrupted the people, struggled for power and yearned hungrily for power, sparing no expense, until it prepared a rising of the people, although it itself collapsed, in accordance with the judgement of God, under the ruins of the great fall of the old order. The monarchy leaned on the officials, but the officials turned out to be hirelings, changing stripes with the greatest ease and adopting any colour so long as they preserved their own position. It leaned on the bourgeoisie and the wealthy classes, supporting their prosperity and capital in every way possible, but the bourgeoisie used the money it had gained under the protection of the monarchy to nourish only its enemies. It placed its hope on the terrible strength of the army, but the army leaders betrayed it, while the officers, a year ago, rushed around and celebrated before our eyes in automobiles draped by soldiers, students and girl-students, to the shouts of everyone in the street, with red flags of rebellion... on the eve of their own, most terrible destruction. It placed its hope on the representatives of the Church, but they, instead of taking a back seat in view of the judgement of God and the sin of man, and at any rate keeping quiet, got frightened and sent telegrams from here, from royal Moscow, welcoming the coup, and drove out their own hierarchs and in a humiliating fashion called upon and enthroned over themselves a new power foreign to the Church. And so - it is accomplished! The judgement of God has thundered out. And just as Saul was chosen by God and then rejected, so has it happened with our monarchy. It is fallen before our eyes incomprehensibly easily, and now we, after all that has happened, in view of the common collapse of life, understand the words of the ancient prophet: 'O Israel, who will help you in your destruction? Where is this king of yours? Let him save you in all your cities. Let him judge you, of whom you said, "Give me a king and a prince." Thus I gave you a king in My anger, and took him back in My wrath' (Hosea 13.9-11).'

"... The former authority has voluntarily abdicated from power and, one must say, has departed in silence, behaving up to now with the greatest moral dignity. All the cries of hatred against it have gradually died down, and in this year all the *personal* accusations against it have collapsed one after the other.

"Those who seized power after the overthrow of the monarch have carried out their own will. They are responsible for it before history, before the people, before God. But God has allowed them to carry out their reward both on us and on themselves. Just like the ancient peoples who had been instruments of the punishment of Israel, they have split up endlessly in front of our eyes, overthrowing each other, and in the course of a year they have covered the distance which in antiquity would have required five hundred years.

"Immediately declaring themselves outside God and every religion, they have constructed a tower of Babylon and a Babylonian babble and have arrived at mutual incomprehension and complete division. Monomakh's cap has turned out to be heavy. It was easy to scramble onto the throne of power, but it has turned out to be very difficult to remain sitting on it, as it is in general difficult to sit on the point of a sword or bayonet... And God, O God! How terrible has your righteousness judgement been in this year. Everybody has received his due reward and chained himself with his own hands.

"The parties of the intelligentsia-noblemen - where are they? Beaten, driven out, persecuted! How they yearned for power, how they sought to be the members of the first provisional 'right-believing' government - with the atheists Kerensky, Guchkov and Shingarev! How they revelled and triumphed in the intoxication of power, how they drowned in greetings, how they rejoiced in the supposedly bloodless revolution, how they buried Russia and the people with their addresses, appeals and calls! Where are they, those first rulers? Show me just one who is still in power! They are killed, in prisons, in exile, in trembling, in obscurity!...

"And everything of which they justly accused the old power these new rulers have repeated, only a thousand times worse. And in this - what a Divine sentence is revealed, what shame before human history and what complete lack of any kind of justification! That is what happened to the first power, which constantly changed its members before it was destroyed by our present rulers, who came out of its ranks and were fed by it.

"... Before us appear avengers sent by God from outside - Wilhelm [the German Kaiser], and from within - the Bolsheviks. We repeat: they, too, are doing their own will, they are responsible for all their actions, all their cruelties, all the blood they have shed, all the violence they have committed, but God allows them to do their own evil will for the revelation of His own judgement. There is something terrible in all this, and something providential. They are weapons of the wrath of God, and Wilhelm has often said that. Like ancient Rome, iron-clad and bloody, pitiless and merciless, they have been enthroned over our ruined life. It is not delight in evil that speaks through my lips. You know, the prophet did not sympathize with Rome, of course, he did not rejoice in his coming - he only foretold Rome's coming with sorrow, and foretold the end of the people's history as if from a flood... But God judged and judges still, and before our consciousness there arises this thought: God exists, and His impartial judgement exists!

"And on the anniversary of the revolution I open the third chapter of the mysterious book. It has the inscription: 'And at the end of the time an end shall be put to the desolation' (Daniel 9.27).

"If Wilhelm and our present rulers do not understand the signs of the times, the terrible judgement of God will strike them here, while they are still on the earth. They themselves will be divided and will perish in civil war. 'And the word will be fulfilled': 'Let the sword enter into their own hearts, and let their bows be broken' (Psalms 36.15).

"... Just as Bolshevism was the logical consequence of socialism in its search for freedom, so the logical consequence and end of freedom will be anarchy, and it will come to us - black, terrible, mysterious and awful. It will sweep away the present rulers, it will once more reveal the terrible pages of the judgement of God. And this judgement of God will reveal to us openly that there is not and cannot be complete and absolute freedom for man, that it is limited and must be directed by the Law of God: like steam or a steam-engine in the absence of a good driver, it leads to the destruction of life; like a river which flows beyond its bed and over its banks, it turns life into a bog and a source of illnesses. And when the 'end from the flood' will appear before us, then will begin - if we repent, of course, and are worthy of life, and not of death, - the recreation of life. And this not only in Russia, but in the whole of humanity..."

On May 30, 1918, Fr. John was arrested (according to one source, "for antisemitic propaganda") and imprisoned in the inner prison of the Cheka before being transferred to the Butyrki prison. At that time, however, the Bolsheviks were afraid to murder a man with such an influence over the people for the mere fact of his preaching, and thus they sought other "counter-revolutionary" activities of which to accuse him. A Soviet agent provocateur managed to obtain Fr. John's consent to the sale of Moscow's diocesan residence, which had already been nationalized. His parishioners, who loved him fervently, collected in vain twenty thousand roubles to hire a lawyer; and Fr. John, also in vain, transmitted from prison in written depositions exhaustive proofs of political provocation.

In prison, he was continuously supplied with foodstuffs by his parishioners, even though they themselves were in great need at the time. He was, however, permitted to serve in the prison church, and many went there to pray.

Before his execution he was transferred back to the Lubyanka, the chekists' principal headquarters. He was fully aware that death was drawing near. He heard the confessions of those imprisoned with him and accompanied them to the place of execution.

Here is an account of the execution of Fr. John and some high political officials who were shot with him:

"Six months ago, I happened to meet a certain person who had been incarcerated throughout 1918 in Moscow's Butyrki prison. One of the most difficult responsibilities of the prisoners was the burial of those who had been shot and the digging of deep trenches for the burials of victims of the next execution. This work proceeded day in and day out. Prisoners were transported by truck under armed guard to Khodynka field, or, sometimes, to the Vagansky cemetery. There the supervisor would measure out a trench as wide as a man is high, the length of which was determined by the number of victims to be executed. We usually dug graves for twenty to thirty individuals, but at times prepared the trenches for many more. The forced labourers never saw the bodies of the executed, for they were lightly covered with earth by the executioners before they arrived at the site. The prisoners had only to fill in the pit

with dirt and make a mound along the trench which had swallowed up the victims of the Cheka.

"A friend of mine had served in this cemetery detail for several months. The prisoners managed to grow so accustomed to their guards that the latter shared with them their impressions of the operations being conducted. One day, after the prisoners had completed the excavation of the usual long, trench-like grave, the guards mentioned that the following morning (August 23 / September 5, 1918) an important execution of priests and former politicians would take place. The next day the matter was explained. It appears that the victims were: **Bishop Ephraim (Kuznetsov) of Selenginsk**; Archpriest John Vostorgov; the Roman Catholic priest Liutostanski and his brother; **N.A. Maklakov**, former Minister of the Interior; **John Grigorievich Shchegolev**itov, former president of the State Council; **A.N. Khvostov**, former Minister of the Interior; and **Senator S.P. Byeletsky**. As soon as they arrived the victims were positioned along the trench, facing it... At the request of Fr. John Vostorgov the executioners permitted all the condemned to pray and ask forgiveness of each other. They knelt, and there poured forth from the unfortunates fervent supplication, after which all approached His Grace, Bishop Ephraim, and Fr. John for a last blessing. Then they bade each other farewell. First of all, Archpriest Vostorgov manfully approached the grave and said a few words to the others, urging all to offer the ultimate redeeming sacrifice with faith in God's lovingkindness and the speedy rebirth of their homeland. 'I am ready,' said he, turning to the firing squad. All stood in the places indicated to them. An executioner walked up behind Fr. John, grasped his left arm, brought it back behind his waist and, placing his revolver to the back of his neck, shot him, simultaneously pushing him into the grave. The other executioners approached the remaining victims. Byeletsky broke free and managed to dash quickly some twenty or thirty paces towards some underbrush, but, hit by two bullets, he fell and was dragged back to the trench, where he was finished off and cast in.

"From the words of the guards as related to us by my friend, it was clear that the executioners, in exchanging comments while covering the unfortunate victims with earth, had expressed considerable astonishment at Fr. John Vostorgov and Nicholas Alexeyevich Maklakov, who had apparently impressed them with their composure in the face of the dreadful fate which awaited them. John Grigorievich Shchegolev, in the words of the narrator, had moved with difficulty, but had not shown the least fear..."

## 6. HOLY HIEROMARTYR PHILOSOPH ORNATSKY OF PETROGRAD (+1918)

**Protopriest Philosoph Nikolayevich Ornatsky** was born on May 21, 1860 in the village of Erga, Cherepovetsky region, Novgorod province into the family of a village priest. From his earliest childhood the Church and her Divine services became for St. Philosoph an inherent part of his life. All of his brothers chose the path of service to the Church. Two became priests and one, a deacon. One of these brother-priests, Fr. John Ornatsky, married the niece of St. John of Kronstadt, served in St. Petersburg and was especially beloved of the great pastor of Kronstadt for his meek and gentle manner. The other brothers stayed to serve in their home town.

Fr. Philosoph went to the Kirillovsk theological school and then Novgorod theological seminary, from where, as the best student, he was sent to St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

This was during the first years of the reign of Emperor Alexander III and the period of the greatest influence of the Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod, Constantine P. Pobedonostsev, who brought about the spiritual renewal of the St. Petersburg Academy and appointed as rector and dean persons of monastic calling.

The rector during this time was Bishop Arsenius (Brantsev) and the dean was Archimandrite Anthony (Vadkovsky), who would become the famous Metropolitan of St. Petersburg. The new dean was a person of good heart, eager to deny himself and unaccustomed to regarding his students with condescension; he was especially distinguished by his brotherly love. He introduced into the Academy a new direction - that of the learned monk. Students, disposed toward becoming monastics gathered around him and he encouraged their attraction to the Church.

Two classmates of the future Hieromartyr Philosoph subsequently became metropolitans: Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and Seraphim (Meshcheryakov), and one of the professors of the Academy was the future Bishop of Tauris, Michael (Gribanovsky), the most impressive theological mind of the day. He hoped, along with his students, in the eventual restoration of the patriarchate in Russia.

This monastic, scholarly atmosphere left its impression on the soul of Philosoph and remained with him throughout his life. In reading his sermon delivered in Sarov on the day of the glorification of St. Seraphim, one is involuntarily struck by how well a married priest, who lived all the time in the world, could know all the complexities and subtleties of the monastic struggle. However, one need only recall what kind of spiritual, academic life the hieromartyr had led.

Philosoph graduated in 1885 and was then ordained to the priesthood on July 28 by Metropolitan Isidore of St. Petersburg. Upon ordination, he remained in St. Petersburg to serve, initially as chaplain of a school for boys and girls called the "Hostel of Prince Oldenburg". Then, from 1892, he was rector of the church of the Office for Preparation of State Papers built in memory of the miraculous deliverance

of Emperor Alexander III during the train wreck in Borki; this church was dedicated to St. Andrew of Crete.

In 1895 he began discussions for workers at the bleaching factory. With his aid a technical school giving intermediate education was opened. He became its director and the teacher of the Law of God.

Fr. Philosoph has an immense talent for preaching, and drew large crowds who sought after living words. This God-given gift did not remain unnoticed by the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II; for the sermons delivered in Sarov during the glorification of St. Seraphim of Sarov in 1903 the Tsar awarded Fr. Philosoph a gold pectoral cross.

In October, 1913 Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky), desiring to infuse young blood into the clergy of the capital, broke with the usual traditions of succession by seniority in positions of leadership in the cathedrals and appointed as head of the Kazan Cathedral (second to St. Isaac's Cathedral in size) the relatively young priest Fr. Philosoph Ornatsky. The faithful greeted this appointment with enthusiasm, for the people knew and loved him.

The activities of Fr. Philosoph were not limited only to the confines of his parish, but were very widespread. He was either a member or president of many philanthropic religious societies, which flourished greatly under his leadership. He was the founder of the "Society for the Spread of Religious and Ethical Education in the Spirit of the Orthodox Church", to which Hieromartyr Benjamin, Metropolitan of Petrograd, belonged from his student years. He was the president of the "Temperance Society" and the "Society of the Queen of Heaven" and also took active part in the construction of hostels in the city, was a voting member of the City Council as a representative of the Church and was president of the Commission for Popular Education and Philanthropy in Narva district, the region in which the Office for the Preparation of State Papers was located.

During the troubled days of 1905, when disorder spread throughout the city and a propagandizing mob with weapons in their hands dominated the city streets, Fr. Philosoph fearlessly advised his flock to maintain faithfulness to the sovereign and pay no heed to the travelling "preachers of equality". He gave these sermons in the most dangerous parts of the city - in the Narva district. Subsequently, when he was arrested, the secret police who conducted the arrest came not from his district, that of Kazan, but from the neighbouring one of Narva - evidently the memory of his activities in the first revolution continued to linger.

During this rebellious period, St. John of Kronstadt was almost forcibly dragged out of revolutionary Kronstadt by his adherents. Once, when he was conversing with Fr. Philosoph in his home, he said:

"So, Philosoph, try to figure them out! They led me out of Kronstadt, fearing for my life, and now they denounce me in the papers. You remained and admonished them, and you are likewise denounced!"



St. John of Kronstadt had a great love for Fr. Philosoph and would often visit his home. "When Fr. John would come," his daughter Lydia recalls, "we children would usually line up in the parlour and he would come to each of us and give us his blessing, laying his hand on our heads and kissing our foreheads. Then we would sit down to eat in silence. After the meal, when we were drinking tea, St. John would drink half a cup of tea and give the remaining undrunk tea to Mama and she would divide it up into little glasses and give one to each of us. In this way he shared with us as it were the grace of God that dwelt always with him. After lunch he would rise from the table and usually say, 'Well, Philosoph, come, tell me...'. But the conversations would not last long, since St. John was always expected somewhere else and was reminded of this by his devotees who accompanied him everywhere. Once he stayed the night with us. As we were going to bed, we clearly heard him reading a canon alone in his room in a loud voice. He spent the entire night reading canons, not once closing his eyes."

With the coming of the Bolsheviks, Fr. Philosoph increased his labours of preaching, serving and delivering sermons in the most dangerous locations. He often spoke out against the abolition of religious education for children in schools. He fought not only with words, but with actions. On Sundays he would organize church processions which would come from several churches and proceed to the square in front of the St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra. There they would meet the procession coming from the Lavra, headed by Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd, who was soon to be murdered. The last church procession was composed of members of all the parish churches of St. Petersburg and its environs. The day before, Fr. Philosoph had received an order from the secret police stating that all church processions must proceed to the Lavra by a special route precisely dictated by the police, that responsibility for this rested solely with himself, and that anyone who deviated from this route would be shot. The situation was quite serious, since the trolleys in many places were not working and telephone communications were quite difficult. So informing people of the change in route was no easy task. But with the help of the young people everything was arranged. One after the other, chanting hymns and carrying banners, the processions reached their destination, the square in front of Alexander Nevsky Lavra. There Metropolitan Benjamin with a host of clergy served a solemn moleben.

When Patriarch Tikhon visited Petrograd in May, 1918, Fr. Philosoph was chosen to go to him in Moscow and accompany him to Petrograd. On June 1, his namesday, Fr. Philosoph was visited by Patriarch Tikhon, and the crowds were so great that the Patriarch and the future hieromartyr often had to come out onto the balcony to bless the people.

It was during this period that the Red terror began. Among the victims was Fr. Philosoph's brother-in-law, Fr. Peter Skipetrov, of whose murder Fr. Philosoph was himself a witness. However, all this violence could not shake the firm spirit of the pastor. The editor of New Times, Suvorin, wrote to him:

"You, Fr. Philosoph, are our only hope. Everyone around is silent."

And Batyushka continued fearlessly to denounce the Bolsheviks from the church ambon. It was clear to all that such bold preaching could not continue for long, and he himself noted not long before his death that he felt that his days were numbered.

Subsequently, a friend of Lydia Philosophovna who was on close terms with the Bolshevik elite, in a private conversation said:

"Why do you blame the Bolsheviks for the murder of Fr. Philosoph? It's all your priests who are to blame for it. Vvedensky [the future leader of the renovationist heretics] himself advised the Bolsheviks - 'get rid of Fr. Philosoph and Metropolitan Benjamin is yours.'"

It should be noted that Vvedensky later betrayed Metropolitan Benjamin to his death.

"On the 20th of July, 1918, on the eve of the feast of the Holy Prophet Elijah," Lydia Philosophovna recalls, Fr. Philosoph "was invited to serve the vigil in the church of St. Elijah in Okhta, which was close to a gunpowder factory. This was one of the most rebellious parts of the city, and we could not understand why he had been invited to such a place. When Father returned home, we sat down to eat supper with Mother and my three brothers, Boris, Nicholas and Vladimir, along with the younger sister of my mother, the widow A.N. Skipetrova. Suddenly the bell rang and an armed sailor and two Red Army men appeared at the door. The sailor ordered that a search be made; the search was only cursory. Then he ordered Father to go with him, promising that he would return shortly. My older brother Nicholas, an army doctor, offered to accompany our father. The sailor then addressed my second brother, Boris, also an officer, telling him to accompany them as well. Not long after they had taken away Father and my two older brothers, **Nicholas and Boris**, the secret police from the Kazan district (of Petrograd) came to arrest Boris. We told them that Boris had already been arrested with Father, which greatly surprised them. Their gaze then fell upon my third brother, Vladimir, also an officer, and they arrested him. This was the first night that officers were being arrested.

"After waiting until five in the morning for their return, very troubled, I set off first of all for the Narva district, where my father had spent the greater part of his life. When I arrived at the commissariat, I met the commissar there and told him that my father, Protopresbyter Philosoph Ornatsky, had been arrested that night together with his two sons and that the person arresting them had said that he was taking them only for interrogation and that they would soon return home. In reply, the commissar told me that he knew of no Ornatskys and that they had not been there. Then I asked him where I might look for them.

"Look for them in Kronstadt at "the Crosses", they are not here.'

"As I turned to leave, I met the sailor who had arrested my father and brothers, and said to him:

"Was it you who came to us on Kazan street and took them questioning, saying that they would return soon? They have not come home yet. Where are they now?"

"The sailor also denied this, saying that he had not been to us and had arrested no one. I left the commissariat and walked on, wondering what I might do. Suddenly I heard steps behind me and a voice:

"Sister Ornatsky, keep going, listen and do not turn around. Your father and brothers were here but were taken to be shot along with other prisoners at one of the dykes on the Gulf of Finland."

"Then I heard the steps fading away. I turned and saw a person of short stature in a soldier's greatcoat hastening away.

"After hearing such terrible news, I hurried home where mother was waiting for me, alarmed by all that had transpired. When I saw her state, I could not find the courage to tell her what I had heard.

"The next day, I went to see Metropolitan Benjamin, who received me with great love. I related to him all that had taken place and he said:

"We shall pray."

When they learned of the arrest of Fr. Philosoph, the parishioners of the Kazan cathedral organized several delegations, but the Bolsheviks would not receive them. Finally, one Sunday after the Liturgy, a crowd of many thousands, composed mostly of women, and with the chanting of prayers, carrying banners and icons, moved along the Nevsky Prospect to Gorokh Street in order to free Fr. Philosoph.

The Bolsheviks received a delegation from the crowd and gave assurance that Fr. Ornatsky would soon be released, and that he was in a cell on Gorokh Street, in no danger. The crowd, pacified, dispersed. That very night Hieromartyr Philosoph was shot.

His daughter, Lydia Philosophovna Ryumin, writes: "Various rumours concerning the fate of my father and my brothers constantly came to our attention, but no official word came from the Cheka. I decided then to write a letter in my mother's name to the Chekist Uritsky, appealing to him as a human being to tell us the whole truth about the fate of Protopresbyter Ornatsky and his sons, Nicholas and Boris, noting that a month had already passed and we still had received no notification concerning their lot. Only then did my mother receive a letter signed by Uritsky with news that citizen Ornatsky had been shot as a blatant counter-revolutionary, but of the fate of his sons he knew nothing. A lengthy pannikhida was then served in the Kazan Cathedral by Metropolitan Benjamin with the clergy of the cathedral, Fr. Philosoph's brother, Fr. John, and two young priests, **Fr. Peter Balykov** and **Fr. Michael Yavorsky**, the husbands of my sisters **Mary** and **Vera**, who later also became victims of the Red terror."

Protopresbyter Michael Polsky writes: "The author of these statements, during his wandering through Russia, happened to meet a former worker from the Obukhov factory, the locksmith Pavlov. He was also a driver, and had transported Fr. Ornatsky and a large group of others to the place of execution. Persuaded to speak openly, he said:

"What could I do? I had to take people to their death - I was drafted for that purpose. But I could not do it when I was sober. I could not refuse to do it, for it would have been the end of me. Well, you drink a bottle of alcohol, as strong as you can get, and drive them. The agents of the Cheka were free with alcohol; when sober you couldn't take the car for such an assignment. I clearly recall the ride with Fr. Ornatsky... Fr. Ornatsky died like a saint. That night we picked up 32 men from different prisons. We were told they were all officers of the Imperial Army. Some were young, some were elderly. One said he was colonel of the guards and cursed the communists strongly:

""You will all perish, maybe in 20 years, but you will perish like dogs. Russia will be Russia again, but you will perish."

"The escorts kept silent, listening. Fr. Ornatsky tried to quieten the colonel, saying that they were all going to the Lord.

"Here, accept my pastoral blessing and listen to the holy prayers.'

"And he began to read what was appropriate - the service for the dying. He was reading it clearly, in an unwavering voice, and blessing everyone.

"It was a dark, rainy night. All those arrested started praying. Fear got hold of me and my head began to clear. I had been ordered to take them beyond Ligovo, to the bay [of Finland]. We drove a long time and Fr. Ornatsky said prayers all the time. At a spot on the shore, we unloaded and lined them up. The agents of the Cheka, already waiting, approached with revolvers and shot each one in the nape of the neck.

"Batiushka was knocked down by a gun-butt and then shot in the head. All the bodies were thrown into the sea. Later, I was told that the body of Fr. Ornatsky did not sink and was thrown out by the waves, on the shore near Orienbaum. There, they say, it was secretly buried by the inhabitants."

The account Lydia Philosophovna heard tallies with that of the driver:

"An elderly watchman lived at the dyke on the Gulf of Finland. That day was his name day. My father was killed on the feast of the Prophet Elijah. The guest who had arrived heard in the night that someone had been brought; they heard the name Ornatsky mentioned and heard how Father chanted the funeral verses for those killed before him.

"One day an unknown woman called us on the telephone to tell us that she had seen a body that resembled my father in the morgue on the shore of the Gulf of

Finland. I went there to see for myself, but the watchman said that any bodies thrown up by the waves were usually buried immediately."

Lydia Philosophovna had a younger brother Sergius whom the Bolsheviks did not touch. He was the godson of St. John of Kronstadt. He was born very weak and his parents, fearing for his life, requested that St. John be his sponsor. He remained behind in Soviet Russia. Soon after Lydia Philosophovna had succeeded in crossing the border, she had the following remarkable dream. She saw three boys running about and romping on a green meadow. It became clear to her somehow that these were her brothers. A fiery chariot, like that usually depicted on the icons of the "Ascent of the Prophet Elijah into Heaven", suddenly came down from heaven and in it was Hieromartyr Philosoph. He took one of the brothers with him and returned whence he had come. Soon after, news came from Russia that her brother Sergius had reposed...

The Moscow Patriarchal commission on the canonization of the new martyrs considers that Fr. Philosoph was arrested on August 9, the feast of St. Panteleimon, and that the date of his death is uncertain.

## 7. HOLY MARTYR THEODORE OF KIEV (+1918)

**General Theodore Arturovich Keller** was born on October 12, 1857 in Kursk into a military family. He was a count. During the First World War he distinguished himself in many battles, and a cavalry division under his command destroyed several Austro-Hungarian mounted regiments. As General-Lieutenant and commander of the Dragoon guards regiment he was a hero of the Galician campaign in 1915. His name became renowned throughout Russia, and Tsar Nicholas II gave him a memorial sword with his name on it. He was also a hero of the Trans-Dniester campaign in 1916.

On hearing of the February revolution, and the text of the new oath, he was the only person who “loudly proclaimed his allegiance to his Sovereign. He broke his sabre, refused to swear to the Provisional Government, saying he would not impose it on his soldiers because he did not understand “the essence and juridical basis of the supreme power of the Provisional Government”. The court commandant, General V.N. Voeikov, who knew Theodore Arturovich personally, wrote in his notes that he was “truly Russian, a man of crystal purity, penetrated to the marrow of his bones with a sense of duty and love for the Homeland”. He told his troops: “Today I received a despatch about the abdication of his Majesty and some kind of Provisional Government. This is the telegram that I have sent to the Tsar: ‘The Third Mounted Corps does not believe that You, Your Majesty, have voluntarily renounced the Throne. Give the order, Tsar, and we shall come and defend You.’” The troops thundered in reply: “Hurrah! Hurrah! We shall not allow the Emperor to be offended!”

In a telegram to his Majesty dated March 6 Count Keller wrote that his soldiers “listened to the manifesto of your Majesty on your abdication from the All-Russian throne with horror and despair, and were angry and disgusted at the traitors who had forgotten their duty before the Tsar, had forgotten the oath they had given to God. The Third Cavalry Corps does not believe that you, Your Majesty, have voluntarily renounced the throne. Give the word, O Tsar, and we shall come and defend you!”

When the text of the oath to the Provisional Government was received, Keller refused to bring his Corps to the oath. “I am a Christian, and I think that it is sinful to change the oath!” Baron Mannerheim, a general in the tsarist army and the future ruler of independent Finland, tried to persuade him “to sacrifice his personal political convictions for the good of the army”, but was met with a firm refusal: “I am a Christian. I think that it is sinful to betray one’s oath.”

On April 5 he was suspended “for monarchism” and left for Kharkov. According to another version, it was only when the commander of the Romanian front threatened to declare him a rebel that General Keller was forced to submit to the order, and to the sound of the hymn, “God save the Tsar!” gave up his corps. The general was escorted in profound sorrow and with tears by warriors who sincerely loved him.

In Kharkov in the summer of 1918 General B.I. Kazanovich vainly tried to convince Theodore Arturovich to go to the Don and the Volunteer Army. And in Kiev there were gathering those rightist politicians who wanted to create a monarchist Army of the South to struggle against Bolshevism with the aid of the Germans. They suggested to Theodore Arturovich that he head this army. But he refused, saying: "Here a part of the intelligentsia has adopted an Allied orientation, others, the majority, are supporters of a German orientation, but both have forgotten their Russian orientation."

In any case, the democratic leaders and politics of the Volunteer Army under Alexeyev and Denikin were not to the liking of the faithful Tsarist general. In his opinion, the Volunteer Army was obliged to wage war under a monarchist flag, for Bolshevik materialism could be successfully resisted only by its inspired opposite – Orthodox monarchism. He thought that the struggle with the Bolsheviks could be undertaken only "in the name of the Autocratic Tsar of All Rus' and following the path of repentance by the whole people and the re-establishment of the old Tsarist Army". He wrote: "The union of Russia is a great work, but this banner is too indefinite. Declare that you are following the lawful Sovereign, and the whole people that pines for firm authority and all that remains in Russia that is best will follow you without wavering."

But now another suggestion was made to him: that he lead the Army of the North, which was preparing to introduce an oath "to the lawful Tsar and the Russian State". In this army they were reintroducing the old rules and uniforms with the addition of a white eight-pointed cross sewn on the left sleeve. They suggested that Theodore Arturovich head this army. He agreed, and said that he intended "to raise the Imperial standard above the Kremlin in two months' time." In Kiev a monarchist Council of Defence was formed under a new commander. Theodore Arturovich addressed his military comrades with an "Appeal to the Old Soldiery": "The time has come when I again call you to follow me. Remember and read the prayer before battle – that prayer which you read before our glorious victories. Sign yourselves with the sign of the Cross, and with God's help we go forward for the Faith, for the Tsar and for our undivided Homeland of Russia." When Theodore Arturovich was about to head the Army of the North, Patriarch Tikhon sent him a prosphora and a little icon of the Reigning Mother of God through Bishop Nestor of Kamchatka. (This fact was publicized decades later by E.N. Bezak, the wife of F.N. Bezak, who was at that time was appointed by Keller as president of the Council of Defence attached to the commander-in-chief.)

In the autumn of 1918 the soldiers of Petlyura (socialists of a primitive kind, headed by Ataman Petlyura) burst into Kiev. They began to capture officers on the street and subject them to torture. The German soldiers, honouring the reputation of Theodore Arturovich, suggested that he go into hiding. But they set a condition: that he must agree to give up his weapons and take off his military uniform. He refused.

Theodore Arturovich and **two** of his **adjutants** were put into the Mikhailovsky monastery in Kiev. The followers of Petlyura then appeared at the monastery. The monks suggested that Theodore Arturovich escape by a secret exit, but he refused. On

the night of November 25/ December 8, 1918 the three men were taken along the walls of the Sophia cathedral, past the monument to Bogdan Khmelnytsky and into the square beyond. There they were shot many times and bayoneted. General Keller fell, pierced by eleven bullets.

In the last entry into his diary, Theodore Arturovich wrote: "It has always seemed to me revolting and despicable when people, for their personal good or profit or personal security, are ready to change their convictions. Such people are in the majority."

The remains of General Theodore Arturovich Keller, the only Orthodox Christian general who remained faithful to the Tsar, rest in the Pokrov monastery in Kiev.



## **8. HOLY HIEROMARTYR ANDRONICUS, ARCHBISHOP OF PERM** **(+1918)** **and those with him**

Archbishop Andronicus, in the world Vladimir Nikolsky, was born on August 1, 1870. He was the son of a deacon of the church the village of Povodnevo, Myshkin uyezd, Yaroslavl diocese. In 1885 he finished his studies at the Yaroslavl theological school, and in 1891 - at the Yaroslavl seminary, before entering the Moscow Theological Academy. On August 1, 1893, with the blessing of St. John of Kronstadt, he was tonsured into monasticism with the name Andronicus, and was ordained to the diaconate on August 6. In 1895 he graduated from the Academy, and was awarded the degree of candidate of theology for his work "The Early Church's Teaching on the Eucharist as a Sacrifice in connection with the Question of Redemption". On July 22, 1895 he was ordained to the priesthood.

Fr. Andronicus began his pastoral service in the Caucasus, being assistant inspector of the Kutaisi theological seminary from 1895 to 1896. From 1896 to 1897 he was a teacher of homiletics and inspector of the Alexandrovsky missionary seminary in Ardon, Ossetia. In 1897 he was appointed a member of the Russian Orthodox mission in Japan. This appointment, in his own words, "made me so sorrowful that I wept and would have been very glad if it had not happened... It was sad to part... But this led me to the thought that one should not live as one wants, but as God commands..."

Hieromonk Andronicus described his journey to Japan in his book, A Missionary Journey to Japan (Kazan, 1899). On September 21, 1897 he left St. Petersburg, and on October 26 he left Odessa with Archimandrite Sergius (Stragorodsky) and arrived in Japan on December 26 after stopping in Greece, Italy, France, England and the U.S.A. In 1899 he was released from service in Japan.

On March 5, 1899, at the request of Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), Fr. Andronicus was appointed rector of the Alexandrovsky missionary seminary in Ufa with the rank of archimandrite. He stepped down from this post on January 13, 1900, and on October 18 was appointed rector of the Ufa theological seminary. In 1901 he was awarded the order of St. Anna, second class, and in 1905 - the order of St. Vladimir, fourth class.

In 1905, after the publication of the Tsar's manifesto on civil liberties, Archimandrite Andronicus appealed to the population of the province to return to peaceful work. Later, he would say the following about the events in Russia: "It is a question... of a struggle between faith and faithlessness, between Christianity and Antichristianity... Masonry... will openly drive out Christianity... and pour into one man of iniquity, the son of perdition, the Antichrist. This is the clue to our most recent liberties: their aim is the destruction of Christianity in Rus'."

"It is necessary to work in such a way as to organize the whole people into one family, firmly and consciously standing for the holy, historical heritage of the people - the Christian Faith and the autocratic Tsar. It is necessary obstinately and assiduously to steer clear of all parties, and to preserve the people precisely as a

people, foreign to all party spirit, for wherever there is party spirit, there is division, there is struggle, there order is not to be looked for, and the whole is bound to disintegrate. And for that reason, when they say that amongst the parties there is a Russian party, this is either a lie or a misunderstanding. No, it is the Russian people itself, plucking up courage, consciously looking round on all sides and deciding firmly to stand for its treasure and not give in to the cunning schemes of its enemies...

"Stand aside from all flattering parties, who want to rob you of your most holy feelings; know God and His autocratic Tsar, so that through your striving and unanimity he may truly be an autocrat, so that he may be the source of righteousness on earth. Remember that all these parties that have appeared do not have your good in mind, but are aiming only to rule over you: the Cadets will be in the majority in the Duma, as they were in the previous Duma - and they will rule by force over everyone; there will be Socialists and other leftists - and they will do the same; no one will be able to restrain them until some other party wins a majority. But the main thing is that all these parties are trying to destroy the Faith in your land - that Faith by which you have been living for a thousand years now; and at the same time they are trying to separate you from your Tsar. And then they will completely get rid of him - that Tsar whom you have placed over you before God, and who rules you according to conscience..."

On November 5, 1906, Archimandrite Andronicus was consecrated Bishop of Kyoto and appointed assistant to the head of the Russian spiritual mission in Japan, St. Nicholas of Japan.

On March 28, 1907 he was greeted by the Orthodox flock in Tokyo. On May 27, he petitioned to be released from service in Japan because of illness, which was granted on July 5. On October 26, 1907, he became the deputy of Bishop Eulogius of Kholm and took temporary control of the diocese, appearing in a session of the State Duma in Kholm.

On March 14, 1908 he was made Bishop of Tikhvin, a vicariate of the Novgorod diocese.

A contemporary remembered: "Already at first sight his thin figure, assiduous prayer and cordial words made a most pleasant impression... Vladyka mixed his zealous, tireless service with heartfelt sermons, his lofty position - with simple, close relations with the Orthodox worshippers. Fear of society's displeasure did not embarrass the bishop-preacher. In his sermons Vladyka often reproved the frenzy of worldly spectacles with great boldness."

Bishop Andronicus continued to be a firm supporter of the Orthodox Tsar: "While among the other peoples of Europe the power of the princes and kings conquered the peoples and in relation to them was the enslaver of the disobedient, but weak [people] - we, on the other hand, ourselves created our own power and placed the princes - the prototypes of our tsars - over ourselves. Thus was it at the recognition of Ryurik and his brothers, whom our forefathers here, near Ilmen lake, placed over themselves to rule at a time when we had only just begun to be conscious of ourselves as a people,

when our statehood was founded. With the acceptance of Christianity this power entrusted by the people to the princes received a Divine sanctification from on high: the princes became the anointed of God, receiving high authority over the people from God, so as to rule the people under God. Moreover, as Great Russia grew and became stronger, the power of the princes, who were later called Autocratic Tsars, became higher, being bound to answer for the power that was given them over the people before God and their conscience. Then, when by the permission of God we had no Tsar in Rus', having survived the terrible years under various kinds of administrations, and not finding in any of them salvation from the destruction that threatened, we quickly and unanimously (with the exception of a few power-seekers and intriguers) restored our tried and tested form of power over the kingdom: having elected Michael Fyodorovich to the kingdom, we entrusted the whole Tsarist Autocracy over ourselves to him before God and in the name of God the Omniscient. And we were not mistaken in our wise reasoning this time: our half-destroyed and exhausted kingdom quickly gathered strength and was regenerated and strengthened in all respects, even attaining incomparably greater glory and prosperity than in the times prior to the time of troubles. We came out onto our historical road.

"In what was this autocratic power of the Tsar strong? In that fact that it was based on the conscience and on the Law of God, and was supported by its closeness to the land, by the council of the people. The princely entourage, the boyars' Duma, the Zemsky Sobor - that is what preserved the power of the Tsars in its fullness, not allowing anyone to seize or divert it. The people of proven experience and honesty came from the regions filled with an identical care for the construction of the Russian land. They raised to the Tsar the voice and counsel of the people concerning how and what to build in the country. And it remained for the Tsar to learn from all the voices, to bring everything together for the benefit of all and to command the rigorous fulfilment for the common good of the people of that for which he would answer before the Omniscient God and his own conscience. When applied to the present situation, this was our original Russian constitution worked out by the people itself, but as different from the constitutions from beyond the seas, about which our Red Hundreds of various shades rave, as heaven is from earth. This, our constitution, our Tsarist Autocracy rests not on faithfulness to the Tsar of a chance party majority, which sometimes changes in accordance with various, sometimes purely fortuitous or artificially created conditions, but on faithfulness to the Divine, eternal Law that is supreme both for the Tsar and the people, and to its echo - the law of the conscience, which dies only with the death of its bearer, man."

On the national question Vladyka wrote: "We [the Russians] have not violated and do not violate any of the peoples which are subject to us; we give to all, as before, freedom in all affairs of life on the basis of a common law that is equal for everyone, as also freedom of confession of his native faith for everyone. But we are the masters of the country and we wish to be such in fact, and therefore nobody must dare to mock us, or acquire power over us, or encroach on our higher rights. Still less shall we allow the dignity of our spiritual wealth and most important heritage - the Orthodox Faith and the Autocratic Tsar - to be mocked... In past times the Georgians themselves asked to be received into submission to Russia; for they saw that otherwise they would perish in intestinal warfare in the Caucasus or would be seized by their neighbours,

the Turks or the Persians. And let the other nationalities of our great Kingdom remember that if they separate from Russia they will perish, being seized by their very strong neighbours, who are just waiting for this. And what kind of power these neighbours have let the Poles sincerely describe, remembering their brethren in Germany. A special word concerning the Jews: we did not accept them in our land and did not even conquer them. We cannot and will not give them equal rights, in accordance with the prophetic word of warning of the great writer of the Russian land, F.M. Dostoyevsky: 'The Jews will destroy Russia.' They do not want to use our tolerating them in our midst - so let them go wherever they want: we will not detain them at the gates; and we can live freely and prosperously without them. But if they remain among us, they will be as foreigners for us, not having the right to participate in the building of the people and the state."

On March 8, 1913 Vladyka Andronicus received the independent see of Omsk; and his ascent up the Urals Golgotha began on July 30, 1914 with his appointment as Bishop of Perm and Solikamsk (renamed Perm and Kungur on July 1, 1916). That summer Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna made a pilgrimage to the relics of St. Symeon of Verkhoturye. On July 19, 1914, the feast of St. Seraphim of Sarov, World War I began.

In August Perm heard the voice of Bishop Andronicus: "Amidst today's terrible events the Lord has decreed that I should occupy the see of the enlightener of Perm, St. Stephen. There, in the west, blood-red clouds have already gathered... Yes, this war is terrible, it will demand much blood, many victims. But truly it is allowed by the Providence of God..."

"This is a great mercy of God after all the heavy trials and humiliations which our Homeland has undergone in recent times. And it is all our fault, because we have willingly given our souls into captivity to every kind of foreign import, as if we even rejoiced to become complete Europeans and were leaving behind our so-called Russian backwardness. Now we see from bitter experience that this foreign forwardness is in fact complete barbarism, moral bankruptcy and spiritual perversion."

Vladyka Andronicus set about building up the huge region with its one and a half million inhabitants and 570 churches and monasteries with apostolic zeal.

In November, 1914 he made his first visit to the Belogorsk monastery, to the cave church and to the Seraphimo-Alexeyevsky skete near the monastery. The skete was the cherished dream of some young Christian souls. It published some profound booklets on the monastic life, and the patriotic publication The Voice of Duty. The skete superior, Igumen Seraphim, published a unique chronicle of the 300th anniversary of the House of the Romanovs.

The bishop applied himself zealously to missionary work, to concerts of church music, to spiritual discussions and to patriotic exhortations to serve the Fatherland. He paid particular attention to the monasteries. In the summer of 1915 he again visited the Belogorsk monastery. He went far beyond Kungur to consecrate a place for the

Shamarsky missionary monastery, which was founded in memory of the visit to the province of Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna. In June he made a pilgrimage to the Tabor hermitage. There thousands of worshippers had assembled from Perm.

"And so, beloved," said Vladyka to his flock, "do not complain about sorrows as if they were a terrible misfortune. They wash away our sins, while giving extra holiness to virtue. It is not sorrows that are terrible, but carelessness, which destroys the man even while he remains at rest."

In 1916 he travelled to army headquarters and on August 12 had a conversation with the Tsar in which he warned him about Rasputin - to no effect. The Tsar very much liked the gift that Vladyka brought him - a pair of soldier's boots. (The province of Perm provided the army with boots.)

On March 3, 1917, the day after the Tsar's abdication, Vladyka Andronicus invited the leading citizens of the city to a meeting in the bishop's residence. Vladyka read out a draft "To All Russian Orthodox Christians", in which he called the present situation an "interregnum". Calling on all to obey the Provisional Government, he said: "We shall beseech the All-Generous One that He Himself establish authority and peace on our land, that He not abandon us for long without a Tsar, as children without a mother. May He help us, as three hundred years ago He helped our ancestors, that we may unanimously and with inspiration receive a native Tsar from His All-Good Providence."

The new over-procurator wrote to Andronicus demanding an explanation for his actions in support of the old regime and "aimed at the setting up of the clergy against the new order". The correspondence between them culminated on April 16 with a detailed letter from Archbishop Andronicus, in which he said:

"The act on the refusal of Michael Alexandrovich which legitimises the Provisional Government declared that after the Constituent Assembly we could have a monarchical government, or any other, depending on how the Constituent Assembly will pronounce on this. I have submitted to the Provisional Government, I will also submit to a republic if it will be established by the Constituent Assembly. But until then not one citizen is deprived of the freedom of expressing himself on the form of government for Russia; otherwise, if someone could irrevocably predetermine the question on the form of government in Russia, a Constituent Assembly would be superfluous. As I have already said many times, I have submitted to the Provisional Government, I submit now and I call on all to submit. I am perplexed on what basis you find it necessary to accuse men 'of inciting the people not only against the Provisional Government, but also against the spiritual authorities generally'".

Later in 1917 Vladyka became one of the seven hierarchs in the preconiliar council of the Local Council of the Russian Church in Moscow. From August 15/28, 1917, until the end of the second session on April 7/20, 1918, Vladyka Andronicus took an active part in the Council, being deputy president of the section on the Old Ritualists and Yedinovery, deputy president of the publishing section and president of the section on the legal and property qualifications of the clergy. He was called "Burning Fire" at

the Council. After the Bolsheviks seized the printing presses, Vladyka Andronicus did everything possible to see that the documents of the Council and its epistles should be published.

On December 13/26, 1917, he returned to Perm and made an appeal to his flock to stand firm in defence of the Church. On January 28 / February 8, 1918 the Bolsheviks of Perm published the decree on freedom of conscience and the separation of the Church from the State. Thus the lawless robbing of Church property which had taken place in 1917 was replaced by the "lawful" confiscation of the Church's possessions. On January 25 Vladyka Andronicus made a written appeal to the Orthodox people in all the churches and monasteries of the diocese to defend the heritage of the Church from the aggressors and looters.

In February the blood of unarmed defenders of the Faith flowed in Perm. Under the cover of machine-guns the Bolsheviks looted the podvorye of the Belogorsk monastery, killing many. On February 19 Bishop Andronicus wrote: "May the Lord give rest to, and forgive the sins, voluntary and involuntary, of all the Orthodox monks and laypeople killed in the city of Perm for the Holy Faith and Church in the Belogorsk podvorye. May the Lord bless the zeal of all those who at that time stood firmly for the holy things of the Church, fearing only God, and not the enemy terrors. May all Orthodox Christians be encouraged to stand [zealously] for the Holy Church, so as not to allow the enemy of our salvation [to desecrate] our holy heritage. [All] those who rise up against the Holy Church and mock her and her servants I curse in the name of God... If they do not repent, then I reject them, as enemies of the Church, from Holy Communion and from the hope of eternal salvation. And if any of them secretly or by deceiving the priest receives Communion, then that Communion will be for him with Judas Iscariot for eternal condemnation. This is to be proclaimed in all the churches of the city of Perm and Motovilikhi."

At the end of the second session of the Council, on April 11/24, Vladyka arrived in Perm. On April 16, Holy Thursday, a search was carried out in Vladyka's residence and chancellery by the Cheka. While expecting arrest at any moment, Vladyka was remarkably calm. He confessed and received the Holy Mysteries every day, and his radiant mood never left him.

On April 22 / May 5, he was raised to the rank of archbishop by Patriarch Tikhon. On April 26 / May 9, there was a cross procession in Perm in honour of St. Stephen of Perm, during which the archbishop first read the epistle of the Moscow Council on the subject of the Bolsheviks' decree on the separation of Church and State and then instructed the archdeacon to anathematize "all those who encroach on the temple of the Lord, until they correct themselves."

On April 27, the Friday of Bright Week, Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich Romanov was in the old Peter and Paul cathedral in Perm. He noted in his diary: "Archbishop Andronicus served the Paschal Vespers; he served very well." In the night from the 30th to the 31st of May the great prince was seized by the authorities and disappeared.

On April 28, there was a search in the consistory and certain documents were taken. On the same day Vladyka wrote to Patriarch Tikhon: "I am for the time being in freedom, but I shall probably be arrested soon... In the event of my arrest I am leaving instructions concerning the closing of all the churches of the city of Perm. Let them reckon with the people itself."

The Bolsheviks accused Vladyka of calling on the people to armed resistance to Soviet power. He replied: "My faith and the laws of the Church order me to stand on guard for the faith and the Church of Christ and her dignity. If I do not do this, I shall cease to be not only a bishop, but also a Christian. Therefore you can hang me now, but I will not give you a penny from the Church, you can take it over my dead body, but while alive I will give you nothing that belongs to the Church. That is what I believe and how I act, and I call on the Orthodox people to stand for the faith even unto death."

Those close to him urged him to hide, fearing his arrest, but he said that he was ready to accept death for Christ, but would not abandon his flock. While he awaited arrest, he was calm and received communion every day. On May 9 there took place a great cross process headed by the archbishop. This was a true Triumph of Orthodoxy. Turning to the concealed agents of the Bolsheviks in the crowd, he said: "Go and tell your chiefs that if they can come to the doors of the churches and vestries only over my dead body, and with me they will not get a church farthing."

The Bolsheviks increased their pressure on the archbishop throughout May. On June 1 he gave a written order to his vicar, Bishop Theophanes, to enter upon the administration of the diocese in the event of his violent death. Just before Vladyka Andronicus' arrest the chekists arrested the president of the "Union of the Russian People" in Perm and shot him in the wood.

Shortly before his arrest, a priest tried to dissuade Vladyka from his martyric course: "How can you save the flock from the wolves who are destroying it and yourself not fall into despondency from the brutality in the people and the coming defilement of the holy things?" Vladyka replied: "Believe me, Father, all this atheism and robbery is an assault of the enemy, a foul abuse of the good and God-fearing Russian soul. For the time being, because of their violation of their oath [to the tsar], God has removed the people's reason and will, until they repent... But when they do repent, at first gradually, then they will completely their spiritual sight, will feel their strength and like Ilya Muromets will cast off this horror which has enshrouded the whole of our country... Perhaps I will no longer be in this world, but I will never abandon the hope and certainty that Russia will be resurrected and will return to God."

1,500 Red Army soldiers were summoned by the Bolsheviks for the arrest of Vladyka Andronicus. At three o'clock in the morning on June 4/17 he was arrested and put into a droshky taking him to the police in Motovilikhi. All those in the hierarchical house were also arrested.

On the next day, June 5/18, he was taken to the Perm Cheka, where he spent the night. In reply the superiors of all the churches of Perm and Motovilikhi carried out the order of their archpastor: "I am closing down for Divine services all the churches of Perm and Motovilikhi, and I forbid the carrying out of any Divine services except baptism and the last rites for the dying." From the night of Vladyka's arrest the Perm clergy went on strike. The city was in turmoil. Orthodox Christians gathered on the streets, demanding the release of Archbishop Andronicus and cursing the Bolsheviks.

Meetings organized by the Bolsheviks blamed the clergy for everything, and the Bolshevik press claimed that Vladyka had called on the worshippers to shoot the Bolsheviks, and that he was only trying to save his own skin.

Vladyka had been arrested by an armed detachment of Bolsheviks under the leadership of the former convict Myasnikov, who surrounded the home of the archpastor. "On the third night [June 6 to 7]," recalled Myasnikov, "we went for five versts along the Siberian highway, turned left into the forest, went on for about a hundred metres and stopped the horses. I gave Andronicus a spade and ordered him to dig a grave. Andronicus dug out as much as was required - we helped him. Then I said: 'Go on, lie down.' The grave turned out to be too short, he dug out a bit more at his feet and lay down a second time. It was still too short, he dug some more - the grave was ready. I allowed him to pray. Andronicus prayed in all directions for about ten minutes. Then he said he was ready. I said that I would not shoot him, but bury him alive unless he repealed his decrees, but he said that he would not do this and would not refrain from attacking the Bolsheviks. Then we covered him with earth and I shot a few times."

Myasnikov's account more or less accords with the testimony of two Perm chekists Dobelas and Padernis, both of them Latvians, and was corroborated by a baptized Jew, a former communist party member who became a priest and was shot by the Bolsheviks. According to them, Vladyka Andronicus was buried alive and shot near the road from Perm to Motoviliha (the workmen's suburbs) on June 7/20. According to another account, he had his cheeks hollowed, his ears and nose cut off, and his eyes gouged out, and was then thrown into the river to drown.

One of the archbishop's executioners, Lashevich, was once dying in a hospital in Harbin, China. As he turned restlessly on his bed, he was heard shouting: "Why are you standing here, Andronicus, what do you want? I didn't bury you, I was ordered to do it. You've come for me, don't oppress me. You know, I'm not guilty." And again he would say: "Andronicus, blood, Perm... Don't! Go away! Don't torment me!"

Shortly before his death, on May 5, 1918, Archbishop Andronicus said: "Perhaps I will no longer be in this world, but I am not deprived of the hope and certainty that Russia will be resurrected and return to God. Exhort everyone and reconcile the embittered with life, pour into them the principles of the radiant life according to the Gospel of Christ. Our work is to gather the flock of Christ... so that those who have become disillusioned with every kind of party here might find a living haven and good repose in the Church and amidst believers. The soul of the people will be resurrected - and its body, our healthy statehood, will also be resurrected. May the



Lord help us! Forgive and pray for the sinful Archbishop Andronicus who invokes the blessing of God upon you..."

Among the archbishop's papers after his death was found the following plan for a speech:

"1. My speech will be short: I rejoice to be condemned for Christ and the Church. You are worth a lot, but my life is - spittle.

"2. Counter-revolution! Politics is not my affair. For perishing Russia will (not) be saved through our mutual backbiting out of desperation.

"3. But my treasure is the Church. Calling on everyone everywhere, I excommunicate and anathematise those who rise up against Christ and encroach on the Church..."

## **9. HOLY HIEROMARTYR HERMOGENES, BISHOP OF TOBOLSK**

**(+1918)**

**and those with him**

Bishop Hermogenes, in the world George Ephraimovich Dolganov (or Dolganyov), was born on April 25, 1858, in Cherson province, in the family of a yedinoverye priest who later became a monk. He went to Odessa theological seminary, and then received a classical education in Ananyevo before entering the juridical faculty of Novorossiysk University. On graduating from there, George did a course in the mathematical faculty and listened to lectures in the historico-philosophical faculty. Then, in 1889, he entered the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, graduating in 1893. Being a religious child from his early years, he was helped to make the decisive step in devoting himself to God by Archbishop Nicanor (Brovkovich) of Cherson. On November 28, 1890 he was tonsured into monasticism. Then on December 2, 1890 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on March 15, 1892 – to the priesthood. He worked hard as a preacher and took an active part in the circle of student-preachers. He served frequently in the academy church and acquired a large number of admirers, who saw in him a future pillar of the Russian Church. In 1893 he was appointed inspector of the Tiflis theological seminary, where he more than once had to punish the young Stalin. In 1898 he was appointed rector of the seminary with promotion to the rank of archimandrite. In Georgia he founded church schools and assisted the spread of missionary work among the population.

On January 14, 1901, in the Kazan cathedral in St. Petersburg, he was consecrated Bishop of Volsk, a vicariate of the Saratov diocese by Metropolitans Anthony (Vadkovsky) of St. Petersburg, Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) of Moscow and others. In this see he paid particular attention to missionary work. On March 21, 1903 Bishop Hermogenes became Bishop of Saratov and Tsaritsyn, and in the same year was summoned to attend the Holy Synod. He built many churches, sketes, prayer houses and chapels in his diocese. Regular services and chanting according to the typicon was introduced into the monasteries, monks of strict life came from Athos and other places. The bishop attracted many people to missionary work, including many with higher education. There began the publication of brochures and pamphlets on questions of the faith which were widely distributed. The bishop himself led religious readings and discussions on religious subjects outside the services.

Bishop Hermogenes took an active part in the struggle against the growing revolutionary fervour. During the disturbances of the 1905 revolution, in spite of poor health, he served almost every day and preached with great inspiration. He called on the people to exhort and rebuke the disturbers of the peace, and if this did not work, to depart from them. At the request of the Orthodox population he led cross processions, which soon came to embrace almost the whole city.

He used to say: "Orthodox flock, hold strongly onto the Faith of Christ as the anchor of salvation, and He will lead you to your new fatherland... Do not forget your Mother, the Orthodox Church. She will not teach you bad things, she will guard you from the wolves which are appearing in sheep's clothing among you... They promise much, but

in fact give nothing except trouble and the destruction of the state structure. Always remember that prayer and labour are the true hope of the true sons of the Holy Church and the native land of Russia. Always remember also that it is not joys and satisfactions that lead to the blessed life, but sorrows; it is not through the wide gates that we can reach the Heavenly Kingdom, but along the narrow path, through the magnanimous bearing by each of his cross."

On February 6, 1905 Vladyka served a pannikhida for the murdered Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich, saying that it was not only the terrorists who were responsible for his death, but also Russian society, many of whose members had little faith and even rejected the State order. Saratov was a very "progressive" city in those years, and in 1908 the Saratov Duma decided to name two primary schools after the novelist Tolstoy. Vladyka asked the governor to revoke the Duma's decision, but was refused. He also asked for the Orthodox to be protected from the plays "Anathema" and "Anthisa", but was again refused.

Bishop Hermogenes was greatly admired by St. John of Kronstadt, who said that he did not fear for the destiny of Orthodoxy after his death, knowing that Bishop Hermogenes would continue his work and struggle for Orthodoxy. In 1906 he wrote to Bishop Hermogenes foretelling his martyric death: "The Lord is opening the heavens [for you] as He did for Archdeacon Stephen, and is blessing you."

Bishop Hermogenes prepared and read out to the Holy Synod a report calling for the expulsion of certain Russian writers from the Church. On the initiative of the author the report was published and distributed to the members of the State Duma and many influential people. The reaction of the State officials was one of universal indifference. They were all afraid of touching the public's idols, although many State officials considered themselves to be Orthodox.

At a session of the Holy Synod at the end of 1911, Bishop Hermogenes had a sharp difference of opinion with V.K. Sabler, the procurator of the Synod, with regard to the attempt to introduce a corporation of deaconesses into the Orthodox Church and the rite of a funeral litany for the heterodox. The bishop spoke in defence of the church canons against the procurator and the Synodal officials, who were often completely indifferent to the fate of Orthodoxy. The procurator, with the silent acquiescence of the hierarchs in session, insisted on his opinion. On December 15, 1911 Bishop Hermogenes sent a telegram to the Tsar as the supreme defender and preserver of the foundations of the Orthodox State. The procurator responded by sending a report to the Tsar asking him to suspend the bishop from participation in the Holy Synod and to order him to return to his diocese. On January 3, Vladyka was removed from the Holy Synod and ordered to return to his diocese. He received this order on January 7, but asked permission to stay in St. Petersburg for three days in view of his illness. The procurator refused. On January 12 the Synod under the presidency of the procurator condemned the bishop's "dishonouring of the Holy Synod's decrees and judgements before his Majesty the Emperor".

Concerning his suspension Bishop Hermogenes wrote: "I consider the reason for my suspension to have been, in the main, those differences of opinion which emerged

between myself and the majority of the members of the Synod during an examination of the most important questions that have arisen during the present session of the Synod. I have often pointed out to the members of the Synod that it is necessary to examine the matters raised by the over-procurator, and not just pass over them in accordance with the wishes and views of the secular authorities. For now, when the Church is seen to be in a state of complete disintegration, the voice of the Synod must be firm, clear, definite and in strict accordance with the canons and teachings of the Church. In my speeches in the Synod I began a struggle not with the hierarchs in session in the Synod - I understand their position - but with that bureaucratic attitude to the affairs of the Church which has recently been observed in the Synod. And my critical attitude to the projects put forward by the over-procurator were displeasing above all to the over-procurator himself, and it was at his request that I was suspended. If my suspension is linked with a telegram, then it is with the telegram sent to the Higher authority [the Tsar]. I expounded in detail my view on those questions which were examined in the Synod, and I demonstrated the necessity of deciding them on the basis of the strict application of the canonical rules of the Church."

On January 15, in a telegram to the procurator, the Tsar demanded that Vladyka Hermogenes immediately leave the city. The procurator told the bishop that he should leave for Saratov not later than the following day. Towards evening on the same day Archbishop Nazarius (Kirillov) of Poltava and Bishops Nikon (Rozhdestvensky) of Vologda and Seraphim (Chichagov) of Kineshma came to Bishop Hermogenes and tried to persuade him to leave immediately. On learning that the bishop had not left, the procurator asked the Tsar to suspend him from ruling the Saratov diocese and send him to the Zhirovitsky monastery of the Dormition. The Tsar agreed, and on the same day, January 17, signed an ukaz for his suspension from the diocese with his residence in the Zhirovitsky monastery.

Another, probably more important, reason for the bishop's suspension was his opposition to Rasputin. Vladyka had originally considered Rasputin a true man of prayer, but came to change his mind. For the man who had originally introduced Rasputin to him, Bishop Theophan (Bystrov), the confessor of the royal family, suddenly came to see who Rasputin really was, and began writing his friend Bishop Hermogenes letters, trying to enlist this courageous fighter against freethinking in his fight against Rasputin.

When Rasputin's bad actions began to come to light in the course of the year 1910, Bishop Hermogenes vacillated for a long time. However, having made up his mind that Vladyka Theophan was right, and having the notorious Monk Iliodor (Truphanov) on his side now too, he decided to bring the matter up before the Holy Synod, of which he was a member, at its next session. Before that, however, he determined to denounce Rasputin to his face. This took place on December 16, 1911. According to Iliodor's account, Hermogenes, clothed in hierarchical vestments and holding a cross in his hand, "took hold of the head of the 'elder' with his left hand, and with his right started beating him on the head with the cross and shouting in a terrifying voice, 'Devil! I forbid you in God's name to touch the female sex. Brigand! I forbid you to enter the royal household and to have anything to do with the tsarina!

As a mother brings forth the child in the cradle, so the holy Church through its prayers, blessings, and heroic feats has nursed that great and sacred thing of the people, the autocratic rule of the tsars. And now you, scum, are destroying it, you are smashing our holy vessels, the bearers of autocratic power... Fear God, fear His life-giving cross!"

Then they forced Rasputin to swear that he would leave the palace. According to one version of events, Rasputin swore, but immediately told the empress what had happened. According to another, he refused, after which Vladyka Hermogenes cursed him. In any case, on the same day, December 16, five years later, he was killed...

Then Bishop Hermogenes went to the Holy Synod. First he gave a speech against the khlysty. Then he charged Rasputin with khlyst tendencies. Unfortunately, only a minority of the bishops supported the courageous bishop. The majority followed the over-procurator in expressing dissatisfaction with his interference "in things that were not of his concern".

Vladyka Hermogenes was then ordered to return to his diocese. As the director of the chancery of the over-procurator witnessed, "he did not obey the order and, as I heard, asked by telegram for an audience with the tsar, indicating that he had an important matter to discuss, but was turned down."

The telegram read as follows: "Tsar Father! I have devoted my whole life to the service of the Church and the Throne. I have served zealously, sparing no effort. The sun of my life has long passed midday and my hair has turned white. And now in my declining years, like a criminal, I am being driven out of the capital in disgrace by you, the Sovereign. I am ready to go wherever it may please you, but before I do, grant me an audience, and I will reveal a secret to you."

But the Tsar rejected his plea. On receiving this rejection, Bishop Hermogenes began to weep. And then he suddenly said:

"They will kill the tsar, they will kill the tsar, they will surely kill him."

As he approached Zhirovitsy, Vladyka heard the sound of church bells from afar. The superior and the whole brotherhood came out to meet the hierarch. The monastery courtyard was full of people, and Vladyka addressed them saying:

"I do not consider myself to be an exile, but a man who wishes to devote himself entirely to the service of the Lord God."

On settling in two small rooms on the second floor of the stone building, he took up the ascetic life to which he was accustomed. He went to bed late, and got up unfaillingly at seven o'clock. He often served. Many people came to his services from the villages and from the city of Slonim.

The summary dismissal of the holy hierarch without a proper trial or conciliar decision of his case, as if the Church was just one of the institutions of State, grieved

not only Vladyka Hermogenes but also many believers. But Vladyka sorrowed not for himself, but for the future of the Orthodox Church, of Russia and of the Royal Family. He would cover his face with his hands, weep long and bitterly and then say:

"It's coming, the highest wave; it will crush and sweep away all the rot, all the rags. A terrible thing will happen, terrible enough to make the blood run cold. They will destroy the Tsar, they will destroy the Tsar, they will destroy him without fail."

It was during his stay in the Zhirovitsky monastery that the gift of clairvoyance was revealed in the bishop. Metropolitan Manuel (Lemeshevsky) recounts the following incident. With the permission of God, the daughter of one woman had died as a result of sorcery, and the other had fallen ill. The mother decided to go to Bishop Hermogenes and ask for his advice and prayers.

In the morning she went into the church where Vladyka was serving. The service had finished. He left the altar and walked straight towards her. Before she had had the opportunity to express her woe, he said to her:

"You have come with a great sorrow, one young daughter of yours has died and the other is ill. My dear one, you know, this was done by evil people, and the Lord allowed it to happen. Some days will pass, and then this ill daughter of yours will also die. Before her death a woman will come to her; she will silently enter the room, and then this ill daughter of yours will also die. But do not be upset, nothing can happen unless God allows it."

His words were fulfilled exactly. The mother returned home. In a few days an unknown woman visited her and immediately left. After this her sick daughter died.

On August 25, 1915, Vladyka was assigned to the Nikolo-Ugreshsky monastery in Moscow diocese. On March 8, 1917 he was assigned to the see of Tobolsk. But the Provisional Government was not pleased with the courageous bishop, and on September 7, 1917 the minister of confessions asked the Holy Synod not to allow Bishop Hermogenes to go to Tobolsk, and gave him some task which would keep him in Petrograd or Moscow. This meant that Vladyka was able to take part in the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Eventually, however, on December 6, 1917, Vladyka arrived in Tobolsk and wrote later to the patriarch that he thanked the Lord from the bottom of his heart for sending him to this "city-skete enveloped in silence". Vladyka called on his flock "to preserve faithfulness to the faith of the Fathers, not to bow the knee before the idols of the revolution and their contemporary priests, who demand from Russian Orthodox people the distortion of the Russian national soul with cosmopolitanism, communism, open atheism and disgusting, animal-like debauchery." He wrote the following resolution on the decrees of his diocesan congress: "I do not bless the coup that has taken place, I do not celebrate the hitherto chimerical 'pascha' (or rather: tormenting Golgothat) of our much-suffering Russia and its exhausted in soul clergy and people. I do not kiss the dark and 'stormy' face of 'the revolution. I will not enter into

friendship or unity with it, for I still do not know for sure *who* and *what* it is today, and *what* it will give our Homeland, and especially the Church, tomorrow."

At about the same time, by Divine Providence the exiled Royal Family arrived in Tobolsk on their way to eventual martyrdom in Yekaterinburg. On Christmas Day they were in the church of the Protecting Veil. At the end of the service the deacon, for the first time since the February revolution, chanted "Many Years" and wishes for a long life to the Royal Family. The senior officer in charge of the Family, Commissar Pankratov, was enraged, and when told that the deacon had said this on the instructions of his superior, Fr. Alexis, he ordered: "Drag him out of the church by his braids!"

The next day a commission of inquiry formed by the Tobolsk Soviet criticised Pankratov, and demanded that he harshen the regime of his prisoners: "To prison with the Romanovs!" They also tried to arrest Fr. Alexis. However, Bishop Hermogen refused to give up his priest, and sent him to a remote monastery. Moreover, he challenged the Soviet: "Russia is not a republic, it can be declared a republic only by the planned Constituent Assembly. From history and from canon law we know that monarchs, emperors and tsars who for some reasons leave the throne and cease to carry out their duties, are not deprived of their imperial or tsarist dignity. Therefore I see nothing prejudicial in the behaviour of the priest and deacon." Thus did Vladyka Hermogenes imitate his namesake, Patriarch Hermogenes (+1612, canonized in 1914) in standing for the legitimate Tsar of Russia. As the Dowager Empress wrote to him: "Vladyka, you bear the name of St. Hermogenes. That is a sign."

Vladyka paid special attention to the soldiers returning from the front. The powers that be looked on them as on people who could again be driven under gunfire and dragged to acts of looting and pillaging, so as to bind them to themselves more strongly through bloody crimes. At the end of February, 1918, Bishop Hermogenes presided over a meeting of the St. John - Dmitrievsky brotherhood in his hierarchical quarters. In an ardent speech he described the psychology of the soldier, and pointed out that the soldier expected, not condemnation, but help from society. It was decided to organize a special section attached to the brotherhood to help the soldiers. The bishop's care for the soldiers returning from the front drove the Bolsheviks to distraction; they were trying to fill the soldiers with spite, but here under Bishop Hermogenes' influence the people were beginning to worry and care for them.

On January 18 Patriarch Tikhon blessed cross processions throughout Russia. Vladyka Hermogenes also blessed one in Tobolsk. On the eve he was ordered not to go ahead with it, otherwise he would be arrested. The next day he served the liturgy and a moleben in the Tobolsk Kremlin. Everybody knew that the cross procession had been banned. But the bells rang out, and Vladyka and the clergy came out of the cathedral for the procession. Huge crowds flowed along the wall around the Kremlin chanting: "Lord, save Thy people..."

The Tobolsk Kremlin is above the city, while the house of the Tsar and his family was below it. From the walls there was a good view of their house. Vladyka went up

to the edge of the wall. He raised the wooden cross in his hand and blessed the Royal Family.

It was in this period that the breach between the Tsar and Vladyka was healed. The Tsar sent Vladyka a bow to the earth, asking him to forgive him for allowing his removal from his see. He could not have done otherwise at the time, but he was glad to have the opportunity of asking the bishop's forgiveness now. Bishop Hermogenes was very touched, and sent a bow to the earth to the Tsar together with a prosphora, asking for his forgiveness. And every day he continued to hold services for the Royal Family.

The next day, January 19, Patriarch Tikhon anathematized the Bolsheviks, and a few days after that the Bolsheviks passed a decree on the separation of Church and State which placed believers outside the law, and which gave excuse for all kinds of excesses against the Church and Christians. Bishop Hermogenes wrote about the decree: "The atheist composers of the decree have found executors of their will amidst our soldiers, who, through the ignorance and at the instigation of their leaders, have dared to raise their hands against the holy things of their forefathers and accomplish a work worthy of God's great condemnation. They have done what those who crucified Christ did - but may the prayer of Christ be fulfilled also on them: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

"Orthodox Christians! If the Holy Church is dear to you, if in your hearts the faith in Christ which your parents inspired in you and which was handed down to us by a whole array of Russian saints has not been completely crushed in your hearts, listen to the voice of reason and Christian conscience and understand that the decree on the Church contains within itself a clear sermon of unbelief and a declaration of irresponsible and merciless struggle with the Orthodox Faith and all believers.

"The antichristian decree declares that 'religion is a private matter' - the personal matter of each separate person, but not of society or the State. In these words is contained the greatest untruth and the greatest harm for every religion in general, and especially for the universal religion of Christianity and for the Universal Church of Christ. In actual fact, the Christian faith is a public, conciliar, universal faith.

"The Christian cannot be saved on his own, in separation from others. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name,' said Christ, 'there am I in the midst of them.' The Christian is saved in the Church - in the society of believers: it is to this society of the Church that the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, which acts and is bestowed upon believing people only in the Church, for the sake of the common Church faith and love, for the sake of the common good.

"The society of the Church is like the body of a man: in the body all the members are linked together, they live and act together. If the link between the separate members is broken, the body is destroyed and perishes. A man perishes in exactly the same way if he departs from the society of the Church, if he does not want to be saved together with the others, if he wishes to be an autonomous person, not subject to the spirit and rules of the lawful Church union of all the believers.



"Christians cannot be saved without common prayer, without the carrying out of public services, without the participation of the whole people in the sacraments, without doing good works with the participation of all: pan-ecclesiastical charity, education, and care for each other, etc.

"The decree declares religion to be a private matter, because its composers do not want to recognize the Orthodox Church as a Divine institution; they are striving to disunite and disperse the Christians; they even want to place all of them under suspicion and subject them to house arrest, forbidding them to go to the churches for common Church prayers; they want to kill faith in their hearts and make them atheists!

"Knowing that the Orthodox Church cannot teach and save believers without churches, and that the faith of the Russian people is closely bound up with the veneration of the holy things of the Church, the decree removes from the Orthodox Church the right to acquire property and dispose of it, and thereby deprives the Church of the possibility of building and maintaining churches, and keeping them in a beautiful condition. If the decree is carried out, the Russian land will soon be deprived of the churches by which she was formerly adorned and glorified amidst the other peoples: her churches will be turned by the hands of the atheists into places of entertainment or will come into a state of complete poverty and dilapidation: in their place, according to the word of the Scripture, will be 'the abomination of desolation'! Did our forefathers build the holy churches with great labour and at great expense so that we, their unworthy descendants, should turn them from the beautiful habitation of God into a den of thieves, and so that instead of the Divine services they should arrange various spectacles and games in them to the shame and corruption of the Russian people, so that Russia should be mocked and laughed at in the eyes of all the people of the world?!

"The antichristian decree declares the heritage of the holy churches to be 'the heritage of the people'. But was not the property of our churches the heritage of the people up to now? Everything that is in the church always was and is the heritage of the whole believing people; all the believers have contributed their mite from a pure heart, voluntarily and lovingly, they have given it to God, to the work of God, for the sake of the salvation of their souls. They knew that the gift of their love was pleasing to Christ, Who accepted the pouring out of the myrrh from the adulterous woman; they knew that this gift of their sweat and labour would go to the salvation of their souls, that it would have no other purpose. They were right: all the offerings have been preserved, have been multiplied and have been used only on the needs of the Church.

"Let the heritage of the churches be now, as it was before, the heritage of all believing people, let them - the believers - dispose of this heritage in accordance with its purpose. They were given this right by the Church authorities, and the Church Council, half of which was composed of laymen, in a detailed manner defined and strengthened the rights of the laypeople to participate in the disposal of Church property under the leadership of the Church authorities. But we cannot permit the heritage of the Church to be used by people who do not belong to the Church or are

even complete unbelievers. The enemies of the Church slander the clergy; they say that the heritage of the Church was seized by them, that they used it on their own needs. This is a witting lie. The clergy has not used the offerings to the church, although they could, according to the word of Scripture, 'feed from the altar'; they have existed on the reward for their labour which they have received from the parishioners. They have disposed of the heritage of the Church with the knowledge and agreement of elected people from the parish - the Church wardens, the members of the trusts, in accordance with the 72nd canon of the Holy Apostles and the 10th canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople. In accordance with these canons the heritage of the Church is the heritage of God and is can be used only on Church needs - on deeds aimed at the salvation of people; its use for worldly needs is recognized to be the greatest of crimes.

"The antichristian decree violates the Church canons: it removes the heritage of God from the churches and hands it over into the hands of the secular authorities, thereby turning the sacred heritage of God's churches into a secular heritage!

"Brother Christians! Raise your voices in defence of the Church's Apostolic Faith, the holy things of the Church, the Church's heritage. Defend your right to believe and confess your faith as you learned it in days of old, as you were taught it by the holy apostles, the holy martyrs, the God-wise fathers of the Church, the Christian ascetics. Take care of the holiness of your souls, the freedom of your consciences. Say loudly that you have been accustomed to pray and save yourselves in the churches, that the holy things of the Church are dearer to you than life itself, that without them salvation is impossible. No power can demand from you that which is against your faith, your religious conscience: 'We must obey God rather than men', said the holy apostles. That is what we, too, must say. The apostles joyfully suffered for the faith. Be you also ready for sacrifice, for podvig, and remember that physical arms are powerless against those who arm themselves with powerful faith in Christ. Faith moves mountains, 'the faith of the Christians has conquered the pagan boldness'. May your faith be bold and courageous! Christ destroyed hades. He will also destroy the snares of the enemies of our Church. Believe - and the enemy will flee from before your face. Stand in defence of your faith and with firm hope say: 'Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered!'"

Vladyka blessed the distribution of this leaflet, and the next day he heard that the authorities were in a rage because of it. On April 24 a threatening article against him was published in a local newspaper, and he was told by those close to him that something was being planned against him. But Vladyka was as always joyful and paid no attention to the Bolsheviks' spite.

At 11 o'clock on April 26, Latvian Bolsheviks carried out a search in Vladyka's residence, mocked the holy things and even lifted up the altar, but did not find him. The same night another search was carried out in the Znamensky monastery, in the residence of Bishop Irinarch, and in the Mikhailovsky skete, which was some eight versts from the city.

On Lazarus Saturday, the authorities told Vladyka that they didn't want to arrest him, just interrogate him, and they would put that off until the Monday after the feast.

But they demanded that he keep quiet about the search they had carried out. Vladyka refused to keep quiet and said he did not believe them. And at the all-night vigil for the feast he said: "Whatever they say or do against me, let God be their judge: I forgave them and forgive them now... And once more I declare that my hierarchical activity is alien to all politics. My politics is faith in the salvation of the souls of believers. My platform is prayer..."

That night Vladyka said: "I do not expect clemency from them. They will kill me; more than that, they will torture me. I am ready, I am ready even now. I do not fear for myself, I do not sorrow for myself. I sorrow for the city, I fear for the inhabitants. What will they do with them?"

The next day, Palm Sunday, after the Liturgy, Vladyka celebrated Vespers, during which he said: "The days of the sufferings of Christ the Saviour on the Cross are drawing near. The Soul of the Divine Sufferer, waiting for the coming terrible torments, was tortured by a great anguish, and He sought strength for Himself not only in prayer to God the Father, but also asked His disciples to keep vigil and pray with Him, in order thereby to relieve the great torment which lay with all its weight on His shoulders.

"I, too, feel that the days of my passion and martyrdom are drawing near, and for that reason my soul, in expectation of the coming sufferings, is in great anguish and torment. Therefore I fervently beseech you all to support me, too, in these days by your holy prayers..."

After the cross-procession on Palm Sunday, which ended at five o'clock, the bishop was arrested and taken to the headquarters of the Red Army. Meanwhile, to prevent a possible uprising, soldiers patrolled the streets and scattered groups of citizens. Bishop Irinarch went to the authorities for an explanation. They said that the cross-procession had angered the local Jews, who had begun to incite the soldiers against the bishop. The next day the authorities told the citizens that the arrest had been carried out for political reasons in order to preserve public order. But later, in response to an official request from a commission set up by Patriarch Tikhon to investigate the matter, the president of the executive committee said that Bishop Hermogenes had been arrested on the orders of the Central Executive Committee as a black-hundredist and pogrom-inciter; but they had no documentary evidence to prove his criminal activities.

At one o'clock at night Vladyka was taken under convoy to Tyumen and then to Ekaterinburg. The convoy mocked him throughout the journey. On April 18 he arrived in Ekaterinburg and was put in prison near the Sennaya square, next to the Simeonov church. In prison, Vladyka either read (mainly the New Testament and the lives of the saints) or wrote; but he mainly prayed and chanted church hymns.

In May, a special delegation from the Diocesan Congress was sent to Ekaterinburg to petition for the liberation of the bishop before the local soviet of soldiers' and peasants' deputies. The soviet demanded a 10,000 roubles' ransom, which was then raised to 100,000 roubles. In spite of the protests of the bishop, the money (the

authorities lowered their demands to 10,000 again) was collected by the merchant D.I. Polirushchev and paid as ordered, and the authorities issued a receipt.

The delegation consisted of Bishop Hermogenes' brother, **Protopriest Ephraim Ephraimovich Dolganov**, the Tyumen priest **Fr. Michael Makarov** and the lawyer **Constantine Alexandrovich Minyatov**. Fr. Ephraim was born on January 28, 1874 in Kherson province and served in the cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul in St. Petersburg from January 28, 1908 to 1918.

The next day the delegation went in full force to the soviet, hoping for the liberation of Bishop Hermogenes. However, they never returned to the flat they had rented. Instead, they were arrested and shot on June 29.

On the third day of Trinity, Bishop Hermogenes was taken by train to Tyumen together with **Priest Peter Ivanovich Karelin** from the settlement of Kamensky factory, the dean of the second district of Ekaterinburg diocese, and the laymen **Nicholas Knyazev, Mstislav Golubev, Henry Rushinsky and the officer Yershov**.

On the night of June 26 the train arrived in Tyumen, and the prisoners were put on the steamer "Yermak". On the evening of June 27 the steamer stopped at the village of Pokrovskoye (Rasputin's home village). Fr. Michael joined them there. The next evening, at 10 o'clock, the prisoners were transferred to the "Oka", from where they were to go on to Tobolsk for the trial of Vladyka. As he went towards the gangway, Vladyka quietly said to the pilot:

"Baptized servant of God, tell the whole great world that I ask them to pray to God for me."

The arrested men were placed in the dirty, dark hold of the steamer, which headed down the River Tura towards Tobolsk. At about midnight on June 28 or 29, the Bolsheviks took Fr. Peter out onto the deck, tied two heavy granite stones to him and threw him into the water. Fr. Michael was bound with cords, stripped to his underwear and thrown overboard. At 12.30 Bishop Hermogenes was brought out of the hold onto the deck. He prayed for his tormentors and blessed them. Then with obscene swearing accompanied by blows, the guards tore off the bishop's ryassa and cassock and pinioned his arms behind his back. Since the bishop continued to pray loudly, the commissar ordered that his jaw be held. A blow on the face forced the old bishop to keep silent. Then an eighty-pound rock was tied to his bound hands. The guards grabbed the bishop and, after several swings to and fro, hurled him into the river.

This took place on June 16/29, 1918. On July 3 the holy relics of the hieromartyr were discovered on the banks of the river by peasants of the village of Usolsk. The next day he was buried by the peasant Alexis Yegorovich Maryanov at the place where he had been discovered together with the stone that had been tied to him.

Here the body remained until July 21, when it was transferred to the village of Pokrovskoye and placed in a temporary grave in Pokrovskoye cemetery. On July 27

the body was disinterred and vested in hierarchical vestments in the church of Pokrovskoye. Then a cross procession accompanied it to the steamer "Altai". On arriving at the place where the holy relics had been discovered, the steamer docked and after a pannikhida a large wooden cross was placed on the spot inscribed with the words: "Here on July 3, 1919 were discovered the honourable remains of the Martyr-Bishop Hermogenes, who was killed on June 16 for the Faith, the Church and the Homeland."

In the evening of the following day the steamer arrived in Tobolsk, where the coffin and body of the hierarch was met by a cross procession from all the city churches and many thousands of people. Finally the body was placed in the Sophia Assumption cathedral, where it remained for five days without giving off any odour of corruption. On August 2, after the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Irinarch together with a multitude of clergy and in the presence of the military and civil representatives of the Siberian government buried the hieromartyr in a crypt constructed in the chapel of St. John Chrysostom in the place where St. John of Tobolsk had first been buried.

The youth **Sergius Konev** was killed soon after the martyric death of Bishop Hermogenes, who had sheltered him in his house to protect him from the corrupting influence of the world.

Once Sergius was at school and said that his granddad had been arrested only for believing in God.

The children shouted:

"He's speaking about God, he's speaking about God."

The boy was caught and cut to pieces with sabres. They continued to cut him up even after his death because they thought that he was moving.

The youth Sergius was buried by the cathedral, not far from the tomb of Hieromartyr Hermogenes.

On September 3, 2005 the tomb of Bishop Hermogenes was opened. The body and vestments were found to be well preserved, and a fragrance came from the grave. The coffin with the body was placed in the Pokrov cathedral in Tobolsk.

## 10. HOLY HIEROMARTYRS ALEXIS, ALEXANDER, LEV AND ALEXIS (+1918) OF THE URALS

**Protopriest Alexis Ivanovich Budrin** was born in 1861 in Perm province into the family of a priest, and went to Perm theological seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1882 and began to serve in the village of Syrinskoye, Perm province. Then he became key-bearer in the cathedral in Krasnoufimsk and teacher of the Law of God in local educational establishments. In 1909 he was raised to the rank of protopriest and became rector of the Krasnoufimsk cathedral and dean. He was also a member of the schools committee, and a member of the pedagogical councils of the women's gymnasium and of the industrial school, where he taught the Law of God. In 1912 he became a deputy in the Fourth Duma, in the nationalist fractions. He often spoke in the Duma against the revolution and in defence of Russian interests.

In August (or September), 1918 he was arrested in Kamensky Factory, Perm province. Eyewitnesses recall that this was at midday. Fr. Alexis was dragged out of the church while he was serving and still in his white vestments. Pushing aside a disturbed crowd of believers, they went out of the town to the railway line, where they shot him several times before the eyes of several of his stunned spiritual children. While still alive, he was attached to a harnessed horse and pulled along the embankment of the steel railway line with his head pummelled by the hoofs of the horse. The believers buried him, and to this day his incorrupt remains repose in Krasnoufimsk.

**Priest Alexander Malinovsky** was born in 1890, had completed his studies at Perm theological seminary, and since 1916 had been studying in the Kazan theological academy. In his young years he had been a church activist and had expended much zeal on the prosperity of the parish in the village of Verkh-Suksunskoye. The reason for his arrest was his flaming sermons in the village church. The following fragments of one such sermon have been preserved on tape:

"Laymen, don't you know what is happening now in Petrograd and Moscow? There the Bolsheviks are putting their horses in the churches and cathedrals and are mocking the Orthodox faith. Orthodox! Let us not allow our holy things to be mocked, let us stand for the Orthodox faith. Soon war will begin again, again there will be machine guns and cannons firing, let us not allow our Orthodox faith to be blasphemed!"

News of this sermon was immediately conveyed to Krasnoufimsk, where the authorities decided to arrest Fr. Alexander. Red Guards were sent to Verkh-Suksunskoye. Someone informed Fr. Alexander, and he hid in the church after telling the bell-ringer to sound the alarm. Immediately the Red Guards arrived and the bell sounded, the inhabitants of the village gathered at the church. The commander with difficulty thrust his way through the crowd to the church doors, broke the lock and entered the church. Fr. Alexander was standing in the altar with a cross in his hands, wearing a raso and saying his last earthly prayers to God. He made the sign of the cross over the commander and then, leaving the church at his command and giving

his last blessings, he blessed everyone with the sign of the cross. The parishioners filled the whole square and would not allow the Red Guards to go forward or take their batyushka. But with their rifles they pushed them away, put Fr. Alexander in the cart and took him to Krasnoufimsk, while some parishioners ran after him hoping to catch a last glimpse of their beloved pastor.

In Krasnoufimsk Fr. Alexander met his brother in the faith, Fr. Lev, and together they went to meet their martyrdom.

**Priest Lev Yershov** was born in 1867 in an Old Ritualist merchant family. He left the Old Ritualists and was joined to the Orthodox Church by chrismation. Almost two years later he was ordained to the priesthood, after which he served as a teacher of the Law of God and diocesan missionary. His service in this post was so fervent that he was several times thanked by the ruling hierarch and given awards.

Fr. Lev was arrested on a Sunday in August, 1918. The Red Army men burst into the service, pushed away the worshippers and went into the altar. Fr. Lev asked the soldiers to wait until the end of the service, after which he promised to go with them and stand on trial. The soldiers agreed, and Fr. Lev completed the last liturgy of his life. Then, as the parishioners came up to kiss the cross, they dragged him out of the church. Moreover, they tore off the cross on his breast so forcefully that they injured him, and let off several shots to keep the excited crowd away.

On the porch Fr. Lev saw Fr. Alexander. The two priests embraced, kissed and, though surrounded by a tight ring of soldiers, took the opportunity to begin praying. This enraged the soldiers, and started to beat the priests on the head with the butt of their rifles.

There are no eye-witness accounts of their deaths, but documents state that Fr. Lev was beaten up and shot at the end of August, 1918. According to other sources, he was shot in the night from September 1 to 2 in Krasnoufimsk. According to one version, Fr. Lev was shot with **twelve** other **priests** in prison in Perm. Fr. Alexander was strangled by his own epitrachelion in Krasnoufimsk towards the end of 1918. One believer buried the bodies, which when uncovered were found to be wrapped in barbed wire. They were incorrupt. Now relics of these three hieromartyrs are to be found in the Omsk church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia of the Russian True Orthodox Church.

Also shot with them were “the officers **Skornyakov, Vasev and Nikiforov**”. The prisoners “were bound to each other in groups of two and three and shot beyond the city in the so-called Cold Ravine...”

\*

**Priest Alexis Konstantinovich Vvedensky** was serving in the village of Kitayskoye-Troitskoye, Shadrinsk uyezd, Yekaterinburg province (now Kataisk in Kurgan province). In June, 1918 a special detachment of Red Army soldier led by Commissar Ryazanov entered the village. This detachment had been laying waste to

Orthodox churches and monasteries, stealing church valuables and defiling holy relics. It was precisely this detachment that on February 18, 1918 had taken part in the uncovering of the relics of St. Theodosius of Chernigov. At that time Commissar Ryazanov had cut off the little finger of the right hand of the saint and now carried it round with himself. In Kataisk the soldiers stopped in the house of Fr. Alexis since this was the biggest house in the village. Suddenly Commissar Ryazanov fell mortally ill, he had a fever and delirium. Feeling the approach of death, Ryazanov saw in this the righteous judgement of God for sacrilege and ordered Fr. Alexis to be brought to him. He hurried to the dying man, who confessed his sins and handed him the relic of St. Theodosius. Then Fr. Alexis gave him Communion. Although the fever fell after Communion, by morning the commissar was dead. The soldiers, displeased that Fr. Alexis had confessed the commissar, forced Fr. Alexis to dig a grave both for the commissar and for himself. The graves were dug in front of the windows of his house. On June 23 they pushed the priest into the grave and buried him alive in the presence of his wife and children. Then they danced on the grave, saying: "Come on then, rise up!" For some days they feasted in the house of the priest, calling this the funeral wake. According to another source, Fr. Alexis was killed only because the church watchman out of fear had sounded the alarm, for which the priest was accused.



## **11. HOLY CONFESSOR ABBESS MARGARET OF MENZELINSK** **(+1918)**

**Abbess Margaret**, in the world Maria Mikhailovna Gunarodnoulou, was born in 1865 or 1866 in a family of Greek origin. Before becoming a nun she lived in Kiev. Her spiritual father was Protopriest Alexander Korsakovsky, the rector of the St. George church, in whose parish she lived. In his memoirs Prince N.D. Zhevakov, who knew matushka long before she became a nun, writes: "I saw in Maria Mikhailovna the incarnation of fiery faith and ardent love for God. Small, frail, almost an old woman, she burned like a candle before God: everyone who knew her knew that she had been born precisely in order to warm others with her love." Shortly after receiving the monastic tonsure with the name Margaret, she went to live in the "Joy and Consolation" community of the Orlov-Davydovs near Moscow, where the abbess was the very elderly Countess Orlova-Davydova. This period in her life was a heavy trial that demanded great courage, patience and humility.

On January 18, 1917 the Holy Synod appointed her superior of the Menzelinsk women's monastery of the Prophet Elijah in Ufa province with elevation to the rank of abbess. This appointment took place thanks to the efforts of Prince N.D. Zhevakov, the assistant over-procurator of the Holy Synod. And her ordination as abbess took place in the presence of Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna, who was exceptionally fond of Matushka Margaret.

The move to Menzelinsk was long and difficult. At the end of 1917 she arrived in the monastery, which was one of the biggest women's communities in the Ufa diocese. It had three churches, a church-parish school, a monastic economy with fruit trees, kitchen-gardens and apiaries. The nuns worked in the guest-house for pilgrims, in workshops devoted to iconography, gold-weaving, carpentry, dress-making and book-binding, and also baking bread and prosphoras and preparing food. The monastery even had its own photographic studio - an extreme rarity at that time. In 1917 there were fifty nuns and 248 novices. The intelligent and educated abbess was renowned for her strict ascetic life and the good order she introduced into the monastery in the old Russian spirit.

In April, 1917 the revolutionary wave also hit the Prophet Elijah monastery. By decree of the Provisional Government, the church-parish schools had to be transferred into the administration of the Ministry of popular enlightenment, but the abbess tried to defend the monastery's school from this transfer on the grounds that the property and buildings of the school belonged to the monastery and that the pupils were its novices. She declared that the upkeep of the school would from now on be the responsibility of the monastery (under the Tsars the State had paid the teachers). The unshakeable will of the abbess to keep the school's education in the Orthodox faith had an unexpected result: the city left the school in her hands. Moreover, since city girls were studying in it, the city decided to pay the teachers and provide the necessary equipment.

On April 18, 1918 Abbess Margaret was elected a member of the diocesan council.

In May, 1918 the Czech legion rebelled, and by July the whole province had been liberated from the Bolsheviks. However, battles still continued on the western boundaries of the province, and Menzelinsk changed hands between the combatants several times. In the late summer the Whites abandoned Kazan; and according to Nun Alevtina, a previous inhabitant of the monastery, Abbess Margaret at one time decided to leave with the Whites and not remain under the authority of the Bolsheviks. She was at the wharf preparing to leave when St. Nicholas appeared to her and said:

"Why are you running from your crown?"

Stunned by the vision, Abbess Margaret returned to the monastery and told the monastery priest about what had happened. And sensing that she would soon have to suffer for the faith, she asked for her coffin to be prepared in advance, and that she should be buried on the very day of her death, after the burial service.

During the night of August 11–12 the Bolsheviks suddenly left Menzelinsk. The citizens created a voluntary unit to guard the city and established links with units of the White army. On August 21 the Bolsheviks renewed their attack on Menzelinsk. The Whites held out for four hours, but finally the Bolsheviks burst into the city and began to take revenge... On August 21 and 22, they shot 150-200 people in the city. Mother Margaret was one of their victims. Another was **Priest Vozdvizhensky** of the Trinity church.

According to the witness of the Red Army soldier Ya.F. Ostroumov, the excuse for killing the abbess was the fact that the nuns were trying to defend some White officers (probably wounded) in the monastery. "Several White officers who had been left in the monastery were hidden in the cells of the women's monastery and were... shot in the monastery courtyard. The abbess of the monastery was also shot... for hiding White officers in the cells of the monastery."

According to another account that reached Prince Zhevakov across the front line, the Bolsheviks, having burst into the territory of the monastery, wanted to defile the church, but the abbess did not let them in there. Matushka fearlessly went out to the crowd of drunk and heavily armed Bolsheviks and meekly said to them: 'I do not fear death, for only after death will I appear before the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom I have striven all my life. You will only bring forward my meeting with the Lord... But I wish to suffer and endure endlessly in this life if only you would save your souls... In killing my body, you kill your own souls... Think about that.'

In reply to this they hurled insults and curses at her and demanded that she open the church. The abbess refused outright, and the Bolsheviks said to her: "Look to it: early tomorrow we will kill you..." With these words they left.

After their departure, having locked the monastery gates, Abbess Margaret went together with the sisters into the church, where they spent the whole night in prayer and communed at the early liturgy. The abbess had not succeeded in leaving the church when the Bolsheviks, seeing her coming down from the ambon, took aim at

her and fired point-blank. "Glory to Thee, O God!" cried the abbess loudly when she saw the Bolsheviks taking aim at her, and... fell dead to the floor.

Nun Alevtina has a slightly different account: "The following day [after the Whites left Menzelinsk], Abbess Margaret was arrested as a supposed 'counter-revolutionary' during a service. She was taken out onto the porch, and having refused her request to partake of the Holy Mysteries, shot her."

Immediately after the burial service, the sisters of the monastery buried her behind the altar of the Ascension church where she had been shot.

It was only the next day that the abbess's request to be buried on the very day of her death, which had at first seemed strange to the priest, became comprehensible. For the same chekists who had shot Abbess Margaret brought out a Muslim mullah to be shot, wishing to bury him in one grave with the Orthodox superior of the monastery. However, since she was already buried, they could not do this and took the mullah somewhere else.

According to M.V. Mikhailova, the daughter of a priest of Menzelinsk, in the 1970s, near the main church of the Menzelinsk monastery, which was closed at that time, they decided to dig a hole behind the very altar. Suddenly they came on a coffin. In it were the incorrupt relics of Abbess Margaret with a cross on her breast. They did not disturb the coffin, but filled in the grave and found another place for the hole...

A great Russian elder - St. Ambrose of Optina, it seems - prophesied about this monastery that under one superior they would build a church, another would be a martyr, and under a third - the bells would fall. The prophecy was fulfilled. Abbess Margaret became a martyr, and under the last superior they removed the bells from the church and closed the monastery.

## 12. HOLY MARTYR EUDOCIA OF USSURUIISK (+1918)

“**Blessed Duniushka** appeared among us soon after the [end of the Russo-Japanese War. Whence she came, none knew. She would usually come to our town in the summertime, departing with the arrival of cold weather. Whither she went, none knew. I do not recall Duniushka’s presence in my early childhood, but I would chance to meet her in our house later on, and sometimes to be present at her conversations with my elders. She was respected in the town – and somewhat feared. The peasant-women often turned to her for advice on household and family matters; they would confide their women’s woes to her, attending to her words and trusting her. But such popularity weighed heavily on Duniushka, although she realized that this was the way she had to travel to her targeted goal in life; then the cross which she had consciously taken upon herself would not appear to be beyond her strength to bear. She never gave precise replies to the questions asked of her. Her arguments could be understood in a twofold manner; and there were even times when she would reply sharply to some questions. ‘How’s that, my dear? I’m no prophet – how can I know?’ And then she would add, quietly: ‘It will be as you say, my dove, if you but pray properly for it.’ To another question, she responded with an unclear reply, and the woman felt that Duniushka was leaving something unsaid. ‘Well, what is one to do?’ she would usually reply. ‘Maybe it won’t be as you say; be patient – it means that you haven’t yet merited it. The Lord knows, after all, what will be best for you. Don’t try to find out – I’ll say a prayer,’ she would add, with a sigh.

“Sometimes there would be moments when she would be inspired to ‘speak’. Then she would become transformed, in full view of everyone: she would appear to grow taller; her cheeks would acquire a rosy hue; her voice would sound loud and self-assured; her eyes would gleam unnaturally, illumining her entire face. At such times, she would be listened to with bated breath.... At first she would speak with a restrained voice, with only the expression on her face changing; gradually, she would grow ecstatic and her voice would grow stronger, as she no longer restrained it – and quickly, very quickly, as though afraid that she might be stopped, she would continue hastily: ‘Blood! Blood! People will end their lives in martyrdom!... The Holy will be desecrated!... Brother will rise up against brother! The Nation will lose her Sovereign!... Oy!’ would burst forth from her lips, with some sort of hopeless moan.... But what she said was not comprehensible to anyone at the time....

“I recall Duniushka as already being an old woman: skinny, of tiny stature, – she appeared very cheerful and lively. Her face was unwrinkled, retaining its sweet appearance. Her eyes, in particular, stood out; with her gaze, she would pierce anyone with whom she was speaking, and rarely was that person able to bear it. She was always cleanly attired, in a long, dark skirt and a light-colored blouse, over which she wore a small, dark jacket. The white scarf on her head was always neatly tied at her chin. During the summer, she would wear small bast-sandals; in the winter, felt boots and a poorly-fitting fur coat. She always exuded a scent of rose-oil or incense, and wherever she had been present, the aroma would remain long after she had left. I would ask my father why Duniushka gave off such an aroma – and my father would explain it to me thus: ‘Duniushka leads a different kind of life; she is a person given

to strict fasting and prayer – she eats no meat or fish; on the days [that the Church has] appointed, she nourishes herself with milk and vegetables – mostly raw, and even then, without eating her fill. On Wednesdays and Fridays she eats nothing at all. She has no place to call her own, where she might go to rest, such as a home. During the summer, the peasants see her in the fields or in the forest, whither she goes to be alone – apparently for prayer – spending long periods of time upon her knees. It is much more difficult for her in the wintertime. No one knows where she spends her time during the cold winter nights. For people such as Duniushka, food and drink cease being necessities. Usually, their bodies become permeated by spiritual vibrations. As a result of refraining on the physical plane, they obtain power on the spiritual one – and, as a result of prayer and ascetic podvigs [exploits], they might well be endowed with miracle-working abilities, even during their lifetimes. Under such conditions, Duniushka cannot emit an unpleasant smell. We know of many similar cases from the Lives of the Saints.’

“Duniushka acted like a peasant-woman, but rumours circulated that she had been the wife of a prominent government official. Having lost her beloved husband, having early become a widow, she had chosen for herself ‘the way of a wanderer for the sake of Christ.’ She patiently bore this cross with honour to the end of her life, never departing from the appointed rules....

“Before the German War of 1914, Duniushka again often repeated her prognostications of calamities which seemingly were to come upon the land. No one thought of war. After all, the Japanese War had but recently ended; the nation was recuperating from military action, life had begun to settle down into a normal routine, and then – suddenly – war again! Duniushka, after all, ‘never cast her words upon the wind!’ – ‘Brother will rise up against brother! They will destroy everything acquired by their ancestors.... They will sweep away religion, and – most importantly – there will be no master in the land!’ The master in the land, of course, is the Tsar’ – God’s Anointed One! He cannot go anywhere! Duniushka’s predictions were incomprehensible...

“Before the war started, my father was transferred to a new parish in the Cossack stanitsa on the Chinese border. Our family took it hard, parting with the Ussuriisk Region and their native Uspenka. There were no such beauties of nature in the new locality as those for which the Ussuriisk Region was renowned. Mother had her own problem: it was necessary to part with her beloved farm – with the cow, the horse, with the domestic fowl.... We were moving to different surroundings, and Mama took it hard.... Duniushka would often come by; she liked to have some tea from Mama’s samovar. She and Mama were both great tea-drinkers. After dinner, I was sometimes given permission to spend some time in the dining room. From childhood, I had liked to draw and copy the pictures from my favourite magazine, Niva. Thus, being present during Duniushka’s conversations with Mama, I would become an invisible witness of what was said....

“A month before our departure, Duniushka came to say her farewells. It was the end of summer. In the dining room, the silence was broken by the samovar, releasing hissing steam. Mama poured out the just-steeped, fresh tea. It was cosy. In the front

corner burned an unquenchable lampadka. I sat quietly with my pencils and with my Niva. And I knew that I would never again see Duniushka. Today, there was much that she promised to tell Mama.... And she said: 'Don't grieve that you're leaving Uspenka. It will be easier to bear the world's woes where you're going. This trouble will come upon everyone and grind them up, as though in a meat-grinder. It won't touch Batiushka, though, and many will later envy him.' (She bent over, closer to Mama, and said something to her, quietly).... 'The war will end, and its end will turn the whole country upside-down. Insurgents will appear - leaders - who will incite the people against the Tsar.... It will be terrible!'

"Duniushka appeared pale, with faded eyes, and it was as though she did not have enough air to breathe.... 'And later, they will seize upon religion. They will sweep away that which has been gathered through the ages and assiduously preserved by our ancestors. But it will be impossible for them to root it out; the roots will remain - and, after many years, they'll give forth a most-beautiful bloom and fruit.... The Tsar will leave the nation, which shouldn't be, but this has been foretold to him from Above. This is his destiny. There is no way that he can evade it.' Being briefly quiet and, as it were, having gathered her thoughts, she added: 'For this, he will receive a martyr's crown on earth, for which he'll receive, subsequently, an eternal crown, a Heavenly one.... He will be a prayerful intercessor for the nation and the people, when the chastisement fallen upon dozens of generations for the harm done to God's Anointed One will reach an end.... The generations to come will bear the responsibility for this act on the part of their ancestors. The disaster in the land (she had the revolution in mind) will disperse the people; they will be scattered to various countries, losing touch with one another. But, wherever Russians go, they will bring their culture and their religion. At the far end of Russia, there will be an enormous earthquake. The waters will break out of the ocean, flooding the continent, and many nations will perish. Many diseases beyond understanding will appear.... The face of the earth will change.... The people will comprehend their guilt; they will come to understand how far they have departed from God and from His teachings, and then they will begin to be reborn spiritually, gradually being cleansed physically, as well. People will become vegetarians. By that time, many animals will have vanished. The horse and the dog will only be seen in pictures; and later - the cow, the goat, and the sheep will disappear forever from our planet.... People will no longer be interested in politics, and the spiritual principle of each nation will predominate...'

"Duniushka paused momentarily. I was left with the impression, looking at her and listening to her prophecy, - that she had grown extremely tired.

"We thought that she had already finished her prophesying, but then, suddenly, with a great surge of energy, she continued: 'Russia will be supreme in the world. Her name will be 'Holy Rus'. All sects and religions will pour into Orthodoxy.... But Orthodoxy, and -- essentially speaking -- religion, will draw closer to what it was in Apostolic times. . . . In those ages to come, there will no longer be any tsars or kings. In Holy Russia a prince will reign, who will come from the nation that gave us our religion [i.e., Byzantium]. He will be a supremely spiritual person, who will provide the opportunity for uplifting the moral fibre and the spiritual principles of the nation.... In the course of one of those ages, Asia will bestir herself; she will try to

penetrate into Europe, but her attempts will be futile. No one will ever overcome 'Holy Rus', and only through her will salvation come to the world.... Keep my words secret until my death. She [i.e., Death] already waits for me; she's not beyond the hills. And you, Matushka, will have to suffer cruelly; you will endure everything in a Christian manner; you will lose your children; but, later, fate will be kind to you - you will meet again...'

"In 1918, we received a sad bit of news. On the Dormition of the Most-Holy Mother of God [August 15/28] in the large village of V., according to his custom, **Father Seraphim** was celebrating the Liturgy. With shouts and curses, a group of the 'local authorities' burst into the church. They grabbed Father Seraphim and, just as he was - in his vestments and his liturgical cuffs - they hanged him upon the Royal Doors. Duniushka rushed to his defence, and was killed immediately with a ramrod. Mama later told me that all of Duniushka's predictions concerning our family had come to pass.... I have tried to record, in this, my diary, everything that I had once heard personally, having been present at my Mama's meeting with Duniushka....

### **13. HOLY NUN-MARTYR EUDOCIA OF DIVEYEVO (+1918)**

#### **and those with her**

Blessed Dunyushka - her full name was Eudocia Alexandrovna Sheikova - was born in a peasant family in the village of Puzo. Her mother Alexandra died early, when Dunya was two years old, and her father Alexander married again. Dunya's real mother was very pious, but her stepmother was of a different spirit. She tried to kill Dunya's father with arsenic, and finally succeeded. Dunya herself said that for seven years she had known that her step-mother was trying to poison her father, and had told her father:

"Don't drink that water, look, it's muddy."

In the same village there lived Dunya's uncle and aunt. Dunya learned piety from them and lived with them during her adolescent years. Uncle was the churchwarden; prayer in church was not enough for them, and they prayed a lot at home. When Dunya was nine, she and her friend Maria went to Sarov, and there an elder knocked their heads together, from which moment they lived side by side for three years. Maria would reap while Dunya sat on the sheaves and sang. They always went to church together hand in hand. Dunya would always walk in a warm scarf and homespun coat, and never showed her face. In their youth they went to Sarov, Diveyevo and Ponetayevka. Dunya recounted how they once went to see Pelagia Ivanovna in Diveyevo. She was feeding the doves at the fence. Dunya went up to the fence.

"Go away, you scamp, don't scare the doves," said the cell-attendants.

Dunya cried and would not go away. She had a morsel in her hands, and she threw that, too, to the pigeons. Pelagia Ivanovna said:

"Why are you driving her away from me, bring her here and feed her."

Some said that the love between Dunya and Maria was from the devil, others - from God. If Maria was in trouble, Dunyushka would not be separated from her. Maria was beaten by her parents, and Dunya by her relatives. They kept driving them away from each other, but they held hands and walked along singing. They also went to church as a couple. When Maria died, Dunya went every day to the church, and although when Maria had been alive they had begun to throw stones at them, when she was on her own they did it even more. They would not let her into the church on feastdays, and she could only go to liturgies she had ordered.

In her seventeenth year she fell seriously ill. She could only walk with a stick, but she was able to put wood in the stove herself (her aunt had died by this time). Later, however, when she was twenty, she became even worse. It was Christmas, and she cried out:

"I'm dying, I'm on fire."



The two girls who used to come to her took her out into the courtyard and poured two buckets of cold water onto her. Then she said:

"Take me into the cell."

Then they laid her on a bench, and she never got up again. She never received treatment from doctors, and no one knows what her illness was, but everyone says that Dunyushka was a great sufferer. She was completely chained to her bed for about 35 years and had to be carried to her execution. Several families in the village took constant care of Dunya, providing her with everything she needed. She was always surrounded by "nurses" - girls from various places who were voluntarily called to serve her. She lived in great poverty, in the same few clothes till she died. She never cut her hair or her nails.

The Orthodox Russian people does not simply feel compassion for such sufferers. They are surrounded by a special veneration, which is rooted in a special faith in the divine election and gifts of grace of all those who innocently undergo great suffering. Such was Dunyushka's reputation. She was often visited by people from afar who were seeking spiritual edification and consolation. And there are still living people who witness from their personal experience that Dunyushka had the gift of clairvoyance.

When Daria Timagina joined Dunya there were three of them: Dunya, Daria and Dunya's uncle. In her time Dasha Timagina had been on the point of marrying, but the Sarov Elder Anatolius (in schema Basil) had blessed her to go in obedience to the sick Dunya. (The elder died in 1919, and in 1927 his relics were discovered to be incorrupt.) Then other pious girls came to join them, and they created a rule. They would sing verses, kontakia and akathists. Dunya could be consoled only by prolonged singing and reading. She read well, but was unable to write. She read lives of saints most of all, bringing them from the church, although she had some of her own. Dasha, like Dunya, had a good voice. She could not read, but she could recite the Psalter and chant verses and hymns by heart.

Dunya complained that she needed a novice who could read, so Fr. Anatolius blessed Annushka to join her. She loved singing and reading, and knew the church typicon. She was then twenty-three and lived with Dunya for eighteen years. She came to her from a worldly life. Dunya forced her to clean the floor, and she would say:

"Tell me to dance a little."

And Dunya allowed it, she let her do anything. Thus she read novels secretly, without letting Dunya know. Dasha saw it and told Dunya. Then Annushka began to cry:

"But what can I do, Dunya, I'm bored. I'll run away..."

And she wanted to run away. It was still the evening, otherwise she would have run away. But in the night she saw herself in the church in Ponetayevka, and she saw

what looked like St. Seraphim feeding a bear. She went up to him, bowed at his feet. He blessed her, gave her a dried crust and said:

"Oh you idler! Look, I'm giving you something to do - go and nurse my children."

And he took her by the hand and led her into a cell. And there stood two cradles with two small girls lying in them.

"Nurse them," he said - and left.

She began to nurse them, but they began to cry. She wanted to run away. She ran up to the door, but it was like a wall: it was impossible to get out.

Anna woke up. And she told Dunya her dream. And Dunya said that these girls were her and Dasha. She persuaded Anna to stay and told her to pray to the Heavenly Queen.

I.N. records that once his father brought her some bread. She always accepted his offerings, but this time for some reason she refused to take it:

"You need it," she said.

On his way home, he met a woman who complained that she had nothing to feed her son who had arrived, she had no bread. He understood that the bread which Dunya had refused to accept was destined for this family.

Once Dunya was visited by a woman from Moscow who was endowed with a good voice. Dunya listened to her singing and then suddenly said:

"You're not wearing a cross."

The woman objected three times.

"I'm not blessed or a fool-for-Christ, I'm a sick maiden," said Dunya, "but you're not wearing a cross. Fear the Heavenly Queen," she concluded, pointing to the Iveron icon of the Mother of God.

And the woman admitted that her cross was in her purse.

People recall that Dunyushka was venerated by the venerable clairvoyant elder of Arzamas, Archimandrite Sophronius. In those difficult years Fr. Sophronius used to comfort the Orthodox, prophesying that atheism would not reign forever in Russia, but that there would come a time when our Russia would again rise in the strength and glory of Orthodoxy. Fr. Sophronius never saw Dunya, but he deeply respected her, and he used to advise pilgrims setting off for Sarov to call in on the sick Dunyushka.

"She is higher than I," he would say.

Not long before the events in August, Fr. Sophronius sent Dunya a gift - an icon of the Saviour wearing a crown of thorns. On seeing the icon, Dunya wept:

"O batyushka, what have you sent me..."

And Duniushka more than once prophesied her own death. There was a custom in the village that when someone died they rang the bell six times. But Dunya said:

"They won't ring either the big or the small bell for me."

Her girl-servants objected: "For you we'll ring as on Great Saturday."

"They'll throw me out like dung," replied Dunya.

In the summer of 1919, in obedience to the insistent demands of Duniushka, some of the girls dispersed to their homes. The rest remained. But in the end three went to their deaths with Dunya - two Darias and Maria. The only one of them who was local, from Suvorovo, was Daria Stepanova Timagina. In 1919 she was about 35 years old, having spent 18 of those years without parting from Dunya. Nothing is known about the other Daria except that her homeland was somewhere to the east of Nizhni-Novgorod, and that she had several times served the sick Dunya with fervour. Maria was a native of Mordovia. She had once married, but then fell ill with some illness of the legs and then went to blessed Dunya, with whom she remained to live.

About two weeks before the fateful events - witnesses her god-daughter, Ryasofornun E. - Dasha felt a terrible anguish and went for a few days to Ponatayevsky monastery, not far from Sarov. On her return she said that on the way back from Ponatayevsky four birds had pecked at her head. Soon after this an armed detachment arrived in the village. It was endowed, in accordance with the laws of "war communism", with the fullness of judicial and executive power. They say that the detachment was flushing out deserters, and the son-in-law of the priest, the teacher Antipas Pavlovich, made a denunciation that deserters were hiding in the house of Duniushka, who was stirring them up not to go into the Red army...

An investigation - that is, interrogations and beatings - was begun and went on for only two days. They beat Duniushka and the nurses - the Mordovian Masha did not let slip a single word. They also beat the constant visitors of Duniushka's little cabin. The whole village was in a state of great agitation. But one of Duniushka's admirers, Peter Karasev, who died in about 1962, related how the fear disappeared at the first blow, and he did not feel any pain, but felt joyful and peaceful:

"I wanted to be beaten again for Duniushka".

They summoned nobody to the trial, which took place in Antipas Pavlovich's house. There are different accounts of its course and the content of the sentence. Some say that Duniushka was particularly condemned for praying for the tsar. And extra provisions were also found in her house. The latter is quite possible, for her numerous

visitors - who included merchants from Arzamas - always brought Dunya something. Others say that the judges had different opinions and they had to refer to a higher authority.

Nothing is known about the nature of the "crime" of Dunya's "nurses", but everyone unanimously witnesses that right until the evening of August 4/17 there was a real possibility of their escaping execution. There were no constant guards around the house, and some of the girls were able to leave. Daria Timagina, the other Daria and the Mordovian Maria voluntarily decided to share blessed Dunya's lot.

In the evening of August 4/17 all four were transferred to the neighbouring izba, which had been given to Dunya by a deceased old woman, and were placed under guard. Dunyushka's house, which had been terribly ravaged by the prolonged search, was set alight and burned to the ground that same night.

At dawn on August 5/18, some women who had gone out to milk their flocks saw four columns of light rising from earth to heaven above the cemetery. At about 10 in the morning the priest Basil Radugin came to the arrested women, informed them about the death sentence and offered that they receive Communion. Dunyushka asked:

"Are you forbidden to intercede for us?"

The priest replied that he couldn't help them, and that the same threat hung over him, too. After this all four partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

At about 11 a cart came up to the house. The whole village already knew about the impending execution, and a large crowd of people had gathered, but those who came too close were driven away by the soldiers with lashes. The two Darias and Maria carried Dunya out on their arms, laid her into the cart and themselves mounted upon it.

Ryasofof-nun E. was 22 at that time, and well remembers the scene: "The people all around were weeping, but the condemned women were smiling happily, crossing themselves and saying farewell to everybody. My godmother was tall, good-looking, with a beaming face - a strong one, she was. She was bowing in all directions and saying:

"Forgive me, Orthodox, forgive me.'

"Turning to my mother, she said:

"Olga, take my coat.'

"My mother went up to the cart, but the soldiers drove her away. But my godmother continued saying farewell:

"Farewell, Orthodox, forgive me for Christ's sake.'

"And they all said farewell and smiled happily - you know, they had just had Communion..."

The cart, surrounded by soldiers, moved off towards the cemetery. The soldiers were beating Dunya with lashes all along the way. The nurses joined hands over Dunya, protecting her from the blows. The lashes fell on them, but they smiled all the while, as if they felt nothing. John Anisimov, who died in about 1924 of typhus, used to say that when they were beating the girls with lashes on the way to the place of execution, he suddenly saw a White Dove with outstretched wings above their arms as they defended Dunya. And the blows rained down on the wings, and the soldiers said that the lashes bounced back from those those being beaten as if from something elastic. At the moment of the vision Anisimov felt an especially sharp pang of compassion for the sufferers which freed him from any fear for his own life.

They were shot on the territory of the cemetery of the village of Suvorovo, fifteen kilometres from Diveyevo.

Dasha Timagina was holding Dunyushka in her arms. The first time they fired blanks for some reason. Dasha shuddered and dropped Dunya to the earth. At that moment one of the soldiers refused point-blank to shoot.

"I can't. I can see something white, with white wings, near them."

The commander of the unit swore terribly and pushed him aside. He also seemed to be experiencing some kind of terror, and was trying to suppress it with constant swearing. After the second shot it seemed that Masha the Mordovian was still alive. Ryasofor-nun E. says that she was still "quivering", so they thrust a bayonet through her throat.

Then they called some people who were standing at a distance to dig a grave. Basil Ivanovich Seednov was one of those called. He relates that when a big hole had been dug, the soldiers wanted to push the bodies of the shot women straight into the grave with their boots. But he hastily jumped into the grave and asked them to give him the bodies. He covered the faces of the dead with their kerchiefs. There is a rumour that later, at night, some people secretly brought some coffins and transferred the bodies into them, singing the burial service according to the full Orthodox rite.

After the shooting, the commander of the unit who had been in charge of the shooting read the sentence.

"They were real witches, no wild animal would have tolerated what they did."

And he added with a smirk:

"But Christ is risen, and they will arise."

More than once the soldiers expressed their terror by calling the dead "witches". The imperturbable calm and joy of those doomed to death always terrifies murderers. But there was something special here - the extreme degree of defencelessness and orphanhood. The fact that they were women, and virgins, and one of them was chained to her bed with an incurable illness - all this tore at the heart and appealed to their compassion.

Some years after the execution, a fire destroyed half the village, and many said that this was their punishment for not defending Dunyushka. Her memory was linked in the minds of the villagers with a recognition of their guilt.

Twice a year every year, on August 5/18 and the day of St. Eudocia, March 1/14, many venerators of Dunyushka from new generations gather in Suvorovo, Nizhni-Novgorod and other parts of the region. At memorial feasts they sing a song about Dunyushka composed in Suvorovo: "O our mother Eudocia..." Before the funeral they carry out Dunya's great prayer rule, which contains the troparia to the Iveron Mother of God and St. Seraphim. Dunyushka had a special veneration for the Good Gatekeeper and promised to hear everyone who sang this troparion at her grave: "Before thy holy icon..."

The spiritual eye undoubtedly perceives in the exploit of these new passion-bearers the participation of the great wonderworker of Sarov, who was not slow to come to the help of his "orphans". In this region his prayers are felt everywhere, and everywhere the traditions about his miracles and prophecies are preserved.

## **14. HOLY HIEROMARTYR PLATO, BISHOP OF REVEL (TALLINN)**

**(+1919)**

**and those with him**

Bishop Plato, in the world Paul Petrovich Kuldbush, was born on July 13, 1869 in Riga province, in the family of a Church reader. In 1884 he finished his studies at the Riga theological school, and in 1890 – at the Riga theological seminary. In 1894 he graduated from St. Petersburg Theological Academy with a candidate-master's degree. On December 5, 1894 he was ordained to the priesthood in the Petropavlovsky cathedral in St. Petersburg, was appointed to the new Estonian parish in St. Petersburg, and was made dean of the Estonian parishes in St. Petersburg province. Through the efforts of Fr. Paul, a school for Estonian children was opened, and in 1899 he organized an Orthodox Estonian brotherhood in the name of St. Isidore of Yuriev in St. Petersburg. Again through his efforts a Russian-Estonian church in the name of St. Isidore was built and consecrated on September 23, 1907. On December 23, 1917 he was tonsured into monasticism in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra by Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd. On December 24 he was raised to the rank of archimandrite, and on December 31, at the request of the clergy and parishioners of Riga, he was consecrated bishop of Revel (Tallinn), a vicariate of the diocese of Riga, by Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd and Bishop Artemius of Luga. He was a participant in the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. On January 10, 1918, he was made bishop of Riga.

Bishop Plato eagerly began to re-establish order in his diocese, which had been disrupted during the revolutionary outbursts of 1917. It was a terrifying time: burglaries, violence and murder abounded. No-one was sure what the next day would bring, and everyone was in need of spiritual encouragement and comfort. During the short period of his episcopate, Bishop Plato personally visited 71 parishes, re-establishing church life and soothing the perplexed souls of his flock with words of love and faith.

But this did not last long. In November, 1918 the Bolsheviks took power over from the Germans and declared Estonia to be a Labour Commune. On December 10 the Council of the Estonian Labour Commune decreed that all the clergy should be expelled from the country: "Popes of all confessions, as being spreaders of false teaching, are declared to be counter-revolutionaries and, therefore, enemies of the labouring people, and are forbidden by it to remain within the confines of Estonia." Two days later came a new resolution forbidding the carrying out of Divine services. On the basis of these decrees all the Narva clergy were arrested and told to leave the country within twenty-four hours. Only three avoided deportation: Fr. Alexander Volkov, Fr. Demetrius Chistoserdov and Fr. Vladimir Bezhanitsky.

**Priest Alexander Pavlinovich Volkov** was born in 1873 in Narva, St. Petersburg province, the son of a priest. In 1893 he finished his studies at the St. Petersburg theological seminary, and then became a teacher in the Merrekyul church-parish school and reader in the Kazan church in Narva uyezd. In 1897 he was transferred to

the Alexander Nevsky theological school, teaching Russian language and Sacred History. On November 6, 1901 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on November 6, 1904 – to the priesthood. On September 27, 1905 he became priest of the church in the children’s refuge in St. Petersburg, while continuing to teach at the Alexander Nevsky school. On September 24, 1907, on the retirement of his father, he took over his post at the Dormition church in Ivangorod (Narva), and taught the Law of God. On December 30, 1918 he and Fr. Demetrius Chistoserdov were arrested and sentenced to death. He was shot on January 8, 1919.

**Protopriest Demetrius Stepanovich Chistoserdov** was born on October 14, 1861 in St. Petersburg province, the son of a deacon. He finished his studies at St. Petersburg theological seminary in 1882, and then became overseer at the Alexander Nevsky theological school in St. Petersburg. On February 3, 1889 he was ordained to the priesthood and was appointed rector of the Znameskaya church in Narva and dean of all the churches of Narva. Besides, he was dean of the first Yamburg district, president of the Yamburg school council and uyezd oversee of the church-parish schools. On December 20, Fr. Demetrius was arrested. On January 8, 1919 Fr. Demetrius and other hostages were taken beyond Narva and shot.

On December 19, 1918, the Germans left the town of Tartu (Yuriev). Three days later, the Bolsheviks recaptured the town and began their second reign of terror there. On December 28 all landowners and pastors were declared to be beyond the law. On December 29 the carrying out of Divine services was forbidden on pain of death. On December 31 all “popes” were ordered to leave the city - but the priests did not obey this order. On January 4 all the Church’s property was declared to be confiscated.

In the course of 24 days more than 500 people were arrested, and more than 300 of them were shot. January 2, 1919, when Bishop Plato was recovering from a serious illness, he was arrested on the streets of Tartu by the Bolsheviks and imprisoned with several others in the Credit Bank, which had been turned into a prison.

Another of those imprisoned in the bank was **Protopriest Michael Ivanovich Bleive**. He was born on October 29, 1873 in Ollustfere, Fellinsky uyezd, Lithuania, and was a reader in the Ollustfere church. In 1894 he finished his studies at the Riga theological school and Riga theological seminary, after which he remained in Riga as a chanter in the hierarchical choir and as a reader attached to the church of St. John the Forerunner. In 1896 he became reader in the church of the Riga convent. On January 1, 1900 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Agathangelus (Preobrazhensky) of Riga, and was appointed to the Garyelsky parish in Verroe deanery, Lithuania. Here he worked very energetically, preaching, chanting, teaching in the school, helping the poor and defending those unjustly condemned to death. In 1910 he became dean of the Yuryev district. During the war he organized special services to pray for those sent to the front and visited and consoled weeping mothers and wives. On June 22, 1915 he became priest of the Ringensaya church in Verroe deanery, and on October 6, 1916 – third priest in the Dormition cathedral in Yuryev. On June 20, 1918 he was appointed rector of the cathedral in the rank of protopriest. Fr. Michael had a quiet, meek character, but was very firm in his convictions, and his sermons were inspiring. He fearlessly exposed the essence of Bolshevism, and saw in



the revolutionary events the separation of the wheat from the chaff, belief from unbelief. He prophesied that the persecutions would not destroy the Church but would engender a strengthening and renewal of the faith.

When Bishop Plato was arrested, Fr. Michael rejected the pleas of his household and went to offer himself as a hostage for the release of Vladyka. On January 5, 1919 he and Fr. Alexander Bryantsev were arrested in the altar of the Dormition cathedral, and were then cast into prison for ten days.

Another of those imprisoned was **Protopriest Nicholas Stepanovich Bezhanitsky**, who was born on December 14, 1859 and graduated from Riga Theological Seminary. On January 16, 1883 he married the daughter of the priest John Kazarinov, Maria Ivanovna Kazarinova, and had two daughters. He served in Pernovsky uyezd, then in Vyra, in Vilyandi and in Tartu - as superior of the Estonian Orthodox church of St. George. Because of an injury suffered during his youth, he could not kneel. However, in the altar he was so carried away by the services that he would often fall down on his knees - and not be able to get up. So the church warden always had to be near him and help him to get up.

While serving in Vilyandi, during the abortive 1905 revolution, Fr. Nicholas saved eight innocent prisoners from death at great risk to himself. "Standing far above all politics", he did not stand aside but called publicly for the showing of mercy of those innocently caught up in the revolutionary maelstrom. His popularity among the people rose because he was prepared to save anyone - Lutheran or Orthodox, Estonian or Russian. While serving in Tartu, he became especially popular among the students, whom he used to marry without charging money. He also helped needy families, and was in general a model of Christian love.

When the reds entered Tartu (Yuryev) in December, 1918, Fr. Nicholas, though not yet sixty years of age, was already bent and grey-haired. His matushka, daughter and grandson were in Tbilisi, where they hoped to wait out the storm. On January 4 he was allowed, in view of his age, to remain in the city until January 20. But on the next day he was arrested in the church of St. George during a service and taken to the building of the Credit bank, where Bishop Plato was with his secretary, Protodeacon Constantine Dorin, Protopriest Michael Bleive and Fr. Alexander Bryantsev. 230 people were imprisoned there. During his last hours in prison in Tartu, Fr. Nicholas behaved with great calmness and dignity, helping and comforting everyone who needed it, and was nicknamed their patriarch by the other prisoners.

On January 14, 1919, at 10.30 a.m., about 20 of the prisoners were taken into the basement and executed. A commissar came into the cell and took away Vladyka first, followed by the baker **Lutsk**, Fr. Michael and then Fr. Nicholas. "As if it were now I can see the majestic figure of the grey-haired Fr. Bezhanitsky, whom we called our patriarch, calmly and firmly leaving the room on his last journey," recalls one of the prisoners who remained alive. "In the big middle hall Fr. Nicholas was forced to take off his outer clothing and put in on a table. On this table he saw the personal things belonging to Vladyka and Fr. Michael. Barefoot and without his outer clothing, he was led under convoy to the entrance into the cellar of the bank. Here, standing in the

snow and hearing everything that was happening in the cellar, Fr. Nicholas silently awaited his fate. Several minutes later, he heard the order to descend... Fr. Nicholas crossed the cellar and went up to a low vaulted arch that was in the left corner. This was a narrow entrance into the death cell. Bending down, he went inside. The order followed to go into the centre of the cell. He had to walk right over human corpses. Several seconds later, shots rang out from the vaulted entrance into the cell. The earthly life of Protopriest Nicholas Bezhanitsky had been cut off..."

After the retreat of the Bolsheviks, the basement of the Bank revealed about 20 bodies, some of which had been mutilated beyond recognition. Bishop Plato's body revealed traces of seven bayonet thrusts and four bullet-wounds, one of which had been made by a dum dum bullet into the right eye. The fingers of his right hand were formed in the sign of the cross...

On February 9, 1919, the body of Bishop Plato was triumphantly carried into Tallinn and buried by the left kliros of the Transfiguration cathedral. The date of the death of Bishop Plato and those with him was proclaimed a day of general mourning in Free Estonia. The bodies of the two priests shot with him were buried in the Assumption cathedral in Tartu; and on January 14 each year for many years thereafter, a triumphant pannikhida for the two priests was served in the presence of the all the priests of the city - both Orthodox and Lutheran.

## 15. HIEROMARTYR TIKHON, ARCHBISHOP OF VORONEZH (+1919) and those with him

Archbishop Tikhon, in the world Basil Varsanufyevich Nikanorov, was born on January 30, 1855 in the family of a reader of Novgorod diocese. In 1877 he graduated from Novgorod theological seminary, and in 1881 - from the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. On August 1, 1881, he became assistant supervisor of Beloozersk theological school, and on April 25, 1884 - the inspector of Novgorod theological seminary. On June 15, 1884, he was tonsured into monasticism. On July 8 was ordained to the diaconate, and on July 10 - to the priesthood. On December 6, 1888 he was raised to the rank of igumen, and on December 25, 1890 - to the rank of archimandrite and rector of the Novgorod theological seminary. On January 21, 1891, he became rector of the Novgorod Antoniev monastery. On February 2, 1892, he was consecrated Bishop of Mozhaisk, a vicariate of the Moscow diocese, by Metropolitan Leontius (Lebedinsky) of Kolomna, Bishop Nestor (Metaniev), Bishop Alexander of Dmitrov and Bishop Christopher (Smirnov), the rector of the monastery of New Jerusalem. On August 20, 1899 he was made bishop of Polotsk and Vitebsk, and on June 4, 1902 - bishop of Penza and Saransk. From July 25, 1907, he lived in retirement in the monastery of New Jerusalem as its superior. On June 25, 1912, he became bishop of Kaluga and Borovsk. On May 13, 1913, he became archbishop of Voronezh and Zadonsk. He took part in the All-Russian Local Church Council in 1917-18.

Archbishop Tikhon was a very kind man who gave simple and easily understandable sermons. On January 9, 1919 (or 1920) he was serving the liturgy in the Annunciation cathedral of the Alexievo-Akatov monastery in Voronezh when a group of Red Army soldiers burst through the royal gates and into the altar. Their leader lit a cigarette from the seven-branched candlestick, sat on the throne and announced the decision of "the proletariat": the bishop, being a monarchist and a helper of the White Guards, was to be liquidated. The sentence was immediately carried out, and the archbishop was hanged on the royal doors of the cathedral. For two months it was forbidden to bury his body. Only on March 2, 1920 was a funeral service and burial allowed. It was carried out by the vicar-bishops Vladimir of Ostrog and Modestus of Novokhoper near the Annunciation cathedral. In 1956 the body was reburied in the Comintern cemetery, and in 1993 the holy relics were transferred to the Akatov monastery.

Together with Archbishop Tikhon, **160 of his priests** were shot. After the retreat of the White Army from the city, they, following the example of their archpastor, did not want to leave their flocks and were all vouchsafed the martyr's crown. Some of the clergy who fled with the White Army later returned to take up their posts, and were shot. One of them, **Fr. Metrophanes Devitsky**, was seized before he reached his home and shot in the sight of his parents, wife and children.

As the Whites retreated and the Reds entered the city of Voronezh, **seven nuns** of the same monastery were arrested for having taken part in a moleben for the Whites and were burned alive in a cauldron full of boiling tar. According to another account, they were buried alive.

Other clergy killed included **Archimandrite Demetrius**, who was killed in 1918 after he had been scalped. **Fr. George Snesev**, the priest of the hospital church of the Sign of the Mother of God in Voronezh, was also scalped, and received 63 wounds on his body. Nails and pins were thrust under his nails. He was so mutilated as to be almost unrecognizable. His relatives recognized him only by his hands. This took place in 1919.

Also **Hieromonk Nectarius (Ivanov)**, a graduate of the Moscow Theological Academy. He became a teacher in the Voronezh theological seminary. In 1918 he was killed after all manner of the cruellest tortures: he was dragged by his feet, his arms and legs were broken, wooden nails were driven into him, and he was given "communion" with molten pewter. All this time the martyr prayed: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

## 16. HOLY HIEROMARTYR NICHOLAS OF KIROVOGRAD (+1919)

**Protopriest Nicholas**, of the Kirovograd diocese, was tortured to death in 1919. Once he was serving as a deacon in the St. Isaac cathedral in St. Petersburg. At that time **Tsar Nicholas** was looking for a priest to serve at the church he was building in Iskrovka, Yelisavettgrad province. With the blessing of **Fr. John of Kronstadt**, Fr. Nicholas was chosen. He was ordained to the priesthood, and set off for Iskrovka with his matushka, Anna.

Fr. Nicholas was joyful and kind, and loved jokes. He even reproached sinners with humour. Once he reproached a poor bridegroom for marrying a rich, but simple-minded bride. At home they had taught the bride, if batyushka asked her how many commandments there were, to reply: ten. But Fr. Nicholas asked her how old she was. "Ten," she replied.

Batyushka cast out demons, healed the sick and prayed for the healing of cattle. His labours of prayer acquired for him a reputation far beyond the bounds of the Yelisavettgrad province. People would come from as far as 1000 versts away, seeking healing. In summer he said prayers at his spring, but in winter, when it was cold, in the church. Many came to listen to his sermons, and became witnesses of his miracles. Thus a woman was lying on the ground thrashing around. Fr. Nicholas read the Gospel over her, and she rose healed. Once he healed a man by the name of Timothy with the help of the word of God. On being healed, Timothy remained to live with Fr. Nicholas. He worked the land and helped single mothers.

Fr. Nicholas had the gift of prophecy, which he acquired through prayer and labours on himself. Once a girl had stolen five roubles from her uncle. Batyushka told her where she had hidden the money, under some wood in a shed. He stroked her on the head and said: "Your father needs to work a month in order to earn that money," and he told her to return it. To another person whose horses had been stolen, Fr. Nicholas told where to find them. To a third he prophesied that he would be dekulakized, that he would be imprisoned several times, and that he would die peacefully in freedom.

Once he said to his wife Anna with a smile: "Matushka, don't grieve. They will kill me, and will bury me three times, but you will hide under two surnames, And you, Demetrius, my son, will be a priest, and will have a large family!" It turned out exactly as he prophesied. During the persecutions, his matushka hid under two surnames...

In his sermons Fr. Nicholas spoke frequently about the coming persecutions. He said that an atheist power would come, and with it great trials. He also told about his death, and called on people to appeal to him in the future as to a living person and ask for his help after his death. He said that the church at Iskrovka would remain unharmed. But he predicted the complete destruction of another church, the Pokrovskaya in Lozovatka.

Once, early in the morning, novice Euphrosyne came into the church and heard Fr. Nicholas speaking with the Lord Himself. She heard the last words of the saint: "For Thee, O Lord, I am ready to suffer everything!" When he came out of the altar, she asked him with whom he had been speaking. He replied: "If you heard, then tell nobody while I am alive. They must kill me and then they will bury me three times."

On the last day of his life the hieromartyr celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and then sent the people to their homes, while he remained in the bell-tower. In the afternoon a band of reds came, dragged the martyr out of the bell-tower and dragged him along the ground by his hair. After mocking him and beating him, they dragged him to the cemetery and shot him.

The body of the confessor was found by some women coming from the fields. They buried it and covered it with branches. Later, they with some others reburied it in another place. A year later, in 1920, many priests came and carried out a third burial of Fr. Nicholas behind the altar of the church. The witnesses of this event said that the body of the confessor was incorrupt, as if they had killed him that same day.

On September 17, 2001 the body of the hieromartyr was uncovered and found to be incorrupt. Many healings have taken place through his prayers.

## **17. HIEROMARTYR NICODEMUS, BISHOP OF BELGOROD (+1920)**

### **and those with him**

Bishop Nicodemus, in the world Alexander Mikhailovich Kononov, was born on June 18, 1871 in Mezen uyezd, Archangelsk diocese into the family of a priest. He finished his studies at Arkhangelsk theological seminary, and in 1896 he graduated from St. Petersburg Theological Academy. On February 2, 1896 he was tonsured into monasticism; on February 24 he was ordained to the diaconate; and on April 21 - to the priesthood. On August 17 he became overseer at the Alexander Nevsky theological school in St. Petersburg. On August 30, 1901 he was raised to the rank of archimandrite. On November 17, 1904 he became rector of the Kaluga theological seminary, and on March 18, 1909 - rector of Olonets theological seminary. He received many rewards for his outstanding work in these posts. In particular, on April 12, 1907 Bishop Benjamin of Kaluga awarded him for his "unsleeping labours borne especially in recent times in helping the disturbed minds of students, thanks to which they stopped wandering and abandoned the thought - if not forever, at any rate for a considerable time - of not submitting to the lawful demands of the Governors". He was the composer of an akathist to St. John Chrysostom approved by the Holy Synod. He also composed akathists to Saints Nicodemus of Kozheeversk, Tryphon of Pechenga and Job the Gorge-Dweller of Solovki.

On January 9, 1911 he was consecrated bishop of Rylsk, a vicariate of Kursk diocese. On November 15/28, 1913 he was appointed bishop of Belgorod, a vicariate of the same diocese, and rector of the Holy Trinity monastery in the city. He was appointed to this diocese not long before the uncovering of the relics of St. Joasaph of Belgorod. Bishop Nicodemus worked hard in connection with this event, and composed a fine akathist and prayers to the newly glorified saint. He also wrote a life of the saint, and for his works was granted the degree of master of theology.

Bishop Nicodemus' sermons were wonderfully expressive and convincing; they left an ineradicable trace on the minds of his hearers. After the revolution he attacked the Soviet authorities so powerfully that some of his priests hid themselves, leaving the bishop alone. He also conducted conversations on religious-moral themes which attracted large numbers of people to the great hall of the residence of St. Joasaph, which Bishop Nicodemus had turned into a museum in memory of the saint reconstructed exactly as it had been in the saint's lifetime and containing many documents and objects connected with the saint. After the glorification of St. Joasaph, the bishop founded the Charitable Brotherhood of St. Joasaph, which published missionary literature, had schools and developed charitable works.

Bishop Nicodemus served very frequently and with great inspiration. He had a special, inimitable way of chanting. In the middle of week he would read akathists to the Mother of God (on Wednesdays), St. Nicholas (on Thursdays) and St. Joasaph (on Fridays).

Bishop Nicodemus governed his diocese firmly, being at some times strict, at others merciful, as circumstances dictated. He founded refuges for the aged and the widows,

and gave financial help to students. Before the revolution he personally maintained two students at theological institutions entirely at his own expense.

During the retreat of the Bolsheviks before the Germans in March, 1918, everybody expected his arrest, and Bishop Nicodemus himself did not hide himself. However, although the servants of Satan raged through the monastery, they somehow forgot about the bishop, and he remained unharmed until the autumn. At this time a conference of bishops of the south of Russia was convened in Kiev, which Bishop Nicodemus attended. At the end of the conference he hurried back to his flock. On the way, he stopped in Kharkov, where they were preparing for the canonization of the Hierarch Meletius (Leontovich). Bishop Nicodemus headed the commission preparing the canonization, and the revesting of the relics of the saint was carried out in his presence.

It was the week before the Nativity of Christ, and the Bolshevik front was already between Belgorod and Kharkov. However, Bishop Nicodemus resisted calls to delay his return to his flock, and set off for Belgorod, where he arrived, having crossed the front line. The brotherhood of the Holy Trinity Monastery were not expecting the arrival of their bishop. In fact, they were glad, thinking that because of the conference in Kiev he was out of reach of the Bolsheviks. The problem was now: how to save Vladyka, whose bold attacks on the Bolsheviks amazed everyone.

Vladyka refused to go incognito, and openly served the Christmas services, not omitting a sermon. The Bolsheviks waited for the best moment to arrest him.

After the Liturgy on the first day of Christmas, Bishop Nicodemus was receiving representatives of the clergy, the theological seminary and the diocesan school over a cup of tea. At that moment Commissar Sayenko, the well-known executioner and sadist who had just organized the Belgorod Cheka, burst into the dining room. Without taking off his hat, he crudely suggested to the bishop that he follow him in order to clarify certain questions. It was clear to everyone why he wanted to take Vladyka. The bishop asked those present to be calm, saying that everything would be cleared up, and he would certainly return immediately he had carried out the necessary formality. The bishop was taken to the former Zemstvo offices, which had become the "rulers'" lair.

The news of the arrest of their beloved Vladyka quickly spread through the whole city. Not believing the declaration of Sayenko, the people decide to gather together and petition the authorities to release Vladyka. A delegation was organized. A large group of girl students was led by **Maria Dmitrievna Kiyanovskaya**.

Maria Dmitrievna, the wife of a teacher of the Law of God in the Belgorod boys' gymnasium, Fr. Basil Kiyanovsky, had finished her studies on Higher Women's Courses, was a teacher in the girls' gymnasium in Belgorod, and then was chosen to be the director of the second girls' gymnasium. She was highly educated and a fine person, truly religious and responsive to all good in a completely self-sacrificial way. She did not hide her political and religious convictions, but boldly raised her voice in



defence of them. Her sincerity, directness and fearlessness earned her the respect and love of her colleagues, students and all who knew her.

As Maria Dmitrievna's delegation headed for the authorities' headquarters, they were stopped by soldiers who told them that this was a demonstration which could be seen as a rebellion against Soviet power. Since the women did not disperse, and demanded to see the representatives of the authorities so as to present a petition, a last warning was given them. Then one of the "commissars" came out and with the help of the Red Army soldiers arrested some of the leaders of the delegation. The first to be arrested and led away in spite of the protests of the crowd was Maria Dmitrievna. The rest were dispersed by threats and violence. However, the demonstration was successful and within a few hours Bishop Nicodemus was returned to his hierarchical residence and served the all-night vigil on the first day of Christmas.

The leaders of the "rebellion" remained under arrest as if their case had nothing to do with the bishop's case. Maria Dmitrievna showed great fearlessness and self-sacrifice for others. Seeing that she was doomed and could in no way influence the Bolsheviks to release Bishop Nicodemus, she rebuked them for their lawlessness against the Church and justice, and the commissar, having nothing to answer her, went into an uncontrolled rage which did not allow him to follow the Bolsheviks' judicial norms, but incited him to kill her on the spot. And so on the Nativity of Christ, 1918/1919, Maria Dmitrievna was shot in the basement of the building of the former Zemsky offices by Commissar Shapiro.

Her body was thrown into the same pit in which that of Bishop Nicodemus would later be thrown. This pit was at the northern corner of the city cemetery, behind the wall; and from the time that their bodies could be buried with fitting honour it became a place of pilgrimage for the citizens of Belgorod. Her body was found to have suffered little corruption. The cause of her death was discovered to have been a bullet wound in the chest fired point-blank by the commissar.

On the second day of the Nativity of Christ Bishop Nicodemus celebrated the last Liturgy of his life. In the evening, during Mattins, he was taken directly out of the altar of the Holy Trinity cathedral by Red Army men and secretly taken out through the sacristy to the Cheka headquarters. There he was interrogated and tortured in the basement. On the fourth day of Christmas he was shot in the courtyard of the fire-station, having been tortured and disfigured by blows to the head with an iron club. (According to one source, he died on September 3, 1921.)

A fireman who witnessed the execution gave the following description. When the bishop was brought out to be shot (this task was entrusted to some Chinese), he prayed and then blessed his executioners. This had such an effect on them that they categorically refused to fire at him, in spite of being threatened. Vladyka was therefore again taken into the basement. Other executioners were summoned. To avoid a similar fiasco, the bishop was dressed this time in a soldier's greatcoat.

His body was secretly buried in a rubbish pit in the city cemetery. The believers discovered the place, and soon little crosses and icons and even burning oil lamps

were placed on it. Many people went there secretly to bow down to the relics of the martyrs.

Six months later, when Belgorod was liberated by the Volunteer Army, the grave was dug up and several bodies were found. Among them Bishop Nicodemus was recognized by his monastic clothing. Also recognized were the bodies of Maria Dmitrievna and the former head of the city prison.

The body of the bishop-martyr was vested in the cemetery church, and then his coffin, covered by his hierarchical mantia, was placed in the same church. The transfer of the relics of Bishop Nicodemus from the cemetery church to the Holy Trinity men's monastery was carried out with the participation of all the clergy of the city and a large crowd of believers. He was buried under the northern wall of the cathedral near the reliquary of St. Joasaph.

## **18. HOLY HIEROMARTYR SYLVESTER, ARCHBISHOP OF OMSK**

**(+1920)**

**and those with him**

Archbishop Sylvester, in the world Justin Lvovich Olshevksy, was born on May 31 (or June 1), 1860 in the village of Kosovka, Svirsky uyezd, Kiev province (according to another source, he was a native of Poltava province), in the family of a junior deacon, Lev Olshevsky. In 1883 he graduated from Kiev theological seminary, and in 1887 - from Kiev Theological Academy, having distinguished himself for his zeal for study, his good behaviour, prayerfulness and generosity to the poor. At the seminary he became close to the future Bishop Sylvester (Malevansky) of Kanev, and acted as his secretary in the writing of the first two volumes of his Dogmatic Theology.

On October 27, 1887 he was appointed teacher in the church-parish school in the village of Lipovka, Kiev uyezd, and on January 15, 1888 - teacher of the Law of God in the ministerial school in Shpola, Kiev uyezd. Shpola was a very poor area almost completely infected with Shtundism. Having studied the sect carefully, Justin Lvovich came to the conclusion that a secular missionary would bring greater fruits than a clerical one. He wrote his ideas on this to Metropolitan Plato (Gorodetsky) of Kiev, who accepted them and on March 7, 1889 Justin Lvovich was appointed diocesan missionary for Kiev, and in 1890 - diocesan missionary for Poltava and teacher of history, pastoral theology, liturgics and homiletics in the theological seminary. He was also inspector of church schools and president of the diocesan council. In June, 1891 Justin Lvovich was sent to the Second Missionary Congress in Moscow. On February 2, 1892 he was ordained to the priesthood as a celibate by Bishop Hilarion of Poltava, and was appointed to serve in the cathedral church of Poltava. From October, 1892 to the end of 1896 he was teacher of the Law of God in the women's Sunday school in Poltava. On April 1, 1896 he was appointed teacher of homiletics, liturgics and practical guidance for pastors in the Poltava theological seminary. From October 15, 1896 he was diocesan supervisor of the church schools of Poltava diocese. On May 12, 1902 he was raised to the rank of protopriest. On December 10, 1910 he was tonsured into monasticism, and on December 25 was raised to the rank of archimandrite. He took the name Sylvester in memory of the well-known rector of the Kiev Theological Academy whose personal secretary he had been as a student.

On January 16, 1911, he was consecrated bishop of Priluki, a vicariate of the Poltava diocese, in the Holy Trinity cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra by Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow, Metropolitan Flavian of Kiev and other hierarchs. In 1912 rumours reached Poltava that the Holy Synod was intending to transfer Bishop Sylvester to another diocese. But the love of his flock for him was so great that a petition was sent to the Synod asking them to defer their intention. The petition was granted, and it was only on November 13, 1914 that he became bishop of Chelyabinsk, a vicariate of the Orenburg diocese. From June 4, 1915 he was made bishop of Omsk and Pavlodar.

In 1917-18 Bishop Sylvester attended all the sessions of the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow until January, 1918, when he returned to Omsk via Poltava.

On February 6 he was arrested in the Hierarchical House together with Protopriest Alexander Solovyev by a group of armed men. They put a gun to his head and led him, without a coat, through the streets to the building of the Council of deputies, but in view of mass popular demonstrations in the city were released on February 8.

On February 3, a Saturday, groups of parishioners gathered round the church. They were dispersed by Red Army soldiers.

On February 4 the archbishop headed a grandiose cross procession through the streets of the city. Emotions were running high. The epistle of Patriarch Tikhon was read. However, no serious conflict had yet taken place.

On February 5 the priest of the church of the Peter and Paul hospital, **Fr. I. Chokoy**, was arrested for not serving a pannikhida for the Red Army soldiers. Fr. Chokoy refused to sign the protocol of the president of the investigatory commission.

On the night of February 6 an armed detachment of sailors from a punitive squad went up to the archbishop's house and began to knock on the doors. In view of the robberies and violence caused in the city at night under the guise of searches, the servant did not open the doors. The sailors began to threaten that they would shoot and break down the doors if they were not opened, and in fact they did begin to break them down. Then at the command of the steward of the archbishop's house they began to sound the alarm on the cathedral bells. The detachment ran away. A short time later they again began to knock on the doors. To the question: Who are you? they replied that they were parishioners. The cell-attendant opened the doors. It was the Red Army men. When the cell-attendant tried to usher the uninvited guests out of the door, he was killed with a bullet from a revolver on the spot.

They seized Archbishop Sylvester, pressing a gun to his temples, and without giving him the opportunity to put on warm outer clothing, led him through the Siberian frost through the whole city to the "House of the Republic" - the Sovped's headquarters. Before leaving, the leader of the detachment shot the archbishop's steward, **Nicholas Tsikura**, blowing out his skull with what was probably an explosive bullet.

Archbishop Sylvester was placed in a dirty room filled with tobacco smoke. In the same room were **Protopriest Alexander Solovyev** and the cathedral sacristan, **Fr. Theodore Chelyugin**, who had been arrested earlier.

During this time bells were ringing throughout the city in response to the alarm that had been raised. Crowds of people gathered in the churches, in the streets and on the squares. They demanded the release of the archbishop. This had some influence on the authorities, who moved him into another room.

The next day there was a mass strike in the city, as institutions, shops and educational establishments closed. Red Army soldiers fired at the crowds to disperse them. A guard was placed around the Hierarchical House, which was later sealed by an investigatory commission.

On February 8 Archbishop Sylvester was released from prison. On the first day of Pascha, April 22 / May 5, 1918, he was raised to the rank of archbishop by Patriarch Tikhon.

Soon there began the Civil War, and Omsk and the whole of Siberia found itself temporarily outside the control of the Bolsheviks. In November, 1918 Archbishop Sylvester was elected as head of an autonomous temporary Higher Church Administration for Siberia, the first such administration in Russia. His first decree was to repeal the Bolsheviks' decree of January 18, 1918. The Church was given back its lands and possessions, and the teaching of the Law of God was re-established in the schools. In Siberia scholarly work resumed in five seminaries and five theological schools.

On January 29, 1919, when Admiral Kolchak assumed power, Archbishop Sylvester administered the oath to him as Supreme Ruler of Russia. In March 1919 he organized a cross procession through the city with the participation of Kolchak and the Kolchak government. In May-June he travelled round the Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk dioceses, delivering more than one hundred sermons. In order to strengthen the spirit and morality of the officers and soldiers of the White Army, he instituted military chaplains - more than one and a half thousand of them, and some military units were composed exclusively of Christians. The Church administration headed by him distributed more than sixty thousand appeals in which the antichristian essence of Bolshevism was explained. In Omsk they began to publish the journals, For Holy Russia and The Siberian Herald.

In August there was a congress of Cossack soldier in Omsk at which Admiral Kolchak called on all to defend the Orthodox faith, while Archbishop Sylvester blessed the warriors, giving them crosses with the inscription: "With this conquer".

In the autumn of 1919 the armies of **Admiral Kolchak** were forced to retreat, and at the end of the year they left Omsk. Kolchak was later shot by the Bolsheviks. Archbishop Sylvester remained with his clergy and flock in the city.

On November 14 the first detachments of the Bolshevik Fifth Army arrived. On the basis of the decree on the separation of Church and State they demanded of Archbishop Sylvester that he hand over the whole administration of the consistory, together with the building, the equipment and the property, into their hands. They also demanded that he clear out his residence so as to make way for Bolshevik institutions.

Archbishop Sylvester was arrested on the grounds of helping the Whites and was subjected to many tortures in the course of two months. The Cheka demanded that he "repent", but he refused. The atheists nailed his hands to the floor with nails and then

burned his body with heated ramrods. With one ramrod that was glowing red they penetrated through to his heart.

On February 26, 1920 (old style), Archbishop Sylvester died in prison, and his body was buried secretly. In 2005 the cathedral in Omsk began to be rebuilt. Excavations brought to light buried church vessels and the grave of the martyred Archbishop Sylvester.

## **19. HOLY MARTYR MARIA OF SIBERIA (+1920)**

**Maria Bochkareva** was a simple peasant woman from Siberia. In 1914 she tried to enlist in the army, but was refused. Not to be deterred, she spent her last eight roubles in sending a telegram to the Tsar, petitioning him to allow her to serve in the Russian army. Her petition was granted: she was allowed to fight under General Gurko. By February, 1917, she had risen to the rank of sergeant, having spent two years in the trenches with several wounds and a number of medals to prove it.

Concerned by the collapse of military discipline, she appealed to General Brusilov to let her form a shock battalion of women in the hope that this would shame the rest of the soldiers into fighting. Brusilov agreed, the battalion was formed under the leadership of Lieutenant Maria Bochkareva, and was blessed by Metropolitan Tikhon (Bellavin), the future patriarch, on Red Square before being sent to the front in June. The women shaved their heads and put on standard army trousers. During the summer offensive near Smorgon, Bochkareva's battalion did better than most. The women volunteers broke through the first two German lines, followed by some sheepish male conscripts. But then they came under heavy German fire. The women dispersed in confusion, while most of the men stayed put in the German trenches where they had found a large supply of liquor and proceeded to get drunk. Despite the shambles around her, Bochkareva battled on. At one point she came across one of the women having sexual intercourse with a soldier in a shell-hole. Imitating Phineas in his zeal, she ran her through with a bayonet; but the soldier escaped. Eventually, Bochkareva herself was seriously wounded, and the last offensive of the Russian army in the First World War came to an end.

In October, 1917, the women's battalion became subject to the headquarters of the Petrograd military district, and at the beginning of the storming of the Winter Palace, at about nine in the evening, a unit of the women's battalion capitulated. The soldiers and sailors arrested 137 women and disbanded the women's battalion. Only Maria Bochkareva was detained. She was interrogated in the Smolny Institute by Lenin and Trotsky. The leaders of the proletariat spoke graciously with the legendary woman officer, and were full of admiration for her courage. They offered that she work with the Bolsheviks. Maria refused outright and managed to escape from those who had arrested her.

She wanted to go abroad, to America. But she did not succeed, and was again arrested. She was stripped naked and put against the wall with other male officers. They say that as she was waiting for her execution she prayed before an icon of St. Anna. But then a miracle took place. The rifle of one of the executioners trembled. He recognized in the naked woman the officer who had saved his life on the German front. The soldier stood next to her and declared that he would die together with Maria. The Bolsheviks had a meeting. Finally, they decided to send Bochkareva to the Cheka.

God delivered Maria Bochkareva from the Lubyanka. After many trials she managed to escape to the U.S.A. There she met Theodore Roosevelt, and obtained an

audience with President Woodrow Wilson. She fell on her knees and begged him to help the struggle against the Bolsheviks. She was so persuasive that the American president wept.

In August, 1918, when an anti-Bolshevik rebellion broke out among the workers in Izhevsk, Maria Bochkareva arrived in Archangelsk so as to create women's "death battalions" in the army of General Miller. But they demanded that Lieutenant Bochkareva not shame the uniform of the Russian officer, and even removed her epaulettes. Meanwhile, in the Izhevsk region thousands of women had put on military uniforms. And they often stirred up the men to attack.

In October, 1919, Bochkareva arrived in Omsk, where many refugees from Izhevsk and Votkinsk had assembled under the protection of Admiral Kolchak. Maria Bochkareva made a last attempt to form a women's battalion. Soon she again fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks. By a decree of the Omsk Cheka dated May 15, 1920, she was sentenced to execution by shooting...



**20. HOLY HIEROMARTYR BENJAMIN, METROPOLITAN OF  
PETROGRAD (+1922)**  
**and those with him**

Metropolitan Benjamin - in the world Basil Pavlovich Kazansky - was born on April 17, 1873 in the village of Nimensky pogost, Andreyevsky volost, Kargopol uyezd, Olonets province, into the family of a priest.

Of his childhood he wrote: "In my childhood and adolescence I immersed myself in reading the Lives of the Saints and was enraptured by their heroism and their holy inspiration. With all my heart I sorrowed over the fact that times had changed and one no longer had to suffer what they suffered. Times have changed again, and the opportunity has been opened to suffer for Christ both from one's own people and from strangers!"

In 1893, having finished his studies at Olonetsk theological seminary, he entered the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and in 1895 he was tonsured and ordained to the diaconate. On May 19, 1896 he was ordained to the priesthood. In 1897 he graduated from the Academy, and was appointed teacher of the Holy Scriptures in the Riga theological seminary. In 1898 he became inspector of the Kholm theological seminary, and on October 6, 1899 - of the St. Petersburg theological seminary. On April 2, 1902 he was made rector of the Samara theological seminary with the rank of archimandrite. On October 12, 1905 he became rector of the St. Petersburg theological seminary.

On January 24, 1910, he was consecrated Bishop of Gdov, a vicariate of the St. Petersburg diocese, being raised to the rank of archbishop on March 6, 1917. Bishop Benjamin was a learned and irreproachable monk who placed the interests of the Church above everything else, even going so far as to speak out openly against Rasputin. And so after the February revolution, on May 25 / June 7, 1917, he was elected archbishop of Petrograd and Ladoga by a majority vote of the people of Petrograd (including the workers) in place of Rasputin's appointee, Metropolitan Pitirim, who had been arrested and removed from his see. On June 17, 1917 he was renamed Archbishop of Petrograd and Gdov. On August 14 he was raised to the rank of metropolitan and made a member of the Holy Synod by the Local Church Council that had just opened.

From October 27 to November 3 he was in the Kremlin while it was being fired on. A shell fell on his cell, and he escaped death through a miracle. The Council appointed him president of a commission for photographing and describing the damage done to the Kremlin.

On January 21, 1918 he headed a huge cross procession in defence of the Alexander Nvesky Lavra, which had been invaded by Red Army soldiers on January 19.

On January 26, 1918, by a resolution of the Council, he was appointed archimandrite of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. He took part in the opening of the

Theological-Pastoral school of the Petrograd diocese, and also took an active part in the organization of the Theological Institute.

In 1919, during a trip to Kronstadt, Vladyka was arrested for being in the city for longer than the permitted time. Two days later he was released and sent to Petrograd.

In March, 1922, the communists started confiscating church valuables on the pretext of giving help to those starving in the Volga region. Metropolitan Benjamin objected to confiscation, but he did bless the voluntary donation of valuables. In this he was motivated both by compassion for the starving and by concern to avoid the bloody clashes between communists and believers which had taken place in other cities.

At first the Petrograd communists adopted a conciliatory attitude, and agreed to the metropolitan's proposals with regard to the voluntary donations and the control of funds raised by the parishes. However, the authorities in Moscow disapproved; they wanted, not cooperation with the Church, which would raise the Church's prestige, but war against Her. So the metropolitan was told that there would be no voluntary donations or control by the Church, but confiscation.

As the day set for the confiscation approached, the population of the city grew restless. Then on March 24, Petrogradskaya Pravda published a letter signed by twelve clergy who were to become the pillars of the future renovationist or "Living Church". They accused the Church of "playing politics" and being "counter-revolutionaries", and demanded the confiscation or unconditional surrender of the Church's valuables to the authorities. However, the peacemaker metropolitan succeeded in defusing the situation by sending two of the twelve, Vvedensky and Boyarsky, to Pomgol, the Soviet Committee for providing help to the starving, to negotiate an agreement. The upshot was that permission was obtained to substitute other possessions for the consecrated vessels (whose handover the Patriarch had forbidden), and the appropriation went ahead in a peaceful manner. This agreement negotiated with the Soviet authorities was to become the main basis of the prosecution's case against the metropolitan at his trial...

In spite of this, there were clashes between the authorities and the ordinary believers. Thus on March 15 a large crowd gathered at the Kazan cathedral to protest against the forthcoming requisition. On March 26 soldiers were summoned to disperse a crowd at the Nativity church. On March 30, during another demonstration against requisition at the Znamenskaya church, the police beat up the crowd. On April 14, at the church of St. John, a two-thousand-strong crowd pelted the commission with stones and rang the bells. On April 21 violence was again displayed against the members of the commission at the St. Vladimir church, and again on April 26 at the Protection and St. Andrew cathedrals, and on May 4 - at the Putilov church. The Bolsheviks replied with repressions. They staged more than two thousand trials, shot about 10,000 people and sent hundreds of thousands to the camps.

In May, 1922, Patriarch Tikhon was placed under house arrest. Profiting from this circumstance, Vvedensky and other members of the group of twelve succeeded in

usurping control of the central ecclesiastical administration in Moscow. In mid-May a Higher Church Administration (HCA) was set up, and the schism became entrenched.

The renovationist or "Living Church" schism stood for acceptance of the revolution, more privileges for the lower, married clergy, the acceptance of married bishops and twice-married priests, the new calendar and other innovations in church services. They also proclaimed some clearly heretical teaching. Metropolitan Benjamin vigorously defended the teaching of the Church against the renovationists, as we can read in this account written by the Catacomb Bishop Peter (Ladygin) (+1957):-

"When Metropolitan Agathangelus issued this epistle [accepting the leadership of the Church as lawful patriarchal locum tenens], he was immediately arrested and exiled to Siberia. But Eudocimus, Antonin and Leonid then consecrated the protopriests Vvedensky, Krasnitsky, Stadnik and others to the episcopate, while they made themselves metropolitans. They created a Higher Church Administration which was confirmed by Soviet power. Then they became the ecclesiastical rulers throughout Russia. They created a programme [of twenty-eight points], in which it was said that 'our Lord Jesus Christ is not God, and the Mother of God is not a Virgin' and other points which go against our Church and the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and Apostles...

"Then in Moscow this Higher Church Administration began to demand that all the bishops and priests should recognize them, while all those who did not recognize them were thrown into prison. The three metropolitans: Vvedensky, Krasnitsky and Boyarksy went one evening to Metropolitan Benjamin and suggested that he also unite with them. He said:

"I was elected to this see by the people. Without the people I cannot decide. Tomorrow is Sunday, the people will be free. We shall ask the people to assemble at the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. Then you explain to them what renovationism and the Living Church is.'

"They all agreed to this. That same evening Metropolitan Benjamin phoned the deans of Leningrad that they should immediately announce in all the churches that some metropolitans had arrived from Moscow who had suggested that he accept renovationism.

"Tomorrow, May 28th [new style], I shall serve in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. At the end of the Liturgy the representatives of the Living Church will explain what renovationism and the Living Church is. And I shall ask the whole people and all the believers who are interested in Church matters to come at ten o'clock to the Lavra.'

"On May 28th, 1922, the people began to come together from the whole of Leningrad, and in front of the entrance they placed notebooks in which everyone's name could be recorded. From these notebooks it is calculated that 12,000 people gathered, as well as the clergy from every church. Three people: Archimandrite Macarius, Hieromonk Seraphim and Hierodeacon Herman wrote down everything that happened and sent it to me in Odessa.

"At the end of the Liturgy Metropolitan Benjamin addressed the people, saying:

"There have arrived from Moscow representatives of the Living Church. They propose that we accept their teaching. I cannot do this without you, who elected me. So I have invited all of you who are interested in Church affairs. Listen carefully. They will explain their programme to you, and then I will express my own opinion!"

"Then, on the ambon, Metropolitan Benjamin appointed eight members of the presidium; the metropolitan himself, four clergy and three laymen. Then he declared the session open.

"Vvedensky came out onto the ambon. He began to explain his programme as follows

"Brothers and sister, up to now,' he said, 'we have been subject to the Tsar and the metropolitans. But now we are free, and we ourselves must rule the people and the Church. More than 1900 years have already passed since it was written for us that the Lord Jesus Christ was born from the Virgin Mary and is the Son of God. But that is not true We recognize the existence of the God of Sabaoth, about whom our whole Bible and all the prophets have written. And we recognize them. But Jesus Christ is not God. He was simply a very clever man. And it is impossible to call Mary, who was born of a Jewish tribe and herself gave birth to Jesus - the Mother of God and Virgin. And so now we have all recognized the existence of God, that is, the God of Sabaoth, and we must all be united: both Jews and Catholics must be a living people's church.'

"When he had said this, the whole people cried out:

"We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and God, and we recognize the Mother of God to be a Virgin!"

"Then Krasnitsky came out and said:

"Brothers and sisters, the baptism of small children has been accepted by us. But when the child is just born he does not know or understand anything. They baptize him, put a little cross on him, and he grows up with the obligation of wearing this cross and not taking it off. But when he has grown up, he will learn and know everything - the cross will be quite unnecessary for him. So we do not recognize the baptism of young children, and when he comes of age let him be baptized and wear a cross. In the same way we do not recognize marriage: it is unnecessary and wrong. Why bind people? It should be like this: they should get together, register a civil marriage, and if one doesn't like the other, then let them go off in search of another and let him take another woman. We have freedom now. So we do not recognize any saints or relics. Nor do we recognize monasticism. We don't need any monasticism. Before, bishops had to come from the monks. This is wrong, because a man cannot live without a woman, nor a woman without a man. Bishops must be married, and priests also. It used to be that if a priest's wife died he had to remain a widower until

his death. That is wrong. Now there is freedom. We can take a second and a third wife.'

"Then Boyarsky came out. He said:

"Although Vvedensky said that Jesus Christ is not God but a clever man, and the Mother of God is not a Virgin, I do not agree with this. I recognize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Mother of God a Virgin... But baptism, marriage, holy relics, monasticism - I do not recognize!"

"When he had said this, the people cried out:

"We do not need your explanations. We do not want your new Living Church!"

"There was a disturbance and shouting among the people. Metropolitan Benjamin began to calm them down. When the people had settled, Metropolitan Benjamin said to them:

"You have all heard all the explanations of the representatives of the "Living Church". Perhaps there is someone who will agree to join them. But I cannot, because this is the same blasphemy which was previously preached by Arius and his followers. And so I, in accordance with the rules of the Apostles and the Ecumenical Councils am obliged to anathematize all the leaders of this living and new church and their followers.'

"Then he immediately turned towards the Royal Doors and said:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and of the All-pure, immaculate and Ever-Virgin His Mother, the Birth-giver of God, I anathematize...'

"And there and then the protodeacon pronounced anathema on all the teachers and followers of the 'Living Church'. But while they were chanting anathema, Vvedensky, fled out of the sanctuary through a side-door into the courtyard of the Alexander-Nevsky Lavra, and informed the GPU by telephone of what had happened. But Metropolitan Benjamin began to preach and give further explanations to the people. While he was speaking, there appeared representatives of the Soviet authorities and arrested Metropolitan Benjamin and the four bishops and three laymen who had been appointed members of the presidium.

"Immediately, they took them out into Gorochovaya street, where the GPU was situated. All the people who had been in the Lavra went there and demanded that the authorities release the metropolitan and those who had been taken with him. The whole people gathered and towards the evening of May 28th about 30,000 people had gathered on the square of the GPU. No-one left, they continued demanding their release, but the authorities did not release them. It was already late in the evening when the people were dispersed by a cavalry army."

The next day chekists arrived at the residence of the metropolitan and arrested him for "resistance to the requisitioning of church valuables". Meanwhile, Vvedensky took over the chancellery. Without turning a hair, he went up to the hierarch for a blessing. "Fr. Alexander," said the metropolitan peacefully, "you and I are not in the Garden of Gethsemane". And without blessing the schismatic, he calmly listened to the statement about his arrest.

On May 29, the administration of the diocese passed to his vicar, Bishop Alexis (Simansky) of Yamburg, the future false-patriarch. On the same day, Metropolitan Benjamin was brought to trial together with 86 other people. They were accused of entering into negotiations with Soviet power with the aim of annulling or softening the decree on the requisitioning of church valuables, and that they were "in a plot with the worldwide bourgeoisie and the Russian emigration". He was given many chances to save himself in a dishonourable manner. Thus even before the trial Vvedensky and the Petrograd commandant Bakaiev had come to him and given him the choice: either revoke the anathema against Vvedensky or face trial. But the metropolitan refused to revoke the anathema. (His deputy, Bishop Alexis, having recognised the HCA to be lawful, did revoke the anathema, on June 4.) Again, during the trial, the judges hinted that he save himself by naming "the authors" of the proposition he had sent to Pomgol. The metropolitan again refused, saying: "I alone did it - I thought everything over; I formulated, wrote and sent the proposition myself. I did not allow anybody else to participate in deciding matters entrusted to me as archpastor."

Also on trial with him were most of the members of the administration of the "Society of Orthodox Parishes", the superiors of almost all the churches of Petrograd, the professors of the Theological Academy, the Theological Institute and university, members of the lower clergy and simple people "of various ranks and callings" who had fallen into the hands of the Bolsheviki during the street disturbances that took place during the requisitioning of church valuables - 87 people in all.

Vladyka was called an "enemy of the people" who was working in agreement with the world bourgeoisie. He was given many chances to save himself in a dishonourable manner. Thus even before the trial Vvedensky and the Petrograd commandant Bakayev had come to him and given him the choice: either revoke the anathema against Vvedensky or face trial. But the metropolitan refused to revoke the anathema. (It was revoked by his successor, Alexis Simansky, who became the second Soviet Patriarch in 1945.)

Again, during the trial, the judges hinted that he save himself by naming the authors of the proposition he had sent to Pomgol. The metropolitan again refused, saying:

"I alone did it - I thought everything over; I formulated, wrote and sent the proposition myself. I did not allow anybody else to participate in deciding matters entrusted to me as archpastor."

The renovationists Krasnitsky and Vvedensky testified against Metropolitan Benjamin during the trial, which was staged in what had been the Club of the Nobility.

Three witnesses came forward to defend the metropolitan. They were immediately arrested, so no-one else came forward.

Once the prosecutor Krasikov prophetically remarked: "The whole of the Orthodox Church is a counter-revolutionary organization. It follows that the whole Church should be put in prison!"

In the thirties this is precisely what happened, when the whole of the True Church was either imprisoned or driven underground.

During the trial, Metropolitan Benjamin said: "I of course reject all the accusations made against me and once again triumphantly declare (you know, perhaps I am speaking for the last time in my life) that politics is completely alien to me. I have tried as far as I have been able to only a pastor of human souls. And now, standing before the court, I calmly await its sentence, whatever it may be, well remembering the words of the apostle: 'Take care that you do not suffer as evil-doers, but if any of you suffer as a Christian, thank God for it' (I Peter 4.15-16).

**Professor Ilya Georgievich Yegorov** of the Technological Institute defended the metropolitan so well during the trial that the judge in his fury brought him, too, to trial.

The defence lawyer Y.S. Gurovich delivered an eloquent speech, in which he said: "If the metropolitan perishes for his faith, for his limitless devotion to the believing masses he will become more dangerous for Soviet power than now... The unfailing historical law warns us that faith grows, strengthens and increases on the blood of martyrs."

Gurovich's speech was greeted by tumultuous applause. Then the final word was given to the defendants (there were sixteen in all). When the metropolitan rose to speak, he first expressed sorrow at being called an "enemy of the people".

"I am a true son of my people," he said. "I love, and always have loved, the people. I have dedicated my whole life to them and I felt happy to see that they - I mean the common people - repaid me with the same love. It was the Russian people who raised me to the high position I have been occupying in our Russian Church."

This was all that he had to say about himself. The rest of his speech dealt with explanations and considerations for the defence of the others. Referring to some written documents and other facts, he exhibited extraordinary memory, logic and calmness.

A reverent silence followed the metropolitan's speech, which was broken by the presiding judge. He addressed the metropolitan in a gentler tone of voice than before, as if he also was affected by the spiritual strength of the defendant.

"All this time," he said, "you have spoken about others; the tribunal would like to hear about yourself."

The metropolitan, who had sat down, rose, looked at the presiding judge in a puzzled way, and asked in a low, clear voice:

"About myself? But what else can I tell you about myself? One more thing perhaps: regardless of what my sentence will be, no matter what you decide, life or death, I will lift up my eyes reverently to God, cross myself and affirm: 'Glory to Thee, my Lord; glory to Thee for everything.'"

On July 5 Metropolitan Benjamin was convicted of "organizing a counter-revolutionary group that set itself the aim of struggling with Soviet power". In accordance with articles 62 and 119, he was sentenced to death with confiscation of his property.

Over a month passed before the sentence was carried out. In a letter from prison, Metropolitan Benjamin anticipated the position of the Catacomb Church, saying: "The reasoning of some, perhaps outstanding pastors is strange: 'we have to preserve our living forces', that is give in to everyone for their sake! Then what is Christ for? It is not the Platonovs and the Chuprins and the Benjamins and those like them who save the Church, but Christ. That point on which they are trying to stand is destruction for the Church - it is wrong to sacrifice the Church for oneself. Now is the time of trial. People are sacrificing everything for the sake of political convictions... Cannot we Christians display a similar courage even unto death, if we have some faith in Christ and the life of the age to come?"

And in another letter he wrote: "It is difficult, hard to suffer, but according to the measure of my sufferings consolation abounds from God. It is difficult to cross this Rubicon, this frontier and give oneself over wholly to the will of God. But when this is done, then man abounds in consolation and does not feel even the greatest sufferings; filled as he is in the midst of sufferings by an inner peace, he draws others to sufferings so that they should imitate that condition in which the happy sufferer finds himself... I talked about this before to others, but my sufferings had not reached their full measure. Now, it seems, I have to go through everything: prison, trial, public mockery and demands for my death as if the people applauded it, the ingratitude of men, their betrayal, inconstancy and similar things, anxiety and responsibility for the fate of others, and even for the Church herself.

"My sufferings have reached their height, but consolation has also increased. I am joyful and calm, as always. Christ is our life, our light and our peace! With Him it is good at all times and in all places. I do not fear for the fate of the Church! We pastors should have more faith. We should abandon our self-reliance, our intelligence and learning and (human) strength, and give place to the grace of God.

"... I am joyful and peaceful, as always. Christ is our life, light and rest. With Him it is always good."

On the night of August 12 to 13 (new style), 1922, Metropolitan Benjamin, Archimandrite Sergius, George Novitsky and Ioann Kovsharov were shaved and



dressed in rags, so that the firing squad would not know that they were executing clergymen. Metropolitan Benjamin went to his death calmly, whispering a prayer and crossing himself. They were all shot.

## 21. HOLY HIEROMARTYR TIKHON, PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA (+1925)

His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, in the world Basil Ivanovich Bellavin, was born on January 19, 1865 in Toropets, Pskov province, the son of a priest, Fr. John of the Spaso-Preobrazhensky church. His mother was called Anna. Once his father dreamed that he spoke with his dead mother. She warned him of his imminent death and went on to say that one of his sons would die a youth and be brought back to Toropets, and Basil would become very great. Just after he had been made Bishop of Alaska, Basil accompanied the body of his youngest brother back to Toropets, in fulfilment of this prophecy.

In 1872 Basil entered the Toropets spiritual school, and in 1878 - the Pskov theological seminary. He was a very cheerful, good-humoured and kind boy, quite tall with blond hair. He was also very intelligent, and used to help his schoolmates with their work. In 1884, at the very young age of 19, he entered the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. He was very popular with his fellow-students, who prophetically nicknamed him "Patriarch" and once jokingly censured him, crying: "Many years, your Holiness". On June 11, 1888 Basil graduated from the Academy as one of the best students; his dissertation was on the subject, "Quesnel and his relationship to Jansenism". Then he returned to Pskov seminary as a teacher in Dogmatic and Moral Theology, living very simply in a tiny annexe to a simple wooden house near the church of St. Nicholas. On December 14, 1891 he was tonsured into the mantia by Bishop Hermogenes (Dobronravin) of Pskov. On December 15 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on December 22 - to the priesthood.

On March 17, 1892, Tikhon was appointed inspector of the Kholm theological seminary. On June 24, 1892 he was briefly transferred to the Kazan Theological Academy, but soon, on July 15, returned to the Kholm seminary as rector in the rank of archimandrite. Here, besides his duties in the seminary, he was made president of the Diocesan Educational Council, president of the Kholm Orthodox Brotherhood of the Mother of God, dean of the monasteries of the Kholm-Warsaw diocese and publications censor.

On May 6, 1895 he was awarded the order of St. Anne, second class.

Fr. Tikhon's simple, unaffected ways endeared him to the local population, and many uniates returned to the Orthodox Faith through his gentle tact. This reached the ears of the Holy Synod, and on October 19, 1897 (or 1898) he was consecrated Bishop of Lublin, a vicariate of the Kholm-Warsaw diocese, in the Trinity cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg by Metropolitan Palladius (Rayev) of St. Petersburg, Archbishop Arsenius (Bryantsev) of Kazan, Archbishop Anthony (Vadkovsky) of Finland, Bishop John (Kratirov) of Narva and Bishop Gurias (Burtasovsky) of Samara.

After his consecration, Bishop Tikhon returned to Kholm, where he remained for about a year. Then, on September 14, 1898, he was made Bishop of the Aleutian Islands

and Alaska. On February 7, 1900 he was appointed Bishop of North America and Alaska, becoming archbishop on May 5, 1905.

His activity in America was very successful, in recognition of which he was awarded the order of St. Vladimir, third class, in 1901, and the order of St. Anne, first class, in 1904. In Minneapolis he founded a seminary, which was soon producing enough American priests to obviate the necessity of sending priests from Russia. And in New Canaan, Pennsylvania he founded the St. Tikhon's monastery. The number of parishes increased from 15 to 70, and all became self-supporting. As in Kholm, Tikhon continued his missionary activity among the uniates, and a large number converted to the Orthodox Faith. Service-books were translated into the English language with his blessing. A special achievement of Vladyka Tikhon's, in view of the later disintegration of American Orthodoxy into various ethnic groups, was his unification of all the groups - Russian, Greek, Syrian, Bulgarian, Aleut - under his leadership. A symbol of this unity was the first Orthodox Church Council in America, which was convened by Tikhon in Mayfield, New York, in February, 1907.

However, Tikhon did not attend this Council because on January 25, 1907, he was appointed Archbishop of Yaroslavl and Rostov. Here, as always, Tikhon made a special point of visiting all the churches in his diocese, and by his humility, approachability to all classes and kinds of people, and active interest in the details of the lives of all his spiritual children he soon became as popular in Yaroslavl as he had been in Kholm and America. But his gentleness and love were combined with firmness on matters of principle. This once brought him into conflict with the governor of Yaroslavl, who on December 22, 1913 secured his transfer to Vilnius. The people were greatly saddened, and at a grand farewell ceremony he was made an honorary citizen of the city, the first time any bishop had been accorded this honour.

The Holy Synod awarded him the order of St. Vladimir, second class, in 1909, and the order of St. Alexander Nevsky in 1913. In 1916 he was awarded a diamond cross for wearing on his klobuk.

In Vilnius the Orthodox were a distrusted minority in a sea of Catholics. But once again Vladyka succeeded in winning the trust and respect of the heterodox. However, his work in this field was interrupted by the war. He worked first with refugees, and then with the soldiers at the front. He conducted services under bombardment and maintained the morale of the soldiers so well that he was awarded a military order for distinguished conduct. When Vilnius was occupied by the Germans, Archbishop Tikhon was forced to go to Moscow, taking the relics of the holy three Vilnius martyrs with him. However, he was not detained long in Moscow and soon returned to the part of his diocese which was still in Russian hands. Here he often visited the soldiers and came under enemy fire.

Once he was entrusted by the Synod with travelling to Tobolsk, where Bishop Barnabas, supported by Rasputin, had on his own initiative carried out the glorification of a saint. As always, the archbishop carried out his obedience with tact, and succeeded in reconciling the warring parties.

During the war Archbishop Tikhon was frequently called upon to attend meetings of the Holy Synod. On January 29, 1917, on his way to one such meeting, he stopped in his native land of Pskov and served the Divine Liturgy and a moleben for the granting of victory to the Russian armies in the Trinity cathedral. That evening, however, at a meeting with the seminarians, he prophesied terrible times to come for Russia, and great sorrows and deprivations for everyone without exception...

After the abdication of the Tsar and the coming to power of the Provisional Government in March, 1917, Archbishop Tikhon was a member of the Synod under its new procurator, Prince Lvov. However, there was so much friction between Lvov and the members of the Synod that in April the procurator dismissed all of them except the future traitor of the Russian Church inside Russia, Archbishop Sergius of Finland. Sergius became head of the new Synod, which also included the future traitor of the Russian Church in America, Metropolitan Platon of Georgia.

Since Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow had been among those removed from his see, it was necessary to elect a new metropolitan. On June 19, 1917, a congress of the clergy and laity of the diocese of Moscow met and on June 23 / July 6 elected Tikhon as Archbishop of Moscow and Kolomna. The decisive vote took place before the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God. However, this appointment caused some pain to him, because for a long time the lawful incumbent of the see of Moscow, Metropolitan Macarius, protested against his removal and did not want to recognize it as lawful. Some years later, the two holy hierarchs were reconciled.

Metropolitan Tikhon immediately set about visiting all the churches of his diocese, and became a member of the committee to prepare the election of delegates to the forthcoming Local Council of the Russian Church.

At about this time Bishop Joannicius of Archangelsk arrived at the Solovki monastery to supervise monastic life there. As he was coming towards the monastery hospital in the company of the monastery's clergy and monks, he met a monk named Tikhon whom the brotherhood considered to be mad and who ran up to the window, opened it, stood on the sill and started to bless the approaching company with both hands, crying:

"We, humble Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, declare..."

Then he looked at the bishop who was just entering and said:

"and we bless you."

Surprised by this strange behaviour, the bishop asked the superior who this was. And he received the reply:

"This is Monk Tikhon, who already a year ago, having gone out of his mind, began to go up to the window and bless the people entering, saying similar things."

It is not known whether the bishop was satisfied by this reply. But soon the election of Archbishop Tikhon to the patriarchate gave a prophetic significance to the acts of Monk Tikhon...

On August 15, 1917, the Local Council of the Russian Church opened in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow attended by 564 delegates. On the day before the opening of the Council Archbishop Tikhon was promoted to the rank of Metropolitan. He was elected president of the Council by 407 votes to 33.

While the Council was in session, the Kremlin was being bombarded by the Bolsheviks, who were resisted only by a small force of junkers. When the Kremlin fell, everybody in the Council was very worried by the fate of the young men who had fallen into the hands of the Bolsheviks, and on the fate of the holy things that had been fired at. The first to enter the Kremlin when access was made possible was Metropolitan Tikhon at the head of a small group of Council delegates. These delegates witnessed that the metropolitan went everywhere fearlessly, paying no attention to the savage soldiery.

The first major question before the Council was the restoration of the patriarchate, which had been abolished by Peter the Great in 1700. 200 delegates participated in the Section on the Higher Church Administration which was to decide this question, and for a long time the opponents of the patriarchate, led by the future renovationist Professor Titlinov, waged a bitter struggle against its restoration. However, the Bolshevik coup on October 25 changed the mood of the Council, and on October 31, at the suggestion of Count Paul Mikhailovich Grabbe, nominations of candidates took place.

On the first secret ballot, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov received 101 votes, Archbishop Arsenius of Novgorod - 27 votes, and Metropolitan Tikhon - 23 votes. On the second ballot, only the first three candidates on the first ballot were considered. Archbishop Anthony got 159 votes, Archbishop Arsenius - 148 votes, and Metropolitan Tikhon - 125 votes. These three names were then put in a blessed urn and placed before the famous wonderworking Vladimir icon of the Mother of God. On the following morning, October 28, after the Divine Liturgy and a moleben served to the Holy Hierarchs of Moscow, Elder Alexis of Zossima hermitage drew out one of the names and handed it to Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev, the future hieromartyr. Metropolitan Vladimir crossed himself and read out:

"Tikhon, Metropolitan of Moscow, Axios!"

A delegation from the Council headed by Metropolitan Vladimir went to the Trinity podvorye, where Metropolitan Tikhon was staying. After a moleben had been served, the Patriarch-elect said: "Your news about my election as Patriarch is for me that scroll on which was written: 'Tears, groans and mourning.' Such was the scroll that the Prophet Ezekiel had to eat. How many tears I shall have to swallow and how many groans let out in the patriarchal service that is set before me, and especially at such a terrible time! Like the ancient leader of the Hebrew people, Moses, I shall have to say to the Lord: 'Why dost Thou torment Thy servant? And why have I not found

mercy before Thine eyes, that Thou shouldst lay upon me the burden of the whole of this people? Did I bear this people in my womb and give birth to it, that Thou shouldst say to me: bear it in your hands as a nanny bears a child? I alone cannot bear all this people, for it is heavy for me' (Numbers 11.11-14). From now on the care of all the Russian churches is laid upon me, and I must care for them every day. And who could be happy with that, even if he were among those who are stronger than me? But may the will of God be done! I find strength in the fact that I did not seek this election, and it came in spite of me and in spite of men, in accordance with the lot of God. I trust that the Lord Who has called me will Himself help me through His almighty grace to bear the burden laid upon me and will make it light. A consolation and encouragement for me is the fact that my election has not taken place without the will of the All-Pure Mother of God. Twice she, through the presence of her honourable Vladimir icon has been present in the cathedral of the Saviour at my election. This time the lot was drawn from her wonderworking image. I have as it were come under her honourable omophorion. May she the all-powerful one stretch out to me, the weak one, the hand of her help, and may she deliver this city and all the Russian land from every need and sorrow."

Then he withdrew to the Holy Trinity - St. Sergius Lavra to prepare to receive his lofty rank.

Soon the word went through Moscow that God had chosen, not "the cleverest" (umneyshij), Anthony, or "the strictest" (strozhayshij), Arsenius, but "the kindest" or "the quietest" (tishayshij), Tikhon. And on November 21 / December 4, 1917, Metropolitan Tikhon was enthroned as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in the Kremlin Dormition cathedral.

As he received the staff of St. Peter from Metropolitan Vladimir, the newly elected Patriarch expressed his sorrow at the tragic events that were taking place around him: "The patriarchate," he said, "is being restored in Rus' at a terrible time, in the midst of shooting and weapons of death-dealing fire. Probably it will itself be forced to resort more than once to bans in order to bring the disobedient to their senses and restore church order. But as in ancient times the Lord appeared to the Prophet Elijah not in the storm or in the earthquake but in the coolness and the breath of a quiet breeze, so now to our pusillanimous reproaches: 'Lord, the sons of Russia have abandoned Thy covenant, they have destroyed Thy altars, they have fired at the holy things of the churches and the Kremlin, they have slaughtered Thy priests' - the quiet breath of Thy words is heard: 'There are still seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the contemporary Baal and have not betrayed the true God.' And the Lord as it were says to me: 'Go and search for those for whose sake the Russian Land still stands and is maintained. But do not abandon the lost sheep who are doomed to destruction and slaughter - sheep who are truly pitiful. Shepherd them, and for this take this, the staff of goodwill. With it search out the lost sheep, return the oppressed, bind up the wounds of the wounded, strengthen the sick, destroy those who have grown fat and obstreperous, shepherd them with justice.' May the Chief Shepherd Himself help me in this, through the prayers of the All-Holy Birth-Giver of god and the Holy Hierarchs of Moscow. May God bless you all with His Grace. Amen."

After the Liturgy the Patriarch went round the Kremlin in a cross procession, sprinkling the wall with holy water.

Patriarch Tikhon immediately had to face a great test of his leadership as the new Bolshevik regime passed law after law restricting and robbing the Church, while excesses and murders of Church servers throughout the country increased. He did not wait for the delegates to the Council to return from their Christmas recess, but immediately took upon himself the whole responsibility for rebuking the communists. On January 19, 1918, he anathematized the Bolsheviks and their co-workers, saying: "I adjure all of you who are faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ not to commune with such outcasts of the human race in any matter whatsoever". Addressing the pastors and archpastors, he said: "Do not hesitate for a moment in your spiritual activity, but with fiery zeal call your children to defend the rights of the Orthodox Church which are now being trampled on. Immediately organize spiritual unions, call on them to enter, not of necessity but voluntary, into the ranks of the spiritual warriors, who oppose external force with the force of their holy inspiration..." The decree ended with an appeal to defend the Church, if necessary, to the death. This was read out by Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan to a closed session of the Council, which immediately supported the Patriarch with an epistle of its own.

In March, the Patriarch condemned the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which separated the Ukraine and Kiev, the mother of all Russian cities, in enemy hands and left millions of Russians in captivity, freeing the Bolsheviks to turn the war into a civil one. In May he made a triumphant journey to Petrograd, where the faithful greeted him en masse and with great joy. In July, on hearing of the killing of the Tsar and his family, he immediately served a pannikhida and funeral Liturgy during a session of the Council. He condemned the murders, and warned that anyone who did not likewise condemn it was also guilty of this most terrible of crimes.

Shortly afterwards some members of the Council suggested to the Patriarch that he take refuge abroad, so that he not share in the fate of the Tsar. "The flight of the Patriarch," replied his Holiness, "would play into the hands of the enemies of the Church. Let them do with me what they want."

In October, 1918 the Patriarch again condemned the Red terror, saying: "It is not our task to judge earthly governments. Every government allowed by God would attract blessing if it were truly a servant of the Lord for the benefit of its subjects and were a deterrent not for good deeds but for bad (Rom. 13.34). But now to you who use your powers for the persecution of the innocent, we direct our word of warning. Celebrate the anniversary of your rule by freeing the imprisoned, cease the bloodshed, violence, destruction, persecution of the faith, turn not to destroying, but to maintaining order and laws, give the people their well-deserved rest from civil war. Otherwise you will have to answer for all the righteous blood shed by you (Luke 11.51), and you who have taken the sword will perish by the sword (Matthew 26.52)."

When this epistle was read out at a united session of the Synod and the Higher Church Council, many tried to dissuade the Patriarch from publishing it, indicating that it would put him in great danger. The Patriarch listened carefully to all this, but

did not change his decision. However, the Muscovites feared for the Patriarch's life, and organized 24-hour guards at his residence so that the alarm could be sounded immediately if he was arrested.

On November 24, 1918 his Holiness was subjected to house arrest, and a search was conducted in his flat. On January 6, 1919 he was released under guard. In the course of 1920 the Patriarch was often subjected to house arrest.

As the civil war progressed Patriarch Tikhon adopted a strictly apolitical stance that reflected the fact that there were millions of Russian Orthodox on either side of the conflict. Thus in the autumn of 1919, when the White armies had captured Orel and threatened Moscow, he issued an epistle to the clergy requiring that they not enter into the political struggle, while at the same time reminding them that the commandments of God are more binding than any human directives: "Remember the canonical rules, archpastors and fathers, and the testaments of the holy apostles: 'Guard yourselves from those who create discord and dissension'. Decline from participation in political parties and speeches, obey your human superiors in external matters (I Peter 2.14), give no reasons to the Soviet authorities to suspect you, submit to their commands insofar as they do not contradict faith and piety, for we must obey God, according to the apostolic exhortation, more than men (Acts 4.19; Galatians 1.10)."

On November 7/20, 1920, as the White armies boarded the ships taking them to Constantinople with several Russian hierarchs on board, he issued his famous ukaz no. 362, which authorized hierarchs who were out of touch with the centre to form their own autonomous administrations. This not only gave the émigré bishops the basis for their independent activity, but also helped the patriarchal Church to survive during the ascendancy of "the Living Church" and was used by the Catacomb Church after the apostasy of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927.

In 1921 a terrible famine struck the Volga region. Tikhon immediately authorized that the Church send aid to the starving, and in August appealed to foreign Christian leaders for help. But the Bolsheviks saw in this tragedy an opportunity to oppress the Church even further, and letters began appearing in the press accusing the Church of greed and demanding that all the Church's wealth should be used to feed the hungry. The Patriarch then issued a statement authorizing that all the church valuables could be donated, but only voluntarily and excluding those which were consecrated for use in the Divine Liturgy.

In February, 1922, the Bolsheviks decreed that the local soviets should seize all the valuables from the churches. This led to bloody clashes between the local soviets and believers. Many Orthodox suffered martyrdom defending the Church from sacrilege, many were brought to trial. On May 6 the Patriarch himself was placed under house arrest in the Troitskoye podvorye, being accused of "resistance to the requisitioning of church valuables" under articles 62 and 119 of the criminal code.

At one such trial, that of the 54 in Moscow in May, the Patriarch appeared as a witness for the defence.



President: "Do you consider the state's laws obligatory or not?"

Patriarch: "Yes, I recognize them, *to the extent that they do not contradict the rules of piety.*"

President: "You ordered that your appeal calling on the people to disobey the authorities [this was the statement on church valuables] should be read out to the whole people.

Patriarch: "The authorities well know that in my appeal there was no call [to the people] to resist the authorities, but only to preserve their holy things, and in the name of their preservation to ask the authorities to allow their value to be paid in money, and, by helping their starving brothers in this way, to preserve their holy things."

President: "Well this call will cost the lives of your faithful servants."

At this point he pointed with his hand to those on trial.

Then, according to another source, the testimony of eye-witnesses, Patriarch Tikhon cast a loving look at the priests of the bench of the accused and said: 'I always said and continue to say... that I alone am guilty of everything, and this is only my Christian army, obediently following the commands of the head sent to her by God. But if a redemptive sacrifice is necessary, if the death of innocent sheep of the flock of Christ is necessary' - at this point the voice of the Patriarch was raised and it became audible in all the corners of the huge hall, and he himself as it were grew tall as, addressing the accused, he raised his hands and blessed them, loudly and distinctly pronouncing the words - 'I bless the faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ to go to torment and death for Him'. The accused fell on their knees. Both the judges and the prosecutors fell silent... The session did not continue that evening. In the morning the verdict was pronounced: 18 priests were to be shot. When they were being led out of the hall, they began to chant: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life".

Among the critics of the Patriarch on the question of church valuables was a group of pro-revolutionary "renovationist" clergy, who created the so-called "Living Church". In this same month of May they took advantage of the Patriarch's transfer to the Donskoy monastery to seize control of the Church's central administration.

Soon the renovationists were attacking several of the basic dogmas of the Church, and introduced several modernist innovations such as the new calendar and married bishops. They adopted a vigorously pro-Soviet and anti-patriarchal policy. The GPU supported them while imprisoning those clergy who remained loyal to the Patriarch. Soon most of the churches in Moscow and about a third of those in the whole country were in their hands. However, the masses of the people remained faithful to the Patriarch, who in April, 1922 was imprisoned in the Taganka prison pending his trial.

At this last liturgy in freedom, on April 24 / May 7, Fr. Michael Polsky concelebrated with the Patriarch in the village of Bogorodsk in Moscow. "Late at night, before this, he returned from the Cheka. He had only just been interrogated cruelly and for a long time. At home, among those close to him, who were tormented with expectation, the Patriarch said:

"This time they interrogated me really strictly..."

"What will happen to you?" asked one anxiously.

"They promised to cut off my head," replied the Patriarch with his usual geniality.

"He served the liturgy – as always, with not the slightest trace of nervousness or even tension in prayer. Looking at him, who was preparing himself for prison, and perhaps also for execution (that was a serious threat at the time), I involuntarily remembered the words of Christ: 'The prince of this world come, and will find nothing of his own in Me'. Let them accuse, they will find nothing, he will be innocent..."

At their second council, which met in Moscow in April, 1923, the renovationists first heaped praises on the revolution, which they called a "Christian creation", on the Soviet government, which they said was the first government in the world that strove to realize "the ideal of the Kingdom of God", and on Lenin: "First of all, we must turn with words of deep gratitude to the government of our state, which, in spite of the slanders of foreign informers, does not persecute the Church... The word of gratitude and welcome must be expressed by us to the only state in the world which performs, without believing, that work of love which we, believers, do not fulfil, and also to the leader of Soviet Russia, V.I. Lenin, who must be dear also to church people..."

The council tried Patriarch Tikhon in absentia, and deprived him not only of his clerical orders but also of his monasticism, calling him thenceforth "layman Basil Bellavin". Then the patriarchate itself was abolished, its restoration being called a counter-revolutionary act. Finally, some further resolutions were adopted allowing white clergy to become bishops, and priests to remarry, and introducing the Gregorian calendar. When the decisions of the council were taken to the Patriarch for his signature, he calmly wrote: "Read. The council did not summon me, I do not know its competence and for that reason cannot consider its decision lawful."

46 "bishops" out of the 73 who attended the council signed the decree condemning the Patriarch. One of them, Joasaph (Shishkovsky), told Fr. Basil Vinogradov: "The leaders of the council Krasnitsky and Vvedensky gathered all those present at the 'council' of bishops for this meeting. When several direct and indirect objections to these leaders' proposal to defrock the Patriarch began to be expressed, Krasnitsky quite openly declared to all present: 'He who does not immediately sign this resolution will only leave this room straight for the prison.' The terrorized bishops (including Joasaph himself) did not find the courage to resist in the face of the threat of a new prison sentence and forced labour in a concentration camp and... signed, although almost all were against the resolution. None of the church people had any doubt that

the 'council's' sentence was the direct work of Soviet power and that now a criminal trial and bloody reprisal against the Patriarch was to be expected at any time."

The pressures on the Patriarch were mounting inexorably, with daily visits from the GPU agent Tuchkov, who made blackmail threats to force him to make concessions to the State. (Tikhon called him "an angel of Satan".) In April, the government announced that the Patriarch was about to go on trial on charges arising from the trials of the 54 in Moscow and of Metropolitan Benjamin in Petrograd the previous year. However, partly because the authorities wanted to give the renovationist council the opportunity to condemn him first, and partly, later, as the result of an ultimatum issued by the British foreign minister Lord Curzon, which was supported by an outcry in the British and American press, the trial was postponed to June 17.

At the beginning of June, the Patriarch fell ill and was transferred from the Donskoy monastery to the Taganka prison. There he was able to receive only official Soviet newspaper accounts of the Church struggle, which greatly exaggerated the successes of the renovationists. Feeling that his presence at the helm of the Church was absolutely necessary, and that of his two enemies, the renovationists and the communists, the renovationists were the more dangerous, the Patriarch decided to make concessions to the government in order to be released. As he said: "Reading the newspapers in prison, with each passing day I was more and more horrified that the renovationists were taking the Church into their hands. If I had known that their successes were so meagre and that the people was not following them, I would never have come out of prison." But, being in ignorance of the true state of affairs, on June 3/16 and again on June 18 / July 1 he issued his famous "confession", in which he repented of all his anti-Soviet acts (including the anathema against the Bolsheviks), and "finally and decisively" set himself apart "from both the foreign and the internal monarchist White-guard counter-revolutionaries".

This "confession" was undoubtedly a compromise, a concession in favour of the Bolsheviks, which sowed no little confusion and perplexity in the ranks of the Orthodox. However, as Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky) points out: "1) it did not annul the anathema in the name of the Russian Orthodox Church on Soviet power, 2) he did not declare himself a friend of Soviet power and its co-worker, 3) it did not invoke God's blessing on it, 4) it did not call on the Russian people to obey this power as God-established, 5) it did not condemn the movement for the re-establishment of the monarchy in Russia, and 6) it did not condemn the Whites' struggle to overthrow Soviet power. By his declaration Patriarch Tikhon only pointed to the way of acting which he had chosen for the further defence and preservation of the Russian Orthodox Church. How expedient this way of acting was is another question,... but in any case Patriarch Tikhon did not cross that boundary which had to separate him, as head of the Russian Orthodox Church, from the godless power."

Moreover, as reported in *Izvestia* on June 12, 1924, the Patriarch managed to write to Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), as it were replying to the perplexities elicited by his words on "walling himself off" from the "counter-revolution" of the Church Abroad: "I wrote this for the authorities, but you sit and work" ...

Tikhon was released on June 27, 1923, and his appearance in public – he had aged terribly in prison – was enough to send the Living Church into a sharp and irreversible decline. They remained dangerous as long as they retained the favour of the authorities; but by 1926 the authorities were already turning to others (the Gregorians, then Metropolitan Sergius) as better suited for the task of destroying the Church. And by the end of the Second World War the last remaining renovationists had been absorbed into the neo-renovationist Soviet Moscow Patriarchate. However, the Patriarch bitterly repented of his “repentance”; he said that if he had known how weak the Living Church really was, he would not have signed the “confession” and would have stayed in prison. And when he was sadly asked why he had said that he was no longer an enemy of the Soviet government, he replied: “But I did not say that I was its (i.e. the Soviet government’s) friend...”

We see a striking parallel between the destinies and decisions of Patriarch Tikhon and Tsar Nicholas here. Both were peacemakers, ready to lay down their own lives for the sake of their flock. Both, in the interests of saving lives, made fateful decisions which both came bitterly to regret – the Tsar his decision to abdicate the throne, and the Patriarch his decision to “repent” of his anti-Soviet behaviour. But in spite of these mistakes, both were granted the crown of life from the Lord, Who looks on the heart and intentions of men, forgiving them their unintended consequences...

Protopriest Lev Lebedev writes: “On freeing Patriarch Tikhon from prison, [the Bolsheviks] at the same time officially *forbade* the commemoration of his name during the Divine services, as *a criminal* whose accusation *had not been removed*... For violating this ban, according to the circular of Narkomiust N 254 of December 8, 1923, those guilty (that is, those who would continue to consider the Patriarch the head of the Church and commemorate him during the Divine services) were subjected to *the punishment appointed for criminals* – three years in the camps! But in spite of everything the people, the priests and deacons *continued to commemorate him!*”

The Patriarch, though now released from prison, was severely curtailed in what he could do. Once he told Fr. Michael Polsky, who brought him greetings and bows from bishops and priests who were in prison: “It’s better to sit in prison. After all, I only consider myself to be in freedom, but I can do nothing. I send a hierarch to the south, and he lands up in the north; I send another to the west, and they take him to the east.”

On July 15, the Patriarch anathematized the Living Church, declaring: “They have separated themselves from the body of the Ecumenical Church and deprived themselves of God’s favour, which resides only in the Church of Christ. Consequently, all arrangements made during our absence by those ruling the Church, since they had neither legal right nor canonical authority, are non-valid and void, and all actions and sacraments performed by bishops and clergymen who have forsaken the Church are devoid of God’s grace and power; the faithful taking part in such prayers and sacraments shall receive no sanctification thereby, and are subject to condemnation for participating in their sin...”

Large numbers of parishes, especially in such important urban centres as Petrograd (through Bishop Manuel (Lemeshevsky)) and Voronezh (through Archbishop Peter (Zverev)), now renounced renovationism, and influential renovationist hierarchs such as Metropolitan Sergius hastened (and yet not very quickly, as Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene of Glukhov pointed out) to make public confessions to the Patriarch.

The authorities then tried to make the Patriarch introduce several of the innovations which the renovationists had adopted. One of these was the new calendar. For a short time, the Patriarch was in favour of this, thinking that the other Orthodox Churches had accepted the new calendar. However, the people were against it, and when he received a telegram from Archbishop Anastasius of Kishinev, the future first-hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, saying that the other Orthodox Churches had not accepted the new calendar, the Patriarch reversed his decision. He informed the authorities about this, and noted with some irony that he did not quite understand why the secular authorities should be interested in changing to the new style...

"The brutal persecution," writes Fr. Demetrius Serfes, "did not let up during the entire remaining period of the Patriarch's life. They wished thereby to make him their obedient slave, as Metropolitan Sergius subsequently became, but he remained a guardian of Orthodoxy. Never during the Church's entire history had it ever been confronted by such a cruel and evil foe. The Patriarch literally fell ill after every encounter with Tuchkov, who directed Soviet ecclesiastical policy. The Patriarch was not afraid of martyrdom. The most savage death would probably have been easier for him than having to be constantly concerned over exiled bishops, priests and faithful laymen. On the other hand, as the breakdown which took place during his imprisonment indicated, it would seem that it was essential to do everything possible without changing the fundamental principles of the Church and its internal freedom, so that the recent state of affairs under which the sheep were abandoned to the mercy of wolves, would not occur again. The sheep however, realized that their shepherd had not forsaken them, but had been parted from them against his will. And they showed their love for him whenever possible."

In February, 1924, one of the renovationist leaders, Krasnitsky, with GPU backing, tried to join the patriarchal Church. After some wavering, the Patriarch rejected this, though the effort caused him to fall ill. Then Patriarch Gregory IV of Constantinople, who had just caused a schism in his own Church by introducing the new calendar, tried to reconcile the Patriarch with the "Living Church". The Patriarch decisively rejected this attempt.

On March 21, 1924 the case against Patriarch Tikhon was shelved. The Bolsheviks now resorted to another tactic. Instead of trying to remove the Patriarch, whose popularity was too solidly entrenched among the people, they tried to force him into accepting legalization by the state on terms that involved more-or-less total submission to them. To this end they applied blackmail - the threat of shooting several bishops. Under this terrible moral torture, the Patriarch's health began to deteriorate...

At about this time the Patriarch confided to his close friend and personal physician, Michael Zhizhilenko, the future Catacomb Bishop Maximus, that he feared that soon

the "political" demands of the Soviets would go beyond the bounds of faithfulness to Christ, and that the Church, in order to remain faithful, would have to go into the catacombs.

On December 7, 1924, the Patriarch sent an epistle to all the clergy of the Church, in which he wrote: "Whoever was in the administration of the Living Church in the HCA cannot take up any further administrative position in our Church. And not only can he not be an administrator: he cannot have a vote during a Council." This was an important decree, because it disqualified the man who eventually became "patriarch" after Patriarch Tikhon, Metropolitan Sergius of Nizhni-Novgorod, who had been in the renovationist HCA.

After the publication of this epistle, the Bolsheviks decided to kill the Patriarch – or perhaps only frighten him by killing the man closest to him, his cell-attendant **James Anisimovich Polozov** (according to another version, Sergeyevich Ostroumov). He began serving the patriarch in 1902, when he was in America. On returning from America, in 1920, James married Princess Drutskaya-Sokolinskaya. On March 19, 1921 he was arrested at the patriarchal Trinity podvorye and cast into the Lubyanka, and then into Taganka prison. The order was signed by Dzerzhinsky himself. Immediately the patriarch sent a letter to the investigator, asking him to free James Anisimovich. A few days after the arrest, his first daughter was born, but the mother's emotion was such that it affected the child, who died eight days after birth. On August 11 James Anisimovich was condemned to one year's imprisonment on Solovki. But the sentence was not carried into effect, and he was released because the GPU had only arrested him in order to exert pressure on the patriarch. On March 22, 1922 he was arrested again. The patriarch said: "They don't need him. Let them take me." Again, James Anisimovich was interrogated only once, and for a long time was not even accused. In the end he was accused that "in every way he aided and made easier the coming to the head of the Church of counter-revolutionary elements", but he refused to sign this. He was cast into the Lubyanka, but fell seriously ill there with a nervous disease, so he was transferred to a prison hospital. His wife did everything she could to have him released. By October she had obtained his release on condition that he promised not to leave the city. When she came to take him home he was in such a state that she did not recognize him, and the whole of his journey home he was stopping and weeping. Two weeks after his release a son was born to the couple. The patriarch became his godfather.

On the evening of December 22, 1924 another attempt was made on the life of the patriarch or his faithful cell-attendant – it is not clear who. In any case, it was the cell-attendant who was killed. Jane Swan writes: "... The Patriarch was standing before the icons in his bedroom praying. Hearing a shot, he crossed himself in the direction of the shot, then opened the door. For a moment, the door could not be opened for something was obstructing it. Then it suddenly gave and there James lay covered with blood, half on the floor and half against the door. Two men stood there. On seeing the Patriarch, one of them grabbed his own head with his hands and turning, ran out. The other followed, also running. Tikhon shouted:

"Stop, what have you done? You have killed a man!"

"James opened his eyes, looked at the Patriarch, and then died. The police were called at once, and next day a notice was printed in *Izvestia* that two thieves had entered the apartment of Citizen Bellavin and stolen a fur coat. No mention was made of the murder and no investigation was ever made. Curiously enough, the Bolsheviks made an issue over James' burial [which took place on December 25 before a huge crowd of worshippers]. The Patriarch wished to have him buried at the monastery and for a while the Bolsheviks refused. Finally it was allowed, but almost as soon as the grave was made, the government announced that they were building a crematorium on that spot. Tikhon had the grave removed next to the walls of the church and eventually his own body was to be placed in the grave next to James'. This incident shattered the little health which remained to the Patriarch and his attacks [of angina] increased."

Holy Martyr James was canonized by the Russian Church Abroad in 1981.

According to the witness of Bishop Maximus (Zhizhilenko), during the murder of his cell-attendant, the Patriarch remained in a chair in the same room, but the murderer did not see him.

On January 12, 1925, the Patriarch was admitted to a small private hospital run by Dr. Bakunina. Even here he came under pressure from the GPU agent Tuchkov. However, his health recovered somewhat, and for a while he was able to officiate in church again. On March 23, he consecrated two bishops. But the following evening he arrived back at the hospital exhausted after a meeting of the Holy Synod.

Fr. Alexander Tolgsky, who died in 1962 as pastor of the church of St. Elijah the Prophet in Moscow, witnesses that after confessions made to him by doctors of the Bakunina clinic, "I have not the slightest doubt that Patriarch Tikhon was martyred".

According to the official version of the Patriarch's death, he died at 11.45 p.m. on March 25 / April 7, 1925, "at the end of the feast of the Annunciation". There is no hint in the official version that the Patriarch may have been poisoned. But this is the inference to be drawn from the following account by the Catacomb Schema-Bishop Peter (Ladygin), which he received from the Patriarch's cell-attendant:

"The Patriarch continued his work. On the Annunciation [March 25], having celebrated the Liturgy, he was completely healthy. At four o'clock Metropolitan Seraphim of Tver [a suspected GPU agent who later joined Metropolitan Sergius' false synod] came to him. The Patriarch told him that he would serve the next day, but Seraphim said:

"Do not serve, your Holiness, have a rest. You are very tired and weak."

"Seraphim left at eight o'clock in the evening.

"The Patriarch felt well and was getting ready to serve the next day. But suddenly there was a ring at the door. When they opened the door, a doctor entered. The doctor said:

"Your Holiness! You rang us and asked us to come since you were weak. Here I am to examine you and prescribe you some medicines.'

"The Patriarch said: 'But no. I feel fine.'

"Okay,' said the doctor, 'but just allow me to examine you. Your pulse is weak. You must drink some medicine.'

"The Patriarch asked: 'Why have you come and not my doctor, who always looks after me?'

"He's not at home now, he's on call, but I was at home - so here I am,' replied the doctor. 'In an hour's time I shall send you a mixture.'

"An hour after the doctor had left, at ten o'clock in the evening, [the cell-attendant] Mark brought the Patriarch a mixture and said that the doctor had ordered him to drink a spoonful.

"Give it to me,' said the Patriarch.

"Mark poured out a spoonful of the mixture and the Patriarch drank it. Immediately he began to vomit (be sick). The cell-attendants Stratonicus and Mark rang the doctor. After a few minutes the doctor appeared. The Patriarch was lying down.

"What's the matter with him?' asked the doctor.

"The doctor prescribed a mixture and ordered us to give him one spoonful,' replied Mark.

"The doctor demanded to see the mixture immediately. They gave it him. On seeing it, the doctor threw up his hands and immediately sent the Patriarch to hospital. Mark and Stratonicus took him out and put him in the carriage. They got in themselves and accompanied him to the hospital. There they gave him some milk, and prepared some baths, but nothing helped. Within an hour and a half Patriarch Tikhon had died. The cell-attendants took him back. At three o'clock the Patriarch was laid out as a corpse at home. I write this from the words of the cell-attendants Mark and Stratonicus, who were with the Patriarch in the place of the murdered James."

Just as the official version of the Patriarch's death may have been tampered with, so his official will, which was flagrantly pro-Soviet, was almost certainly a forgery. That was the opinion of Bishop Maximus and Protopriest Basil Vinogradov. As Bishop Gregory Grabbe writes: "We know that on the day of the death of the Patriarch the question of the epistle [his will], which was demanded by Tuchkov, was discussed.



Apparently the last conversation between the Patriarch and Metropolitan Peter was precisely about this. The room in which the Patriarch died was immediately sealed by Tuchkov. Only after several days did Tuchkov give what purported to be the will of his Holiness to the two metropolitans to be taken to the newspaper.

"But Fr. B. Vinogradov tells us, from the words of people who were near the room of his Holiness the Patriarch, that during the conversation with Metropolitan Peter the Patriarch was heard to say: 'I cannot do that.' Then it is very important to draw attention to the fact that at the meeting of the assembled bishops the notorious 'will' was NOT proclaimed. Fr. Vinogradov is right in emphasizing that Tuchkov, in allowing the meeting, would undoubtedly have demanded its proclamation if it had really been signed by the Patriarch. Moreover, Metropolitan Peter in his first address as locum tenens did not mention the will...."

"Nevertheless," writes Protopriest Lev Lebedev, "a week after the death of the Patriarch the document was published in the newspaper Izvestia under the title 'Testamentary Epistle' of Patriarch Tikhon (later it was simply called 'Testament'). *They overlooked* a series of absurdities. Thus the 'Testament' (that is, that which is given before death) began with the words: 'Now we... *having recovered from illness*, entering again on the service of the Church...' and so on. The heading: 'By the mercy of God Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow *and the whole Russian Church*' is illiterate: he always wrote 'and all Russia'. The 'Testament' is dated 7 April, 1925, a date only according to the new style, whereas the Patriarch *always* used a double date (according to the old and the new styles). Finally, Metropolitan Peter *said nothing* to the almost 60 hierarchs assembled for the burial of his Holiness on April 12 about the existence of the 'Testament', which he could not have failed to do in view of its exceptional importance if it had been signed. And then he did not distribute it to the dioceses and parishes, which he would have been *obliged* to do as Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne. But the most weighty proof of its fabrication lies in the fact that Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), who agreed to full cooperation with Bolshevism and on July 29, 1927 wrote his infamous 'Declaration', in which he emphasises the direct *succession* of his line of friendship with Soviet power from Patriarch Tikhon, says not a word about the 'Testament' and does not refer to it, which he would unfailingly have done if he had considered it genuine."

Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov) has further pointed out that the wording of the Patriarch's will is lifted almost word for word from the renovationist appeal published on April 30 / May 12, 1922 under the heading: "To all the believing sons of the Orthodox Church of Russia". Moreover, although "the official Soviet 'variant of the death' of Patriarch Tikhon was timed to take place in the clinic of Dr. Bakunina", it ends with the words "Moscow. Donskoj monastery". "This means that the writing and signing of this 'document' took place and was finished in the Donskoy monastery, and not in the clinic of Dr. Bakunina! Which corresponds to the hidden truth..."

According to the Patriarch's cell attendant, Constantine Mikhailovich Pashkevich, his last words, uttered in an unusually strict tone, were: "I shall now go to sleep... deeply and for a long time. The night will be long and very dark."

The burial of the Patriarch took place on March 30 / April 12, 1925 in the presence of fifty-eight bishops and enormous crowds. There has never been such a huge demonstration of religious feeling in Russia from that time to the present day. He was buried in the old winter church of the Donskoy monastery.

The monastery was closed in 1927, and it was rumoured that the monks had hidden the relics to protect them from the communists. However, in May, 1991, after a fire that damaged the church, a search commenced for the relics of the Patriarch. Hearts sank when, after hours of digging beneath the marble slab bearing the Patriarch's name, they finally uncovered a burial vault only to find it contained nothing but cobwebs. Closer inspection, however, revealed that this chamber was only part of the underground heating system. They also noticed that the heating ducts directly beneath the assumed burial place were firmly secured with cement and not limestone as elsewhere in the system. More significantly, this part of the system lay not on the ground but on top of a massive cement slab. The care with which it was all arranged made it doubtful that this was the work of chekists. Two more days of intense digging - and the real sepulchre was uncovered. It may have been that this was the plan from the first, which would explain why only a few hierarchs were admitted into the church for the actual burial. The relics, which were almost entirely incorrupt in spite of the extreme dampness of the vault, were discovered on February 19, 1992 (according to another source, February 22).

On March 23 / April 5, 1992, patriarchal bishops solemnly transferred the relics of Patriarch Tikhon to the monastery's main church. Witnesses, who included Catacomb Christians, reported that "it was even possible to recognize the face of the Patriarch from his incorrupt visage, and his mantia and mitre were also preserved in complete incorruption. Witnesses also speak about a beautiful fragrance and an unusual feeling of reverential peace at that moment. But then, as some patriarchal clerics confirm, on contact with the air the relics crumbled, or - as the Catacomb Christians remark - the relics were not given into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate. Then they buried them in plaster - a blasphemous act from an Orthodox point of view..." However, official patriarchal sources contradict this report, saying that the bones were washed before being vested again and re-interred.

At the reliquary there is an icon in which the Saint is depicted holding a scroll with the words: "My children, stray not from the path of the Cross, which has been sent to us by God."

## **22. HOLY HIEROMARTYR NICODEMUS OF SOLOVKI (+1926)**

The most notorious camp in the Gulag in the 1920s was the famous monastery of Solovki in the White Sea. The bishops and clergy exiled to Solovki usually spent some time in the Transfiguration cathedral in the Kremlin. Among them was **Fr. Nicodemus**, who arrived in 1923. Stooped, approaching 80, he was nevertheless fit and healthy for his age. He came from Poltava region, had been a priest for 50 years, and had been sentenced by the Poltava NKVD because he did not fulfil the new rules of the Bolsheviks concerning witnesses for weddings, doctor's certificates for funerals, etc. He had been sent first to Kem, where they took away his pectoral cross, epitachelion, riza and kamilavka, leaving him only with his Gospel. He wore a red army hat with the red star cut out. This didn't put him out.

"The people say that you can recognise a priest in bast matting. Besides, everyone knows me. And I'm not wearing bast matting, but good material, I bought it in Kiev.

As night was falling, the prisoners, starving and exhausted after a long day's work, asked Fr. Nicodemus to tell them a story. They meant by that a story from the Bible. Every evening there was an attentive crowd in front of the old altar. The prisoners interrupted the story-telling with critical or enthusiastic remarks (Fr. Nicodemus was a very good story-teller).

They particularly loved the parable of the Prodigal Son. Identifying themselves with him, they wanted to know the story to the last detail. At the point that the son returned to his father, only sobs and sighs could be heard all around. Some animated opinions were expressed: some found the father's loving behaviour in receiving the rogue again unacceptable. Others, putting themselves in the place of the father, wondered whether the return of the son would have given them joy.

The next day, after work, Boris Shirayev, who later wrote his story, wanted to meet the story-teller. He was sitting on his bed, on the third level. A ray of sunlight was playing on his face, and one could see the pleasure this gave him:

"What sunshine today, what happiness!"

They started up a conversation. The father wanted to know the life of Shirayev. On learning that he had ten more years of his sentence to serve, he said to him:

"My son, don't be sad, you are still young, you have the whole of your life in front of you... Only thank God."

"Why the devil should I thank him? How can I be happy with this dog's life?"

"Don't speak like that, don't speak like that. No joy comes from the devil. Only sadness and despair come from him. But from God comes joy and gaiety."

"One is not a man here, one is nothing, just a protoplasm."

"I a nothing, a protoplasm?! I am a child of God, no-one can take that dignity from me. God has placed me in the middle of a community which I must protect."

He spat on the earth in indignation. Shirayev retorted:

"What a fine parish you have - these thieves, these filthy bandits, dressed in rags, covered with lice and starving, these fallen officers, these shipwrecked clergy, what miserable pariahs!"

"So that you may know once and for all, this is the most beautiful parish I have ever had. Look: what splendour, three levels!"

He pointed to the camp beds superimposed on top of each other.

"Christ would be proud of this community. Do you think that it was only the scribes who went to Him? No, it was the wretched ones, the starving, the crippled who sought healing, the blind, the epileptic, the possessed, the sinners, the thieves, the peasants and the fishermen. Do you think that they thought that God had come to bring them salvation? No, my little one. They had heard that an extraordinary man was going round the country healing the blind and the paralytics, and cleansing the lepers. No! They went to Him to see what kind of man He was. They listened to Him and some began to understand. With the eyes of the body they saw nothing extraordinary. However, some had the eyes of their souls opened. It was the same as with the lepers; He had cured that one of his ulcers, but hundred by His preaching. What a fool you are! You've read the Scriptures only with your carnal eyes and your materialist spirit."

"What miracles are you talking about? No-one here needs to be healed, we don't have lepers any more!"

"You say that we don't have lepers any more! You see nothing, look around you. Who is lying down over here, who is dragging himself along over there, who is coughing? All of them are lepers who are asking for forgiveness. They don't know that they're asking for it, but they're doing it without words. And not only here, it's the same throughout the world. Everyone is hungering and thirsting for the word of salvation which comes from God."

Big tears flowed out of his shining eyes and stopped, clinging to his white beard. Seizing Shirayev's head, the priest turned it towards the frescoes blackened by the smoke. One could only see one figure prostrated on the ground and another with his hands raised to heaven in thanksgiving. It was the father with the prodigal son.

"Look, open your eyes, rejoice!"

Fr. Nicodemus had arrived in Solovki a few days earlier, in a convoy. They had spent nine days in a train. In the railway carriages there had been cages which each contained three people. They were so crowded that in order for one to move the two others had to change position. The guards patrolled between the cages.

In Fr. Nicodemus' cage there was a robber and a Muslim Tartar. During the night the priest read and chanted the services in a low voice. He murmured the evening hymn: "Now that we have come to the setting of the sun, and behold the evening light, we praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God..." The Tartar understood immediately. Although he did not understand Russian, He nevertheless began to pray in his way. The thief was silent, crouching like a rabbit. He had stubbed out his cigarette-end in his pocket. Fr. Nicodemus continued to pray: "From my youth have many passions warred against me. But do Thou Thyself defend and save me, O my Saviour... In the Holy Spirit every soul is given life..." At the words during the Great Doxology, which he said in a soft voice: "O Lord God, Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us...", the thief immediately made the sign of the cross.

Fr. Nicodemus said to Shirayev: "And so we have served God for nine nights, for one can serve Him anywhere. God has said: 'There where two or three are gathered together in My name, I will be in the midst of them.' But we were three! What joy that gave me! We couldn't move, we were frightened of speaking out loud, but the spirit was free and this silent communion with our neighbours was magnificent."

"But they didn't understand your prayers!"

"Why should they not have understood them? They prayed all the same, that means that they understood. They understood with the heart."

No one knew his surname, but that was unimportant. The priest-consoler was known everywhere. He told stories in a wonderful way - stories from the Bible and the lives of the saints, but also simple, real-life stories from his former parishes. One day, a commissar was passing the night in the barracks.

"Pope, I want to bring a woman here for the night, what do you think of that?"

"What do I think of it? In my seventy years I have seen many things; you are young and full of passion, if you cannot do without her, do as seems best to you."

"Shall I bring you one, too?"

"No, my child, don't worry about me, I have been a widower for fifty years."

"Has the devil never tempted you?"

He replied: "Of course he has tempted me. Isn't a pope a man? We all have human feelings, and it is the devil's task to tempt us. And so he tempts me and I respond with prayer."

They conversed like this for a long time. The commissar did not bring in a woman, but two packets of tobacco.

They called him secretly to come and visit the sick and the dying so as to say a prayer. All those who were heavy laden came to him in secret.

One day, a thief, a big, loud fellow who was always blaspheming, was crushed by a tree. They called Fr. Nicodemus; he came, but a guard was already there who wanted to drive the priest away. Nicodemus said to him calmly:

"A man is dying, he needs a last word, that's not going to last a long time, step aside a little."

The chekist obeyed. The thief could no longer speak. Stretching out the three fingers of his hand, he indicated that he had killed three men. The father gave him absolution and he died in peace.

He was a great connoisseur of the human heart. Like a woodcutter, he went from one part of the camp to the other. Someone was despondent, so he sat down beside him and talked about everyday things.

Without beating about the bush, he attacked the problem:

"My child, pray to Saint Nicholas and the Mother of God of Tenderness and say to him: 'Your servant is suffering, he is sad, take his pain upon yourself and intercede for him. Drive away my sadness, Saint Nicholas.' He will help you, but you must pray to him and remind him often. He has a lot to do. The whole world is asking for his help, at his age he could forget. But you remind him."

In the evening, when he was telling his "holy stories", as the thieves called them, the great, sombre church was full of people. He spoke a language which they understood. He told the stories with the aid of images, embellishing the scene so that one would have thought one was with Abraham under the oak of Mamre when the three visitors approached. He had himself given the order to his wife to bring in the veal, and he himself had been the father of the prodigal son who was so moved by the return of his child.

Boris Shiryayev writes: "The face of the old priest shining with light stood in front of me and blotted out everything from me: both the rows of hard-labour bunks, and the human mish-mash crawling on them, and the charred, smoky walls of the defiled, desecrated church."

Fr. Nicodemus never feared the wrath of the bosses, and never refused to carry out his pastoral duty. They led him secretly "to those women who wished to receive Communion. The rabble contrived to push him through the window into the hospital to the dying, which was very difficult and dangerous."

It was inevitable that Fr. Nicodemus should receive the crown of martyrdom. At Christmas they had asked him to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in one of the barracks. Two guards entered unexpectedly:

"Again you are spreading your opium!"

Making the sign of the cross in their direction, he let them understand that the Holy Rite must not be interrupted. Then they led him into the death-cell, which had no heating. They stripped the prisoners of their outer clothing. The temperature in the ancient chapel was the same as outside, much lower than minus 20 degrees centigrade. To protect themselves from the cold, they piled up on the straw mattress, four lengthways, four sideways and four diagonally. Those who were on top protected themselves as best they could with long strips of material. During the long dark nights, Fr. Nicodemus was right at the top, telling them his marvellous stories. On Holy Saturday, radiant with joy, they celebrated the Liturgy. After embracing and kissing each other three times, they heard Fr. Nicodemus tell the story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The next morning, they did not wake up. Their bodies were already cold. He had shown each of them the way to his last hour, then he had had to go the way he already knew alone...

After three years on Solovki, Fr. Nicodemus died there on May 2, 1926.

## **23. HOLY MARTYR LYDIA OF UFA (+1928)**

### **And those with her**

**Lydia Grammakova** (?), the daughter of a protopriest in the city of Ufa, was born on March 20, 1901. From childhood she was sensitive, affectionate, loved by all, fearing sin and everything forbidden by God. Upon completing girls' school, at the age of nineteen she married and lost her husband in the Civil War with the departure of the White Army.

Her father joined the schism of the renovationists in 1922. The daughter, prostrating herself at her father's feet, said:

"Bless me, father, to leave you, so that I will not bind you in the salvation of your soul."

The old priest knew his daughter, just as he was aware of the wrongness of his action. He wept, and, blessing Lydia for an independent life, prophetically said to her:

"See, daughter, when you win your crown, that you tell the Lord that although I myself proved too weak for battle, still I did not restrain you, but blessed you."

"I will, papa," she said, kissing his hand, thus herself also prophetically foreseeing her future.

Lydia succeeded in entering the Forestry Department, and in 1926 she was transferred to the Collective Lumber Industry for work with the lower-paid labourers. Here she immediately came into contact with simple Russian people, whom she warmly loved and who responded in the same fashion.

The lumberjacks and drivers, who had been hardened by the work they did under difficult conditions, related with amazement that in the office of the Lumber department, where Lydia met them, a feeling came over them similar to the one, now almost smothered, which they had felt when before the revolution they had gone to meet the venerated icon of the Mother of God from the village of Bogorodskoye near Ufa. In the office foul language, insults and quarrels were no longer heard. Evil passions were extinguished, and people became kinder to each other.

This was amazing and was noticed by everybody, including the party chiefs. They kept watch over Lydia, but discovered nothing suspicious: she did not go at all to the churches that had been legalized by the Bolsheviks, and she attended catacomb services rarely and carefully. The GPU knew that members of the Catacomb Church existed in the diocese, but they could find no way of uncovering and arresting them.

With the aim of uncovering those who had not yet been arrested, the GPU suddenly returned Bishop Andrew of Ufa, the future hieromartyr, from exile. He was deeply revered by the people, but was received openly by only one church in Ufa, although secretly the whole diocese came to him. The GPU was mistaken: instead of being



uncovered, the Catacomb Church deepened and spread, remaining as before inaccessible to spies. Convinced of the failure of its plan, the GPU again arrested Bishop Andrew and sent him into exile.

Lydia was arrested on July 9, 1928. The secret-operations department had long been seeking a typist who had been supplying the workers of the Forestry Department with typewritten brochures containing lives of the saints, prayers, sermons and instructions of ancient and recent hierarchs. It had been noticed that on this typist's typewriter the lower stem of the "k" was broken; and thus Lydia was discovered.

The GPU understood that they had received a clue for uncovering the whole Catacomb Church in the region. Ten days of uninterrupted questioning did not break the martyr; she simply refused to say anything. On July 20 the interrogator, having lost all patience, gave Lydia over to the "special command" for interrogation.

This "special command" worked in a corner room in the cellar of the GPU. A permanent guard was stationed in the cellar corridor. On this day the guard was **Cyril Atayev**, a 23-year-old private. He saw Lydia as she was brought into the cellar. The preceding ten days' questioning had drained the strength of the martyr, and she could not go down the steps. Private Atayev, at the call of his chiefs, held her and led her down to the interrogation chamber.

"May Christ save you,"

said Lydia, sensing in the Red Army guard a spark of compassion for her.

And Christ saved Atayev. The words of the martyr, her eyes full of pain and perplexity, fell into his heart. Now he could not listen with indifference to her uninterrupted screams and cries, as he had previously listened to the same cries from others being interrogated and tortured.

Lydia was tortured for a long time. The tortures of the GPU were usually fashioned so as to leave no particularly noticeable marks on the body of the tortured one, but at Lydia's interrogation no attention was paid to this. The screams and cries of Lydia continued almost uninterruptedly for more than an hour and a half.

"But aren't you in pain? You're screaming and crying, that means it's awful?" asked the exhausted torturers in one of the intervals.

"Painful! Lord, how painful!" replied Lydia with a broken moan.

"Then why don't you talk? It will be more painful!" said the perplexed torturers.

"I can't talk... I can't... He won't allow..." groaned Lydia.

"Who won't allow?"

"God won't allow!"

Then the torturers devised something new for the martyr: sexual assault. There were four of them - one more was needed. They called the guard to help.

When Atayev entered the room, he saw Lydia, understood the means of her further torture and his own role in it - and there was worked in him a miracle similar to the unexpected conversions of the ancient torturers. Atayev's whole soul was repelled by the satanic abominableness, and a holy enthusiasm seized him. Totally unaware of what he was doing, the Red Army guard killed on the spot the two torturers who stood before him with his own revolver. Before even the second shot had echoed the GPU man who had been standing behind hit Cyril on the head with the handle of his gun. Atayev still had the strength to turn and seize his attacker by the throat, but a shot from the fourth one knocked him to the floor.

Cyril fell with his head toward Lydia, who was stretched out with thongs. The Lord gave him the opportunity of hearing once more words of hope from the martyr. And looking straight into Lydia's eyes, Cyril, with blood gushing from him, gasped his union to the Lord:

"Saint, take me with you!"

"I will take you," Lydia smiled, radiant.

The sound and meaning of this conversation as it were opened a door to the other world, and terror darkened the consciousness of the two GPU men who remained alive. With insane shouts they began to shoot the helpless victims who threatened them, and they shot until both their revolvers had been emptied. Those who had come running at the shots led them away, shouting insanely, and themselves fled from the room, seized by an unknown terror.

One of these two GPU men became completely insane. The other soon died of nervous shock. Before his death this second one told everything to his friend, Sergeant **Alexis Ikonikov**, who turned to God and brought this account to the Church. For his zealous propagation of it, he himself suffered a martyr's death.

## 24. HOLY HIEROCONFESSORS ANATOLIUS (+1922) AND NECTARIUS +(1929) OF OPTINA

**Elder Anatolius the Younger** of Optina was born Alexander Potapov. From his youth he wanted to become a monk, but his mother did not give her consent, and he entered the monastery only after her death. There he became the cell-attendant of Elder Ambrose, and after his death he functioned as an elder, first in the cell of the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God in the monastery skete and then in the main monastery.

Archimandrite Ambrose Konovalov writes of his meeting with Elder Anatolius in 1903: "He received us with love. As we conversed with him his gift of clairvoyance was revealed to us. This first meeting remained in our memory for life..."

The elder gave himself over completely to the Jesus Prayer, and would hardly sleep at all, only dozing off a little during the reading of the Psalms in Mattins. Through this inward activity he preserved an unshakeable calm even though thousands of people from all over Russia came to visit him. He would often give his visitors On True Christianity by St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, telling them to take it and live according to its directions.

The monks would come to him to reveal their thoughts twice a day. After receiving his advice they would depart from cleansed and full of peace and joy.

His way of treating visitors was as follows. Usually the saint would come out into the vestibule and bless everyone with a short, quick sign of the cross. He would lightly tap with his fingers on the forehead of the man several times, as if pushing in and sealing the sign of the cross. He was short, exceptionally quick and lively in his movements. As he went round everyone, he would answer the questions posed to him, and then receive certain people individually for a conversation in his cell. The love and tenderness of his manner always attracted crowds of people to the elder. Once, when he was ill, without leaving his cell he only went up to the window and blessed the people who had gathered outside through the window. On seeing him, the whole crowd fell to the ground.

"Next to the cell of Anatolius," writes Prince N.D. Zhevakov, "the people crowded together. They were mainly peasants who had arrived from the surrounding villages and neighbouring provinces. They brought with them sick and crippled children, and complained that they had spent a lot of money on their treatment with no benefit... Their one hope was Batyushka Anatolius, that he would pray to the Lord win health for the innocents."

Archpriest Sergius Chetverikov writes: "In 1905 I visited him in his narrow little cell deep within the skete. He was a short, slightly hunchbacked man; his speech was extraordinarily rapid; he was enthusiastic and loving, and even then left an indelible impression on me. Six years later, I saw Fr. Anatolius again, though by that time he had been made a hieromonk. Around him there had formed that particular spiritual

atmosphere of love and honour which surrounds true elders, and in which there is neither sanctimoniousness nor hysteria. In his lovingly joyful and humble attitude, the elder brings to mind the venerable Seraphim of Sarov, whose particularly reverent manner of making a blessing with his hand near the forehead of the one being blessed was often remarked. In him the spirit and power of the first Optina elders is clearly felt."

One day, there came to the elder a peasant who found himself in a difficult situation: he and his whole family had no roof over their heads, and possessed only fifty roubles to their name. No matter where he went, he did not find any help. In his grief he fell into despair and took to drink, resolved first of all to abandon his wife and children, and then to go off to Moscow to become a labourer. Yet the old proverb "Morning is wiser than the evening" is true. In the morning, the first thought that entered his mind was: "Go to Elder Anatolius," and he went.

"When I bowed down for a blessing, he blessed me, striking me, as it were, twice on the skull, making the sign of blessing slowly, carefully. Then I said:

"I am perishing, Batiushka, I really want to die.'

"What's this?' he asked.

"Well, it's this way...'

"And I repented before him. You know, if you want to receive a good answer, you have to tell him everything. He blessed me again and said:

"Be not downcast in spirit. Three days from now you will enter your new home.'

"And that's the way it happened. I became another person entirely."

"In 1916," writes Helen Kontzevich, "I was informed that Elder Anatolius was expected in St. Petersburg; and so three of us, my brother, sister and I, went there. On the way my brother and sister both declared that all they actually needed from the elder was his blessing, but I said that I would like very much to talk with him. After some time he came out into the vestibule to all the people who were waiting for him and began giving his blessing, saying a few words to each... When our turn came, the elder blessed my brother and sister, but to me he said:

"But you wanted to talk to me, didn't you? Right now I can't; come to me in the evening.'

"The elder read my fervent desire, although I had not expressed it in words."

In one of the many popular books about Optina monastery that appeared just before the revolution, *On the Bank's of God's River*, is a touching description of a holy child, the five-year-old son of Fr. Anatolius' spiritual daughter. When pregnant with him she fervently prayed to her beloved St. Sergius of Radonezh, promising to

dedicate the child to him. However, while attending St. Seraphim's canonization in Sarov in 1903, she felt the child leap in her womb, and she began to wonder whether she shouldn't name the child Seraphim instead; but because of a dream she named the child Sergius (Seryozha) after all.

Five years later, "when Vera and Seryozha were leaving our monastery and bowed down to take his blessing, Seryozha, putting his little hands forward, said,

"Bless me, batyushka."

"Instead, the old monk himself bowed down low to Seryozha, touching the ground with his hand, saying:

"No, you first bless me."

"And to our astonishment the child put his fingers into the proper position and blessed the old monk with a priest's blessing. What does the future hold for this boy?" concluded the author.

The answer to this question was provided by Natalya Vladimirovna Urosova some twenty-five years later: "When my boys were arrested in 1937 and banished by the GPU for ten years without right of correspondence, one can well imagine my sorrow. I shed many, many bitter tears, but not even in a single fleeting thought did I complain, but only sought consolation in church; and this could be only in the Catacomb Church, which I sought out everywhere, and by God's mercy I always found it very quickly; and I poured out my grief to the true God-pleasing priests who celebrated catacomb services. And so it was also when, after the arrest of my sons, I left Siberia for Moscow. My sister - who to my horror recognized the Soviet church - had not been arrested, despite the fact that she had been a lady-in-waiting to the Empress. She directed me to a childhood friend of ours with whom she differed on church questions, since this friend was a fervent participant in catacomb services. This woman and other members of this holy Catacomb Church greeted me with open arms... I lived with my sister periodically and visited all the services, which took place in private houses in various parts of Moscow. There was a certain Father Anthony, an old hieromonk, who was our priest and spiritual father. I constantly heard him say:

"As the elder commands, whatever the elder says,' and the like.

Whenever he was mentioned it was with great reverence, and he was called an extraordinarily holy man.

"I asked Fr. Anthony where I might see this elder in order to pour out my grief to him and receive comfort.

"No,' Fr. Anthony said, 'that's out of the question. I will tell him everything that you need from him.'

"In 1941 I became acquainted with a lady in Mozhaisk who had been banished from Moscow because of the arrest of her husband and her only daughter. She was also a member of the Catacomb Church and had been the spiritual daughter of this elder from the very first years of his priesthood. She told me that the elder (she didn't give his name) was staying now in a village two miles from Mozhaisk and that she secretly visited his services. To my question whether she couldn't ask him to receive me, she replied:

"No, that isn't possible. All the faithful have been denied this, since the GPU has been looking for him for 25 years, and he travels over the whole of Russia from one place to another, being evidently informed by the Holy Spirit whenever it is necessary to go.'

"Of course I was saddened by this, but there was nothing I could do about it. The feast of the Holy Trinity that year was on June 7. Just as nothing in life is due to chance, so was it now: I could not go to Moscow, and in sorrow I sat in my room alone on the eve of the feast. And then I heard a light tapping at my window. I looked and was dumbfounded. An old nun was tapping, and she was dressed as a nun, in spite of the fact that it was strictly forbidden to wear such garb. It was towards evening. I opened the door and she came in to me with the words:

"The elder, Father Seraphim, invites you to come to him early tomorrow morning, and if you wish you can confess and receive the Holy Mysteries.'

"She showed me which road to take and told me to be careful. Before the village itself there was a rye field already in full ear, and she advised me to walk bent down. The back road through this field led right up to the hut where the elder was staying, and right opposite, across the road, was the GPU station. One can imagine my feelings after the nun, so affable with her radiant face, left. She was called Mother N. There were two nuns with the elder; the other one was called Mother V. They were always with him. The elder would stay peacefully at one place for as long as two months or so, and then, entirely unexpectedly, at any hour of the day or night, would suddenly say:

"Well, it's time to go!

And he and the nuns would put on rucksacks, which contained all the objects for church services, and immediately leave in any direction, until the elder would stop and enter some hut or other, evidently by inspiration from Above.

"Early in the morning I set out, walking not on the street but, as had been indicated to me, on the dirt road which led to the back door. Before me was a wondrous monk, not at all old. I have no words to describe his holy appearance; the feeling of reverence before him cannot be communicated. I received confession and it was wonderful. After the Divine service and my reception of the Holy Mysteries, he invited me to eat with him. Besides myself there were the lady I mentioned above, the two nuns, and another of his spiritual daughters who had come from Moscow. Oh, the mercy of God! I shall never forget the discourse of which he deemed me worthy, and which

continued for several hours. Two days after this spiritual happiness which I experienced while visiting Father Seraphim, I found out from the lady that on the next day, while they were still sitting at table, Father Seraphim stood up and said to the nuns:

"Well, it's time to go!"

"They instantly gathered themselves and left, and within half an hour, no more, the GPU came looking for him; but the Lord had hidden him. Three months passed; the Germans were already in Mozhaisk when, suddenly, there was again a light tapping on the window and the same Nun N. came in to me with the words:

"Father Seraphim is in the town of Borovsk (forty miles from Moscow), and he sent me to give you his blessing. And he ordered me to reveal to you that he is the very Seryozha before whom Father Anatolius bowed down."

Elder Anatolius said: "Pride comes in various forms. There is worldly pride: this is knowledge; and there is spiritual pride: this is self-love. This is exactly so: people will truly go insane if they expect their intellect to cope with everything they hope to receive from it. But how can our mind get down to its own business, since it is insignificant and infected? Take from it that which it is able to give, and make no further demand upon it. Our teacher is humility. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble: and the grace of God is everything... That's your greatest wisdom. Humble yourself and say to yourself: 'Although I'm a speck of earthly dust, still God cares for me, and may the will of God be done in me.' If you say this not only with your mind, but also with your heart, and really boldly, as becomes a true Christian, rely on the Lord with a firm intention to submit to the will of God, whatever it may be, without murmuring, then the clouds will disperse before you and the sun will look out, and will enlighten and warm you, and you will know true joy from the Lord and everything will seem clear and transparent to you, and you will cease tormenting yourself, and it will become light in your soul."

The elder said: "My child, if you see some people of another faith quarrelling with an Orthodox and wanting by flattery to tear him away from the Orthodox Church, help the Orthodox. In this way you will deliver a sheep from the jaws of a lion. But if you are silent and leave him without help, this is the same as if you took a redeemed soul from Christ and sold him to Satan.

"If somebody tells you: 'Both your and our faith is from God,' you, child, reply as follows: 'Corrupter of the faith! Or do you consider God also to be of two faiths! Haven't you heard what Scripture says: "There is one God, one Faith, one Baptism" (Ephesians 4.5).' ... Amen."

The elder prophesied that the organizational unity of the Russian Church would break up into a number of branches or splinters, when on February 27, 1917 he compared the Russian Church to a ship: "There will be a storm. And the Russian ship will be destroyed. Yes, it will happen, but, you know, people can be saved on splinters and wreckage. Not all, not all will perish..." But he also prophesied that canonical

unity would be restored: "A great miracle of God will be revealed. And all the splinters and wreckage will, by the will of God and His might, be gathered together and united, and the ship will be recreated in its beauty and will go along the path foreordained for it by God. That's how it will be, a miracle manifest to all..."

Again he prophesied: "Heresies will spread everywhere and deceive many people. The enemy of the human race will act with cunning in order to draw into heresy, if possible, even the elect. He will not begin by crudely rejecting the dogmas of the Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the virtue of the Theotokos, but he will begin imperceptibly to distort the teachings and statutes of the Church and their very spirit, handed down to us by the Holy Fathers through the Holy Spirit. Few will notice these wiles of the enemy, only those more experienced in the spiritual life. Heretics will seize power over the Church and will place their servants everywhere; the pious will be regarded with contempt. He (the Lord) said, 'by their fruits ye shall know them', and so, by their fruits, as well as by the actions of the heretics, strive to distinguish them from the true pastors. These are spiritual thieves, plundering the spiritual flock, and they will enter the sheepfold (the Church), climbing up some other way, as the Lord said: They will enter by an unlawful way, using force and trampling upon the Divine statutes. The Lord calls them robbers (cf. John 10.1). Indeed, their first task will be the persecution of the true pastors, their imprisonment and exile, for without this it will be impossible for them to plunder the sheep.

"Therefore, my son, when you see the violation of patristic tradition and the Divine order in the Church, the order established by God, know that the heretics have already appeared, although for the time being they may conceal their impiety. Or they will distort the Divine Faith imperceptibly, in order to succeed better in seducing and enticing the inexperienced into the net. The persecution will be directed against not only pastors but against all servants of God, for all those ruled by heresy will not endure piety. Recognize these wolves in sheep's clothing by their proud dispositions and love of power. They will be slanderers, traitors, everywhere sowing enmity and malice. Therefore the Lord said that by their fruits you will know them. True servants of God are humble, love their neighbour and are obedient to the Church. Monastics will be greatly oppressed by the heretics and monastic life will be scorned. Monasteries will become scarce, the number of monastics will decline, and those who remain will endure violence. These haters of monastic life, however, having only the appearance of piety, will strive to attract the monks to their side, promising them protection and worldly goods, and threatening those who oppose them with expulsion. These threats will cause great despair among the fainthearted, but you, my son, rejoice that you have lived until that time, for then the faithful who have not shown any other virtues, will receive crowns merely for standing firm in the faith, according to the word of the Lord (cf. Matthew 10.32). Fear the Lord, my son. Fear to lose the crown prepared (for you), fear to be cast by Christ into the outer darkness and eternal torment. Stand bravely in the faith, and if necessary, endure persecution and other sorrows, for the Lord will be with you... and the holy martyrs and confessors, they will look upon you and your struggle with joy. But woe to the monks in those days who will be bound by possessions and riches, who because of love of peace will be ready to submit to the heretics. They will lull to sleep their conscience, saying, 'We are preserving and saving the monastery and the Lord will forgive us.' The



unfortunate and blind ones do not at all consider that through heresy the demons will enter the monastery and then it will no longer be a holy monastery, but merely walls from which grace will depart. God, however, is mightier than the enemy, and He will never leave His servants. True Christians will remain until the end of this age, only they will choose to live in secluded, deserted places. Do not fear sorrows, rather fear pernicious heresy, for it strips us of grace and separates us from Christ. This is why the Lord commanded us to consider the heretic as a pagan and a publican. And so, my son, strengthen yourself in the grace of Jesus Christ. Hasten to confess the faith, to endure suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (cf. II Timothy 2.1-3), Who has said, 'Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life' (Revelation 2.10). To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honour, glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen."

Concerning the Tsar the elder said: "There is no greater sin than resistance to the will of the Anointed of God... Keep him, for it is by him that the Russian land and the Orthodox Faith are maintained... But...the destiny of the Tsar is the destiny of Russia. If the Tsar rejoices Russia will also rejoice. If the Tsar weeps Russia will also weep... Just as a person with a cut off head is no longer a person, but a stinking corpse, so Russia without the Tsar will be a stinking corpse..."

After the revolution, soldiers of the Red Army subjected the elder to mockery, tormented him and shaved off his beard. He endured much suffering, but continued to receive his spiritual children.

On the evening of July 29 / August 12, 1922 they came to arrest him. But he asked for a little time to prepare himself. The following morning, the committee of soldiers arrived in a military vehicle. They asked the saint's cell-attendant, Fr. Barnabas whether he was ready.

"Yes," Fr. Barnabas replied, "he is ready!"

And, opening the door, they entered the venerable one's cell. Imagine their surprise when their eyes took in the following scene: in the middle of the cell the elder, all "prepared", lay dead in his coffin! Thus did the Lord not permit His faithful servant to be further mistreated, and that very night had taken him to Himself.

A few days before the elder's repose, one of his spiritual daughters received a letter from him inviting her to come and stay at the monastery. She delayed in going, and arrived only on the ninth day after his repose. There she met other people who had likewise been called by the elder, either by letter or in a dream. One person received word through the elder of his own repose several hours before it occurred. The body of the elder was buried next to that of **Elder Macarius**, whose relics were found to be incorrupt.

\*

**Elder Nectarius**, was born in the town of Yeltz of poor parents, Basil and Helena Tikhonov, in 1857 or 1858. He was baptized in the Yeltz church of St. Sergius and given

the name Nicholas. His godparents were called Nicholas and Matrona. He always prayed for them and for his parents. His father worked in a mill and died when the boy was only seven. He was bright and loved to learn, but being poor was only able to attend the village school.

Once he was playing near his mother. Nearby was a cat whose eyes were shining brightly. The boy grabbed a needle and thought of stabbing the animal's eye to see what was making it shine, but his mother hit his hand:

"Naughty boy! If you dare to poke out the cat's eye, you yourself will later be without an eye!"

Many years later when already a monk, the elder remembered this incident. He came to the skete's well where there hung a ladle with a pointed end. Another monk, not noticing the elder, lifted the ladle in such a way that the pointed end came within inches of the elder's eye, and just in the nick of time the elder was able to push it aside.

"If I had poked out the cat's eye at that time, I would now be without an eye," he said. "Obviously, all this had to be to remind me, the unworthy one, that everything in life, from the cradle to the grave, is taken into serious account by God."

Nicholas was very close to his mother, who brought him up strictly but with love. She, too, died early, leaving him a complete orphan. When he was eleven she arranged for him to work in the shop of the merchant Khamov, and there until he was seventeen he worked up to the position of youngest steward. He grew up to be quiet, prayerful and lover of reading. He had a very handsome face with a rosy complexion and curly blond hair like a girl's - so said the oldest Optina monks who remembered him in his youth.

As soon as he turned eighteen, the oldest of Khamov's students thought of marrying off his daughter to him; and his employer supported this idea. The girl was very nice and Nicholas was drawn to her. Even ten years later, remembering his bride-to-be, he would smile; and to one nun whom he used to receive very kindly, he said:

"You remind me of my bride of long ago."

At that time there lived in Yelts a righteous old woman already nearly 100 years old - Schema-Nun Theoctista, a spiritual daughter of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. The Yeltz inhabitants would go to her for advice. And the merchant counselled Nicholas to go to her for a blessing on his marriage. But when he came, the schema-nun said to him:

"Young man, go to Optina to Fr. Hilarion and he will tell you what to do."

She made the sign of the cross over him and gave him tea for the road. He kissed her hand and went to his employer.

"Matushka Theoctista is sending me to Optina."

The merchant said nothing and even gave him money for the journey. Nicholas said goodbye to his bride and left; they never saw one another again.

So in 1876 Nicholas arrived at Optina, carrying only a Gospel in his knapsack. The skete superior, Fr. Hilarion, sent him to Elder Ambrose, who saw Nicholas straight away and spoke to him for two hours. Elder Nectarius never revealed the content of this conversation, but afterwards he remained in the skete and never returned home even for a day.

Once he saw that a pilgrim had the book, The Life of Elder Hilarion, and he remarked:

"I am indebted to him for everything. He received me into the skete fifty years ago when I came not having a place to lay my head - a total orphan, penniless, and the whole brotherhood at that time was very educated. And so I was the very least among them."

His spiritual father was Elder Anatolius (Zertsalov), but he also went for advice to Elder Ambrose. These holy elders led Nectarius along the strict path of true monasticism.

His first obedience was to look after the flowers, which he loved. Then he was appointed sacristan. Nicholas had a cell which opened into the church. In this cell he lived for 25 years without speaking to any of the monks; he went only to Elder Anatolius or Elder Ambrose. In this obedience he was often late for church and walked with swollen, sleepy eyes. The brothers complained about him to Fr. Ambrose, but he replied:

"Wait, Nikolka will sleep it off and come in useful to everyone."

He attached great significance to obedience. "The highest and first virtue is obedience. Christ came into the world for the sake of obedience, and the life of man on earth is obedience to God. But obedience must be understood; it must be properly valued, otherwise it can be destructive. Without obedience a man is impulsive and as if in a fever, but then comes a weakening, a cooling and stiffening, and the man cannot go on. Obedience is difficult at first - always semi-colons. But then all punctuation marks are smoothed away."

When citing some text or example from Holy Scripture, he would usually talk both about the direct, literal meaning, and about the allegorical meaning. For example: "Blessed is that man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly." From the external point of view, this means that blessed is the man who avoids ungodly meetings, taking no part in heretical or anti-ecclesiastical teachings. But the man also stands for the mind when it does not accept thoughts coming from the enemy. It is impossible to stop thoughts from coming, but it is possible not to enter into meetings or conversations with them, and instead say: "Lord, have mercy!" So the man is he who acts in this way.

Fr. Nectarius received the mantia in 1887. In 1894 he was ordained to the diaconate, and in 1898 Bishop Macarius of Kaluga made him a hieromonk. Now he almost never left his cell, and for eleven years he even covered the windows of his cell with blue paper. He used to say that for a monk there are only two exits from his cell - into the church and into the grave. But in these years he studied and read. He studied not only the Holy Fathers and spiritual works, but also Latin, French, science, maths, history, geography and classical literature both Russian and foreign. He spoke to his visitors about Pushkin and Shakespeare, Milton and Krylov, Spingler and Rider Haggard, Blok, Dante, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. In his only hour of rest after dinner he asked Pushkin or some fairy-tales - either Russian or the Brothers Grimm - to be read aloud. He was close to Constantine Leontiev, who used to read him his works in manuscript. He learned painting from the artist Bolotov, who became a monk and founded an icon-painting studio in Optina.

The elder said about art and literature: "One can practise art like anything else, but everything must be done as under God's gaze. There is great art and there is lesser art. One can define the lesser as follows: there exist sounds and lights. An artist is someone who is sensitive to these sounds and lights which others are unable to perceive. He takes them and puts them on canvas, on paper. They become colours, notes, words. It is as though the sounds and lights have dissolved. From light there remains colour. A book, a painting - these are the sarcophagi of light and sound. a reader or a beholder comes and, if he is able to creatively apprehend or read, a 'resurrection' of meaning takes place. And then the circle of art is completed. Light flashes in the soul of the beholder or reader, his hearing becomes awakened to sound. For this reason an artist or poet has no particular cause for pride. He is only doing his share of the work. In vain do they suppose themselves to be the creators of their works - there is one Creator, and men only dissolve the words and images of the Creator and then revive them by the power of the spirit given by Him.

"But there is also greater art - the word of life and death (the Psalms of David, for example), but the way to this art lies in the personal struggle of the artist. This is the path of sacrifice, and only one out of many thousands reach the goal.

"All the poetic verses in the world are not worth a line of Holy Scripture. Pushkin was the cleverest man in Russia, but he couldn't manage to live his own life!"

And he emphasized the need for writers to consider every word:

"Before beginning to write, dip the pen seven times into the ink-well."

He once refused a blessing to a girl who was dreaming of going on stage. When asked why he replied:

"She will not overcome and will be corrupted. Here strength is necessary. Modesty in our day is a great virtue. This is nothing less than chastity. And to preserve chastity (and among you intelligentsia this is easiest to lose) is to preserve all."

Once one of his spiritual daughters was sorrowfully talking to her friend in his reception room:

"I don't know, perhaps education is altogether unnecessary and only brings harm. How can it be reconciled with Orthodoxy?"

The elder, coming out of his cell, rejoined: "Once a man came to me who simply couldn't believe that there had been a flood. Then I told him that on very high mountains in the sand are found shells and other remains from the ocean floor, and how geology testifies to the flood, and he came to believe. You see how necessary learning is at times."

And again he said: God not only permits, but demands of man that he grow in knowledge. However, it is necessary to live and learn so that not only does knowledge not ruin morality, but that morality not ruin knowledge."

About history he once said:

"It shows us how God rules the peoples and gives as it were moral lessons to the universe."

Speaking about mathematics, he loved to ask: can a triangle be equal to a circle? and often cited the patristic example:

"God is the centre of the circle, and people - the radii. As they come closer to the centre they come closer to each other."

At another time he said: "One prophet had a vision of God - not in a circle of light but in a triangle. This was a sign that man cannot approach and experience the impenetrable depth of the mystery of God. To man is given only to experience that which surrounds the Divinity; but if he makes bold to penetrate beyond these limits, he will perish from the sharp corners of the triangle."

On inner work he used to say: "The outer belongs to you, but the inner to the grace of God. So practise the outer and, when everything is in good order, the inner will be formed. One should not expect or seek miracles. We have one miracle: the Divine Liturgy. This is the greatest miracle, one should try to measure up to it."

During these years of study and spiritual growth, the elder began to take upon himself foolishness for Christ. He wore brightly coloured sweaters over his cassock; all his food he dumped together into one pot - the sour, the sweet and the salty. He walked about the skete with a boot on one foot and a slipper on the other. He bewildered the monks even more, even as an elder, with all his toys. He had toy automobiles, boats, trains and later even airplanes. He had music boxes and wound up a gramophone with religious records, but the skete administration put a stop to it.

In 1913 the Optina monks gathered to elect a new elder. At first they offered the eldership to Archimandrite Agapetus, who was living in Optina in retirement, a

widely educated and deeply spiritual man. But he refused. He was leading a soul-saving life surrounded by only a few of his close disciples, one of whom was Hieromonk Nectarius. When the brethren asked him to indicate a worthy candidate, he nominated Fr. Nectarius. The latter in his humility was not even present at the meeting. When he had been chosen, Fr. Abercius was sent to get him. Coming to him he said:

"Batiushka, your presence is requested at the meeting."

But Fr. Nectarius declined, saying:

"They can choose whoever is needed without me."

"The archimandrite sent me to get you and asks that you come!" said Fr. Abercius.

Then Batiushka immediately put on his riassa, and just as he was - one foot in a shoe, the other in a slipper - he went to the meeting.

"Batiushka," they greeted him, "you have been chosen as the spiritual father and elder of the brotherhood."

"No, fathers and brothers! I am stupid and cannot carry such a burden," said Batiushka, declining.

But the archimandrite said to him: "Fr. Nectarius, accept this obedience."

And then Batiushka agreed. He used to say:

"What kind of an elder am I? How can I be the heir of the earlier elders? I'm weak and feeble. Grace came to them in big loaves, but to me in little slices..."

"The story of Job," said the elder, "is a lesson for all men. When a man is rich, learned and happy, God does not answer. When a man is on a dung hill, abandoned by everyone, then God appears and Himself speaks to him. But the man only listens and cries out: 'Lord, have mercy!' Only the measure of abasement varies."

"The main thing is to guard oneself from judging one's neighbour. As soon as such a thought enters the mind, immediately and with attention turn to the Lord: 'Lord, make me to see my own faults and not to judge my brother.'"

The elder was clairvoyant and prophesied. He also worked miracles. Thus Fr. Basil Shustin wrote: "Batiushka told me:

"'Rinse out the samovar first, then pour in water. The water's standing there, in the corner, in the copper jug. Take it and pour in the water.'"

"I went up to the jug, but it was very big, containing twenty-four litres, and massively built. I tried to move it, but no - I didn't have the strength. But batiushka told me:

"Take the jug and pour the water into the samovar.'

"But you know, batiushka, it's too heavy, I can't move it from its place.'

"Then batiushka went up to the jug, made the sign of the cross over it, and said:

"Take it.'

"Then I lifted it, and it seemed very light to me."

In 1917 the elder prophesied: "A hard time is coming. The number six has passed in the world, and the number seven has begun. Now begins the age of silence. Be silent, silent," said batiushka, and tears flowed from his eyes. "And now his Majesty is not his own man, he is suffering such humiliation for his mistakes. 1918 will be still worse. His Majesty and all his family will be killed, tortured. And our tsar will stand before the throne of God wearing the crown of a great-martyr. Yes, this tsar will be a great-martyr.

"In the last days," he said, "the world will be encircled by paper and iron. Noah's time is a figure of our own. The flood was approaching. Noah knew about it and told the people, but they did not believe him. He hired workers to build the ark, and they, while building the ark, did not believe, and so they only received the agreed pay for their work, but were not saved. Those days are a prefiguring of ours. The ark is the Church, only those who are in it will be saved."

"We must pray. By prayer and the word of God every filth is cleansed. The soul cannot be reconciled with life and is consoled only through prayer. Without prayer the soul is dead to grace."

"Forcing oneself is necessary in everything. Suppose a dinner is served, and you want to eat and smell the delicious smell, nevertheless the spoon will not bring the food to you of itself. You have to force yourself, get up, go up and take the spoon and then eat. And no work is accomplished immediately - waiting and patience are required everywhere."

Concerning prayer, the elder said to one of his spiritual sons: "I will light your lamp, but you must take care of the wick yourself."

And about the Six Psalms: "The Six Psalms must not be read like kathismas, but like prayers. The meaning of the Six Psalms is very deep; it is the prayer of the Son to God the Father."

The elder said to one of his spiritual daughters, the secret nun Lydia: "Soon there will be a famine of books. Buy books, otherwise you will not be able to buy them for any money."

They asked the saint how to pray for those about whom it is not known whether they are alive. "You will not be erring if you pray for them as for the living, because everyone is alive with God. Everyone except heretics and apostates. They are dead. So, if you like, commemorate them as dead people."

"This is an order for you: when you prepare for Holy Communion, less wordiness and more prayerfulness."

One woman said to the elder: "Batyushka, I'm very annoyed."

And he replied: "When irritation comes upon you, only repeat: 'Lord, have mercy!' Seek strength in prayer and consolation in work."

The old carter Timothy fell on his knees before batyushka. Timothy's face was all transfigured by faith, tender feeling and hope. "Batyushka, give me your elder's instruction, so that your warm ray may heat up my cold soul, so that it may flare up to the path on high."

After this fine phrase he said simply: "Batyushka, I have no tears."

But the elder leaned towards him with a wonderful smile and said: "It doesn't matter, your soul weeps, and such tears are much more valuable than bodily ones."

The elder was strict, demanding and sometimes ironic with the intelligentsia, but exceptionally kind and approachable with simple people. In confession he was very strict, pointing to the significance of thoughts as well as deeds. But sometimes he was kind and even joked.

One woman who had not done confession since her youth and was far from the Church, accompanied her sick husband to the elder. He made a strong impression on her, and when he suggested that she do confession, she agreed. She entered, and he led her to the icons:

"Stand here and pray!"

Having placed her there, he himself went into his cell. She stood and looked at the icons. She didn't like them - they were not artistic and even the lampada seemed mediocre to her. It was quiet in the room. Only the saint was walking behind the wall and rustling something. And suddenly she began to feel sadness and compunction, and involuntarily and imperceptibly she began to weep. Tears dimmed her eyes, and she could no longer see the icons and lampada but only an iridescent cloud behind which there seemed to be the presence of God. When the saint entered, she was standing all in tears.



"Read 'Our Father'."

Somehow, stumbingly, she read it.

"Read the 'Symbol of Faith'."

"I don't remember it."

The elder himself began to read it, and after each article he asked:

"Do you believe this?"

To the first two she replied: "I believe."

When they reached the third article, she said that she understood nothing there and felt nothing for the Mother of God. Batyushka reproached her and ordered her to pray for enlightenment to the Heavenly Queen, so that she herself should teach her how to understand the Symbol of Faith. And with regard to the majority of the other articles of the Symbol of Faith the woman said that she did not understand them and had never thought about them. But she wept bitterly, and all the time felt that it was impossible to hide anything and it would be pointless to try and hide anything, and that this was for her like a prefiguring of the Terrible Judgement, while the saint asked her about her personal sins as if she were a child, so that she began to reply to him with a smile through her tears. Then he absolved her from her sins since childhood to the present day.

Once a spiritual daughter of his asked the elder: did he have to take upon himself all the sufferings and sins of those who came to him for relief and consolation? He replied:

"You yourself have understood, so I shall tell you - it is impossible to relieve them in any other way. And you sometimes feel as if literally a mountain of stones had fallen on you, so many sins and pain did they bring you, and you cannot bear it. Then grace comes to your weakness and clears away this mountain of stones as if it were a mountain of dry leaves..."

The clairvoyant elder often gave messages in an indirect way, through parables. Thus Bishop Theophan of Kaluga did not believe in the holiness of the elder. When he visited Optina and went to him, the elder paid no attention to him and occupied himself with his dolls (they had been given to him by some children out of love for him). He ordered one to be put in prison, giving it a sentence; another he beat, and a third he punished. Bishop Theophan decided that he was mad. But when Vladyka was taken by the Bolsheviks and put in prison, he understood everything and said:

"I am a sinner before God and the elder. Everything he said was about me, and I thought that he was mad."

During his exile Vladyka suffered much from his landlord, but did not complain. However, he later fell into the schism created by Metropolitan Sergius.

Elder Nectarius also said: "Russia will arise and will be materially poor, but in spirit she will be wealthy, and in Optina there will be seven more lights, seven pillars."

And he said: "You know that if you translate the apocalyptic number 666, you get *free thinker*."

When the heresy of renovationism arose, the elder took a firm stand against it. He said: "I fear the red hierarchs", and: "There is no grace there. Rebelling against the lawful patriarch Tikhon, the bishops and priests of the 'Living Church' deprived themselves of grace and lost, according to canonical ruling, their hierarchical office. Because of this the Liturgy performed by them is a mockery."

The elder forbade his spiritual children from entering the churches taken over by the renovationists. If there were wonderworking icons in such churches, the Iveron Mother of God, for example, he would instruct them on entering the church to go straight to the icon and neither by thought nor movement to participate in the service. Candles placed before the icon were to be brought from home or from an Orthodox church.

In 1923, just before Pascha, Optina was officially closed by the Bolsheviks. The churches were sealed, the graves of the elders desecrated and the skete turned into a resort for the Soviet upper class. Fr. Nectarius was arrested and put in a prison hospital in Kozelsk.

After his departure from Optina, the Bolsheviks put an occultist into his cell in order to discover, as they thought, the treasures that were hidden there. (It is well known that they made frequent use of occult powers to pursue their ends.) It was night, and a kerosene lamp burned in the cell. The magician-occultist began his spells and, although the lamp continued to burn, the room became dark. At this point a nun who was there took Fr. Nectarius' prayer-rope and made the sign of the cross with it. Immediately it became light, but the magician writhed on the ground in convulsions.

As the elder himself said of spiritists: "Finally, when the unfortunate soul with Satan's help has reached the last step in leading himself astray, he either takes leave of his senses - the man becomes literally irresponsible - or he commits suicide."

On leaving prison, Fr. Nectarius settled in the house of a peasant in the village of Kholmischchi in Bryansk region. Here, although many of his spiritual children visited him, life was very difficult for him. The authorities threatened him with exile to Kamchatka.

Elder Nectarius also worked miracles of healing. Eugenia Grigorievna Rymarenko, the wife of Fr. Adrian, later Archbishop Andrew of Rockland, recalls: "I remember during Lent the unusual case of Fr. Adrian's healing by Batiushka's prayers. Every evening I sent medicine (powders, mineral water) - from the beginning of Lent he had

unbearable abdominal pains. Fearfully, the people were talking among themselves that he would probably be so sick that he wouldn't even be able to carry out the Cross. He didn't want to eat non-lenten food, and I didn't know what to do with him! I wrote to a certain nun in Kozelsk, Anastasia, so that she would ask Batiushka to pray. And then (for, when Fr. Adrian went in the morning to liturgy on the day of the bringing out of the Cross, he still had pains), toward evening everything went away, and the evening church service, with the bringing out of the Cross, passed without his having pains. The pains stopped for a long period of time and didn't return. Mother Anastasia told me that Batiushka had arranged a short moleben and everyone heard how he prayed for 'the sick priest Fr. Adrian'."

In 1927 Fr. Nectarius foretold to Professor I.M. Andreyev that very heavy trials and sufferings lay ahead for him, but that in the end everything would turn out well and he would be free and have the opportunity of working actively for the Orthodox Church.

In February, 1929, the professor was arrested for being a member of the Catacomb Church, was exiled to the Solovki labour camps, and then was in exile. But everything turned out well and after the war of 1941-45 he emigrated to America, where he became a professor in the Jordanville theological seminary.

Once a young girl came to ask the elder's blessing to become a nun. But he said:

"No, you will have a bridegroom, you will marry, you will bear a child and he will weigh ten pounds."

It turned out exactly as he said. And two years later the girl brought her son to the elder to be blessed.

One of Fr. Nectarius' constant visitors relates the following: "Patriarch Tikhon did not visit Fr. Nectarius, and Fr. Nectarius did not visit the patriarch. It seems that there was no correspondence between them. However, it seems that many questions were decided by the patriarch in accordance with the elder's opinion. People close to both men would convey the elder's opinion to the patriarch. And he always acted in accordance with his advice."

Or almost always. We know of one case in which the elder criticized a decision of the patriarch's: his decision in 1922 to allow the church valuables - with the exception of the most sacred vessels used in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy - to be given to the Bolsheviks, supposedly so that they should be sold and the proceeds given to the starving in the Volga region. "You see now," said the elder to Matushka Evegnia Rymarenko, "the patriarch gave the order to give up all valuables from the churches, but they belonged to the Church! Only don't say anything about this to Fr. Adrian, please, don't say anything..."

Of course, as I.M. Kontzevich writes, "the position of the patriarch was exceptionally difficult. The authorities were trying to destroy the foundations of Christianity. At this time Optina, under the direction of the elders in general and the

last elder, Batiushka Nectarius, in particular, went firmly ahead without deviating to either side. Through the authority of the elder Optina spread its influence into every corner of Russia; for people devoted to the Church poured to it from all sides in spite of the difficulties and dangers. Bishops, priests and laymen addressed the elder both personally and in writing and orally, through other people. They sought the resolution of spiritual, ecclesiastical and everyday questions. The elder's opinion on this or that question was absolutely authoritative and quickly spread among the truly believing people, who were a support for the patriarch in all his initiatives.

"A quite different situation arose with the coming to power of Metropolitan Sergius: between the latter and Fr. Nectarius there was no communication.

"Even before the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, in the same summer of 1927, Professors Komarovich and Anichkov were visiting the elder. During the conversation the elder called Metropolitan Sergius a renovationist. When they objected that Sergius had repented, the elder replied:

"Yes, he has repented, but the poison is in him still."

And according to Archbishop Lazarus of Tambov, the elder said: "Sergianism is worse than renovationism... It is worse because the renovationists repented, but these will not repent, they will become hardened of heart."

Elder Nectarius sent some of his spiritual children to the churches of those who had separated from Metropolitan Sergius, both in Moscow and in Petrograd. And when he was dying, he said that his body should not be sent to Kozelsk for the burial service, since the brothers in Kozelsk recognized Metropolitan Sergius.

"Kozelsk has set off on a false path," he said.

They say that at the time of his arrest, when the authorities demanded that batyushka refuse to receive visitors, all the Optina elders appeared to him and said:

"If you want to be with us, do not refuse your spiritual children."

And he did not refuse.

The Optina elders appeared to him for the second time when they wanted to take him away from Kholmishchi. At that time they forbade him to leave.

Elder Nectarius died on May 12, 1928 in Kholmishchi. The last rites were given to him by Fr. Adrian Rymarenko, later Archbishop Andrew of Novo-Diveyevo. At the moment of death Fr. Adrian placed his stole over the dying elder. He reposed quietly. He was buried in the local cemetery on May 16 by five priests led by Fr. Sergius Mechiev, the future hieromartyr. It was a bright spring day, and a great joy was felt in the hearts of his weeping spiritual children. The elder foreknew his death and bade farewell to his close ones already two months before he died. He blessed them for the

last time, gave them some parting counsels and gave them over into the care of this or that spiritual father. After his death he appeared in dreams to his spiritual children.

In 1935 some village hooligans dug up his grave one night. They tore the lid off the coffin and the covering from the face of the dead man, and then leaned the open coffin against a tree. In the morning, as little children were leading horses from their nightly grazing spot, they saw the coffin and galloped to the village, shouting:

"A monk arose from the grave!"

The collective farm worker ran to the cemetery and said: "The elder was standing incorrupt - his skin was wax-coloured and his arms and hands were soft." One woman brought a white silk covering and with it they covered the face of the elder. Then they closed the coffin and lowered it into the grave, singing "Holy God".

The elder prophesied that his relics would not remain in Kholmishchi, and on July 16, 1989, they were returned to Optina and placed in the cathedral of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple.

Arsenius Malyutin writes: "For a long time the honourable remains of the blessed one remained in oblivion. And only on July 16, 1989, the day of the commemoration of Metropolitan Philip of Moscow, were the relics of Elder Nectarius transferred to Optina Hermitage. The brethren of the community arrived at the elder's grave at about 6 o'clock in the morning, and in about one-and-a-half hours, at a depth of two metres, they found the coffin in which the relics of the saints were resting. When they opened it, everyone senses a fragrance; the mantia of the elder was incorrupt, and his relics of an amber colour..."

## **25. HOLY HIEROMARTYR PETER, ARCHBISHOP OF VORONEZH**

**(+1929)**

**and those with him**

Archbishop Peter was born on February 18, 1878 in the village of Veshnyaki, near Moscow, the eldest son of a Moscow protopriest, Fr. Constantine Zverev (who later became the spiritual father of Grand-Duchess Elizabeth Fyodorovna), and his wife Anna. He was given the name of Basil in Holy Baptism after St. Basil the Confessor (February 28). Already as a child he loved playing church services, and zealously attended church services with his father.

In his early childhood he had a vision of the Saviour. As he described it: "In childhood I was very fat and pudgy. The adults liked to squeeze me, and I couldn't bear this and pushed them away with my hands and legs. And then I saw a vision. We had a table standing by the wall in the living-room, and there I saw the Saviour sitting, dressed in blue and red clothing and holding me in His hands. And under the table was a terrible dog. The Saviour took my hand and stretched it under the table to the dog, saying:

"'Eat it, it fights.'

"I woke up, and from that moment I never fought, but began to grow up, trying to restrain myself in everything, not getting angry and not doing anything bad. All boys always want to try smoking. My father was strict and said:

"'If anyone smokes, I'll tear off his lips!'

"But I still wanted to try it. I smoked a cigarette and went to the church. It was Forgiveness Sunday and they were chanting: 'Turn not Thy face away from Thy servant, for I sorrow, quickly hear me.' This was my favourite chant. But at this moment my head began to reel and I had to leave the church. From then on I did not try to smoke."

In 1895 Basil finished secondary school. Then he studied for three years at the University of Moscow, finishing two courses at the Historical-Philological faculty. In 1899 he entered the Kazan Theological Academy. His dissertation was entitled, "An Exegetical Analysis of the First Two Chapters of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews". On January 19, 1900, he was tonsured a monk and given the name Peter in honour of the Apostle Peter. On January 23 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on June 15 - to the priesthood by Bishop Parthenius of Mozhaisk.

On graduating from the Academy, on September 30, 1902, he was appointed anti-sectarian diocesan missionary in the Savvino-Storozhesky monastery in Zvenigorod, Moscow province. On December 30, 1902, Metropolitan Vladimir appointed him rector of the St. Vladimir church in the Diocesan House in Moscow. According to one source, he also served as a teacher in the Orel theological seminary.

On June 30, 1906 he became an inspector at the Novgorod Theological Academy. On January 15, 1908, at his own request, he was numbered among the brethren of the Yuriev monastery in Novgorod.

On June 3, 1909 he became superior of the Saviour-Transfiguration Belev men's monastery in Tula province. On August 8, 1910 he was raised to the rank of archimandrite by Bishop Parthenius (Levitsky). He remained in this post until 1917, and raised the monastery from steep decline to a flourishing state. The church was filled during services, especially with children.

Fr. Peter also read lectures in Belev, and visited the local village schools, taking a lively interest in the lives of the peasants and clergy. Diocesan News published many of his accounts of local ascetics. He was very popular, and his services were always packed. During his sermons he often talked about the local sectarians, skoptsy and khlysty, exposing their heresies.

The monastery was close to Optina Desert, and Fr. Peter had close relations with the Optina elders, who highly estimated him and often sent people to him. Elder Anatolius (Potapov) once wrote to one woman:

"You ask a blessing to turn to Vladyka Peter. God blesses. How fortunate you are that the Lord sends you such wise directors."

Fr. Peter was also often in Diveyevo, where he "sat at the feet" of Blessed Pasha of Sarov, who once gave him some coarse linen which she had made. Later, a hierarchical vestment was made out of it, and Vladyka kept it for his own burial.

He also knew St. John of Kronstadt.

During the First World War a field hospital was built in the monastery. In 1916 Fr. Peter was appointed for missionary work in North America, but he never arrived there, and instead was sent to the front as a preacher.

In 1917 he became rector of the St. Vladimir diocesan church in Moscow, and then, on February 21 / March 6, 1918 - of the Zheltikov monastery in Tver. During his time in Tver he re-vested the relics of St. Arsenius of Tver, and witnessed that the hierarch's body was completely incorrupt. Only the lower part of his legs were missing - they had evidently been stolen.

In December, 1917 (or 1918) Vladyka was arrested for the first time by the Tver Cheka and imprisoned as a hostage. However, by the mercy of God he did not stay long in prison.

On February 2/15, 1919, the feast of the Meeting of the Lord, he was consecrated bishop of Balakhin, a vicariate of the diocese of Nizhni-Novgorod, by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon. The archbishop of Novgorod at that time was the future leader of the renovationists Eudocimus, whom Vladyka knew from his time in Belev, when Eudocimus was ruling the Tula diocese.

On his arrival in Nizhni, Vladyka was accommodated in the Caves monastery on the banks of the Volga. In 1919 the monastery was in sharp decline, but Vladyka brought several monks with him, and introduced the full cycle of services according to the Typicon. He was tall, thin, with long, fair hair that he never cut, and piercing blue eyes. He had a beautiful, strong voice, and when he served every word could be heard. He also introduced courses in the law of God for children. The children loved him very much, and he himself would teach them the Law of God.

He served unhurriedly, and during censuring would go slowly through the church so that the Polyeleos had to be sung in full. He demanded that the kathismas be read in full, and once, when invited to a church where they read no kathismas, he called the rector and said to him:

“Why do you not love King David? Love King David.”

He also always performed burials and pannikhidas in full. Once he said to his cell-attendant:

“Your Peter is sinful in everything, only he has never violated the Typicon.”

For this reason the services lasted many hours. But the people did not mind, and no-one thought of leaving the church before the end of the services, which were always very well attended. After the services he would instruct the people, and people were constantly visiting him at home. It was observed that if a person entered his cell sad and gloomy, he would come out radiant and consoled.

Vladyka was often invited to serve in city churches, and he became very popular with the people. This popularity of his annoyed Archbishop Eudocimus, and the archbishop's initial friendly attitude towards him soon degenerated into outright hatred.

Once, on Forgiveness Sunday, 1920, Vladyka was returning from a service in Sormov, and dropped in at the Diveyevo podvorye to ask forgiveness from Archbishop Eudocimus before the Great Fast. On entering his room, he prayed before the icons, prostrated at the feet of the archbishop and then went up to him with the words: "Christ is in our midst." Instead of the usual reply: "He is and shall be", the future leader of the renovationist heretics said: "He is not and will not be." Vladyka Peter silently turned and left the room.

During the Fast Vladyka attended all the services, which as a rule lasted 13-14 hours in the 24. In the middle of the Fast in 1920 Archbishop Eudocimus sent him to live in the Gorodets monastery podvorye in Kanavino. This was a very noisy place because the podvorye was situated just next to the railway lines in the Moscow station.

In May, 1921, Vladyka was arrested in Kanavino for "arousing religious fanaticism". But this elicited a three-day strike of the Sormovo factories, and the



authorities promised to release him. Instead, however, they sent him to Moscow: first to the Lubyanka, then to Butyrki, and then to the Taganka prison.

In Lubyanka Vladyka converted a sailor to the faith, and then took off his cross and put it round the sailor's neck. In general Vladyka was a tireless preacher, and when he converted someone he would take off his cross and put it round the neck of the convert.

When Vladyka was taken out of the Taganka prison in July, 1921, everyone in the cell said goodbye to him, many wept, even the jailers came out to accompany him. "I then remembered the parting of the Apostle Paul," said Vladyka.

In Taganka there were up to twelve hierarchs and many clergy at that time. The believers sent prosphorae and vestments to the prison, and the hierarchs concelebrated together round a little table. In the Taganka prison Vladyka fell ill from exhaustion and went to hospital. Boils came out on his head. Then, at the end of July he was transferred to a prison in Petrograd. Before leaving he was allowed to see his spiritual children, who accompanied him to the station. The bishop told them much about his stay in prison, and finally said: "How I want to open my heart to you and show you how sufferings purify the heart."

Vladyka was freed from prison in Petrograd on December 22 / January 4, 1921/22, the feast of St. Anastasia the releaser from bonds, and was appointed bishop of Staritsky, a vicariate of the Tver diocese. He lived in the same Zheltikov monastery where he had been rector in 1918. In Zheltikov he introduced the same strict monastic order that he had introduced in the Caves monastery.

On March 18, 1922, Bishop Peter blessed his flock to give the valuables of the Church to the authorities for the relief of the starving. Almost all the money of the diocese went on the starving, and Vladyka himself was often in need. But, in accordance with Patriarch Tikhon's decree of February 23, he excepted those valuables which were necessary for the carrying out of the sacraments.

However, on June 16, 1922, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Vladimir (the future first Soviet patriarch), Archbishop Eudocimus of Nizhni-Novgorod and Archbishop Seraphim of Kostroma issued an appeal published in the journal Living Church to give these valuables, too, to the starving. When the Diveyevo nun Margarita brought a copy of the appeal to Vladyka Peter he said:

"I expected this. Metropolitan Sergius is deaf: he hears what he is required to hear and does not hear what he is not required to hear."

Metropolitan Sergius remained for fourteen months in the renovationist schism, and according to the Moscow Patriarchal historian Metropolitan Manuel (Lemeshevsky), many hierarchs and clergy followed his example. Bishop Alexander of Tver also joined Sergius at this time. But Vladyka Peter remained faithful to the True Church. He immediately banned those priests in the Tver diocese who joined the schism, and publicised the fact so as to warn the laity not to join them.

In the summer of 1922 he wrote to his flock: "There is nothing religious in these living church renovationists. They only pretend to be religious, they are political workers, although many do not understand this. We must not occupy ourselves with politics, this is not our business. We strictly keep the decree on the separation of the Church from the State. There must be renovation, not in the Church, but in ourselves. We are not able, we have forgotten how to assimilate and understand the grace-filled spirit of the ecclesiastical regulations, which is why much seems to us superfluous, unnecessary, outmoded. However sad the appearance of quarrels and disturbances in the Church is, we must thank God for them, for at this time the wheat will be separated from the chaff and everyone will look at himself and will find out to what extent he is an Orthodox Christian. I pray God that He preserve more people in the true Church, although I know from the Scriptures, and from my observations of those around me I see, that few true believers will remain."

The GPU's censorship refused the bishop permission to publish his appeal: "In view of the fact that the appeal is setting on a part of the clergy and believers against another, which is forbidden by the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, which gives every citizen and community the right to believe in what it wants, and to pray to whom it wants, [it has been decided] to reject the appeal for publication, and to call Bishop Peter to account for his non-submission to Soviet power, and for using pre-revolutionary orthography in his letter."

Tuchkov, from the secret department of the GPU, demanded proof that Bishop Peter was distributing this appeal. They tried in vain to extract proof from Fr. Basil Kurpiyanov, who was close to the bishop, in order to arrest him. The GPU was afraid to arrest him in Tver and told Tuchkov: "During the preliminary investigation Bishop Peter was proved to have distributed the appeal forbidden by the censors, and in a few days will be arrested with the whole band of Tikhonites. We ask your permission immediately after the arrest to accompany Bishop Peter and his company, with all the material, to you so as to avoid exciting fanatics." The secret department agreed.

So on November 24, 1922, in spite of his strictly apolitical stand, Bishop Peter was arrested together with Bishop Theophilus of Novotorzhsk, Archimandrite Innocent, Protopriests Basil Kuriyanov, Alexis Benemansky and Alexander Preobrazhensky, Hieromonk (later Bishop) Benjamin (Troitsky), treasurer of the Novotorzhsk monastery of SS. Boris and Gleb, and Alexis Ivanovich Sokolov. They spent the winter in Butyrki prison in Moscow. In February they were moved to the Taganka prison.

**Protopriest Alexander Mikhailovich Preobrazhensky** was born in 1879 in the village of Alexeyevskoye, Vyshnevolotsky uyezd, Tver province. Until 1918 he served as secretary of the Spiritual Consistory in Tver, and later became secretary of Bishop Peter. After his arrest on November 24, a group of believers petitioned for his release, but he was sent to Moscow with the other arrestees. On February 26, 1923 he was sentenced in accordance with article 73 to two years' exile in Samarkand in Turkestan. After his arrival in Samarkand, nothing more is known about him.

On February 26, 1923 the NKVD sentenced Vladyka and the others arrested with him to two years' exile in Turkestan for "distributing the appeals of Bishop Peter of Tver, which was directed against every renovationist movement in the Church and in support of the counter-revolutionary politics of Tikhon". This was part of the group case, "The Case of Bishop Peter (Zverev) and others, 1923". From the protocols of the interrogation: "What is your attitude to the renovationist movement?" "I consider renovation to be necessary in the Church, but within the bounds of the inviolability of the dogmas. I consider the HCA to be canonically unlawful and a self-called institution". "What is the reason for your active struggle, that is, in word and deed, with the supporters of the HCA?" "Their heretical teaching, that is, their denial of heaven and hell, etc. Besides, they are, in my opinion, political activists." "What is your attitude to Patriarch Tikhon?" "I recognize him as the head of the Russian Church in ecclesiastical matters."

On April 1, 1923, Vladyka was taken under convoy to Tashkent. His spiritual children succeeded in seeing him before his journey. One of his spiritual daughters recalls: "Having pushed her way onto the platform, one spiritual daughter of the bishop saw him first behind two grills, and with her eyes she indicated this to us. When I saw the thin face of Vladyka, covered with the paleness that is special to prison life, I sobbed loudly. Vladyka smiled, and I heard his words, although he said them almost in a whisper because of the convoy: "How glad I am to see you. But why are you crying? You must not be sorry for me, you must rejoice for me." At that time because of malnourishment he was beginning to suffer from avitaminosis, and the whole of his head was bound up."

When the prisoners arrived in Tashkent, and before they set off for their place of exile, the parishioners of the city cathedral prepared a meal for them, and brought many kuliches (it was the Thursday of Bright Week), tea and sugar, and gave each of them a shirt. Vladyka's emotion was so great that he wept and he hurried to go to the room prepared for him.

Vladyka was in Perovsk (now Kzyl-Orda) for more than a year. He lived in very difficult conditions, suffered from scurvy and lost all his teeth. In time he was able to arrange correspondence with other exiles. Sometimes letters were passed on through a train driver: the bishop's cell-attendant would go up to the train, the driver would open a little window and throw a bundle of letters onto the snow. Having received the letters, Vladyka would immediately set about reading them, and then the cell-attendant would cast them into the stove. Only after a year was regular correspondence established through Nun Olympiada (Porokhovitskaya). In the letters vital church problems were discussed (renovationism, the arrest of Patriarch Tikhon, etc.), and the question was posed: how to act without sacrificing the interests of the Church while at the same time avoiding direct conflicts with the authorities.

In the summer of 1923 Patriarch Tikhon was released from prison and petitioned for the release of a list of hierarchs without whom he considered that he could not rule the Church. Among them was Vladyka Peter. And so, at the end of the summer of 1924 he returned to Moscow, where he was appointed temporary administrator of the Moscow diocese.

After the death of Patriarch Tikhon, Vladyka Peter signed the act transferring power to Metropolitan Peter on April 12, 1925. He was offered either of two dioceses: that of Nizhni-Novgorod, or that of Voronezh. He chose Voronezh because of his devotion to the saintly hierarchs of Voronezh, Metrophanes, Tikhon (of Zadonsk) and Anthony.

Bishop Peter arrived at his new see on July 16, 1925 and took up residence in the Alexeyev Akatov monastery. Most of the churches in Voronezh were in the hands of the renovationists. The 84-year-old Metropolitan Vladimir (Shimkovich) was subjected to house arrest and forbidden to give sermons, but he firmly opposed the schismatics. Bishop Peter was a great help to the elderly metropolitan, and under him almost all the churches in Voronezh returned from renovationism to the Orthodox Church.

Vladyka would carry out the return to Orthodoxy very majestically. All returning priests had to repent in front of the whole people. Vladyka stood in his cathedra while the priests from the ambon pronounced their repentance before him and the whole people. The penitents would prostrate to the ground and "Thee, O God, do we praise" was chanted. Vladyka did not immediately allow the penitent to serve, but put them on the kliros for a certain time. The churches of the penitent, which included the Vvedensky, Nikolsky, Voskresensky and Mitrophanievsky monasteries, were first consecrated, and he was always met in them by a cross procession and a vast crowd of people.

Of course, not all the priests returned by conviction, with sincerity. Some admitted in private conversations that they were frightened of remaining alone, without the people. Thus Protodeacon Simeon Silchenko, a renovationist, repented in front of the people and served with Vladyka Peter, but then renounced his priesthood and published an article against the Church in Vechernij Voronezh. The repentance of the renovationists was also received by Fr. John Andreyevsky, who died in 1961 in the Catacomb Church as Hieromonk Hilarion.

The people loved Vladyka Peter very much. He was exceptionally welcoming, attentive and kind. Everyone felt close to him, and he called everyone: "my dear ones". During his services the church was so full that it was literally impossible for an apple to fall to the ground. He most often served in a large, five-altared church dedicated to the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the edge of the town, at Ternovaya Polyana, because most of the churches, including the cathedral, were in the hands of the renovationists. He also served in the Pokrov-Transfiguration church of the former Devichi monastery, where he also lived.

In Voronezh Vladyka was helped by Archimandrite Innocent, whom he had first met in Tver. Vladyka sent him to Sarov and Diveyevo to get a copy of the akathist with music to St. Seraphim of Sarov. He used to serve this akathist every Wednesday during his time in Voronezh.

As in other places, Vladyka introduced chanting by the whole people. Thus he would sing "Praise ye the Name of the Lord" himself, and then all the worshippers would join in. The people's choir was directed by Archimandrite Ignatius (Biryukov), who collected ancient chants and introduced them into church practice.

Blessed Paraskeva Ivanovna had once told Vladyka that he would be imprisoned three times. He had already been in prison three times, so Vladyka did not fear anything anymore.

"There will be no fourth [term]," he said.

However, the Diveyevo eldress Maria Ivanovna warned him through the nun Margarita:

"Let Vladyka sit quietly, otherwise the Heavenly Queen will turn away from him."

But he, remembering the words of Paraskeva Ivanovna, paid no attention to this warning. However, on November 10 (or 16, according to another source), 1925, he was arrested and taken to the GPU headquarters at the Lubyanka in Moscow, to the well-known head of the Bolsheviks' anti-church activity, Eugene Tuchkov - "Metropolitan Eugene", as Vladyka jokingly called him. The people were greatly saddened at this parting, and Vladyka Peter said that wherever he stayed he left a part of his heart.

"And so here in Voronezh I am again leaving a part of my heart," he said.

On arriving at the northern station in Moscow, Vladyka shouted:

"Are there any Diveyevo nuns here?"

There were two sisters there.

"Give Blessed Maria Ivanovna a bow from me."

After Vladyka Peter's departure to Moscow, Metropolitan Vladimir died, on December 24 / January 6, 1925/26. The people were constantly asking:

"When is Vladyka Peter coming back?"

A blessed fool-for-Christ, Theoctista Mikhailovna, said:

"He'll come when we'll be eating meat".

And sure enough, he returned on January 10, in the fast-free period after Christmas. On January 12, serving together with Metropolitan Nathanael (Troitsky), he buried Metropolitan Vladimir. After the burial he again had to go to Moscow, but returned for the fortieth day.

On the day after the burial (or on February 15, according to another source), representatives of the Orthodox parishes of Voronezh diocese sent Bishop Peter a declaration: "In accordance with the unanimous demand of all the Orthodox collectives of the believers of Voronezh diocese, we ask you to occupy the now-vacant see of the archbishop of Voronezh and Zadonsk." The bishop replied: "Seeing the voice of God in my unanimous election by the workers, I do not dare to refuse and declare my complete agreement." Soon (on February 18, according to one source) he went to Moscow, where Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) confirmed his election and appointed him to the see of Voronezh with promotion to the rank of archbishop. Moreover, Sergius said that he was the best preacher in Moscow.

On returning, he began to live in a small house not far from the St. Alexis monastery. Here he was constantly visited by the fool-for-Christ Theoctista Mikhailovna. She would go straight to his cell and sit on his bed, where she would wait until Vladyka sent away those who were constantly coming to him. She would always call Vladyka by his first name and patronymic.

Nobody knew who **Theoctista Mikhailovna** was or where she came from. It was said that she had been the wife of a high-ranking naval officer who died in the Russo-Japanese War (the earthly life, she directed the gaze of her heart on high and took upon herself the exploit of foolishness for the sake of Christ. God rewarded her with a gift of clairvoyance with which she helped her suffering neighbours.

She was small of stature, skinny, worn out, with noble features. She would wear a long skirt, a coat of some dark, ugly colour, and many scarves on her head. On her feet she wore soldier's boots of the largest possible size; she always left the laces untied. She would walk intentionally through puddles; the boots would become filled with water and she would keep right on walking. She would always take a cane with her, and would always close windows along the street with it. She was always accompanied by some woman, perhaps a nun or a novice from the Protection Convent where Theoctista Mikhailovna lived amidst the remaining sisters who had not yet been arrested and exiled. The Convent had been closed by the communists long before, and had been turned into a so-called "workers' village", its houses rented out to laymen. Theoctista Mikhailovna lived in one of the cells of the Convent.

She would spend her nights in prayer and vigil, sleeping little. When she was visiting she would pretend to pick insects off herself and kill them, and she would scratch herself all the time. People would judge her for this. She was also noisy. When she was with outsiders, she would often begin to speak all manner of nonsense, and sometimes would spit with an oath. But as soon as the outsiders left, a coherent conversation of a clairvoyant eldress would begin. She had a remarkable mind and a refined way of expressing her thoughts and feelings. It was evident that she was well bred.

There was a great public square in Voronezh. On one side were the buildings of the Party's Regional Committee, and the Regional Executive Committee, and here there were monuments to Lenin and Stalin. Chekist guards were standing everywhere. Once she went up to these monuments and in front of everyone relieved herself; a

puddle formed. She was immediately taken to Cheka headquarters, and there, in the chief's office, she made an even bigger mess right on his desk with all his papers. She was detained, but then released as abnormal.

She had a friend, Anysia, who very much loved her. Once this Anysia became ill and was preparing to die, since nobody could help her. Theoctista Mikhailovna came to her and was told that she was dying. "She's pretending," replied Theoctista Mikhailovna. Then she went up to her, took her by the hand (it was evident that she was really dying) and said: "Anishka, get up!" Anysia instantly got up completely healed and began to prepare a meal for them. This took place in Voronezh.

A certain woman was once subjected to a search by the police. She had a small store of money which she had hidden in a purse on a shelf. Suddenly the police came and the search began. Mentally she cried out for help: "Theoctista Mikhailovna, save me!" The one conducting the search touched the purse but saw nothing. He moved the whole buffet and all the shelves, but still didn't find the money.

Theoctista Mikhailovna lived in the Voronezh monastery of St. Alexis until it was closed in 1931, and then took shelter with various people. She lived from time to time also in Novocherkassk, where she was very respected. It is said that she was received there by the Ataman (General) of the Don Cossacks; despite the armed guard around his house, she went everywhere freely, even to his private rooms. It was not for nothing that she was comforting people in Novocherkassk, for frightful catastrophes had taken place there; the town was almost entirely wiped out by the communists because the Cossacks had been a great support for the Tsarist government and were suspected to be a threat due to their freedom-loving spirit. Both in Voronezh and Novocherkassk she had her own circle of people whom she would visit.

The renovationists were very disturbed by Vladyka Peter's activity, which they called "peterzverian" at their diocesan assembly. There they elected a new metropolitan to replace their dead Bishop Tikhon. Vladyka Peter declared from the ambon that prayers in church for the deceased heretic were out of the question. However, people could pray for him privately with the words: "Deal with him, O Lord, according to Thy mercy".

The renovationists tried to persuade the authorities, who did not recognize the True Church from a juridical point of view, to remove Vladyka from Voronezh. And so his trips to village parishes were seen as counter-revolutionary activity, and each time he went he had to seek permission from the authorities. The believers would intercede with the authorities on his behalf, but without result. The more people interceded for Vladyka, the more the authorities hated him. The atmosphere in the city became very tense. The archbishop received several letters with threats, and there were occasions when someone would throw stones at him from a roof.

Although Vladyka remained in freedom, a group of ten to twelve people was formed to guard him day and night. They tried to organize a manifestation to defend him from administrative arbitrariness, and to meet the local party and GPU officials, demanding that they "refrain from disturbing our archbishop".

Vladyka was grateful, but had little faith in the effectiveness of his guard. He turned for advice to Elder Nectarius of Optina. The elder said that if this went on, he would inevitably be arrested.

Vladyka began to be summoned to interrogations by the GPU. He would go into the room of the investigator and look round, as if looking for an icon. Not finding one, he would make the sign of the cross with a bow to the waist towards the right corner, and then began to talk with the investigator. The officials would involuntarily bare their heads at his entry, even when they had agreed not to.

During the Dormition fast in August Vladyka served the akathist to the Dormition of the Mother of God every day, after which he would make a cross procession around the church (of the Alexeyev monastery) chanting the troparion to the Dormition. The workers were very frightened of some kind of ambush and unpleasant consequences during these cross processions, and formed a cordon around him. After the service they would escort Vladyka to his home. Many of these workers were later arrested and condemned on the charge of resisting the authorities.

During this period the police, who were stationed not far from Vladyka's flat, called him for interrogation. After the service the whole church accompanied Vladyka in a huge crowd. They waited a long time for him outside the police station. Four people forced themselves into the office of the chief policeman, but attempts to arrest the "troublemakers" were frustrated by a crowd of angry women. Then a detachment of cavalry was called, who rode into the crowd and dispersed them.

At the feast of the Dormition Vladyka was not able to serve because of the interrogation. They waited for him at the Resurrection church, but in vain. The atmosphere was very tense.

On October 29, Vladyka was summoned to the OGPU and told that he had to go to see Tuchkov in Moscow for a conference on ecclesiastical affairs with Metropolitans Sergius (Stragorodsky) and Agathangel (Preobrazhensky). On returning from the OGPU, Vladyka was met by a crowd of people. They decided to ask the head of the local OGPU to postpone the trip to Moscow so that the workers could get leave to go to Moscow as well. On the next day Vladyka was again summoned to the OGPU, and said: "You yourselves are going against the people, you yourselves are irritating and disturbing them. I will not speak with you chekists any longer. You speak to the people yourselves. Extricate yourselves as you want." On that day representatives of the workers came to the archbishop and told him that they were going to Moscow for talks with Tuchkov, and they were also sending delegates to a non-party workers' conference which would take place in Moscow on November 27.

Nine workers sent two telegrams in defence of the archbishop: one to Tuchkov, and the other to the fifteenth all-union party conference, asking to know the reasons and purpose of the archbishop's summons to see Tuchkov in Moscow, and also demanding that a delegation of believers should go there together with the archbishop. When the workers arrived in Moscow and came to Tuchkov's flat, he was



extremely angry and ordered them to go to the OGPU. Then the workers asked the delegates of the workers' conference to help. However, they were not interested in the opinions of their fellow-workers in Voronezh, and passed the resolution: "The conference demands the speedy withdrawal and isolation of Peter Zverev from Voronezh province and the exclusion of the nine men who signed the telegram from the trade unions, handing them and Peter Zverev over to trial." The next day, November 28, a local newspaper declared: "The servant of the Tsar Archbishop Peter (Zverev) has tried to incite the Voronezh workers. A broad conference of the workers demands the investigation of the provocative actions of Peter (Zverev)."

To add to the tension, a congress of the renovationists under Tuchkov's direction was being prepared. In connection with this, the OGPU decided to conduct a search in the archbishop's house.

On November 28, Vladyka served for the last time. Perhaps he sensed this, because he was very sad. That night, agents of the OGPU came to search his house and arrest him. When they began to knock, Vladyka's cell-attendant, Archimandrite Innocent (Beda), shut the door more firmly, shot the bolt and did not allow them in until Vladyka had burned all his letters and documents that might harm somebody. After the search the archbishop was taken to the OGPU.

In the morning rumours flew round the city that Vladyka had been arrested, and a large crowd had assembled near the police-station, demanding his release. Vladyka pointed to the crowd and said that there might be some unpleasantness. Then they suggested that he go out after the policemen had left the house. That is what he did. On the street he was met by about three hundred people, who went behind him and stood at the entrance to the police-station. Several workers marched into the office of the police chief and asked on what basis the archbishop had been arrested. The people began to be disturbed. The policemen tried to disperse the crowd by force, but without success. Then the police chief threatened to summon the mounted police. "But if you tell the people that nothing will happen to me, the people will become calm and go away," advised the archbishop. "No, you tell them yourself," replied the police chief. Vladyka tried to calm the crowd, but the people began to shout that the police chief himself give his word that the archbishop would not be arrested. He promised, but the people did not disperse, and demanded the release of the archbishop. The chief of police gave the order to arrest the people closest to the archbishop – all those who had entered his office. The policemen hurled themselves into the crowd, but the people resisted, surrounding with a dense ring all of those whom the police wanted to arrest. However, with great effort they succeeded in arresting several people, among them **Ogarkov** and **Sukhovtsev** and **Peter Timofeyev**. The crowd began to disperse, and a cavalry detachment of police drove away the rest.

Nevertheless, in the evening some were still there and managed to see the archbishop being taken away and put in a car. They rushed to the station, but no-one was allowed onto the platform until the train had gone. Two men who had often spent the night in Vladyka's house in order to guard him, **Semyon Tsikov**, the president of the church council of the Pokrov-Preobrazhensky church in the Devichi monastery, and **Alexis Gorozhankin**, went to Moscow to talk to Tuchkov about Vladyka's arrest. They were arrested and cast into Butyrki prison.

On his arrival in Moscow, Vladyka was cast into Lubyanka prison, and later into the Butyrki prison together with ten fellow believers from Voronezh. These included **Archimandrite Innocent** (Panteleimonovich Beda), who was born in 1881 in the village of Moisesy, Zolotonoshsky uyezd, Poltava province into a peasant family. He was educated at home. In 1908 he became a monk and hierodeacon. At the beginning of the First World War Fr. Innocent, who was now a hieromonk, went to Tver, where he became the treasurer of the Dormition Zheltikov monastery in Tver diocese. There he met Bishop Peter and became his cell-attendant and Vladyka met him there. In 1923, when Vladyka was imprisoned, Fr. Innocent went to Poltava province, but returned when Vladyka was released. In May, 1926 Vladyka invited him to Voronezh, where he made him superior of the Alexeyev monastery in Voronezh in the rank of archimandrite.

Archbishop Peter was accused of spreading counter-revolutionary rumours whose aim was to arouse distrust towards Soviet power and discredit it, and to incite believers against it. He was asked about his relationship to Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Sergius. He did not know the Patriarch, but he had corresponded with Metropolitan Sergius, whose position on relations with the government he did not share.

On March 26, 1927 the OGPU gave its verdict in "The Case of Archbishop Peter (Zverev) and others, Voronezh, 1927". Archbishop Peter and **D.K. Moskalev**, a jurist, were condemned to ten years in the camps in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11; **Archimandrite Innocent, Peter T. Atamanov, Ivan M. Nemakhov, Basil Siroshstan and Semyon A. Tsykov** (these four had been part of Archbishop Peter's bodyguard) were given five years in the camps; the novices of the Pokrov Devichi monastery **Maria Marchenko and Agrippina Budanova**, who had been arrested in November together with Archbishop Peter and cast into the Butyrki prison, were exiled to Central Asia for three years; **George. I. Pushkin**, the warden of the Ternovskaya church, was exiled for three years to Kazakhstan.

After Pascha Archbishop Peter, Archimandrite Innocent, P.T. Atamanov and S.A. Tsykov were sent to Solovki. D.K. Moskalev worked on the White Sea canal, and in the middle of the 1930s was transferred to Medvezhyegorsk.

In the camp, Vladyka lived first as a watchman, then as an accountant in the food warehouse, where only clergy worked. He and Bishop Gregory (Kozlov) were given a little room next to the warehouse. Here Vladyka kept his prayer rule and lived according to the Church typicon, striving as far as he could to help the exiles and support the needy. In his little room he received everyone who wanted to talk with him, and drank tea.

After the dissolution of the monastery, sixty monks had agreed to stay in the camp as voluntary workers, and they had been given the church in the cemetery in honour of St. Onuphrius the Wonderworker, where there were daily services. Until 1928 clergy prisoners were allowed to visit them. At 6 in the evening, after work, the all-night vigil began. Vladyka always read the six psalms (he particularly loved the

Psalms). Then there would come the roll-call, and then everyone would lie down to sleep. At 4 a.m. the Liturgy would begin, and would end at about 6, when there was a general reveille and control, after which Vladyka would go to the bread-cutting section. He blessed the bread and the priests cut it and handed it out in rations. The believers who lived on Anzer island would come to Solovki to receive communion.

On December 24 / January 6, 1927/28 Archimandrite Innocent died "like an angel" of a stomach illness in the monastery hospital in the "Kremlin". The funeral service took place in the church of St. Onuphrius. It was celebrated by Archbishop Peter together with thirty clergy and a huge crowd of sympathizing prisoners.

Vladyka tried to write to his spiritual children as often as he could. He thanked them for parcels, and took a keen interest in the situation in Voronezh, and asked for the prayers of Theoctista Mikhailovna. In one of his letters he wrote: "Because of the prayers of many, I am still alive and well... I am united by blood with my flock and I cannot fail to pray for them and be worried about their welfare, peace, health and salvation... To you, your relatives and to all - peace and the blessing of God. Gratitude. Let nobody write my rank on their letters."

As a mark of special respect, the exiled episcopate elected Archbishop Peter as the archpastor and head of the Orthodox clergy on Solovki. The moral loftiness of the archbishop was such that even with a shovel in his hand, whether as watchman or doorkeeper, he inspired reverent respect. Thus the bosses had such respect for Vladyka that on meeting him on one of the foot-bridges laid out for those coming across the mud, they would step into the mud, letting him walk on the foot-bridge.

However, this attitude changed when Uspensky, the son of a priest who had killed his own father, became camp commandant. He immediately removed the crosses from the churches, and in October, 1928, in punishment for Vladyka's conversion and baptism of an Estonian woman in Holy Lake, he transferred him to the Trinity skete on Anzer island, where he worked as an accountant.

From there he wrote: "Glory to God for all things... Do not live as you want, but as God commands. I have not received any letters from anybody for a long time, probably because of the closing of navigation. Probably my letters have also begun to arrive less frequently, although there may be other reasons not dependent on me... It looks as if a real winter has begun for us, with winds and storms, so that the wind almost lifts you off your feet... I live in a remote and desert place on the banks of a deep sea bay. I see nobody except those living with me, and I can imagine myself as a desert-dweller."

On Anzer, Vladyka composed an akathist to St. Herman of Solovki. He sent postcards with parts of the text to his spiritual children, and later they were able to collect them and put together the whole text.

From Anzer Vladyka wrote that he was sorry to be separated from the grave of Fr. Innocent. He remembered his former cell-attendant Fr. Seraphim, who had earlier died in the Nizhni Caves monastery and with whom, he said, he was united "by

mutual love". He also asked his correspondent to send his blessing to his cell-attendant Fr. Paphnutius, who used to interpret the significance of Vladyka's dreams.

During the autumn of 1928 there was an outbreak of typhus on Anzer. Of the 1000 prisoners on the island, 500 died. In January, 1929 Vladyka fell ill and was transferred to Golgotha - that was the name for the hospital situated in the former Golgotha (according to another source, Trinity) skete, in the church in honour of the Crucifixion of the Lord, on the hill called Golgotha.

An eye-witness wrote: "The picture I encountered on arriving in Golgotha was terrible, the name 'Golgotha' was completely justified. It was so stuffy in the small rooms, packed with people, that just staying in it for a more protracted period seemed fatal. Most of the people, in spite of the frost, were completely undressed, naked in the full sense of the word, while the rest were covered with pitiful rags. Exhausted faces, skeletons with the skin covering the bones tautly slumped naked out of the chapel [of the Resurrection of Christ] to the hole in the ice, in order draw water into a jam jar. There were cases when they died as they stooped down."

They put Archbishop Peter in a tent that was by the altar of the church of the Crucifixion. He was ill for two weeks, and it seemed that the crisis was past. But Vladyka was very weak, and refused to eat. A hieromonk came from Solovki and gave him communion.

In the same tent as Vladyka there lay one of his spiritual sons, a vet by profession. On the day of Vladyka's death, at 4 a.m. on February 7, he heard a noise as if a flock of birds were flying in. He opened his eyes and saw the holy Great-Martyr Barbara with many other virgins, among whom he recognized the Martyr Anysia and the Great-Martyr Irina. On the same day, at seven in the evening, Vladyka died. Just before his death, he was constantly writing with a pencil on the wall:

"I do not want to live any longer. The Lord is calling me to Himself."

And he wrote this several times. As he was writing "not" for the last time, his hand fell, and he died. It was January 25 / February 7, 1929, the feast of the Mother of God "Console my sorrows", and of all the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia. Vladyka was the last to die of typhus - after his death the epidemic came to an end.

According to another account, when Vladyka was dying of typhus on Anzer, a prisoner by the name of **George Mikhailovich Osorgin** was called to bring the Holy Gifts to him.

**George Osorgin** was born in 1893 and was an officer on the Staff of the Supreme Commander of the army in World War One. He had been awarded the George cross. In 1921 he was sentenced to be shot for taking part in an attempt to save the Royal Family. However, he was amnestied. On March 6, 1925 he was arrested again and cast into Butyrki prison. On October 12 he was condemned by the OGPU and sentenced to be shot, but the sentence was commuted to ten years' imprisonment. In May, 1928 he was sent to Solovki.

In the words of O.I. Volkov: "Osorgin belonged to a completely special kind of warrior, to that old-fashioned type that saw their presence in the army in a knightly, medieval light, as a kind of heightened form of service... Being a convinced, absolutely undoubting monarchist, George was devoted to the memory of the destroyed Royal Family... He was from a famous old family. Osorgin traced his genealogy to St. Juliana. Being devoted to his family traditions, George was deeply believing by inheritance. Yes, and in the Moscow style! That is, he knew and observed the Orthodox rites in all their age-old inviolability - he chanted on the kliroses and did not miss an opportunity to put on a sticharion to take part in a hierarchical service... Osorgin declared with the greatest firmness at interrogations: 'I am a monarchist and a believer' ... George was chief clerk at the field hospital... He worked with rare zeal in the camp: his service gave him the opportunity to do a lot of good. It is impossible to say how many priests and helpless intelligentsy he fished out of the thirteenth, quarantine company! He put them into the hospital... George would save people... The whole day he would dash about between the hospital, the companies and the administration, trying to get alleviation, transfers, passes, privileges... "

Before his release O. Volkov wrote his impressions about George Osorgin as follows: "I suddenly saw that which I had not noticed when I would meet George from day to day: both his sharply etched wrinkles, and his deeply sunken eyes, and the ineradicable crease between his brows. The look in his eyes was completely exhausted, even downtrodden. My George's soul was heavy. But what self-possession he had! In no way did he give away his suffering, he was always sympathetic and light! And generous in doing good. As if he had been spoiled by fate, he was ready to splash out his extra good fortune onto others. George looked on his earthly path soberly and without hope. But from Solovki he could not reach out and protect his helpless parents, and his dear little wife Marina. They had no defence, and there was no support for them in the fickle, hostile world - only God!"

A.I Solzhenitsyn writes: "Besides the clergy, nobody was allowed to go to the last monastic church. Osorgin, using the fact that he worked in the sanitary section, secretly went to the Paschal Mattins [in 1928]. And he brought a mantia and the Holy Gifts to Bishop Peter of Voronezh, who had been taken to Anzer with spotted typhus."

Now Anzer was twelve kilometres from the monastery, and in January, 1929 there was no access. Many tried to dissuade Osorgin, saying that Vladyka was unconscious and he would be subjecting himself to danger for no purpose. But Osorgin took a boat and made his way through the ice and water to Anzer. Vladyka came to for a very short moment, during which he received the Holy Gifts and immediately died...

George Osorgin was not punished for his feat of self-sacrificial love. Later, however, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn relates, he was denounced, cast into a punishment cell and condemned to death. On that very day his young wife came to the quayside at Solovki. Osorgin pleaded with his jailers: don't spoil my wife's meeting with me! He promised that he would not let her stay for more than three days, and immediately she left they could kill him. They agreed. For three days he was with his wife, and, exercising supreme self-control, did not let her guess what awaited him.

Not by a word, not even by the tone of his voice. And not by the expression of his eyes. "Only once (his wife is alive and recalls it now), when they were walking along Holy Lake, she turned and saw her husband clutching his head in torment. 'What's the matter with you?' 'It's nothing,' he immediately explained. She could still stay, but he asked her to leave. The time came to part: he persuaded her to take his warm things, he would get more in the sanitary section the next winter - after all, they were precious, he was giving them away to his family. When the steamer left the quayside, Osorgin let his head fall. Ten minutes later he had already put on other clothes for the shooting." George Osorgin was shot on October 29, 1929.

Vladyka's body was taken to the morgue and was at first thrown into a common grave with all the other victims of typhus. The bosses ordered that the grave be covered with earth and snow, but this order was not carried out. However, after a formal request from the prisoners, the commandant allowed him to be buried separately. Using some money that had been sent to him, the prisoners had a coffin built for him, and at 5 a.m. on the fifth day after his death they chanted the burial service. Then while four men dug a grave, they opened the common grave. All those who had died lay with blackened bodies, but Vladyka lay, like the Saviour, all white, in a shirt, with his hands folded on his breast. Three priests - Archimandrite Constantine Almazov from Saint Petersburg, Fr. Basil from Barnaul and Fr. Demetrius from Tver - raised him from the grave, placed him on a sheet, combed his hair, washed his face and began to vest him in new vestments, mantia, small omophorion and slippers and a wooden panagia that had been made for him only the night before. They put a cross, prayer rope and Gospel into his hands. His body was white and soft as if he had only just died. Before putting the prayer of absolution into his hands, the three priests all signed it. Nun Arsenia asked: Why are you signing? There are no signatures on the prayer!" "If times change, and the relics of Vladyka are uncovered, they will know who buried him," they replied. The priests performed the burial service, which was attended by about twenty people, loudly and triumphantly. After the last farewell words, the body was laid in the grave, which was dug out opposite the altar of the church of the Resurrection, and placed a cross with an inscription over the grave (later removed). One of the priests said that as they were filling in the earth of the grave, a column of light suddenly appeared over it, and in the light stood Vladyka blessing them.

After his death Vladyka was again seen by the wife of his brother standing in the air in their room in a bright light, blessing them. He was sometimes seen in this light even during his lifetime.

There are some who claim that Archbishop Peter died in communion with Metropolitan Sergius. However, in a letter from his exile in Central Asia dated June 10/23, 1929, the protopriest and future martyr Fr. John Andreyevsky wrote that he had been greatly comforted by a letter from Archbishop Peter dated July 3/16, 1928, in which he made it quite clear that he shared the point of view of the Voronezh "Josephites".

The relics of the saint were uncovered on June 17, 1999.

## 26. HOLY HIEROMARTYR MICHAEL OF MOSCOW (+1929)

### **and those with him**

**Fr. Michael Glagolev** served as a priest on the other side of the river in Moscow. Once he was told that there was going to be a dispute on a religious subject in a theatre. Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Education, himself would be speaking. Fr. Michael's parishioners urged him to go. They said it was necessary to fight for the souls of the young. Otherwise they would say that he had nothing to say and was giving up. Fr. Michael did not want to go, he felt that no good would come from it. But he had to carry out his duty. So he went.

The theatre was packed with people. Lunacharsky spoke ardently against religion and God. In particular, he said that the soul did not exist. Not one of the exact sciences confirmed its existence. It was comical to believe in such a thing in the age of radio and electricity. All talk about the soul and the spirit was the raving of fools...

Fr. Michael could restrain himself no longer. He got up.

"Allow me, my friends," he said, "to tell you of a dream I had recently. I dreamed of our deeply respected commissar, Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, whom I wouldn't want to offend by my story - God forbid! I know him to be the most intelligent man, I have never had the slightest doubt about his remarkable qualities..."

"Well, then, I had this dream that our dear Anatoly Vasilyevich had died..."

As he said this, a deep silence descended upon the crowd, as in a church. Then, without hurrying, he continued:

"You know, a dream can bring such sorrow. Well, okay. Our Anatoly Vasilyevich had donated his body to an anatomical theatre. Of course, it doesn't matter, matter is the same with all of us. Let Soviet students study on my dead body..."

"And so they laid the mortal remains of him who was once our dear Anatoly Vasilyevich on an anatomical table and began to cut him up, divide him up into bits. It didn't take long for the young but curious hands to cut the body up. There again, it's not every day a commissar comes your way... Well, soon everything had been divided up into its constituent parts. And they found the stomach, and the heart, and the tongue, and the brains. But then they looked for the soul and mind, and they just couldn't find them... What a commotion there was!..."

"Well, let's suppose that there is no soul in a dead body, but you would think the mind could be found! After all, it was clear to everyone that our dear deceased one - the Kingdom, hm, hm, of heaven to him - was a very, very clever man. But hard as they tried, they just couldn't find his mind. And after this, here you are talking about the mind... How embarrassing it was! I woke up covered in sweat... Lord, forgive me, how stupid dreams can be."

For two minutes the whole hall laughed, with a joyful fire in the tired eyes of the people. But Lunacharsky didn't like it at all. The discomfiture of religion that he had counted on hadn't happened. Two days later, the chekists came to Fr. Michael at night. He was exiled to Solovki. That was in 1926...

On Solovki Fr. Michael once said: "The Bolsheviks do not so much fear weapons as faith, and ideas. But how can a real priest not be their enemy? Look, it's laughable to say it, but they're very frightened of us old men [there were more than two hundred Orthodox priests on Solovki at that time.] How that can be was well explained by someone: the most explosive thing in the world is thought and faith." He was shot together with **S.A. Grabovsky** and **D.M. Shipchinsky** in the autumn of 1929. He did not recognize Metropolitan Sergius and was a member of the Catacomb Church.



## **27. HOLY HIEROMARTYR PROCOPIUS OF BIISK (+1929)**

**Protodeacon Procopius** was the choir director in the village of Kamyshinka, Bystro-Istoksky uyezd, Altai district, Siberia, and also served as deacon in the Alexandrovskaya church in Biisk. At the end of 1928 or beginning of 1929 he was arrested in Biisk and taken to the local police station. There they demanded that he renounce God, torturing him by dipping him through a hole in the ice of the river Bii. Then they threw him into a special punishment cell called the "secretka", in which he could only stand. He was terribly beaten and tortured. Then he was transferred to the prison in Naryn, where his wife Ekaterina came to visit him. She had been allowed a meeting only on condition that she tried to persuade her husband to renounce Christ and work at Pascha. On seeing him she hardly recognized him - he was completely covered in wounds. To the question why he refused to work at Pascha, Fr. Procopius replied: "Immediately I lift my axe, I see the Saviour Himself lying in front of me. How can I cut him?" And he went on: "When I went out of the gates to work at Pascha, I saw the Risen Christ and the Mother of God in great radiance, and He cried: 'Christ is risen!'" After that they immediately took hold of him and cast him into the "secretka". When his wife said that he should renounce God only in words and not forget Him in her heart, he replied: "Get thee behind me, Satan, and do not tempt me!" As they were driving all the clergy into exile under convoy, Fr. Procopius raised his arms and gazing at the sky, sang: "Christ is risen!" He was immediately taken out of the formation and shot.

## 28. HOLY CONFESSORS SERGIUS +(1929) AND HELEN (+1938) OF MOSCOW

### **And those with them**

**Sergius Alexandrovich Nilus** was born on August 25 (April 28, according to another source), 1862 in Moscow. His family, as he wrote, "on my mother's side counted in its midst not a few advanced people - advanced in the spirit for which the 60s of what is now already the last century was distinguished.

"My parents were nobles and landowners - major ones, moreover. It was perhaps because of their links with the land and the peasants that they escaped any extreme manifestation of the enthusiasms of the 70s. However, they could not escape the general, so to speak platonic-revolutionary spirit of the times, so great then was the allure of the ideas of egalitarianism, freedom of thought, freedom... yes, perhaps freedom of action, too, which overcame everyone. It seems that at that time there was not one home of the nobility in both the capitals where the state structure of the Russian empire was not reshaped in its own model, according to the measure of its understanding and according to the last book it had read, first from Sovremennik, and then Otechestvennye Zapiski or Vestnik Evropy. Of course, the hard food of conversations of a political character did not much help to develop in me religious dreams, as they were then called, and I grew up in complete alienation from the Church, uniting it in my childish imagination only with my old nanny, whom I loved to distraction.

"Nevertheless, I did not know any prayers and entered a church only by chance; I learned the law of God from teachers who were indifferent, if not outrightly hostile, to the word of God, as an intractable necessity of the school's programme.

"That was the degree of my knowledge of God when I, as a youth who was Orthodox in name, went to university, where they already, of course, had no time for such trivialities as Orthodoxy.

"Left to my devices in the life of faith, I reached such an abominable degree of spiritual desolation as only that person can imagine who has lived in this spiritual stench and who has then, while on the path of his own destruction, been detained by the unseen hand of the benevolent Creator.

"But under all the spiritual abomination which accumulated in the course of the years of the freedom of religious education in family, school and, finally, public life - the silent, but loved-filled lessons of Moscow, of the country and of nanny; the boundless Christian kindness of my mother, who ceaselessly did good to her neighbour with the meekness that belongs only to Christians - all this did not allow the spark to go out in my soul, the spark of dimly recognized love for God and His Orthodoxy - although, it is true, it hardly twinkled in my soul's darkness.

"Quite a lot of time passed. How it was passed, or rather, conducted, it is terrible to say! Terrible, of course, for a Christian. In a word, I lived a gay life!

"I had left the service a long time ago and had settled down to keep house in the country. One Holy Week, not having fasted for seven years or more, I fasted, as they say, after a fashion and received Communion. This was not without a feeling of false shame before my 'intellectuality', perhaps more out of condescension to the 'prejudices' of my lesser brethren, the peasants, who had elected me as church warden of our village church. However, when I received Communion I had what was for me a strange, incomprehensible, secret feeling of trembling, which for a long, long time I did not want to admit to myself. And after Communion I felt as if renewed, somehow more full of the joy of life: my soul experienced something which I had known a long time ago, which felt familiar; moreover, it was something inexplicably sweet and at the same time triumphant...

"Something came to fruition in my soul: I began to be visited more often by a thirst for prayer, a thirst which I was not clearly conscious of and which was sometimes even violently drowned out by everyday cares..."

In 1886 Sergius Alexandrovich graduated from the juridical faculty of Moscow university. He then served for two years as a candidate for juridical posts in Yerevan, attached to the procurator of the Yerevan district court. From 1888 he lived on his estate in the village of Zolotarevo, Mtsensk uyezd, Orel province.

Once, in accordance with the call of his heart, Sergius Alexandrovich went to the Trinity - St. Sergius Lavra - the spiritual support of the throne and the homeland:

"There were quite a lot of worshippers. The hieromonk on duty was serving a general moleben for everyone. I fell on my knees in front of the shrine containing the holy relics of St. Sergius and for the first time in my life surrendered to a wonderful feeling of prayer without cunning sophistries. I besought the saint to forgive my spiritual weakness, my lack of faith, my apostasy. Involuntary, grace-given tears welled up somewhere deep in my heart: I felt as if I had gone somewhere far away from myself, like the prodigal son, and had then returned into the bosom of the loving Mother-Church. These few hours spent under the roof of the holy monastery, this wonderful prayerful mood sent down from above through the prayers of the saint - all this accomplished such a turning-point in my spiritual life that in itself this turning-point was nothing other than a miracle quite openly accomplished over me. I came to believe. This was a deep, irrevocable faith in which Creator and creature are invisibly united into one, in which the reverent gratitude of the creature raises it to the very One Who has created it."

But the enemy of the human race cannot leave even one soul in peace, still less one who is on the path of conversion. In this period of his life Sergius Alexandrovich experienced many trials, doubts, uncertainties, falls.

"I was no longer the former man, but I had not yet become a new one. The world and its delights had lost their significance for me - I somehow became detached from people, but the emptiness left by them in my soul did not find its fulfilment.

I was visited occasionally by a prayerful mood: I acquired a greater taste for reading the Holy Scriptures, and I rested my attention and meditations on them more often and more deeply than before. But I still could not tell myself with complete sincerity that my heart had found satisfaction for itself. I began to go to church more often, but neither in church did I find what I desired. This mental state continued for about a year."

Sergius Alexandrovich heard about the great man of prayer John of Kronstadt and decided to meet him without fail. In February, 1900, when he had caught a cold and had lost his voice, Sergius Alexandrovich went to the House of the Love of Labour for an unforgettable meeting with God's righteous one. This is how he describes this visit:

"I heard steps in the direction of my door... Someone pulled on the handle. 'Why is the door not open? Open it immediately!' sounded an authoritative voice, and with a quick, energetic stride batyushka entered my room. Behind him came the reader. Fr. John took me in at a glance... and what a glance that was! A piercing, penetrating glance like lightning which revealed all my past, and the wounds of my present, and pierced, as it seemed, even into my future! I felt so stripped that I began to be ashamed of myself and my nakedness... The reader bent towards Fr. John and said loudly: 'Batyushka, here is a gentleman from Orel province (at this point he pronounced my surname) who has come to seek your advice, but he has fallen ill and lost his voice.' 'A familiar name! How did you lose your voice? Did you catch a cold?'

"In reply I could not utter even a sound - my throat was simply not up to it. Helpless and at a loss, I could only look at batyushka in despair. Fr. John gave me the cross to kiss, put it on the analogion, and then with two fingers of his right hand stroked my throat behind the collar of my shirt three times... My fever immediately left me, and my voice returned to me sounding fresher and purer than usual... It is hard to convey in words what took place in my soul then!

"For more than half an hour, as I knelt at the feet of my longed-for comforter, I told him about my sorrows, opened to him the whole of my sinful soul and offered repentance for everything that lay like a heavy stone on my heart. That was the first true repentance in the whole of my life. For the first time with my whole being I understood the significance of the spiritual father as the witness of this great sacrament - a witness radically crushing, by the grace of God, the evil of the pride of sin and the pride of human self-love. For the first time I experienced with all my soul the sweetness of this repentance, for the first time I felt with all my heart that God, God Himself, was sending me His forgiveness through the lips of the pastor engraced by Him, when Fr. John said:

"God is very merciful - God will forgive.'

"What ineffable joy I felt, with sacred trembling was my soul filled at these love-filled, all-forgiving words! That faith which so stubbornly had not been given to my soul, in spite of my evident conversion at the relics of St. Sergius, only flared

up in me with a bright flame after this heart-felt confession of mine with Fr. John. I became conscious of myself as a believer and an Orthodox."

In 1903 there appeared the first edition of his remarkable book, The Great in the Small. In one of his prefaces to the book Sergius Alexandrovich wrote: "The great intercessor for the Russian land, Fr. John of Kronstadt, to whom this book was dedicated during his lifetime, and to whom I now dedicate to him as to a living person, said to me on July 14, 1903 in the Nikolo-Babayevsky monastery: 'Write: I like everything that you write.' 'For whom should I write it?' I was about to object. 'Who now reads such writings?' 'God gives the blessing,' replied Fr. John, ' - and they will buy it and read it.'

"It is by this blessing of the great pastor of Kronstadt that I explain to myself the completely unexpected spread of my sketches collected in the book and called The Great in the Small."

"What is in store for Russia?" asked Sergius Alexandrovich.

"The events of contemporary world and Russian life, and also my dealings with people who have devoted their whole life and all their activity to the service in spirit and in truth, in the likeness and truth of real Christianity, have revealed to me something new, great and terrible, 'the depths of Satan', which was still hidden from me in 1905, when the second edition of this book appeared. This revelation, which was drawn from observations of the current spiritual and political life of Christian peoples and the study of the secrets of the religious sects of the East, and in particular Masonry, have given me material of such enormous importance *that I would consider myself a turncoat traitor of Christ my God if I did not share this material with the God-loving reader.*

"I draw the attention of my reader," he wrote in the preface to the second edition, "to the sketch 'The Antichrist as an imminent political possibility', in which is found the solution of a great world mystery hidden until the times of its final realization. Now the mystery has been realized and the key to it found: the imminent triumph of all justified Christian hopes, the triumph of the whole Christian faith, is coming. But the imminent triumph of the faith has also brought closer the terrible antichristian time of persecutions against the faith, and it is not without the will of God that this sketch contains a forecast of that for which the Christian world must prepare itself so as to meet with the whole armour of its humility and patience the terrible ordeal of the temptation that is aiming to deceive even the elect. 'He who endures to the end will be saved.'"

In the preface to the final, fifth edition (an edition that was never brought to fruition), Sergius Alexandrovich wrote:

"My book about the coming Antichrist, which in its fourth edition was called It is Near, even at the Doors, was published in January, 1917, and already on March 2 of the same year there took place the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II from the all-Russian throne for himself and his son. The House of Romanov, as an autocratic

dynasty, ceased to exist, and the provisional Russian government was not slow to declare that Russia was a republic. That which was foreseen as a possibility by my book became an already accomplished fact, the heritage of the past. He who restrains was taken from the midst of the Orthodox Russian community. One does not have to be a prophet to foretell his removal in the very near future from all the other monarchical states, too, not excluding 'victory-bearing' Germany and her allies. This cannot take place later than that universal peace congress which must bring to an end the still-continuing universal human catastrophe which is already coming to its final moment.

"According to the word of the Apostle Paul and the tradition of the Holy Fathers, this removal of him who restrains represents the closest and most important sign of the coming of that time when the lawless one will be revealed - he whose coming, in accordance with the working of Satan, will be with all power and signs and false miracles, and every unrighteous deception of those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth for their salvation (II Thessalonians 2.7-10)."

In 1906 Sergius Alexandrovich married **Helen Alexandrovna Ozerova**, née Ozerova, the scion of an aristocratic family, was a lady-in-waiting at the court of Empress Maria Fyodorovna. Her father, Alexander Petrovich Ozerov, had many posts at court. He was, it seems, an envoy to Greece, where Helen Alexandrovna was born. He was an envoy to the Russian embassy in Persia, and thereafter the ober-hofmeister of the Court of His Imperial Majesty. He had seven children. His eldest son, Alexander, perished in Bulgaria during the siege of Shipki. His eldest daughter, Olga, the Duchess Shakhovskaya by marriage, took monastic vows after the death of her husband and died as the abbess of the Dmitrievna women's monastery of the Moscow oblast', having taken the name of Sophia in mantia. One of the sons, David, was in charge of caring for the condition of the Winter Palace.

Brought up by her pious mother in strict obedience to the Church, Helen Alexandrovna devoted her life to caring for her elderly father and to good works. She was a trustee of one of the "Patriotic" schools founded in the last century by Empress Elizabeth for orphans of the Patriotic War of 1812; there, in addition to sciences, the young women were instructed in trades. She was also a trustee of the Rozhdestvensky medical assistant course for women, and it was there that she met her future husband. During the Russo-Japanese war Helen Alexandrovna worked in the Winter Palace together with Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna. Here she became closely acquainted with the Empress, who in 1905-06 offered her to become the Red Cross representative in Tsarskoe Selo and to take charge of all her charitable organizations.

Petersburg society looked down on the marriage; they regarded Sergius Alexandrovich as a social climber who had married one of the Empress's favourites, and was becoming a priest in the hopes of entering the ranks of the court clergy and of wielding a reactionary political influence. Then an article appeared in Novoye Vremya exposing a sinful episode in his earlier life involving a married woman. There could be no more talk of the priesthood, and the Niluses left Petersburg, choosing as their retreat the Babayevsky monastery on the banks

of the Volga, where Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov had spent the last years of his life. On the way they unexpectedly met St. John of Kronstadt, who approved and blessed their marriage, and bowed to Helen Alexandrovna, saying: "I thank you for marrying him."

Prince N.D. Zhevakov recalls: "The marriage between Sergius Alexandrovich and Helen Alexandrovna was concluded in their old age, when they were both over 60 [she was seven years older than him], or thereabouts. Its foundation was not carnal, but was rather a strengthening of their friendship of many years, which had been established on the soil of their common profound religiosity."

In September, 1906 the couple went to live in Valdai, Novgorod province. However, in 1907 they visited Optina Desert, where Hieromonk Sergius, suggested that Sergius Alexandrovich help the Fathers in publishing a series of Optina leaflets. A large house just outside the monastery was presented to them for this purpose; and there they stayed for the next four years under the spiritual direction of Elder Barsanuphius.

Sergius Alexandrovich wrote in his biographical narrative: "July 7, 1909... Last night I had a heavy attack of a suffocating cough. Just what I deserved! It was from smoking, a habit which I cannot break; I've been smoking since my third year in high school and now I am so penetrated with this accursed nicotine that it has undoubtedly become an essential part of my blood. A miracle is needed to tear me away from the claws of this vice. I haven't enough willpower to do it myself. I tried to kick the habit. I didn't smoke for a day, two days - but the result was that I became irritable, angry, and this new sin was more bitter than the first. Fr. Barsanuphius forbade me even from making such attempts, limiting my daily portion to fifteen cigarettes. (I had previously smoked without counting.) Fr. Barsanuphius wrote: 'Your hour will come, and you will stop smoking.' Regarding this habit Fr. Joseph said to me: 'Hope, do not despair: in good time, God willing, you will quit!' And, according to the word of the elders, this miracle occurred. It happened in the following way:

"I lived with my friend, my God-given wife, 'soul in soul', as they say, in the full sense of the Gospel words; i.e. in such a way that we were not two, but one flesh. The great mercy of God was granted us from above on account of our profound and firm faith in the Mystery of Marriage, which we both approached with fear and trembling. Then, in June, 1910, my wife fell seriously ill, and neither the Optina medical assistant nor the summoned doctor could identify the nature of the illness: in the morning she appeared to be almost well, but as soon as evening came her temperature rose to 40. And so it went on for a week, another, a third! I saw that my joy was melting before my eyes, like a wax candle; at any moment I imagined she would flare up for the last time and be extinguished. And my orphaned heart became filled with a great, an immeasurably great distress and grief. I fell down before the Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God, which stood in the corner of the study, and I wept, pouring forth my anguish and distress and speaking to her as if the Icon were alive: 'Mother, Queen, my All-blessed Theotokos! I believe it was you who gave me my angel wife. Save her for me, and

in return I vow before you that I will never smoke again. I give this vow, and yet I know that I cannot fulfil it through my own powers, but not to fulfil it would be a great sin; therefore help me!

“This was about 10 o’clock at night. Having prayed and calmed down somewhat, I approached my wife’s bedside. She was sleeping; her breathing was quiet, regular. I felt her forehead: it was damp but not hot. My sweet darling was sound asleep. Glory to God, glory to the Most Holy Mother of God! In the morning her temperature was 36.5, in the evening – 36.4, and a day later she was up as if she had never been ill. As for myself, I forgot that I had ever smoked, although I had been a chain-smoker for thirty-three years and my entire organism was so saturated with the cursed tobacco that I couldn’t live without it, not for a day, not even for a minute. Was this not a miracle of the Hodigitria?”

It was under the influence of Optina and its holy elders that there poured out from the pen of Sergius Alexandrovich a series of remarkable books entitled: Holiness under a Bushel, On the Banks of God's River, The Power of God and the Weakness of Man, The Optina Elder Theodosius. In these works Sergius Alexandrovich described with amazing simplicity and talent the piety of Optina, "the swansong of Russian monasticism", as Helen Kontzevich put it, not without some sorrow in her heart.

In Holiness under a Bushel, Sergius Alexandrovich wrote: "I offer to my pious readers materials consisting of vivid and lively examples of everyday life which clarify the true secret of the monastic mission and cast a bright light on the most secret corners of the monastic heart. They illuminate the inner cell life of the monk's soul, which in this material poured out his thoughts and feelings not for worldly honour and glory, not for the satisfaction of egotistical self-love, but spoke out of the abundance of his heart to himself and to his God." And at the end of the preface, sensing the approach of the terrible tragedy not only of Russia, but of the whole world, he speaks with pain about the untimely loss of the last lamp of Russian monasticism - Optina Hermitage and its inhabitants:

*What a lamp of reason has gone out.  
What a heart has ceased to beat...*

On May 14, 1912, in the wake of the exile of Fr. Barsanuphius from Optina, and in obedience to a decree of the Holy Synod forbidding lay people to live in the monastery (although their house was outside it), the Niluses moved back to Valdai. Life for them in Valdai was rich and fruitful. Although the nearby Iveron Monastery could not replace their beloved Optina, its holy things and spiritually attuned monks were for them a source of comfort and joy. People came to see them from all parts of Russia, and they received letters...

In On the Bank of God's River, Sergius Alexandrovich writes: "After the publication of this book, I sent it as a gift to Bishop Theophan of Poltava. In reply Vladyka wrote to me the following on November 24, 1915:



"Respected Sergius Alexandrovich! I thank you from the heart for taking thought for me by sending me your book, On the Bank of God's River. I read all your books with great interest and I completely share your views on recent events. The people of this age live by faith in progress and lull themselves with unrealizable dreams. Stubbornly and with a kind of cruelty they drive away from themselves the very thought of the end of the world and the coming of the Antichrist.

"Their eyes are spiritually blinded. Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not understand. But the meaning of contemporary events is not hidden from the truly believing children of God. More than that: to those upon whom the goodwill of God rests will be revealed both the coming of the Antichrist and the end of this world... Therefore great are the merits of those who remind the people of this age of the coming great events. May the Lord help you to talk about this in the hearing of this world 'in season and out of season, with all long-suffering and exhortation' (II Timothy 4.2)!

"Your sincere admirer and intercessor, Bishop Theophan."

"May the Lord help you to talk about this in the hearing of this world' - these words of the bishop were fulfilled exactly in the years of the revolution. Such is the significance of a bishop's blessing and especially of such a bishop as Vladyka Theophan."

It is precisely to Sergius Alexandrovich that we are indebted for the discovery and deciphering of the "Conversation of St. Seraphim with Nicholas Alexandrovich Motovilov on the acquisition of the Holy Spirit".

After the publication of the "Conversation" Sergius Alexandrovich recalled:

"If only someone could have seen the state in which I acquired Motovilov's papers, which preserved in their hidden depths this valuable witness to the God-pleasing life of the holy elder! Dust, pebbles and dove's feathers, bird's droppings... All the papers were old, written on in a rapid and indecipherable hand, so indecipherable that I was simply horrified: what could I make out there?! Sifting through this chaos, bumping up against all kinds of obstacles - the handwriting, especially, was a stone of stumbling for me, - I remember almost giving way to despair. But then, amidst all this pulp, no, no, a phrase deciphered with difficulty would shine like a spark in the darkness: 'Batyushka Fr. Seraphim told me'... What did he tell? What did these uninterpreted hieroglyphs hide in themselves? I was in despair.

"I remember that towards the evening of a whole day spent in stubbornly fruitless work, I could bear it no longer and cried out: Batyushka Seraphim! Did you give me the possibility of receiving the manuscripts of your 'lay brother' from such a distant spot as Diveyevo, in order that they should be consigned uninterpreted to oblivion? My cry must have been from the heart. In the morning, having set about deciphering papers, I suddenly found this manuscript and

immediately received the ability to make out Motovilov's handwriting. You can well imagine my joy, and how significant seemed to me the words of this manuscript: 'I think,' Fr. Seraphim replied to me, 'that the Lord will help you to keep this forever in your memory, for otherwise His kindness would not have inclined so suddenly to my humble petition and would not have deigned to hearken so quickly to poor Seraphim, *the more so since it is not given only to you to understand this, but through you to the whole world...*'

"For seventy long years this treasure lay under a bushel in trunks, amidst various forgotten rubbish. But was it meant to be published, and if so when? Before the very glorification of the holy relics of the God-pleaser!"

Prince Nicholas Davidovich Zhevakov writes in his memoirs: "Sergius Alexandrovich did not think up or 'compose' anything. He preferred to live near the famous Russian monasteries and use the monastery libraries. He extracted from the wealthy monastic archives valuable material and reworked it."

Being a truly Orthodox Christian, Sergius Alexandrovich fervently loved his own people and deeply understood the heavy burden of that time, sincerely experiencing it in his heart:

"In our time, which is distinguished by extraordinary discoveries and inventions - all the so-called 'miracles' of technology with which light-minded humanity amuses itself as with brilliant trinkets, playing a dangerous game that loses for it, in the expression of Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, the Heavenly Kingdom, - it is especially timely and useful for every believing Orthodox to oppose to all these 'false miracles and signs' the true miracles and signs worked by the Holy Spirit through the mediation of the vessels of grace chosen by Him - the saints who are pleasing to God.

"Faith in miracles, the search for the miraculous that transcends the greyness of everyday life, and is raised above the sphere of that which is known by our five imperfect senses, is innate to the whole human race regardless of the various degrees of its spiritual development. The semi-savage cannibal searches for the satisfaction of this faith of his in shamanism, the educated theosophist - in brahmanism or yoga. The intellectual who has lost his faith hurls himself at the miracles of spiritism and hypnosis... The human race since time immemorial 'seeks signs and miracles'. For over seven thousand years now the fallen nature of mankind has been striving to find that which it lost in the fall... but cannot find it. Only true faith finds that which has been lost, and only through it are true signs and miracles given to those who search, who have been able with the help of the grace of God to preserve their faith in purity and who have not mixed with the work of faith the proud inventions of the inconstant and limited mind of man. That is how it has been in all ages. Such is now the particular spiritual condition of the majority of mankind, when the terrible times foretold by the apostle have arrived for it. People's spiritual eyes have been closed by their lack of faith or, more precisely, their apostasy from the faith, so that 'seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear and understand'.

"Man's chief good on earth - and almost his only one, one might add - is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in God in Trinity glorified. Without this faith our earthly life is not life, but senseless vegetation."

No-one was taken by surprise by the revolution of 1917 in Russia. Some prepared it, others prepared themselves for it. The catastrophe was inevitable, given the spiritual state of the people. Sergius Alexandrovich considered it his Christian duty to warn not only the Orthodox people, but also the whole world, about the terrible times that were coming, just as before him Dostoyevsky had given warnings in his novel The Devils. Thus in one small, little-known book entitled The Wheat and the Tares, and published in 1908 by the Holy Trinity - St. Sergius Lavra, he wrote the following in the preface:

"In the woes and sorrows which like a narrow, heavy ring have oppressed your wandering along the paths of life from all sides, and which have become so much more difficult in recent times, have you ever given a thought, O reader, to the final and only common end, for all those who live upon the earth, of their labours and efforts, all their sorrows and joys, disillusionments and hopes, love and hate, good and evil - everything, in a word, out of which the thorny crown of life is woven? Do you even fully know what this end is like? And if you know, do you remember it with that careful thought which its importance merits? I don't think so. So allow me, my reader and brother in Christ, to remind you, whoever you may be - a ruler of the peoples, or a poor homeless man - that there is no other end to your life than death, than preparation for death. O how great and terrible is that word, that reality! And how few people in the world think about it!

"Remember the hour of your death and you will not sin to eternity', calls our Mother the Church 'and you will not sin to eternity!' Do you hear what she says? We have forgotten about this hour, which none can escape: and yet what have we turned the whole world that surrounds into through our sins? We have forgotten about death.

"Public and family quarrels, leading to bloodshed, in which sons raise their hands against their fathers and mothers, brothers against brothers, husbands against wives, wives against husbands; civil strife, in which public garbage and our youth that has been diverted and made senseless by antitheist teaching rises up in mindless blindness against the powers that be and against everyone that lives in accordance with the commandments of God, and not according to the elements of this world. Blood is shed in torrents, and the scythe of death mows down such an abundant harvest that the heart grows cold in horror. It seems that the times have come about which the faithful Christians were warned by the threatening word of Holy Scripture, that "blood will reach the horses' bridles" (Revelation 14.20), and "if those days should not be shortened for the sake of the elect, no flesh would be saved" (Matthew 24.22). And yet, people see all this, they see all the horrors of death, but few are those who think about death; as if only they, among those who are temporarily left among the living, have a guarantee of eternal life upon earth - a guarantee only they know about, and as if only those who are dead

were predestined to death.

"I will judge you as I find you'... 'Savage is the death of sinners'... It is terrible for the sinner to fall into the hands of the Living God in that desired world in which the faces of the saints and the righteous shine like the stars!... No stain of flesh and spirit will enter there.

"In my quiet retreat it is as if I hear the enemy devil whispering into the ear of him who pays attention to my words: 'Don't listen to him! Go after the educated world - that's enough of fairytales about the Heavenly Kingdom. Give us the earthly kingdom that belongs to us by right!'"

At the very beginning of the revolution, in June, 1917, the Niluses were providentially invited to move south, to the estate of Prince Vladimir Zhevakhov (the future Bishop Ioasaph) in the village of Linovitsy, Piryatinsky uyezd, Poltava province. There they were spared the famine and terror which soon swept the north; their local friends all perished. Preparing for an uncertain future, the Niluses received a blessing from the diocesan bishop, Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, to establish a church on the top floor of their house. The future martyr, Abbess Sophia of Kiev, whom they knew from Optina, took an active part in setting up the church and sent some of her nuns to help out.

The Niluses were both readers and singers; others joined them, forming a choir. Most people came to this church only irregularly. But still, they were drawn to the services and obtained spiritual consolation. When times were hard, those who came brought provisions. From abroad letters came with offers to help the Niluses to leave the country. But apart from having no money, they felt that it was not right to abandon their church, where the Lord and the Queen of Heaven had appointed them "guardians, watchmen, readers, chanters and lamp-lighters". "There is no way," wrote Sergius Alexandrovich, "that we can change our assignment; we must stand at our Divine post until the Lord Himself clearly indicates that our mission is finished, or until our death..."

In his memoirs Prince Zhevakov describes an interesting incident from the last years of the life of Sergius Alexandrovich: "S.A. Nilus was preserved by God and after the revolution continued to live in the houses of his friends, in a small two-storey house in the depths of a shady park. On the upper floor of the little house was a house church and the residence of Schema-Archimandrite N., the former superior of one of the neighbouring monasteries which had been destroyed by the Bolsheviks, while on the lower floor lived S.A. Nilus and his wife.

"In those days anyone found in possession of the Protocols (in Nilus' Near, even at the Doors) would be shot on the spot, while the book became better and better known, being translated into European and Asiatic languages, spreading throughout the world and arousing the satanic spite of the world conspirators. Meanwhile, S.A. Nilus continued to live in one of the wings of an estate seized by the Bolsheviks, where, to cap it all, daily Liturgies were celebrated by a reverend elder-archimandrite who had taken refuge there!

"It goes without saying that none of the local soviets, composed of criminals, caused S.A. Nilus the slightest concern, for, it goes without saying, they did not suspect him of being the publisher of The Protocols of Zion. Some considered that he had died long ago, while others even thought that he had never existed.

"But the enemy did not slumber. The fact that the 'masters' remained on the estate, even if they had been expelled from the main house, but continued to live in one of the wings, troubled the representatives of the local Soviet, and the evildoers decided at a meeting to kill all those living in the little house in the garden.

"One dark night in November, 1921, at the appointed hour, a band of eight Red Army soldiers under the leadership of the local bandit, armed with guns and knives, penetrated into the park and slowly began to approach the house, stealthily creeping through the bushes and looking around on all sides. They had decided to kill the aged schema-archimandrite first. But the closer they came to the house, the clearer became the sounds of a night watchman's rattle. He was walking round the house and rattling with a wooden crank that had a little sphere attached to it. The evil-doers decided to wait until the night watchman went away. But they had no success that night, and decided to try again the next night, only with ten men this time.

"It seemed as if everything favoured them. Instead of the wind and frosts of the previous night, the weather was wonderful, quiet and almost warm. The moon shone, and everything around was steeped in a deep sleep, but... the hateful old watchman was still fearlessly walking round the house and rattling his rattle, as if he were calling for help, as if he were mocking the criminals.

"'What are you waiting for,' suddenly shouted the leader, losing patience, 'there are ten of us and he's alone, let's go!' And the evildoers, encouraged by their leader and certain of victory, headed with guns on their shoulders towards the old man, considering it no longer necessary to hide themselves from him. They were already within a few strides of him, and they could clearly see him. He was a frail, bent-over old man with a white beard. He was walking confidently round the house and displayed not the slightest fear or concern at their approach.

"'Get him,' commanded the enraged ataman of the band of criminals. And, coming up to the old man, with all his might he struck him on the head with his axe. The blow flew through the air, the old man disappeared, and the evildoer fell as if dead onto the earth, losing consciousness. His comrades, mortally frightened, hurled themselves towards their ataman, who displayed no sign of life, and carried him home. Several days passed, but none of the inhabitants of the house even guessed at their miraculous delivery from the death that threatened each one of them. In fact, no one would probably have known about the attempt if the wife of the criminal had not come to the schema-archimandrite and told him about the crime. Drenched in tears, she besought him to help her husband, who was lying paralyzed.

"If it were not for the night watchman,' she said, 'the criminals would have killed you all. It was only thanks to him that you were saved from death and the souls of the evildoers from eternal damnation.' For a long time they tried to convince the woman that in those times there could be no question of any night watchmen. But she insisted and asked that her husband be brought there, then he himself would tell them everything.

"Bring him here, let him confess, receive Communion, kiss the icon of the God-pleaser St. Seraphim, and then the Lord will release him,' said the archimandrite.

"That day the paralysed criminal was brought on a stretcher to the house-church. But before starting confession, the archimandrite went up to him with the icon of St. Seraphim and asked him to kiss it. The eyes of the criminal met those of the kindly elder and God-pleaser Seraphim, and... a hysterical shout filled the little church.

"It's him, it's him!' shouted the unfortunate criminal, recognizing in the face of St. Seraphim the old watchman walking with his rattle round the garden-house and guarding it. Tears of contrition flowed from his eyes, and the love of God not only healed him instantly, but also completely transformed him. After the Liturgy, in which he was counted worthy to commune of the Holy Mysteries, he stayed for a long time in the church and told everyone present in detail about the miracle of St. Seraphim, after which a moleben of thanksgiving was served to the saint for the miraculous deliverance from death of those living in the house."

The Niluses were too well-known to escape the notice of the new godless authorities. The net began to tighten. Meanwhile, however, their Christian love continued to prove its strength. As one of their guests at Linovitsa later wrote: "In their house there reigned the grace of God; one could sense it upon entering. There was always an atmosphere of joy; no-one ever quarrelled. While I was there it happened that a Bolshevik commissar came to look at the house. Of course, he did not remove his cap; he had an insolent manner and was very crude in his behaviour. S.A. showed him around the whole house and took him into the chapel on the top floor. They were there for a long time. S.A.'s wife decided to have a look and saw that the Bolshevik was crying in the embrace of her husband... S.A. himself was weeping. Evidently he had been able to find words which melted his heart..."

On April 3, 1923 the Niluses were banished from Linovitsa, and it was only through a miracle that they were not executed. Already getting on in years, the couple began to lead a life corresponding to the uncertainty of the time. "We don't think about what is to become of us," wrote Sergius Alexandrovich in a letter abroad. "Let us commend ourselves and one another and all our lives to Christ our God."

They moved to Kiev, where, in August or the beginning of September, 1923 Sergius Alexandrovich was arrested and imprisoned for no reason and without an

interrogation. But God was merciful. Describing her husband's circumstances in a letter to her sister, Helen Alexandrovna wrote: "He is calm, as always, cheerful... Only one thing grieves him - the separation from me. We've never been separated before, not once..."

In August, 1924 Sergius Alexandrovich was transferred from Kiev to the prison in the city of Priluki, Poltava province. In the middle of September, however, he was transferred back to Kiev, where he remained in prison until February, 1925. On his release, the couple settled temporarily in a women's convent in Kiev.

Once again, they felt as though they were in Paradise. "It is just the life we love," wrote Helen Alexandrovna. "We have a nice room, and - for nothing! We have only to cross a small courtyard to get to church where there are daily services, splendid, with two choirs and two priests, one better than the other... Everything seems like old times, so you can understand how blessed we are. They show us love in every way, and bring us so much that there's no place to put it..." Sergius Alexandrovich added: "My head is spinning from all the impressions we have experienced and are experiencing. Now with this head and with all my heart I have become absorbed in contacts with people of the same spirit as us... There aren't enough hours in the day to fully and worthily take advantage of this and the more so because Great Lent is here and a lot of time is spent in services."

At the end of September, 1925, Sergius Alexandrovich was arrested again and escorted to prison in Lubyanka prison in Moscow. He was released in February, 1926. For two months they lived in Moscow. But then, on April 6, Sergius Alexandrovich was presented with an order exiling him from Moscow and forbidding him to live in six major cities.

They moved to Chernigov, where they took an active part in church life, organising regular discussions of parishioners with the clergy and the reading of spiritual literature. At one meeting organised by him on December 10, 1926 in the house of the pious parishioner Melnikova, money was collected to send to the exiled Archbishop Pachomius and Bishop Damascene. Also through the Niluses help was sent to the Kiev priest Fr. Demetrius Ivanov and Abbess Sophia and others.

In April, 1927, Sergius Alexandrovich was arrested again. The GPU report says that during the search he was very calm, said that he was happy to suffer for the faith and said to the other members of his household: "Don't worry, everything is from God, He will one day pay back for these unpleasantnesses." At the end of the search the GPU agent told Nilus that he was under arrest and asked him to prepare to follow him. Nilus asked for time to say goodbye, and after gathering all the member of his household together by the iconostasis "began a whole church service". After prayers Nilus blessed all those present, and they kissed his hand. Before leaving the house Nilus ordered the servants to pour out a bottle of holy water. Taking it with him, he left the house, chanting "Christ is risen". All the members of the household took up the chant as they accompanied him onto the street.

On May 6, 1927 he was released, and for another year they lived in Chernigov.

When Metropolitan Sergius' notorious declaration submitting the Church to the God-hating atheists was published, he opposed it. Thus on January 29 / February 11, 1928 he wrote to L.A. Orlov: "As long as there is a church of God that is not of 'the Church of the evildoers', go to it whenever you can; but if not, pray at home... They will say: 'But where will you receive communion? With whom?' I reply: 'The Lord will show you, or an Angel will give you communion, for in 'the Church of the evildoers' there is not and cannot be the Body and Blood of the Lord. Here in Chernigov, out of all the churches only the church of the Trinity has remained faithful to Orthodoxy; but if it, too, will commemorate the [sergianist] Exarch Michael, and, consequently, will have communion in prayer with him, acting with the blessing of Sergius and his Synod, then we shall break communion with it."

In May, 1928 Sergius Alexandrovich was banished from Chernigov and forbidden to live in the Ukraine.

At this stage the strain of the Niluses peripatetic life began to tell on his health. A friend arranged for the couple to move in with his father, the priest **Fr. Basil Smirnov**, in the home of the Orlovs in Krutets, Alexandrovsky uyezd, Vladimir region. They hoped that Sergius Alexandrovich would get better in the fresh country air. The Niluses arrived at the end of April, 1928. But he never recovered his health.

Maria Vasilievna Orlova-Smirnova - later the nun Mariam, the daughter of the martyred **Priest Basil Smirnov** - shared her impressions of the last days of Sergius Alexandrovich, who spent the last two years of his life in her house and died there: "Inwardly, he was a colossus of the spirit, who stood so firmly 'on the rock of faith' that neither persecutions, nor slander were able to shake his faith and love for God. Having chosen his path, he went along it without looking back.

"Sergius Alexandrovich got up very early: at about four o'clock, and when he had finished his special morning rule, at about seven o'clock, Helen Alexandrovna got up and they read the morning prayers together."

The words of Sergius Alexandrovich are both simple and deeply Orthodox: "Christ the Lord and His Orthodox Church - that is the one truth that makes us free, the one source of every earthly blessing, every true, unbreakable happiness that can be attained on earth and above the earth - in the depth of the endless ages, in the height of the fathomless heavens. For him who, by the mercy of God, attains this truth, who devotes himself unreservedly to its service, life becomes clear; and he sorrows for unsettled contemporary man, who mindlessly and unwittingly drives away from himself the grace of God, without which he is dust and ashes!"

Sergius Alexandrovich died on January 1/14, 1929. On that day, he forced himself, with great difficulty, to go to the church in the village of Krutets, where he was counted worthy to receive the Holy Mysteries. On returning home, he fainted



(from a heart attack), after which it was only with difficulty that he recovered consciousness. One hour before his death, he said that difficult times were coming for the Church and that now the doors had been opened for the coming of the Antichrist. Then, pointing at Fr. Basil Smirnov, he said:

“Ah, Father, Father, I am sorry for you.”

The last thing he did was bless the little daughter of Maria Vasilievna Orlova. Then, at five in the afternoon, at the very moment when the bells were beginning to ring for the all-night vigil commemorating St. Seraphim of Sarov, he fainted again, and quietly died.

It is obvious that the holy God-pleaser St. Seraphim took care of his great venerator and prayed the Lord that the righteous man should have a peaceful end.

Soviet power did not forgive Fr. Basil for giving shelter to the Niluses. The same year he was driven out of his house, and the following year he was arrested, his property confiscated and his family exiled. Fr. Basil was in exile for five years. In 1936 he returned. In 1937 he was again arrested, and on February 8, 1938 he died.

After the death of Sergius Alexandrovich, Helen Alexandrovna went to Chernigov to live with a little elderly woman, to take care of her. After her repose she lived with the Orlovs in the town of Gorodok in Kalinin province. In 1938 the Orlovs had to move to Moscow, while Helen Alexandrovich was invited by her former landlady in Chernigov to move to Kola in Murmansk district. There she died.

**Maria Vasilievna Orlova** was born in 1906, the first of six children. She married Lev Alexandrovich Orlov. After the death of her father she remained in Moscow, where she became close to Tatyana Mikhailovna N, a spiritual daughter of Abbess Tamara, the famous “Josephite” and spiritual mother of Hieromartyr **Bishop Arsenius** (Zhadanovsky). In 1992 Maria Vasilievna joined the “Matthewite” branch of the Greek Old Calendarist Church. In 1995 she received the monastic tonsure with the name Mariam from the Greek Old Calendarist Bishop Kyrikos of Mesogaia. She died on July 30 / August 12, 1997.

"On the grave of Sergius Alexandrovich," concludes Maria Vasilievna, "my brother placed a cross which he himself had made. On the cross, under the name of the deceased, was written: 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints', and on the other side: 'It is good to keep the secret of a king, but honourable to proclaim the works of God.'"

At the end, or in the preface, of his books Sergius Alexandrovich always asked his readers for their prayers: "In conclusion, I again ask every Orthodox who has a liking for this book to remember the name of its sinful compiler, praying for the time being - for his health and salvation, and in time - for the repose of his soul in the heavenly dwellings of the One Tri-Personal God for the sake of the priceless merits of the One Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be honour and worship and glory to

the ages."

## **29. HOLY HIEROMARTYR BASIL, BISHOP OF PRILUKY (+1930)**

**and those with him**

### **The Good Shepherd**

Bishop Basil, in the world Basil Ivanovich Zelentsov, was born in March, 1870 in the village of Zimarovo, Ranenburg uyezd, Ryazan province, the son of a protopriest. He graduated from the faculty of law of St. Petersburg University and from St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and was a teacher of Russian language in a theological school. He was also a teacher in the Yekaterinoslav theological seminary and a diocesan missionary for Yekaterinoslav diocese.

He was an outspoken opponent of the name-worshipping heresy. Thus, commenting on decree No. 2670 of the Holy Synod dated March 10, 1916, he wrote: "In this decree of the Most Holy Synod, we find a confirmation of the basic rule that the name-worshippers must be received into ecclesiastical communion and admitted to the sacraments of the Church only on the unfailing condition that they reject the false teaching of name-worshipping and witness to their faithfulness to the dogmas and teaching of the Church and to their obedience to Church authority".

In 1917-18 he was a member of the All-Russian Local Council. When he was 47 or 48 years old, he arrived in Poltava and became great friends with Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, who appointed him diocesan missionary while still an unmarried layman. In 1919 he was tonsured and ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Theophan.

At first he was the second priest, and then the rector of the Holy Trinity parish. His intense prayer life, penetrating sermons after every service, and spiritual talks on Sundays and feastdays attracted people from all over Poltava, including heterodox and sectarians, and his fame as a preacher spread far beyond the confines of the city. Although he had no particular rhetorical skills, everyone listened enthralled to his sermons, trying to catch every word and penetrate to its inner meaning. The reason for his unusually great influence was his boundless faith in the Providence of God, his devotion to God and His holy will, a devotion that went so far as forgetting everything earthly.

This was particularly evident during Divine services, when batyushka would be so engrossed in prayer as to notice nobody and nothing. And he used to teach people to pray in such a way as not to notice the time or anybody around them. At the end of the services they would awake as if from a blessed sleep, and would want them to go on and on.

Practically everyone knew both the ecclesiastical chants and the readings of all the Divine services by heart, as well as the akathists to the Saviour, the Mother of God and St. Nicholas. Every Sunday evening, when there were spiritual talks, and at the minor feasts, when there was no choir, the whole people chanted under the direction of a deacon. The young people and children also chanted.

Fr. Basil was never too tired to visit distant parts of the city to help the poor, making no distinctions of nationality or religion. Many poor Baptists, Catholics, Jews, etc., were helped by him. He gave away everything that he had out of burning love for his flock, who in turn gave their last to him. He had a great gift for consoling sorrowing and despondent souls, and many of the erring were involuntarily led to exclaim: "This is a true Christian." Vladyka also supported the four orphaned children of a priest from his own means.

He exhorted the heterodox, teaching them all the truths of the Orthodox faith. He conducted debates with the Baptists and other sectarians, as well as with the atheists, and clearly and precisely exposed the falsehood and cunning of all these teachings. The Christian Youth Society of the Protecting Veil was organized against the Komsomol and attached to the Holy Trinity parish.

### **Trial and Imprisonment**

In 1922 the Communists began the requisitioning of church valuables, which was supposed to be for the benefit of the starving in the Volga region. The starving received nothing and died at home or in other places they had dragged themselves to. Meanwhile, the church property that had been plundered went to the centre for the needs of communism while some was pilfered on the spot.

Fr. Basil spoke up against the robbery of the churches. He appealed to his and other parishioners to give bread to the starving, and asked the authorities to say how much bread was needed: "We'll give you double, but don't touch our churches." As was only to be expected, Fr. Basil's proposal was not accepted. On May 30 he was arrested on a charge of obstructing the requisitioning of church valuables and detained in prison until the trial.

He continued preaching in prison, and gave away everything he received to the other prisoners. At first he was in a common cell, but was then put in solitary confinement, where particularly important prisoners were confined. The children found out which cell he was in, and while pretending to play on the square near the prison, received batyushka's blessing and fatherly smile.

The trial took place in the summer of 1922 in the building of the music school on Pushkinskaya street. Fr. Basil, who was then 51 years old, was accused of resisting the requisitioning of the church valuables and inciting others to do the same. The great hall was full of people, and hundreds stood in the street outside. The public was divided into two camps: the secular and the spiritual, those "for" and those "against". The secular camp shouted a lot of abuse, such as: "They'll finish off the pope good and quick", while the spiritual camp were quiet and sorrowful - many of the women wept.

In the middle of an elevated stage there was a large table covered with books, behind which sat the "judges". On the left behind a separate table sat the "public prosecutor". And on the right, behind another little table, sat the accused, Fr. Basil. He was dressed in a humble ryasa with a cross. On his table were two burning candles, a

briefcase with papers and a book - probably the holy Gospel - which Fr. Basil read attentively during the breaks. A few steps away from Fr. Basil behind another table sat his state defense attorney.

Fr. Basil was quite tall, thin, pale, with a long face, and a long, greyish beard and hair. A kind of smile did not leave his face throughout the "trial"; it expressed either suffering or pity. Perhaps he was feeling pity for all these judges, for the crowd, for the whole of this earthly assembly.

The prosecutor in this trial was the son of a refugee priest who had fled from the western regions during the Great War, the communist Benderovsky. At that time he was still comparatively young, and had a higher education in law. This toady went all out to ingratiate himself with the authorities. During the trial such expressions as "black crows" and "diehard counter-revolutionaries" were constantly tripping off his tongue. He swore, he threatened, and he demanded the supreme penalty. Later he was appointed director of the Poltava museum, and still later, it seems, was "removed" and disappeared somewhere in the basements of the GPU.

The state defense attorney was an old Poltava barrister, Mr. Ogolevets, a lawyer revered by all. But his role was pitiful, of course - just for form's sake.

The head of the local GPU, the Latvian Linde, appeared as a witness during the trial. He was a handsome, well-groomed, well-dressed man with a military bearing - they say that he had been an officer in the Tsar's army. He said to the accused: "As a servant of the cult and an enemy of Soviet power, I would shoot you with pleasure, but I admit that I respect you as a man of firmness and conviction..."

On the last day of the trial, August 12, Fr. Basil was given the last word. He crossed himself and said approximately the following: "Many things have been said against me during these days. With much I do not agree and I could refute many of the accusations. I prepared a long speech going through each of the points - here it is," - and he motioned towards his notebook, - "but I've thought things over and I shall say only a little. I have already told you, and tell you again, that I am loyal to Soviet power as such, for, like everything else, it is sent from above... But where it concerns the Faith of Christ, the churches of God and human souls, there I have fought, am fighting and will fight to my last breath with the representatives of this power. It would be shameful and sinful for me, as a warrior of Christ who bears this holy cross on his breast, to defend myself personally while the enemies have taken up arms and declared war on Christ Himself. I understand that you are laying down an ideological challenge for me and I accept it..."

At that moment the whispering and humming in the crowd became louder and louder, and voices were heard saying: "The pope is being an agitator... The pope is giving himself airs. Why fiddle about with him? Give him a bullet..." At the same time people were cursing the judge, many were sobbing, some were having hysterics. The president made some kind of objection, but Fr. Basil interrupted him and said: "Allow me to finish, that is my right" and continued loudly: "So I accept your challenge, and

whatever punishment you serve me with, I must bear it firmly and without fear. I am ready even for death, for there is no reward greater than the reward in the heavens."

He added something, but it was not audible - the noise in the hall was getting louder. After the speech, having bowed to the hall, Fr. Basil sat down in his place. The judge left to confer with his colleagues. Fr. Basil buried himself in his book, the candles burned, the sentries stood behind his back with rifles.

It was stuffy in the hall, part of the public left to get some fresh air. But the numbers of people were constantly increasing and everywhere there were debates and quarrels - the atmosphere was red-hot. The judges conferred for some time, but finally they came out and the sentence was read out. Fr. Basil was standing behind his little table, his head slightly lowered, calm and pale. The light of the candles showed that his face had aged somewhat in the last few days. His book was lying opened in front of him, and it seemed that he was not listening to the sentence but was reading this book. That was the impression many had. The reading of the sentence lasted quite a long time.

Finally they came to the words: "On the basis of articles such-and-such, the court has decreed that the priest Zelentsov, Basil Ivanovich, 51 years of age, should be sentenced..." Nothing more was audible, for an amazing hubbub started in the hall: "Cursed murderers", "Damn you", etc. "Batyushka, dear one, Christ save you." "Fr. Basil, bless us." There were loud sobs and hysterics, and many hurled themselves towards the stage stretching out their hands as if for a blessing. They took hold of one person, another was arrested...

At the last word of the sentence, "to execution by shooting", Fr. Basil crossed himself broadly and with the same calm smile turned towards the crowd, blessing them with small crosses in the air and consoling them: "The Lord be with you, calm down, everything is in the will of God, look, I'm calm, go to your homes in peace."...

He was surrounded and taken somewhere. Many chekists and policemen appeared, and on the street the huge crowd was dispersed by the mounted police. Fr. Basil was led out under a strong convoy and taken along the street. Some of the people streamed after him. The prison was quite near, and a few minutes later the iron doors of the prison brought this grim picture to an end.

Fr. Basil was put in the death cell. One of the prisoners in Poltava prison recounted that Fr. Basil prepared for death with joy, with an extraordinary exaltation that amazed those around him, and even the administration. And he was saddened when the sentence was remitted. The defense attorney had put in an appeal. On the same day delegates from the factories and all the citizens of Poltava went to see Lenin in Moscow. Since the Bolsheviks had only just established themselves in the Ukraine, they probably feared an uprising from the Ukrainian workers (whom they treated cruelly in the coming years) and changed the sentence to ten years in prison (according to another source, five years).

Fr. Basil was transferred to a general cell. His admirers did not leave him for one minute. Every day he received many parcels, flowers and books in prison. This gave

a writer by the name of Kapelgorodsky the excuse to write in the local paper, Bolshevik Poltavshchiny, a blasphemous "akathist". In order to lessen the people's love for Fr. Basil and somehow humiliate and discredit him, the atheists subjected him to all kinds of mockery in the Poltava press. But this "akathist", though composed of insults and mockery, was prophetic in spite of itself, for it foretold his glorification, as a servant of God and the Church, in the Kingdom of heaven.

The prisoners, and especially the criminals, loved and revered him. They called him "our Fr. Basil", or "our batyushka", and did not allow him to carry out the tasks of cleaning the cell, taking out the slop bucket, etc. Nor did they swear in front of him, but defended him from the coarsenesses of the prison warders and all kinds of rogues. This did not please the authorities, and they transferred him to Kharkov prison on Kholodnaya mountain.

Those were the days when the Bolsheviks liked to arrange anti-religious debate in front of large crowds, usually in a theatre. There was one such debate in Kharkov, and Fr. Basil was brought out of prison in the capacity of an opponent of the main speaker. On that occasion Fr. Basil gave such a powerful speech that the whole of Kharkov was talking about it, and the news reached as far as Poltava.

### **Bishop of Priluki**

In 1925, by the will of God and the ardent prayers of the whole of his flock (who also handed over many valuable gifts to the Cheka), Fr. Basil was amnestied and returned from prison to Poltava. While he had been in prison in Kharkov, Fr. Basil had helped a poor woman who was in prison and who had asked for alms together with her son. She died, and Fr. Basil took the boy, brought him to Poltava and looked after him together with the four orphaned sons of the priest.

Fr. Basil's main activity during this period was his struggle with two kinds of Ukrainian separatists - the so-called "Lypkovsky self-consecrators", who had appeared immediately after the revolution, and the more recent movement started by Bishop Theophil (Buldovsky) of Lubensk, a vicar-bishop of the Poltava eparchy. Fr. Basil tirelessly pointed out not only the anti-canonical nature of both schisms, but also the fact that they gave a powerful weapon into the hands of the Bolsheviks in their struggle against religion. Thanks mainly to his energetic activity, it was in Poltava that the decline of Ukrainian separatism started.

Fr. Basil often challenged the leaders of the separatists to a public debate. The challenge was never taken up. Only in their churches did they vent all their spite against the Orthodox clergy, and especially Fr. Basil.

Once Archbishop Gregory (Lisovsky) was celebrating the Liturgy in Lubensk monastery. The service was accompanied by hooliganism on the part of the separatists, who organized a very loud "service" just outside the church in order to hinder the service inside the church. Fr. Basil's sermon during this service was accompanied by profane shouts and insults.

It was during the episcopate of Archbishop Gregory that Patriarch Tikhon issued an ukaz to all the eparchial bishops, asking them to bring forward the most worthy from among the local clergy for consecration to the episcopate. This honour was first proposed to **Protopriest Gabriel Kovalenko**. But he considered himself unworthy and refused. Later, in 1937, he was tortured and killed. Then the same offer was made to Fr. Basil.

And so, on August 12, 1925, in accordance with the unanimous wish of the clergy and people, Fr. Basil was consecrated bishop of Priluky, a vicariate of the Poltava diocese, in Holy Trinity church by Archbishop Gregory and Bishop Damascene (Tsedrik), the future hieromartyr, who happened to be detained on his journey and came illegally to Poltava for the consecration. His tonsure and promotion to the rank of archimandrite, etc., all took place very quickly since they feared that the exiled Bishop Damascene might be arrested at any moment. At first everyone wept, thinking that Vladyka Basil would be sent off to Priluky, but Archbishop Gregory kept him in Poltava.

Vladyka Basil's speech at his consecration was amazing. It was not so much a speech as a triumphant vow to remain faithful to the true Church of Christ and struggle "to my last breath" with all the apostates, blasphemers, renovationists and heretics - the self-consecrators and Buldovtsy.

Vladyka Basil remained in his Holy Trinity church, where he served constantly. But he also willingly served in other churches at the invitation of the clergy. From the first days of his episcopate, there began his thunderous speeches against the Bolsheviks - he gave one unflinching at every service. He called them "apostates from God, violators, blasphemers of the Faith of Christ, murderers, a satanic power, blood-suckers, destroyers of freedom and justice, fiends from hell". He constantly called on the people "to make them no allowances, to make no compromises with them, to fight and fight with the enemies of Christ, and not to fear tortures and death, for sufferings from Him are the highest happiness and joy". It was very difficult to enter a church where Vladyka Basil was serving. Not only the church itself, but the whole church property was filled with worshippers who had come to pray and listen to "Father Basil", as he was still called by everyone. A group of young people surrounded him and escorted him home from the church. He was kind and welcoming to everyone, he knew everyone by name. It happened that some people remained in the church after the service and asked him: "Vladyka, why do you say all this? There are constantly spies in the church, they are constantly following you, listening to you and denouncing you. We know them, and we're afraid for you." But he replied with a smile: "Yes, they don't deserve to hear such things. Well, okay, I won't do it anymore. Calm down, go in peace to your homes." But at the next service he would speak still more sharply and fearlessly. As we have already said, he was not distinguished by any particular eloquence, and at the same time thousands wanted to listen to him. His fearlessness, sincerity, the strength of his convictions, his constant, firm readiness to die for Christ and his calling on the people to make this sacrifice - this is what captivated and subdued his listeners.

### **Confession and Martyrdom**



For a year he continued his archpastoral service in Poltava. Sometimes, while hiding from arrest, he would suddenly appear in some church at the beginning of a service, lead the service and then disappear, having changed into civil clothing even before the end of the service so as not to be caught by the GPU. However, on the eve of the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, 1926 he was summoned to Kharkov, where on September 7 he was arrested for his "anti-Soviet sermon the Trinity church", and taken to the Butryki prison in Moscow. There, on September 24, he was sentenced to three years in the camps and imprisoned on Solovki. From there he was despatched to the far north - Bear Mountain or Murmansk or Kolyma, it is not known for certain. Four years passed in this way.

In 1927 Metropolitan Sergius issued his notorious "Declaration", which placed the Church into submission to the militant atheists. Vladyka Basil was the only bishop on Solovki at that time who openly refused to sign the declaration, writing a letter from Solovki to his flock entitled "Necessary canonical corrections to the epistle of Metropolitan Sergius and the Temporary Patriarchal Synod under him of July 16/29 July, 1927". In this letter, Vladyka Basil pointed out that according to the resolution of the Moscow Local Council of August 2/15, 1918, no one was allowed to claim that his politics was the politics of the All-Russian Church, and no one could impose his politics on any member of the Church by ecclesiastical means. And he went on:

"The Church cannot help but sympathize with the attempt by Metropolitan Sergius and his holy Synod to obtain a peaceful attitude from the Bolshevik persecutors of the All-Russian Orthodox Church towards her, for Christians are commanded by God: 'If it is possible on your part, be at peace with everyone' (Romans 12.18). But Christ allows the Church to accept from Metropolitan Sergius and his holy Synod only such a reconciliation with her persecutors, the Bolsheviks and their Soviet power, which will truly be the peace of Christ, that is, a peace of such a content and quality as is demanded by Christ, Who said: 'Seek first of all the Kingdom of God and His righteousness', and not earthly prosperity and security. For any other peace is undoubtedly forbidden by the Church of Christ unto all ages and eternity (John 14.27).

"Unfortunately, this attempt by Metropolitan Sergius and his holy Synod not only has not given us the peace of Christ with the Bolsheviks, but so far does not give us even the hope of such a peace, and that not only because of the Bolsheviks' stubborn enmity towards the Orthodox Church, but also because the attempt by Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod is being further advanced by them by uncanonical means, and consequently, not according to the path of Church righteousness. There are other defects in it from the ecclesiastical point of view, about which we shall speak at another time, if God gives us the opportunity. It is necessary immediately to move this attempt by Metropolitan Sergius and his holy Synod into the canonical stream of Church righteousness, and above all to declare to the Bolsheviks that only an All-Russian Local Orthodox Council of bishops (alone, or broadened by the participation of clergy and laity in the form of a general All-Russian Church Council) has the right to speak about politics and carry out any political activity in the name of our Church.

"Forgive our baseness, fathers and brothers, sisters and children in the Lord, and pray for my sins. May the mercy of the Lord give all of us joy without ceasing, beloved. The Lord God speaks to everyone who has ears to hear: 'Be faithful to Me unto death and I will give you a crown of life. But the fearful and those who are unfaithful to Me have their lot in the lake burning with fire and brimstone' (Revelation 2.10, 21, 8)."

Vladyka wrote another personal letter to Metropolitan Sergius, in which he condemned Sergius' completely inadmissible concord with the atheist Soviet power. And he also wrote letters rebuking his successor in Poltava, Bishop Sergius (Grishin), who was a sergianist. These letters did not reach Bishop Sergius, but fell into other hands.

As a result of all this, in 1927 Vladyka Basil was sent to the Lubyanka prison in Moscow. In October, 1928 (or November, 1929) he was exiled to Siberia, and was living in the village of Pyanovo, Bratsk region, Irkutsk province.

In the same year, according to one (dubious) source, he expressed, through Reader John, his disagreement with the decisions of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church.

On December 9, 1929 Vladyka Basil was arrested, taken to Moscow, and on February 3, 1930 was convicted of "counter-revolutionary activity" and sentenced to death in accordance with article 58-10. He was shot on February 7, 1930 and buried in the Vagankovskoye cemetery.

**Nun Olga** (Ivanovna Lektorskaya). She was born in 1898 in Poltava in the family of a priest, and received higher education. She worked as a typist in Poltava. She was a secret nun and served as a messenger between the Poltava group and the Voronezh, Kharkov and Kiev groups and Moscow. She was a trusted confidant of Bishop Basil, and kept his archive. On January 15, 1931 she was arrested for being "a participant in the Poltava group of the Odessa branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church", and on December 14 was sentenced to three years in the camps and sent to Svirlag. On November 14, 1933 she was released from camp early, and on November 19 returned to Poltava. Nothing more is known about her.

## **30. HOLY HIEROMARTYR SERGIUS, BISHOP OF BUZULUK**

**(+1930)**

**and those with him**

Bishop Sergius, in the world Michael Nikolsky, was born in 1892 in the village of Novo-Nikolskoye, Serpukhov uyezd, Moscow province into the family of Protopriest Alexander Isidorovich. His uncle was Metropolitan Isidore (Nikolsky), whose name is linked with the building of the cathedral of the Holy Trinity on Izmailovsky Prospect in St. Petersburg.

He was a handsome, tall and well-built young man, with a fine tenor voice. He had a fiancée, and was about to get married. All the preparations for the wedding had been completed. But this event was averted in the following way. Being an officer in the army, he had to take part in battles. Once he almost lost his life. But God heard his prayer and saved him from death. The young man made a vow to become a monk and consecrate his whole life to God. And he received the monastic tonsure.

Fr. Sergius graduated from a Theological Academy, and on March 3 (according to another source, March 23 / April 5), 1925, he was consecrated to the bishopric of Ephremov, a vicariate of the Tula diocese. The consecration was performed by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, who said on handing him his archpastoral staff:

"The episcopate is a great honour, but great sufferings are also bound up with it. Through sufferings to heavenly glory!"

Bishop Sergius always expressed great love for Patriarch Tikhon, and composed some verses in his honour which have been preserved to this day.

K.S. writes: "I was 12 years old when Bishop Sergius (Nikolsky) appeared in our town of Ephremov. He was close to my parents and often came to our house. From my parents I learned about certain moments in his biography, but basically my recollections are bound up with my personal impressions of church life in our little town..."

"At that time there were seven churches in Ephremov (they were all later destroyed). On Saturdays and Sundays Bishop Sergius served in the main cathedral, while on the remaining days he read akathists in turns in the other churches of the town.

"He was a fine, eloquent preacher. He spoke for a long time, with warmth and animation. His sermons could last half an hour - that was a common occurrence. Through his sermons he tried to instil in the people love for God. He loved his flock, and his flock loved him. He presented the image of an apostle, and that is how he was remembered.

"Some of his sermons were given specially for children. He would say:

"Children, please come further forward.'

"And when they came closer to him, he taught them the word of God. These sermons remained forever in the memory.

"After the all-night vigil Vladyka blessed everyone separately and did not leave until he had blessed the last one.

"I remember that among the parishioners was a fool for Christ - Yegorushka of Zadonsk (he came to Ephremov from Zadonsk). Blue-eyed, dressed in a canvas shirt, he always, winter and summer, travelled barefoot. Once after the all-night vigil all the parishioners went up to Vladyka for his blessing and only Yegorushka remained all the time in front of the icons. The bishop watched him and did not leave. Out of curiosity the others, especially the children, also watched him - what would happen?

"Finally the fool came up to the bishop.

"Yegorushka, were you testing me?' asked the bishop, blessing him.

"The face of the bishop, as always, was kindly and joyful. Yegorushka nodded his head, admitting that he had indeed been testing the patience of Vladyka.

"They used to say that this Yegorushka, at his own request, had allegedly been crucified on some gates by his brothers, and that they had pierced him with nails. It is possible that this was not so, but on his hands and feet there really were wounds from nails.

"I remember another incident, also linked with this Yegorushka. Once at the request of Vladyka the abbess of a Tula monastery, Matushka Metrophania, brought to Ephremov a cross with holy particles of the wood of the Life-creating Cross of the Lord. The cross was of wood, not very large, perhaps about 30 centimetres high. During the night they took it to the homes of pious families, and it also stayed in the family of K.S. Some pious people were gathered there, and Yegorushka also came. Everybody went to bed, but Yegorushka spent the whole night standing in prayer. I remember that the floor in the house was very beautiful and covered with varnish. When everyone woke up in the morning, Yegorushka prepared to leave. When he had left his place, everyone saw on the floor two white footprints - the varnish had vanished there. Throughout the night Yegorushka had not moved, he had not shifted from foot to foot, so that the floor under him had lost its shine. Later, remembers K.S., her father brought her some varnish and covered up the marks of the feet.

"The house in which K.S.'s parents lived was good and spacious, but Yegorushka prophesied:

"You will live in a little shed with two little windows.'

"Soon this prophecy was fulfilled, the family was evacuated and some time later took shelter in a shed.

"The services in which Bishop Sergius took part remained in my memory for the rest of my life. At the Nativity of Christ the boys sang the troparion and kontakion wonderfully from music. Before the feast Vladyka himself rehearsed them.

"In Vladyka's house the tree was lit up already on the eve, after the all-night vigil. This was recounted by his aunt, Anna Antonovna Tiptsova.

"The Paschal Mattins service was wonderful. After the procession with the cross Vladyka struck the door with the cross and cried out: 'Christ is risen!' And in reply the chant of the myrrh-bearing women was borne out of the church three times: 'He is risen indeed!'

"How well the choir sounded in those days! It was directed by a precentor from Moscow, Vissonov. And how the service was beautified by the magnificent voice of Protodeacon Michael!

"Once after the Liturgy on the feast of the myrrh-bearing women, Vladyka together with 12 priests and Protodeacon Michael were in the house of the parents of K.S. for dinner. After dinner, when Vladyka was about to leave, a nun called Maria who was present in the house wanted to give him a rasa, while K.S. by agreement was to give him a staff. The priests were against this, and wanted to vest Vladyka themselves, but he stopped them with the words:

'Today is the feast of the myrrh-bearing women, let them do the serving.'

"The time came when they began to summon Vladyka to the police, frequently. They had talks with him, they noticed his innate gifts, and suggested he go to work... in the theatre. But the local authorities did not succeed in exerting influence over him. And then they called him to Moscow, to imprison him in Butyrki. But after some time they released him from prison, and he returned to Ephremov. Bishop Sergius told the story as follows: 'The rusty lock clanked, everyone pricked up his ears. And the jailor's voice rang out:

"Nikolsky, you're free! Set off for Ephremov."

"And here I am with you again!"

"Vladyka's return elicited such indescribable joy among the people! They wept for joy, especially the children!

"Soon after his return, Vladyka collected the children together and treated them to tea from the samovar, himself pouring the tea into the cups. And he gave them all a book entitled The Young Christian...

"Bishop Sergius returned from Butyrki to Ephremov, but the local authorities did not want to put up any longer with the presence of this fiery preacher and wonderful spiritual pastor in the town. And soon the bishop was exiled to Zadonsk.

[In Zadonsk Vladyka was appointed superior of the women's monastery, the Joy of All Who Sorrow. The cathedral church in the city belonged to the renovationists. On passing by it, Vladyka would bow to the cathedral, but would not enter.]

"The people [of Ephremov] did not abandon their Vladyka, and many travelled to Zadonsk to see him, to receive his hierarchical blessing and to pray with him in the church. K.S. also travelled to Zadonsk with her parents, and there she was present at a service in the women's monastery of the Joy of all who sorrow...

"Vladyka was glad to meet his friends from Ephremov. Again, as in Ephremov, he invited the children to drink tea. And, dressed in a white cassock, he himself poured the tea. The service was just about to begin with the participation of Vladyka, and the children had to go home. Vladyka asked them not to ring the bell for a few minutes so that he could say goodbye to them. As K.S. was leaving, she looked back and saw how Vladyka was blessing her as she disappeared from sight. And only after this did the bell calling the people to the service ring out.

"Bishop Sergius was not long in Zadonsk, they soon summoned him back to Moscow [in 1927]. The bishop asked for permission to pass by Ephremov so as to say farewell to his flock. In the church they did not even allow him to serve a moleben, he could only say farewell to the people. But the bishop did not manage to enter even one of the houses of the close circle of believers. After tea Vladyka gave everyone his last blessing. For everybody he found a good, kind, exhortatory word. He found one also for K.S.:

"Pray, be patient and be strong! These words were engraved on her memory for the rest of her life.

"On the second or third day after his arrival in Ephremov he left for Moscow. On the platform thousands of people gathered to say farewell to their Vladyka. And he stood at the window in the carriage also saying farewell to the people. Suddenly the light in the carriage was turned off so that those who had gathered should not be able to see Vladyka. Soon the train moved, the people surged forward following him, but what could they do now? The irreparable was quickly accomplished. The people were not destined to meet the man who had given them all the warmth of his pastor's heart again.

"In Moscow Bishop Sergius was appointed to Buzuluk as vicar of the Samara diocese (1927).

"At this time K.S., who was a fifteen-year-old girl, went to Voronezh to continue her education. On learning about this, Vladyka sent her his photograph from Buzuluk - he was standing near the little house where he lived, and from a window there looked out that same aunt of his - Anna Antonovna Tiptsova. On the back Vladyka had written in his own hand: 'Look where you've flown to, my swallow!'

"Then communication was broken off. It felt as if something had happened to Bishop Sergius.

"Much later, people recounted how in 1927, after Metropolitan Sergius' declaration had been issued, Bishop Sergius had himself taken off his episcopal vestments in the church and refused to follow what he considered to be the anticanonical orders of Metropolitan Sergius..."

Bishop Sergius was arrested on June 22, 1928. On September 28 he was condemned for "anti-Soviet agitation" and sentenced to three years' deprivation of the right to live in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, Kiev and Odessa with confinement to one domicile. He went to live in Ufa.

On March 25, 1930 he was arrested again in Ufa and cast into the Domzak in Orenburg. There, at the request of his sister, he was visited by **Nun Irina** (Gladysheva), who was martyred a year later. On April 27 he was condemned to be shot for "participation in a church-sectarian organization, on whose orders he carried out counter-revolutionary activity". On May 16, 1930, Holy Thursday, he was shot on Mayak hill in Orenburg together with **Priest Erastus Kurdyukov, Hierodeacon Lev and Schema-Monk Martyrius**.

"Much later, there was a rumour about the circumstances of his death. My childhood friend, remembers K.S., once confidentially recounted the following story.

"In the thirties she was giving private music lessons to children. One child was always brought by his grandfather. It turned out that he had been a former worker in the police. In a moment of frank conversation he said to the teacher:

"You knew Bishop Sergius and you would probably be interested to hear the details of his death?"

"According to this man, they brought Bishop Sergius into some sort of cave, where the waters of a turbulent river rushed across some rapids. They ordered the bishop to go forward, deep into the cave, into the darkness. There, somewhere in the rapids, he probably fell and was carried away by the flood."

According to another source, Bishop Sergius was forced to stand in a metal cage for two days before he was shot.

Schema-monk Epiphanius (Chernov) has given yet another account of Bishop Sergius' death:- "For not recognizing 'our', as the chekist-interrogators called him, Metropolitan Sergius, Bishop Sergius of Buzuluk was arrested together with an igumen whose name has been forgotten. Stirred by the unshakeable firmness of the confessors, they sentenced them to the same cruel punishment: either they would give in or suffer a terrible slow death... They put them into a room full of rats. In this room there was a pool full of water instead of a floor and a large stump of wood capable of supporting several swimming people. And in the walls of the room there were holes in which sat hungry rats ready to fall on the people as on food offered them. No one

endured a stay in that room. Everyone, at the sight of those innumerable beasts of prey falling on them incessantly, immediately agreed to take upon themselves any accusation, any demand asked of them by the 'investigators'. Only so long as they were delivered from the rats, from that terrible death. And the executioners, sitting the bishop and the igumen in that rat-room, were convinced that they would obtain their desired result... But the desired result was not obtained!.. The feeding-trough was opened, and through the metal window came the voice:

"Well, have you changed your minds?' asked the supervisor.

"But no answer came.

"Well, we haven't got all day! It's late..'

"But the confessors of Christ understood that here there awaited them inevitable death, and they turned to God with flaming, tearful prayer. About one thing only: that they might be strengthened to receive the longed-for death for Christ... While they stood the beasts of prey were not able to overpower them. But, tormented by hunger and thirst, they grew weaker and lay dawn. And then the whole mass of rats around the water hurled themselves upon them. The supervisor saw all this and waited for them to begin to entreat him to save them, but in vain. The holy martyrs preferred death, 'the sweet death for Christ', rather than betray Him and recognize Metropolitan Sergius' treachery to be 'a good deed'. They did not ask for mercy from the torturers, and, strengthened by the grace of God, they were eaten alive by the beasts of prey..."

All accounts agree that Bishop Sergius and his companion(s) received the crown of martyrdom on May 3/16, 1930.



### **31. HOLY TIMOTHY OF BASHKIRIA (+1937)**

**Priest Timothy Porfiryevich Strelkov** was born on January 15, 1880 in the village of Atyazhkinno, Pomayevskaya volost, Buinsky uyezd, Simbirsk province, in a Mordovian peasant family. He went to a village and a city school, and then to Simbirsk pedagogical seminary. Then he was sent as a teacher to the village of Mikhailovka, twelve kilometres from the regional centre of Duvan, Bashkiria. He married Nadezhda Ionovna, and became a priest in the village. He had four sons and one daughter.

Fr. Timothy was the younger brother of another priest, Father Theodore Strelkov, who had been president of the local section of "The Union of the Russian People" before the revolution and then left with the armies of Admiral Kolchak to the East, to Harbin, where he died. In 1919 Fr. Timothy also left with the White armies, and went to Omsk.

Before that, however, according to Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), the following great miracle took place:

"In the summer of 1918, as living witnesses of this very great wonder relate, this outstanding priest, Fr. Timothy, was arrested by the reds on the eve of the day of the Holy Trinity. On the same day they sentenced him to death as a fearless confessor of Christ. In the night of Trinity they led him on foot out of the village of Mikhailovka, under mounted guard, in the direction of Duvan. A large crowd of people accompanied their beloved pastor. In this crowd there were also representatives of the "new authorities". Some mourned and wept, but others rejoiced and celebrated... In spite of the late hour, the crowd of people did not disperse. They came to the village of Mitrofanovka. And here all those who were accompanying him were ordered to return. All returned, including even the mounted guard. Only one of them was left. They allowed the priest's wife to go on.

"The poor woman was weeping all the time and sometimes asked for the release of Fr. Timothy. The convoy was silent, while Batyushka Timothy, addressing her said:

"Why do you ask this? Do you think that it's his will? Do you think he sentenced me to death? Others took the decision to deprive me of life. But the Will of God also ordered him. May His holy Will be done... Glory to God for all things! Glory to the Lord for His great mercy, that He should send me such a death... But did I teach the people evil? But do not beseech Him... Beseech the Lord only for one thing, for the repose of my soul... for the forgiveness of my sins! For there is no man living, nor will there be, who does not sin... And I have sinned! That's the important thing you must pray about... Lord, have mercy, have mercy! Forgive me the accursed one!..."

"And the priest wept. And his matushka also sobbed violently.

“When they were still three kilometres from the regional centre of Duvan, they turned off into an area overgrown with little bushes and climbed a little hill. It had already begun to get light. The day of the Holy Trinity had dawned.

“The convoy rode on his horse, in front of him walked the priests condemned to death. Beside them walked the weeping matushka... Fr. Timothy was praying warmly and with tears, beseeching the Lord to strengthen him for the feat of martyrdom which lay ahead of him. He humbly thanked the Lord for such a death...

“Suddenly the rider unsheathed his sword, brandished it powerfully and struck him on the neck. The head of the martyr was struck off and he fell like mown grass... Matushka shrieked and took to her heels... Fr. Timothy himself only momentarily saw the blade of the sword flashing over his head, and remembered no more... The blow was exact and powerful - the head did not fly off to one side, but fell together with the body... What further happened to him, Fr. Timothy himself does not remember. But he was lying on his back when he regained consciousness... But the executioner galloped off in pursuit of matushka. He caught up with her. He leapt off his horse and took off her wedding ring... And then he went tearing along to the beheaded Fr. Timothy, stooped, and gave him yet another blow with the sword on the head and cut his cheek and hand (his hand was lying on his face)...

“But matushka arrived at Mikhailovka and related how Fr. Timothy had been beheaded before her every eyes... They got ready a cart and came to collect the corpse. But imagine their astonishment and joyful trembling when they found him alive, covered in blood but with a scar all round his neck witnessing to the fact that he had been beheaded and healed by an ineffable miracle... When the clotted blood had been wiped away, there appeared a fully healed fresh scar around the whole neck in the form, as it were, of a bright thread. There was no sign of inflammation. Fr. Timothy showed this scar to everyone close to him, as a witness of the miracle.

“They carried him as dead, covered with branches, to his father Porphyrius, who lived at a mill outside the village. Here, at the home of his father, the beheaded one hid himself for one and a half months. Then he left that area and hid himself for about twelve years, when he suffered a second death for Christ...”

It may be for this reason that, according to the other source for his story, Fr. Timothy went to Omsk. According to this version, between 1923 and 1928 he did not serve in church, but in 1924 he moved to Bulayevskaya station on the Trans-Siberian railway, where he worked as an accountant. In 1929 he returned to Omsk and again began to serve as a priest.

It must have been during this period that, according to Schema-Monk Epiphanius, “the Lord God wrought another miracle in the life of Father Timothy. He was in hiding, going from place to place, when he arrived at a monastery in the Urals. He asked the abbot to permit him to stay there temporarily. He said that he was a priest and showed him the cross on his breast. The abbot gave him permission. But this was noticed. A commission appeared and began to check all the members of the community in accordance with a list.

"How many monks do you have in this community?' the chairman asked the abbot.

"Thirty-two,' he replied.

"They began to check.

"Fr. Timothy was there, absorbed in prayer like all the other monks. He stood beside a table, leaning against the stove. They checked them all.

"Exactly thirty-two! It's amazing...,' said the commission.

"It was as if they had not seen Fr. Timothy standing beside the stove. When the chekists had gone, the abbot gathered the brotherhood and told them the wonderful miracle of God's mercy and served a thanksgiving prayer-service not only for the priest, but at the same time for the miraculous deliverance of the whole community from inevitable death..."

"After this incident Fr. Timothy left that area and went secretly to Sim factory, near Ufa. Here he served in a house church until his last arrest and death in 1930..."

Our other source agrees that Fr. Timothy was sent to Sim factory, but says that he was sent there in 1929 by the Catacomb Bishop Alexis (Buj), who had arrived in Omsk, and then, in 1930 moved to the village of Novo-Troitskoye, Iglinskaya volost, Ufkanton, Bashkiria. However, there is no record of Bishop Alexis being in Omsk at that time, and it seems more likely that Fr. Timothy decided of his own accord to return to his homeland and made contact there with Bishop Benjamin (Troitsky).

In any case, on July 14, 1930 he was arrested and cast into the Domzak in Zlatoust, Bashkiria. Then, on December 3, he was condemned by the GPU for "being a member of a counter-revolutionary organization, entering into the group of churchmen headed by the accused [Bishop Benjamin] Troitsky", for "recruiting people, working on them and preparing them for a rebellion". In accordance with articles 58-10 part 2 and 58-11, he was sentenced to be shot. On December 3 he was shot.

"By chance", continues Schema-Monk Epiphanius, "there happened to be a witness of his death, the servant of God Alexander Bogdanov, who was at that time in prison. They had ordered him to harness the sledges (this was in winter). And at night three men, apparently priests, were taken out of the prison bound and with their mouths stopped up so that they could not cry out. 'One of them,' relates the witness, 'was tall' - this was Fr. Timothy. The next morning Alexander found the sledges in the yard of the prison all covered in blood. They had cut all three of them to pieces..."

## **32. HOLY HIEROMARTYR MAXIMUS, BISHOP OF SERPUKHOV**

**(+1931)**

**and those with him**

Bishop Maximus, in the world Michael Alexandrovich Zhizhilenko, was born on March 2, 1885 in Kalish, Poland into a noble family. His father was a circuit judge. His elder brother, the professor of criminal law A.A. Zhizhilenko, spoke in defence of Metropolitan Benjamin during his trial in 1922. In 1908 he finished his studies at the St. Petersburg gymnasium and entered the medical faculty of Moscow University. While still a student, in 1911, he married a fellow-student, who died during pregnancy eighteen months later. Bowing to the will of God, both spouses did not want in any circumstances to terminate the pregnancy artificially, although they knew that it threatened almost certain death. Later Vladyka Maximus called his wife a righteous woman.

On graduating from university in 1912 (1911), he worked as a psychiatrist in Sokolniki, but then as a doctor in the ministry of communications in Blagoveshchensk and Moscow. He was a fine musician and composed music. He had a particular veneration for St. Panteleimon the healer. From 1914 to January, 1918 he was a doctor with the Kuban dismounted Cossack regiment in Galicia, on the Austrian front, where he almost died of typhus, being infected by Austrian prisoners of war.

In January, 1918 he became professor psychiatry in a provincial university, then assistant to the chief doctor in the Batrujsky hospital in Moscow, and then, having been mobilized into the Red Army, in May, 1919 he became chief doctor of a field hospital in Kozlov, Tambov province. In August, 1919, he was captured by the Cossacks led by the famous General Mamontov. In 1920 (1921) he became chief doctor in a military hospital in Nizhni-Novgorod, and in 1921, after demobilization, he worked in People's Commissariat of Communications. (According to one source, he was arrested at the beginning of the 1920s and exiled to the north for three years.)

Michael Alexandrovich wrote about this period of his life in his interrogation: "After the death of my wife in 1910 I was constantly drawn to depart from worldly life into monasticism, but the former condition of monastic life did not suit me. I was drawn to Athos, to Greece, but I did not succeed in getting there. After my experiences at the front in the war, I strove to get into a regiment where I could end my life, but I also did not manage that. My desire to withdraw into another, spiritual world grew constantly stronger."

On January 1, 1922 he became chief doctor of the Taganka prison in Moscow, where he won the respect of all, and was nicknamed the prison's angel guardian. He was a great master of the heart, a comforter and a father. Even the most hardened criminals confessed before him as before a priest, and found not only consolation but a return to an honourable life. He slept on bare boards, ate only prison food, and gave all his pay to the prisoners. In Moscow he was known as "the elder of Taganka".

Since he was always a deeply religious person, Michael Alexandrovich became a close friend of Patriarch Tikhon's while he was still a layman, and was entrusted with many of the Patriarch's most intimate thoughts. Once, not long before his death, the Patriarch confided in his friend that in view of the increasing demands of the Soviet government, it seemed that the only way out for the Church in order to preserve her faithfulness to Christ was to go into the catacombs. Therefore the Patriarch blessed Michael Alexandrovich to become a secret monk and then, if in the near future the highest church authority betrayed Christ and conceded to Soviet power the spiritual freedom of the Church, he was to become a bishop.

He was also highly esteemed by the Patriarch's successor, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, who knew him well. He was a spiritual son of Fr. Valentine Sventitsky.

Michael Alexandrovich saw in Metropolitan Sergius' declaration of 1927 the betrayal of the Church of which the Patriarch spoke, and separated from him on December 17/30, 1927. On that day, the clergy and laity of Serpukhov wrote the following appeal to Metropolitan Sergius which may have been composed under the influence of Michael Alexandrovich:

"Since we find it no longer possible for us to remain on the slippery, ambiguous path on which you have placed the Orthodox Church by your declaration and decrees, following the voice of our conscience and our duty before God and the believers, we the under-signed break canonical communion in prayer with you and the so-called Patriarchal Synod and refuse to recognize you as the Deputy of the Patriarchal Locum Tenens for the following reasons:

"1. Your declarations of July 16 and October 20, and everything that is known about your government of the Church clearly speaks of the fact that you have placed the Church into a position of dependence on the civil power and deprived her of her inner freedom and independence, thereby breaking the church canons and going contrary to the decrees of the civil power.

"2. Thus you are nothing other than the continuer of the so-called renovationist movement, only in a more refined and very dangerous form, for in declaring that Orthodoxy is unshakeable and that you have preserved canonicity, you have clouded the minds of the believers, consciously hiding from them that abyss to which you are inexorably dragging the Church by all your decrees.

"3. The result of your politics is obvious to all of us. The believers of the city of Serpukhov are disturbed by your decrees and very anxious and perplexed with regard to the destiny of the Holy Orthodox Church. We, their pastors, have been placed by you in an ambiguous position which not only cannot introduce peace into their hearts and minds, but arouses suspicions in them that you have betrayed Orthodoxy and gone over to the camp of the renovationists.

"All this forces us boldly to raise our voices and stop what has now become a criminal silence with regard to your mistakes and incorrect actions and, with the blessing of Bishop Demetrius of Gdov, we wall ourselves off from you and the people

around you. In leaving you, we are not leaving the lawful Patriarchal Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Peter, and we submit ourselves to the judgement of a future council."

"In 1927," he said at his interrogation, "while working as a doctor in the Taganka prison, I fell seriously ill, and I was almost sentenced to death by the doctors. In March, 1928 I decided to receive Holy Unction and gave a vow that if I recovered I would accept the priesthood. After Holy Unction I quickly got better, and, having recovered from my illness, I decided to become a priest. My spiritual father was Fr. Valentine Sventitsky, who was serving the church of the Big Cross on Ilyinka. I knew him to be a good preacher and went to the church where he was serving. I went to Demetrius of Gdov in Leningrad on May 19, 1928. With me there went the deacon of the church of the Big Cross, Nicodemus Merkulov, who was ordained to the priesthood. I went to Demetrius of Gdov to become a priest because I considered him to be a truly Orthodox bishop. I gained this conviction that Demetrius of Gdov was a truly Orthodox bishop from my conversations with my spiritual father, the priest Valentine Sventitsky, who was in communion with Demetrius of Gdov and who convinced me that by his actions Metropolitan Sergius was, as the leader of the Orthodox Church, beginning to make advances, as it were, to the authorities. He was trying to adapt the Church to earthly life, and not the heavenly. During my ordination [to the diaconate] in Leningrad in May, 1928 [May 20], in the church of the Resurrection-on-the-blood, when they were congratulating me, Michael Alexandrovich Novoselov came up to me to congratulate me. I met him for the first time then. The next day I was ordained to the priesthood, and after that I went to Moscow, and I was in Moscow until September, 1928, continuing to work as a doctor while bearing the rank of priest in my soul. But the most important thing I wanted was not the rank of a priest, but to be a simple monk, and nothing more. So in September, 1928 I again went to Demetrius of Gdov in Leningrad, alone, and began to ask him to tonsure me as a monk. At first he hesitated on canonical grounds, but then he tonsured me and after this I went to Moscow."

It was in 1928, according to one (dubious) source, that Fr. Maximus signed the decisions of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church.

The question of consecrating Maximus to the episcopate arose soon after it became clear to the leaders of the Josephites that the Church would soon not be able to exist openly. In March-April, 1928, there was no more news about Bishop Arsenius (Zhadanovsky) of Serpukhov, who was frequently in exile. The people thought that he was dead or had been shot. So at the petition of a delegation from Serpukhov led by Protopriest Alexander Kremyshensky, Maximus was secretly consecrated Bishop of Serpukhov on October 12 in the church of St. Panteleimon of the Alexander-Oshevsky podvorye on Piskarevka, by Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov and Bishop Sergius of Narva. This was the first consecration of a catacomb bishop. It elicited the protest of Bishop Arsenius, who was in exile at the time. However, after the arrest of Vladyka Maximus, the two hierarchs asked each other forgiveness and were reconciled.

It was rumoured that Vladyka Maximus was the author of the "Prayer concerning the Holy Church", otherwise known as the "Prayer about the Bolsheviks" which was inserted into the Divine Liturgy by the Catacomb hierarchs of Petrograd.

From the evidence given by Vladyka Maximus at his interrogation: "At the beginning of October, 1928 I received a letter in the post from Demetrius of Gdov, in which he asked me to come to him to be consecrated to the episcopate. The next day I went to him in Leningrad. When I came into his presence, he said that 'I was intending to make you a bishop, but in view of certain doubts this question is to be put aside for the time being', and asked me to come the next day, when the question would be finally decided. I told him that I felt myself to be inexperienced and unworthy of this calling, but he told me that he was convinced I could be in this rank. On October 12 my consecration to the episcopate took place. He told me that I should tell nobody in Moscow that I had been consecrated to the episcopate. After this I was again in Moscow, and on January 8, 1929 a delegation from Serpukhov came to me. It consisted of Protopriest Alexander Vladychinsky and the warden, or warden's assistant, I think Kostin... and Deacon Irinarchus, who told me that 'we turned to Demetrius of Gdov asking for a bishop to administer the diocese, and he directed us to you.' I decided to go, since I concluded that this was being done in the interests of the Orthodox Church. While bishop in Serpukhov, in February, 1929, I went to Demetrius of Gdov and reported that I had entered into the fulfilment of my duties. Besides this, I had a conversation with him on exclusively ecclesiastical matters and details of hierarchical services."

From January, 1929, in addition to leading the Serpukhov Josephites, Vladyka Maximus led the movement in part of the Yaroslavl diocese and, after the arrest of Bishop Alexis (Buj), some of the Voronezh Josephites.

Vladyka Maximus was arrested on May 24, 1929 together with many of his flock in Serpukhov. During the course of the investigation, he behaved very cautiously, and the investigatory organs were not able to incriminate him in anything except the fact of his secret monasticism while working as a doctor in the Taganka prison. During interrogations, Vladyka Maximus constantly repeated one and the same thing:

"I accepted secret monasticism because I did not want to advertise my personal religious convictions before the Soviet authorities."

In reply to the question what diocese he ruled, Vladyka Maximus answered that he had no administrative responsibilities and that he lived like "a retired bishop". He categorically refused to speak about his religious convictions and spiritual life and activity, giving as reason the fact that this constituted "too intimate territory, into which he could not initiate anybody".

On July 5, 1929, the OGPU sentenced Bishop Maximus to five years in the camps "for counter-revolutionary propaganda". He arrived on Solovki at the end of October, 1929. There he worked as a doctor, being in charge of the typhus barracks. I.M. Andreyev writes: "We doctor-prisoners went up to our new comrade in chains and introduced ourselves. Our newly arrived colleague was tall, very strongly built, with a thick beard and grey whiskers and brows which hung severely over kind, light blue eyes."

"Every new arrival was very carefully examined by the doctor-bishop, and the first notes in the history of the disease were always huge. Besides a basic diagnosis of the main illness, Dr. Zhizhilenko always wrote a diagnosis of all the accompanying illnesses and gave a detailed summary of the state of all the organs. His diagnoses were always exact and correct... During later visits it seemed as if he paid little attention to him (the sick man) and stayed at his bedside no longer than a minute, feeling his pulse and looking fixedly into his eyes...

"... The sick always died in his arms. It seemed that he always knew exactly the moment of death. Even at night he would suddenly go to the dying man in his department a few minutes before death. He closed the eyes of every dead man, folded his hands on his breast in the shape of the cross and stood in silence for a few minutes without moving. Evidently he was praying. In less than a year all we his colleagues understood that he was not only a remarkable doctor, but also a great man of prayer...

"... After exchanging names and general questions, all three of us brothers told the new arrival that we knew (through friends in the office of the medical unit) his past and the reasons for his arrest and imprisonment on Solovki. Then we went up for his blessing. The face of the doctor-bishop became concentrated, he knit his grey brows still more tightly, and slowly and triumphantly he blessed us. His blue eyes became still kinder and more welcoming, and they were lit up with a joyful light.

"... The arrival of Vladyka Maximus on Solovki produced great changes in the mood of the imprisoned clergy. At that time in the fourth department of the Solovki camps (that is, on Solovki itself) the same schism could be observed among the imprisoned bishops and priests as had taken place 'in freedom' after the well-known declaration of Metropolitan Sergius. One part of the episcopate and the white clergy broke all communion with Metropolitan Sergius, remaining faithful to the invincible position of Metropolitans Peter, Cyril, Agathangelus and Joseph, Archbishop Seraphim (of Uglich) and many others who had witnessed to their faithfulness to Christ and the Church by their confession and martyrdom. The other part had become 'sergianists' by accepting the so-called 'new church politics' of Metropolitan Sergius, which founded the Soviet church and introduced a neo-renovationist schism. Most of the prisoners who arrived on Solovki before the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius were 'sergianists'. But on the other hand, most of those who arrived after the publication of the declaration were so-called 'Josephites' (from the name of Joseph, around whom the unshaken and faithful children of the Church mainly grouped themselves). With the arrival of the new prisoners the numbers of the latter became greater and greater.

"By the time of the arrival of Vladyka Maximus, the following 'Josephite' bishops were on Solovki: Bishop Victor of Glazov (the first to come out with a critical letter against the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius), Bishop Hilarion, the vicar of Smolensk and Bishop Nectarius Trezvinsky. The 'sergianists' included Archbishop Anthony of Marioupol and Bishop Joasaph (prince Zhevakhov). Less outspoken, but still a 'sergianist', was Archbishop Hilarion Troitsky, who condemned the declaration, but had not broken communion with Metropolitan Sergius as 'the canonically correct First-Hierarch of the Russian Church'.



"Vladyka Maximus' arrival on Solovki gave an exceptional impetus to the influence of the 'Josephites' (which was dominant even before then).

"When, after the most cruel bans laid by Metropolitan Sergius on the 'disobedient', these latter began to be arrested and shot, then the true Russian Orthodox Church which was faithful to Christ began to depart into the catacombs. Metropolitan Sergius and all the 'sergianists' categorically denied the existence of the Catacomb Church. The Solovki 'sergianists', of course, also did not believe in her existence. And suddenly - a living witness: the first catacomb bishop, Maximus of Serpukhov, arrived on Solovki.

"Archbishop Hilarion Troitsky was soon removed from Solovki, and with him there also disappeared the 'sergianist attitudes' from many. Only Archbishop Anthony and, especially, Bishop Joasaph (Zhevakhov) remained stubborn 'sergianists'. They did not want even to see or talk with Bishop Maximus. However, Bishops Victor, Hilarion (of Smolensk) and Nectarius quite quickly found the opportunity not only to meet, but also to serve with Vladyka Maximus in secret catacomb Divine services in the depths of the Solovki woods. The 'sergianists' behaved too cautiously and never arranged any secret services. But then the camp administration were more condescending to them than to the bishops, priests and laymen about whom it was known that they 'did not recognize' either Metropolitan Sergius or the Soviet church.

"All those arrested for matters relating to the Church (and such constituted up to 20% of those on Solovki according to official statistics) were unfailingly asked during interrogation what their attitude was to 'our' Metropolitan Sergius, who headed the Soviet church. The chekists would demonstrate with evil joy and sarcasm the 'strict canonicity' of Metropolitan Sergius and his declaration, which 'did not violate either the canons or the dogmas'.

"In denying the Catacomb Church, the Solovki 'sergianists' also denied the rumours that reproachful epistles had been written to Metropolitan Sergius and many delegations had gone to protest to him from the dioceses. Once Archbishop Anthony of Marioupol, who was lying ill in the prison hospital, learned that I had participated in one of these delegations as a layman. So he wanted to hear my account of the journey to Metropolitan Sergius together with the representatives of the episcopate and the white clergy. Vladykas Victor (of Glazov) and Maximus (of Serpukhov) blessed me to go to the hospital where Archbishop Anthony lay and tell him about the journey. If, after my account, he declared his solidarity with the protestors against the 'new church policy', I was allowed to take his blessing. But if he remained a stubborn sergianist, I was not to take his blessing. My conversation with Archbishop Anthony lasted more than two hours. I told him in detail about the historic delegation of the Petrograd delegation in 1927, after which the church schism took place. At the end of my account Archbishop Anthony asked me to tell him about the personality and activities of Vladyka Maximus. I replied in a very restrained and short manner, and he noticed that I did not completely trust him. He asked me about this. I openly replied that we catacombers feared not only the agents of the GPU, but also the sergianists, who had often handed us over to the GPU. Archbishop Anthony was very upset and for a long time walked up and down the doctor's surgery to which I, as a

consultant doctor had summoned him, as if for a check-up. Then he suddenly and decisively said:

"But still I will remain with Metropolitan Sergius."

"I rose, bowed and was about to go. He raised his hand to bless me, but I, remembering the instructions of Vladykas Victor and Maximus, declined to receive his blessing and left.

"When I told Vladyka Maximus about what had happened, he again insisted that I should never receive the blessings of stubborn sergianists.

"The Soviet and the Catacomb Churches are incompatible," Vladyka Maximus said significantly, firmly and with conviction.

"And after a pause he added quietly: 'The secret, desert Catacomb Church has anathematized the sergianists and those with them.'

"In spite of the exceptional severity of the Solovki camp regime, which exposed them to the risk of being shot, Vladykas Victor, Hilarion, Nectarius and Maximus not only often served together in secret catacomb services in the woods of the island, but also carried out secret consecrations of new bishops. Only on the eve of my departure from Solovki did I learn from a close friend, a celibate priest, that he was no longer a priest, but a secret bishop.

"We had several secret catacomb 'churches' on Solovki, but the most 'beloved' were two: the 'diocesan cathedral' of the Holy Trinity and the church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker... Services were more often performed in the church of St. Nicholas. In the 'Trinity diocesan cathedral' services were performed only in summer, on big feasts and, with especial solemnity, on the day of Pentecost. But sometimes, depending on circumstances, strictly secret services were also performed in other places. Thus, for example, on Great Thursday the service with the reading of the 12 Gospels was performed in our doctors' room in the tenth company. Vladyka Victor and Fr. Nicholas came to us supposedly for disinfection. They served with the door bolted. On Great Friday the order went out in all the companies that for three days prisoners were allowed to leave their companies after eight in the evening only in exceptional circumstances, with special written permission from the camp commandant.

"At seven o'clock on Friday evening, when we doctors had just returned to our rooms after a twelve-hour working day, Fr. Nicholas came to us and announced that a plashchanitsa the size of a man's palm had been painted by the artist R., and that the service - the rite of burial - would begin in an hour.

"Where?" asked Vladyka Maximus.

"In the big box used for drying fish which is near the wood not far from such-and-such a company. The sign is three knocks, followed by two. Better come one by one!..."

"Half an hour later Vladyka Maximus and I left our company and headed for the appointed address. Twice the sentries asked us for our passes. We, as doctors, had them. But what about the others: Vladyka Victor, Vladyka Hilarion, Vladyka Nectarius and Fr. Nicholas... Vladyka Victor worked as an accountant in the rope factory, Vladyka Nectarius was a fisherman, while the others wove nets...

"Here was the edge of the wood. Here was the box, over two metres in length. There were no windows. The door was scarcely visible. It was a radiant twilight. The sky was covered with thick clouds. We knocked three times and then twice. Fr. Nicholas opened. Vladykas Victor and Hilarion were already there... A few minutes later Vladyka Nectarius also came. The inside of the box was converted into a church. The floor and the walls were made of spruce branches. A few candles were burning. There were some small paper icons. The small burial shroud the size of a palm was drowning in green branches. There were about ten worshippers. Four or five came later, including two monks. The service began. In a whisper. It seemed that we had no bodies, only ears. Nothing stopped or hindered us from praying. I don't remember how we returned 'home', that is, to our companies. The Lord protected us.

"The Mattins of Pascha was to be served in our doctors' room. By twelve midnight all those who were intending to come had arrived - without written permission, on one of another urgent excuse connected with the medical section. There were about fifteen people. After the Mattins and Liturgy we sat down to break our fast. On the table were cakes, pascha, coloured eggs, snacks and wine (liquid yeast with cranberry extract and sugar). At about three in the morning everyone dispersed. The camp commandants made his control inspections of our company before and after the service, at eleven in the evening and four in the morning... Finding us, four doctors with Vladyka Maximus at our head, still awake, the commandant said:

"'What, aren't you sleeping, doctors?' And he immediately added: 'What a night! One doesn't want to sleep.'

"And he left.

"'Lord Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the miracle of Thy mercy and strength,' said Vladyka Maximus with emphasis, expressing the feelings of all of us.

"The white Solovki night was on its way out. The tender, rosy Solovki paschal morning with its playfully joyful sun met the monastery-concentration camp, turning it into an invisible city of Kitez and filling our free souls with quiet, unearthly joy. Many years have passed since that time, but the fragrance of this tender paschal morning is unforgettably alive, as if it were only yesterday. And the heart believes that it was holy between us then...

"On July 5/18, 1930, the feast of St. Sergius of Radonezh, our friends from the office of the medical section informed me that I would be arrested that night and sent with a special convoy to Leningrad 'in connection with a new affair'. Being warned, I got ready, said goodbye to my friends, and without lying down to sleep, began to wait for my arrest. At two o'clock in the morning I heard a noise and steps below (our room

was on the second floor). I bowed to the ground before Vladyka Maximus (who had also not slept) and asked him to bless me and pray that the Lord would send me strength to bear the coming sorrows and sufferings, and perhaps - tortures and death. Vladyka got up from his bed, stood to his full, knight-like height, and slowly blessed me, kissed me three times and said with emphasis:

"You will have many sorrows and heavy trials, but your life will be preserved and in the end you will get out into freedom... As for me, in a few months they will also arrest me and... shoot me. Pray also for me, both while I am alive and, especially, after my death."

This prophecy was fulfilled exactly, both in regard to I.M. Andreyev and to Bishop Maximus himself.

With regard to the future, "Vladyka Maximus... remained a pessimist, or, as he defined himself in the words of K. Leontiev, 'an optimistic pessimist'. The tragic end of world history is drawing near, and for that reason, according to the word of the Lord, it is necessary to 'raise our heads' in expectation of the certain triumph of Christian truth..." In this respect he had had a certain disagreement even with Patriarch Tikhon, who was more optimistically inclined.

Meanwhile, on August 19, there began the investigation of the affair of "the church-monarchist organization 'True Orthodoxy' in Moscow region". The OGPU claimed that this organization occupied itself with "anti-Soviet activity under the flag of the defence of true Orthodoxy from the 'Godless' authorities". Between August and January more than one hundred people were arrested. When the OGPU in Moscow region heard about the arrests of the clergy in Tver, they immediately understood that it was possible to link these two cases and initiate a big trial. They demanded that their Tver colleagues give them the material on the investigation and, besides, they insisted that they "obtain the confession of those who have been arrested that they had links with Kolomna, Serpukhov, Orekhovo-Zuyevo and Moscow". Having arrested more than 60 clergy and believers from Moscow and the region around Moscow, the OGPU workers prepared standard forms, on which they had to fill in only their surnames, the date and their signatures. The OGPU workers did not put great effort into collecting proofs, since they well knew that the story of a "counter-revolutionary" plot was quite enough to please the authorities, and would therefore bring them no little profit.

One of those arrested in this swoop was Bishop Maximus. On October 28 his sentence had been increased by five years and he had been sent to the camps on the White Sea - Baltic canal. There he was arrested on November 27 and taken to Moscow. On January 27, 1931 he was cast into Butyrki prison. He was accused of being "the leader of the Serpukhov branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church". On February 4 1931, in the group case entitled, "The Case of the True Orthodox Church: Moscow, Tver and Serpukhov branches, 1931", indictments were delivered against sixty-three people (seventeen priests, twenty-three monastics and twenty-three laymen).

Bishop Maximus was sentenced to death on February 18, and he was shot on June 4 (according to another version, July 6). He was buried in the Vagankovskoye cemetery in Moscow.

### 33. HOLY HIEROMARTYR VALENTINE OF MOSCOW (+1931)

**Protopriest Valentine Sventitsky** was born in 1881 into an aristocratic Polish family and had a good education. Very early he started publishing on Christian themes, producing the magazines *Problems of Religion* and *Living Life*. Later, he produced *Heavenly Citizens, or, My Travels among the Anchorites of the Caucasus Mountains* (1916), *Monasticism in the World* (1926), *Six Readings on the Mystery of Confession and its History* and *Against General Confession* (1926). In 1905 he left Moscow for St. Petersburg in order to find supporters for a "Christian Brotherhood of Struggle". He ardently defended monasticism against the free-thinkers who attacked it.

After the revolution he married and was ordained to the priesthood, becoming the rector of the church of St. Nikola the Big Cross in Moscow. There in the 1920s he attracted a large congregation by his eloquent sermons. He became a disciple of St. Anatoly of Optina, advocating the frequent use of the Jesus prayer and the maintaining of monastic discipline even in the world.

His friend S.I. Fudel wrote: "Fr. Valentine Sventitsky on the one hand seemed to be a regular priest with a family, and on the other hand an experienced teacher of prayer. It is a remarkable fact that even in 1925 in the city of Moscow, this man managed to arouse people in his parish to a life of intense prayer. He did much for the general defense of faith. But his main significance was that he called all people to conduct unceasing prayer, an uninterrupted turning of the spirit [to God].

"'Prayer,' he would say, 'erects walls around our monastery in the world.' It was also he who resolved the complex problem of inward evil in the Church.' Any sin in the Church,' he said, 'is a sin not of the Church but *against* the Church.' He also taught that one should not interrupt once' unceasing mental prayer while attending church services.

"Once after I returned from exile to Moscow in 1925, I chanced to be at the Liturgy when Fr. Valentine was serving. I came in at the end of the service, and when he came out with the ambo prayer, I was shocked to see his face. I cannot express my impression other than to say that it was the face of a man who had just sacrificed himself as a burnt-offering – in truth and pain. He was deeply shaken, and was coming out to us oblivious of his earthly surroundings. But even then I made a stupid mistake. Instead of waiting until he would be free to talk with me, I went straight into the altar. Immediately he raised his hand as one with authority, stopping me, and said: 'Only those who believe in God may enter here! Do you believe in God?' We hadn't even seen each other for three years, and he, having received false information about me, was questioning me when I dared to come into the holy of holies.

"Another time I recall how, while in a crowded Butyrka prison ward in 1922, I was endlessly pacing among the prisoners when I bumped into Fr. Valentine. In embarrassment, I asked, for some stupid reason: 'Where are you going?' All of a sudden his face became remarkably light with some inward warmth, and he said: 'I

was coming to you.’ Usually he was so estranged, closed up, stern and impatient, like his distant relative – a Polish cardinal. But now he had the radiant and quiet beam of light of true Russian sanctity – the kind and all-seeing sanctity of a holy elder. He was coming straight towards me, towards my soul, which he was then probably protecting from some evil. Thus even a prison can enlighten and illumine a soul and bring out something which at other times is impossible to attain.”

Fr. Valentine was the spiritual father of St. Maximus of Serpukhov, the first bishop blessed for secret, catacomb service by Patriarch Tikhon.

When Metropolitan Sergius issued his apostatic declaration in 1927, Fr. Valentine separated from communion with him, writing to him in December with the blessing of Archbishop Dmitri of Gdov:

“Realizing all my responsibility before the Lord for my own soul and for the salvation of the souls of the flock entrusted to me, and with the blessing of Dmitri, Bishop of Gdov, I am breaking canonical and prayerful communion with you and the council of bishops that has been organized under you, which has illegally appropriated to itself the title of Patriarchal Synod, as well as with everyone who is in canonical communion with you, and I no longer consider you the deputy of the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne for the following reasons:

“Your declaration of July 16/29, as well as everything that is generally known of your governance of the Church from the time of the publication of the declaration, without any doubt establishes that you are placing the Church in that dependence on the government in which the first two ‘renovations’ wished to place it, in defiance of the holy canons of the Church and the decrees of the civil authority itself.

“Both the ‘Living Church’, which seized the authority of the Patriarch, and ‘Gregorianism’, which seized the authority of the Locum Tenens, and now you, who have abused the latter’s trust – are all doing the same general anti-ecclesiastical, renovationist work. But you are the founder of the most dangerous of its forms, because while pronouncing ecclesiastical freedom, at the same time you preserve the fiction of canonicity and Orthodoxy. This is worse than the violation of separate canons.

“I am not creating a new schism, and I do not break the unity of the Church. I depart from, and lead my flock out of, a subtle renovationist trap – ‘lest imperceptibly and little by little we lose the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us as a free gift by His own Blood’ (8<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council).

“Remaining a faithful and obedient son of the One, Holy, Orthodox Church, I recognize as Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne Metropolitan Peter. I recognize also those bishops who, not arbitrarily appropriating to themselves general ecclesiastical authority, have already broken canonical ties with you, following their testimony: ‘until the judgement of a complete Local Council’, i.e. a council with the

participation of all Orthodox bishops, or until the open and full repentance before the Holy Church of the Metropolitan himself.”

Fr Valentine was arrested in 1929 and sent into exile, where he died in 1931. After his repose his holy body was found to be incorrupt!

In our days, certain popular falsehoods are being disseminated concerning the anti-Sergianist stance of St. Valentine. Thus we read in the (2016) English language book Archbishop Luke: a Saint, Pastor and Physician Surgeon the assertion that Fr. Valentine "disallowed his spiritual children even to visit churches which were close to Metropolitan Sergius. Arrested in 1928, they sent him into exile ... While in exile he fell seriously ill. He repented and asked for forgiveness from Metropolitan Sergius ... (stating) 'forgive my sin ... I reunite myself with the Holy Orthodox Church'. Fr. Valentine fell asleep on October 20th, 1931, within the bosom of the Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Sergius accepted his repentance."

The truth however is revealed by Princess Natalia Urusova (1874-1963). Princess Natalia was a member of the Russian Orthodox Catacomb Church who later became a spiritual daughter of Vladyka Averky of Jordanville. She was the mother of three Martyrs of the Catacomb Church and was highly praised by Fr. Seraphim Rose for her discernment.

She writes concerning Fr. Valentine: “In the church of St. Nicholas the Great Cross, there was an old priest. Fr. Valentine Sventitsky, who was unbending in his firmness against the Bolsheviks and in his open opposition to Metropolitan Sergius and his declaration.

“When he served, the church was so full that masses of people stood not only on the staircase but also in the courtyard. Of course, the Bolsheviks would have killed him in exile if he had not fallen ill and died a natural death. His glory spread far, and the Bolshevik power, for which the end justified the means, needed to discredit him with a common lie before the believers.

“He was dying without coming to consciousness [meaning he was unconscious before dying], and they printed in all the newspapers a letter supposedly written by him before his death, in which he addressed all his parishioners, beseeching them in his last moments to follow Metropolitan Sergius and recognize his declaration and commemoration.

“A false signature was affixed to the letter. The Bolsheviks arranged a magnificent funeral for him. Many of the parishioners were led into deception and joined the sergianist church, but those with minds understood the new and diabolic cunning contained in the false signature.

“It was a terrible time, quite indescribable. Those who rejected the commemoration [of Metropolitan Sergius] and did not agree to sign the declaration linked with the decree were immediately arrested and shot, no matter how many they happened to be. As the rumor went, in the course of one month up to 10,000 people were shot in



Moscow, beginning with a metropolitan and ending with readers, while laypeople were shot in their millions in Russia - while some others were imprisoned or exiled to the terrible conditions of the concentration camps of the North and Siberia. The Lubyanka in Moscow became a place of mass martyrdom. Passers-by tried to avoid passing by the GPU's house of death because of the intolerable stench of death that spread unto a great distance. The corpses were taken out at night; they tried to do this as secretly as possible, but did not succeed."

### **34. HOLY HIEROCONFESSOR MICAH, BISHOP OF KALUGA (+1931)**

Bishop Micah, in the world Michael Fyodorovich Alexeyev, was born on January 23, 1851 in the Saint Petersburg diocese into a noble family. At the age of ten he was deprived of his mother. In 1872 he graduated from the St. Petersburg Naval Cadet Corps and served in the Naval Department, reaching the rank of Captain First Class. During this period he carried out voyages around the world.

From his early years he was a spiritual son of St. John of Kronstadt; and on being widowed, in 1890, he and Prince Turkestanov, the future metropolitan, on the advice of St. John, entered the Optina Hermitage as novices.

Once Elder Ambrose blessed Novice Michael to give the emperor a gift on his namesday. Two days later he blessed him to give St. John of Kronstadt a gift on his namesday. On seeing him in church, St. John was worried that the novice had abandoned the monastery, and was relieved to learn the truth. On the death of Elder Ambrose in 1891, St. John blessed him to take up the path of learned monasticism.

Bishop John of Pechersk recounts the following story from Michael's short stay in Optina: "Being people of upper-class origin, they [he and Prince Turkestanov] continued to love comforts and certain worldly diversions even while at Optina Hermitage, such as taking a samovar into the forest and holding tea parties there.

"Although there was nothing reprehensible in such conduct, nevertheless the Superior of Optina Hermitage did not care for it.

"Once the Superior summoned these novices and told them that since they were educated people, it would be better for them to enter the Ecclesiastical Academy and follow an academic career.

"Prince Turkestanov agreed immediately, but Captain Second Class Alexeyev told the Superior that, inasmuch as he had received a blessing to go to Optina from Father John of Kronstadt, he must first of all ask a blessing from Father John to leave. The Superior agreed wholeheartedly with this and blessed Alexeyev to go to Father John.

"Father John blessed Alexeyev to enter the Ecclesiastical Academy and said to him these prophetic words:

"You will finish the academy and will attain to the rank of a hierarch, and you will be a bishop in my homeland, in Arkhangelsk.'

"Father John's prophecy was fulfilled exactly..."

In June, 1892 he entered the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy at forty-six years of age, graduating in 1896. On October 10, 1892 he was tonsured into the mantia by Archimandrite Anthony (Khrapovitsky). On October 17, 1892, he was ordained to the diaconate, and on May 16, 1893 he was ordained to the priesthood. In 1896 he was

appointed supervisor of the Zhirovitsky spiritual school, but on December 4 he was transferred to the post of Synodal sacristan in the church of the twelve apostles in the Kremlin. On May 20, 1897 he was made igumen, and in December - superior of the St. Joseph of Volotsk monastery. On January 30, 1898 he was raised to the rank of archimandrite. On June 2, 1901 he was appointed superior of the monastery of St. Vladimir in the Chersonese.

On May 19, 1905 he was consecrated Bishop of Sarapul, a vicariate of the Vyatka diocese, in Vyatka, where he ruled his flock, did missionary work and looked after homeless children. On August 25, 1906 he was appointed Bishop of Vladimir in Volhynia, where he worked hard with Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Volhynia to educate the peasants against Latin propaganda.

On October 30, 1908 he was appointed bishop of Archangelsk, thereby fulfilling a prophecy of St. John of Kronstadt: "You will be bishop in my homeland." St. John died only a few weeks later, happy that the monastery he had founded in his birthplace of Sura, and other charitable institutions, were in the safe hands of Bishop Micah.

On April 17, 1912, he became Bishop of Ufa and Menzelinsk. Here he was very active in the mission field and in charitable works.

On December 22, 1913 he was retired for reasons of poor health and was appointed to live in the Pochayev Lavra. However, on January 2, 1914, this order was changed, and he settled in Optina Hermitage. He lived there until his arrest on Palm Sunday, 1923 together with Archimandrite Isaac (Bobrikov) and many other Optina monks. He was in prison for a few weeks. On his release he moved to Kozelsk, where he lived in a flat and served in the Dormition cathedral. We know that he rejected the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius because it is recorded in the records of the trial of the Kaluga priest Fr. Alexander Brilliantov in 1930 that when Fr. Alexander signed the declaration Bishop Micah called him "a red heretic" and banned parishioners from entering his church. He rejected renovationism and sergianism, and received renovationists into communion only through repentance. He died on February 16, 1931.

**35. HOLY HIEROCONFESSOR PAUL, BISHOP OF STAROBELA**  
**(+1931)**

**and those with him**

Hieroconfessor Paul (in the world Paul Fyodorovich Kratirov) was born in 1871, the son of the future Bishop John of Saratov, in the village of Pokrovskoye, Totemsky uyezd, Vologda province. After finishing his studies at the Vologda theological seminary, he entered the Kazan Theological Academy, from which he graduated in 1896 with the degree of candidate of theology. He was then appointed teacher of the Law of God in a village school. From 1897 he was teaching in the theological seminary in Tula, then in Kursk (from December, 1902) and from the beginning of 1903 - in Kharkov. After the closure of the Kharkov seminary in 1918 he was ordained to the priesthood. In 1919 he was tonsured into the mantia with the name Paul and raised to the rank of archimandrite.

On February 19, 1922 he was consecrated bishop of Starobela, a vicariate of the Kharkov diocese, and served in the churches of the Pokrov monastery in Kharkov and in the Kuryazhsky monastery, actively struggling against renovationism. On August 28, with the sanction of the local authorities, he was retired by the renovationists and exiled beyond the bounds of the diocese. As the newspaper The Communist wrote in its issue of August 29, 1922: "Yesterday at 1.00 pm, Bishop Nathaniel of Kharkov, Bishop Paul of Stavropol (Vicar), and the members of the Diocesan Council, Protopriests Butkevich and Popov and Protopriest Ivan Garanin of the Church of the Resurrection, were summoned to the NARCOMUST (National Bureau of Justice). Here, in the presence of Sukhopluev [a member of the Bureau of Justice who was given full authority by the "Living Church" to act on its behalf], in order to deal with the renegade Kharkov clergy, citizen Zakharzhevsky presented the renegade clergy with a decree from the [renovationist] HCA regarding their official dismissal as diocesan staff and exile from the Kharkov Diocese. The exiled Bishops tried to resist the decree of the Higher Church Authority, but later they agreed to obey its decision. Later, in the presence of the Commissioner of Justice, the police, and a representative of the Higher Church Authority, the office of the Diocesan Council was closed."

In September, 1922 Bishop Paul returned to Kharkov and continued the struggle against renovationism, but did not serve. From 1923 he was given the title of bishop of Yalta, a vicariate of the Tauris diocese, while remaining in retirement. On March 17, 1923 he was arrested, and on May 15 was sentenced to three years exile beyond the frontiers of the Ukraine. This was part of the group case, "The Case of Bishop Paul (Kratirov) and others, Kharkov, 1923". On May 21 he went to the Crimea and entered into the administration of the Yalta diocese. However, in the same year, under pressure from the authorities, he retired.

He went to live in Sukhumi and Gagry. However, in 1923 he was appointed Bishop of Vologda, and served his first liturgy there on August 3/16, 1923. On September 14/27 he was appointed first Bishop of Vladimir, then of Velikij Ustiug and finally, in 1925, of Moscow. In this period he was often arrested. On April 12, 1925 he signed the act accepting Metropolitan Peter as patriarchal locum tenens, signing himself as

bishop of Stavrobela. He was then sent to live in Kharkov without the right of leaving. There he would gather in prayer with other bishops and clergy in the same position in the only non-renovationist church in the city.

Abbot Herman writes that Bishop Paul was "an energetic man of average height, with hazel hair. The GPU were hunting for him, and he was in hiding. He would unexpectedly appear, serve in the Kharkov church, and give outstanding sermons, only to disappear again. He would appear in other cities, also. The GPU would arrest the priests at churches where Bishop Paul would appear, and would even close the churches altogether.

"Bishop Paul had a remarkable gift of speech. When he would preach, one would forget everything, listen for hours, and then regret that the sermon was over. It was something phenomenal. People would weep inconsolably. While listening to his God-given gift they would be transported into an unearthly realm."

In the spring of 1926 Bishop Paul supported the claim of Metropolitan Agathangelus to the patriarchal locum tenancy against Metropolitan Sergius, and separated from Sergius, who banned him. At the beginning of 1927 there was an attempt on his life, but the marksman missed.

In July, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius issued his notorious declaration placing the Church more or less unconditionally in the hands of the God-fighting atheists. Bishop Paul came out strongly against the declaration, and together with **Archimandrite Clement of the Kiev Caves Lavra, Archimandrite Macarius, Igumen Eustratius, Igumen Barsanuphius** and other prominent clergy from Kiev and Kharkov, he joined the Josephite branch of the Catacomb Church at the beginning of 1928.

In February, 1928 Bishop Paul wrote in his "Critical Remarks on the Second Epistle of Metropolitan Sergius": "Metropolitan Sergius places his hope on the heavenly Chief Pastor, that He at this difficult time will 'will not leave us orphaned', and that 'He will not destroy his hope'... We are passing beyond the bounds of the possible if we share the hopes of Metropolitan Sergius that the Lord will be a Helper to him in his deeds... It would be more correct to think, having in mind his recent speeches that are filled with begging before the powerful of this world, that the Lord will leave him and the Spirit of God will depart from him."

On April 3/16, 1928, Bishop Paul wrote to an unnamed sergianist hierarch: "Father, Brother and Friend. I greet you with the bright Feast Day of Christ's Resurrection, which delivers us from the gates of hell, from death leads us to eternal life and which illumines us in the knowledge of the Truth. I come from among Christ's unworthy servants who belong to the 'resistant' Church which has gone into the wilderness to distance itself from its external enemies and from its 'legal friends' which are hiding in wait to devour the Bride of Christ for her attempts to avoid union, communion and in order to not partake in the blasphemy of the Adulteress of Babylon. Through prayerful contemplation, we desire that you learn the meaning of our dark and troubled times in relation to your salvation and for a more perfect ability to lead the souls which have been entrusted to your care for eternal salvation in Christ Jesus.

“So, now that you are lamenting that ‘peace is lost and the division among us is growing’. But I, on the other hand, am rejoicing at this. If there was no protest against the antics of the Sergianist from the divinely-wise archpastors, from the venerable fathers and God-loving laity, then I, a sinner, without delay would begin to ask God to bring an end to my life, so that I would not have the depressing inevitability of seeing the adulterous, bloodied, former Bride of Christ and would not have to endure the looming calamity which all the faithful will endure as a result of her disgraceful acts.

“It is for this reason that I rejoice both in the disturbance of the peace and in the division of the Church Militant of Christ which, by God’s allowance, is undergoing great trials. Remember, these arguments and divisions are occurring, not in a body that is of one mind. They are not occurring within a united community, which would indeed be very sad. But they are occurring within a community which is multifaceted and very much at variance with itself. This is quite healthy for the pure Body of Christ’s Church. By God’s allowance the evil one is sifting us like wheat, but our Lord Jesus Christ is praying for us, that our faith does not waver. By God’s mercy my faith that the Kingdom of God on earth is indefectible is not shaken. Until my last breath I will despise those who are trying to save the Kingdom of God, the Church, by forming a union with the dark powers of him who dwells in the depths. He is still bound by the chains of the Lord and only now, quite strongly and noticeably, makes his hideous countenance visible to see if it is not time for him to begin his decisive and final actions.

“This is not the first time he has shown his detestable countenance. He showed his dark face the last time during the earthly life of the Saviour, when He was taken at the garden of Gethsemane. The Lord said to those who captured Him: ‘this is your hour and the power of darkness’ (Luke 22.53). Similarly, during the reign of Julian the Apostate, when St. Basil the Great – the great trumpet to Truth and oracle of the Holy Spirit – prayed that the Emperor Julian would not return from his Persian campaign, so that he could implement his unlawful designs on the Church.

“It was similar for the Church during the iconoclastic period. And so now we have a new order. Metropolitan Sergius simply spits on the examples which the Holy Fathers have given us and has had the audacity to introduce despicable ravings (one simply cannot call it prayer) into the Holy of Holies – welcome apostasy! One can rephrase the Sergianist prayers to read like this: “for the successful introduction of apostasy, let us pray to the Lord,’ or ‘for the successful rooting out of the people’s faith in Christ, let us pray to the Lord’.

“Metropolitan Sergius and those of like mind with him are falling over left and right in their conviction that they are making decisions in order to save the Church, that is, to save the Ship which is the Church. But it is clear even for one with the most simple understanding of Christianity that the Church is none other than the Kingdom of God, and according to the words of the Saviour, it is to be found within us. Can it really be true, that God’s Kingdom which is within us needs this whole repulsive system which Metropolitan Sergius has developed in regard to secular authority? Can it be that we must sell out Christ and the Kingdom of God to save Church property

(church buildings, offices, utensils)? What is the difference, then, between Judas and our contemporary 'sellers of Christ'? Judas sold the Lord and Teacher for 30 pieces of silver, but his present-day followers do the same thing for the temporary maintenance of their material comfort, external order, and for property made of wood and stone (churches, buildings).

"But they have made a grave error. They will not succeed in preserving either their own comfort, or external order, and the office buildings and the churches are sure to be lost and perish. Just as Judas did, they sold the imperishable for the perishable, the heavenly for the earthly. One bishop, a member of the Sergianist Synod, babbled his sad epistle to his flock exclaiming, 'without burdening anyone or anything, the appeal from July 16/29 1927 created a peaceful environment for Metropolitan Sergius for the benefit of the Church, under the protection of Soviet law.' It is difficult for me to make out who said this; whether it was a scoundrel, a wretch or an utter fool. I would have never believed that this thought could be that of an Orthodox Christian, a member of the Sergianist Synod, as he calls himself, had I not read this epistle with my own eyes.

"Can it be that it would not disturb you and, in fact, that you would be glad if there were no protest and righteous indignation in the face of the malicious work of Metropolitan Sergius and those with him? I, personally, am not able to endure this horror, so I go to the desert. I reject all 'legalization', I have become the servant of the 'militant' part of the pure Bride of Christ. In the current ecclesiastical situation, every 'legal' Church without fail becomes an adulteress of the Babylonian Apostasy. I cannot not fail to be disturbed and suffer in the face of the bloodied and adulterous visage of the Church. This is because I am both adulterous and a great sinner myself and I have a great need for a Church which is more pure than we are, a Virgin who wears the white garment of chastity, completely pure, an unstained Bride of Christ, which can save me, a great sinner. You might ask: 'But Metropolitan Sergius did not transgress against any Church Dogmas; why must we prematurely disavow him?' Well, this is why I disavow the Sergianist Church. Externally it may seem that the Church of Christ is whole and that everything is in order. But through apostasy the head is already severed. No matter how much Metropolitan Sergius might proclaim his faithfulness to Orthodoxy, already the main component is gone. The result is not a Church, but an ecclesiastical/political organization. It is present not as the Ark of Salvation, but as a Sergianist rowboat - which is not seaworthy...

"... The Sergianist church is teaching a false interpretation of the Word of God. It has confused normal times with apocalyptic times and has brought forth a frivolous approach to Holy Scripture and an almost categorical misunderstanding of the spirit and power of the Word of God which distinguishes between normal times (Matthew 22.21; Romans 13.1-7; I Timothy 2.1-7) and abnormal times (Luke 22.53; II Thessalonians 2.1-12; Revelation 13) with great precision. It also distinguishes between normal human society and the iniquitous society which those who seek eternal life must avoid bowing down to... Metropolitan Sergius unveils his total ignorance that the Word of God clearly distinguishes personal enemies (Matthew 5.44) from enemies of the Church (Matthew 18.7; I John 2.19; I Timothy 1.19-20; Titus 3.10 and others) and enemies of God (Psalms 67, 82, 36; Luke 19.14, 27; Matthew 12.32 and others) in his unbelievable declaration of October 8/21, 1927.

“If Metropolitan Sergius and his accomplices and sympathizers prayed according to the dictates of the Christian Church, they would not have signed such a shameful declaration. We are to pray about our personal enemies in different ways. For example, concerning our personal enemies, Christians are directed to pray in the following way: ‘Save, O Lord, and have mercy on those who hate and wrong us and do us harm, do not leave them to perish on account of us sinners.’ We pray in the following way for the enemies of the Church: ‘for those who have departed from the Orthodox Faith and are blinded by pernicious heresy, illumine them with the light of Thy knowledge and unite them to Thy Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.’ The Church prays for the enemies of God in the following way: ‘Mayest Thou take away the loathsome and blasphemous rule of the Hagarenes (one can interchange a more appropriate word here).’

“In regard to the given question, the Sergianist Church completely ignored the traditions of the Church and the practice of the Ecumenical Church which has never prayed for the well-being and prosperity of blasphemous persecutors and tormenters who attempt to crush the Christian Faith. On the contrary, the Church has prayed to enlighten them by the light of the Gospel of Truth, or in the case of incorrigible adversaries and extreme cruelty, She has prayed that God destroy the enemies of Christianity...

“Legalization of the Church of Christ, or Kingdom of God, in the current circumstances is simply absurd and nonsense. To speak about legalization of the Kingdom of God in our circumstances is the same as talking about a round square or dark light, hot ice, etc.

“The ‘legalization’ of the Church of Christ, that is, legalization without parentheses, real legalization right now in these circumstances is unthinkable. If we can even talk about legalization, then it can only be in an ironic sense because otherwise any other legalization without fail will deprive the Church of Christ of ‘the Kingdom of God within you’ – the inner Bride of Christ, and as a result caused great harm to the incorruptible and pure Body of the Church of God.

“... Since the sergianist church has put on the crimson robe of the adulteress, it has thereby become guilty and criminal in everything.”

In May, 1928, Bishop Paul wrote another large epistle entitled: “On the modernization of the Church, or on Soviet Orthodoxy”. He wrote: “Metropolitan Sergius, not personally in the name of himself and his Synod, but in the name of the whole of the Orthodox Catholic Church, has bowed down to the man-god, who speaks pride and blasphemy... Decide for yourself what to call those church leaders who, out of one side of their mouth teach people to sing ‘Hosanna!’ to the Son of God, and out of the other side they teach people to praise the sons of perdition who blaspheme the power of the Cross. They teach people to sing ‘Hosanna!’ to those people who make it their main task not only to annihilate the Christian Faith, but also to obliterate man’s most natural instinct to glorify the Creator. Decide for yourself what we should call that place where, instead of teaching people true Christianity and salvation, people



are taught one of the mysteries of iniquity - modernization, a well-known ploy to 'satanize' the 'little flock'. They teach those who are not able, or with difficulty, to decipher the finer questions of Orthodox Christian piety and who blindly follow Church leaders with authority.

"Concerning the modernized church or Sergianist 'Orthodoxy', I, a sinner, believe that, as regards such church activists, we must call them not only heretics and schismatics, but apostates from God. Metropolitan Sergius brings into the church service a heresy unheard of in the history of the Church, the heresy of modernized departure from God, - of which the natural consequence became confusion and division in the Church. Can one, after this, affirm that the declaration and activity of Metropolitan Sergius concerns only the external life of the Church, and does not touch in any way the essence of the Church's Orthodoxy? In no way can this be said. Metropolitan Sergius, by his self-wise and evil-worshipping declaration and the anti-Church work which followed it, has created a new modernized schism or Sergianist modernism, which while preserving for the 'little ones' a fiction of Orthodoxy and canonicity is even more criminal than the first two modernizations of 1922 and 1925. And so Metropolitan Sergius has put under his feet not only the external, but the very inner essence of the Orthodoxy of the Church, since *his* 'hosanna' to Christ and Antichrist, which is now being performed in Christian churches, touches the very essence of Christian Faith and presents by itself clear apostasy, the falling away from the Faith, and the departure from God.

"Metropolitan Sergius has not just rent asunder the external order of the Church, but has corrupted the internal integrity of Orthodoxy as well. It is clear that this 'Hosanna!' which we currently proclaim in our Christian Churches both to Christ and to the Antichrist penetrates to the very core of the Christian Faith and is an obvious apostasy, that is, a falling away from faith. Thus those who continue to hear this Sergianist pride, and even more so, those who spread it, cannot be instructors and guardians of piety because they unwittingly offer demonic deception and error to those thirsting for truth and salvation along with Christian leaven and salt. Everyone who listens to such a teaching will receive impiety in place of piety, and falsehood instead of truth. Instead of receiving joy and spiritual comfort, they will receive bitterness and ultimately will lose hope in salvation.

"So I implore you, brother, do not comfort yourself with the false ideas that we can ignore the external in order to preserve the internal purity and order of Church life, for Metropolitan Sergius is turning the very essence of Orthodoxy upside down."

With the blessing of Archbishop Demetrius, Bishop Paul headed about forty Josephite parishes in Kharkov, Sumsk and Dnepropetrovsk regions.

In 1928, according to one (dubious) source, Vladyka Paul signed the decisions of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church through Bishop Barsanuphius.

On January 15-16 (or 16-17), 1931 Bishop Paul and many of his sympathizers were arrested. He was charged with being "the leader of the Kharkov branch of the counter-

revolutionary church-monarchist organization, the True Orthodox Church”, and was cast into the prison of Cold Mountain in Kharkov. The process of arresting those who were in opposition to Metropolitan Sergius took place as follow: “The agent of the GPU approached the suspected bishop with the following question: ‘What is your position on the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius (Strogorodsky)?’ If the bishop answered that he did not recognize the declaration then the agent concluded: ‘that means you are a counter-revolutionary’, and the bishop was arrested.”

On January 2, 1932 Bishop Paul was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 to ten years in the camps. Others with him also received long sentences. **Archimandrite Macarius** (Velichko) and **Igumen Eustratius** (Grumkov) were given five years in the Svir camps, where they died. **Protopriest Gregory (Igumen Ioann)** Seletsky was sentenced to ten years, first in the Temnikov and then in the White Sea camps. Igumen Barsanuphius (Yurchenko) was sentenced to five years in the Temnikov and Sarov camps.

St. Paul died in Kharkov prison hospital from sarcoma of the lymph glands on January 5, 1932.

## **36. HOLY HIEROMARTYR BENJAMIN, BISHOP OF RYBINSK (+1932)**

### **and those with him**

Bishop Benjamin, in the world Basil Konstantinovich Voskresensky, was born on January 15, 1871 in the village of Pereslavstevo, Uglich uyezd, Yaroslavl province into the family of a village priest. Two of his brothers were priests. In 1892 he finished his studies at the Yaroslavl theological seminary, and in 1896 graduated from Moscow Theological Academy. He was ordained as a hieromonk in the same year. According to one source, he then went to teach in the Yaroslavl theological seminary. In 1897 he went to teach Russian literature and history in Kutaisi theological seminary. On July 2, 1901 he became a teacher in the Tiflis theological seminary. At the same time he studied the theory of music at the Imperial musical school in Tiflis. On March 10, 1908 he was transferred to the Vyatka theological seminary, and on May 5, 1909 – to the Vologda theological seminary. On April 4, 1911 he became teacher of Holy Scripture in the Yaroslavl theological seminary. From 1916 to 1919 he was a teacher in the Yaroslavl railway school.

On June 4, 1921, at a congress of the clergy of Romanovo (Tutayevo) uyezd, he was elected as first candidate for the see of Romanovo. On October 9, 1921, he was consecrated Bishop of Romanovo (Tutayevo), a vicariate of the Yaroslavl diocese. In the summer of 1922 he was arrested for “keeping stamps and blanks” and for “not carrying out the orders of Soviet power”, and was cast into prison in Yaroslavl. On October 28 he was convicted of “using the religious prejudices of the masses in order to overthrow the Workers and Peasants’ Power”, and in accordance with article 119 was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment. In 1926 he was freed on amnesty.

On June 11 (or 14), 1927 Vladyka Benjamin was arrested in Poshekhonye (or Tutayevo) for “anti-Soviet agitation” or “monarchist agitation” and cast into Yaroslavl special isolator. This “monarchist agitation” consisted in the deacon saying during a hierarchical liturgy: “O Lord, in Thy strength the king shall be glad, and in Thy salvation shall he rejoice exceedingly” (Psalms 20.1). He was accused that “in his entourage and during services he conducted anti-Soviet agitation, and expressed dissatisfaction with measures taken in relation to the Church”. “On June 11 he gave a sermon, whose content came down to a sharp criticism of the Communist party, which was inducing mistrust in the broad masses of the people. In it he also referred to Edison and other scientists who firmly believed in and recognized God...” On September 23, he was sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 to three years’ exile in Kazakhstan in “The Case of Bishop Benjamin (Voskresensky), Priest V.I. Stratilatov and others, Yaroslavl, 1927”. He was exiled to Dzhambait and then Kara-Tobe in Western Kazakhstan.

According to one source, from 1927 to 1930 he was counted as Bishop of Rybinsk.

During his exile (probably at the beginning of 1929) Vladyka Benjamin separated from Metropolitan Sergius. “The ‘Declaration’ has placed the Church in a relationship to the contemporary State that it cannot accept while remaining the Church. Our state

has unfurled before the whole world a banner with the inscription – atheism and the struggle with religion – with Orthodoxy in particular.

On June 3/16, 1929 he wrote to Bishop Paul (Borisovsky) (according to another version, Fr. Flegont): “Metropolitan Sergius has begun an undertaking that is complex and difficult in its spiritual basis. Aiming to legitimize the civil situation of the Church in the contemporary State, the metropolitan has done something without precedent in the history of the Church – an experiment in joining two mutually denying elements – the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of atheism, the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of antichrist. Metropolitan Sergius has always been noted for his well-known suppleness of mind. Here he has taken this suppleness beyond its measure and become its victim.

“The declaration has placed the Church in a position in relation to the contemporary State that she cannot accept while remaining the Church. Our State has openly, in front of the whole world, inscribed on its banner atheism and the struggle with religion, with Orthodoxy in particular. It is a struggle until final victory, until the complete death of religion. The Church can never say to such a government: ‘I am with our government’, and to the atheist people: ‘I am with our people’. The Church can never say: ‘the joys and successes of our civil homeland are our joys and successes, and its failures – our failures.’ Our Christian homeland under the leadership of the God-fighting government is being systematically and swiftly reconstructed. It is already something new, its building in all branches of its life is atheist and antichristian, an atheist homeland is being formed. The joys and successes of its atheist construction cannot be the joys of the Church. The concept of the homeland is complex. It is composed of geographical, national, political, social, everyday and religious elements. Of these only one has so far remained untouched for us – the geographical. And not even that entirely. Atheism is defiling even the land. The atheist homeland is no longer a sacred homeland. For the Christian it has ceased to be the homeland. The Christian cannot call the atheistically constructed homeland his homeland, and still less can he rejoice in its joys and successes. The joys and successes of the atheist homeland strengthen the atheism of the homeland and for that reason cannot be the joys of the Christian.

“Metropolitan Sergius, by standing up for atheism and the God-fighting government, by assuming to himself the joys and successes of the atheistically constructed, God-fighting homeland, has ‘bowed’ the Church of Christ under a foreign yoke with unbelievers. They say: it is possible to distinguish the civil element from the religious. That is either an error or a sophism. Socialism understood in an abstract sense is a purely economic system. For that reason many think that it is possible to construct economic life without touching on religion at all. That is absurd. When the unbeliever constructs life, he will not be able to take only a part of life for his purely economic construction. He will unfailingly strive to take the whole of life for irreligious construction. The unbelieving builders are generous in their promises of complete religious freedom, that is, they are very loquacious, promising to present a certain part of life for any religion so that the whole of the rest of life may be filled with an exclusively irreligious content. But such promises are unacceptable, first,

because of their very nature – their irreligiosity,... and secondly, they will never be fulfilled by the unbelieving builders of life.

“But let us imagine an atheist government that is ideally tolerant towards religion. That does little to change the situation. The Christian, like the believer of any other religion, can never be satisfied and reconciled with atheist government.

“He knows that ‘if the Lord builds not the house, they labour in vain that build it’. Therefore the irreligious tone of life, even if it is most tolerant of religion, is unacceptable as a matter of principle for the Christian and for a person of any other religion.

“Our State is carrying out the first experiment in the world; a similar process, at a lower level, is taking place in other States – there where there is separation of the Church from the State.

“The atheization of mankind is growing. Its limits are unknown. The ideological exodus for the Christian in the atheist State is a departure from the world, but there is nowhere to depart to. It is left to the Christian to sorrow and suffer, to submit to reality. He does not submit ideologically, but preserves his principles as holy objects...”

Vladyka Benjamin was considered to be a great man of prayer, an ascetic elder and a clairvoyant. He had many spiritual children.

On April 1, 1930, Vladyka was arrested in exile in connection with the Yaroslavl branch of the True Orthodox Church. (According to one source, on May 28, he was condemned to deprivation of the right to live in eight provinces, and was confined to one domicile.) On January 10 (or September 10), 1931 he was arrested and sentenced to ten years in the camps. On October 5, 1932 he died in prison near the city of Krasnovodsk in Turkmenistan while he was being interrogated.

Vladyka’s clergy who suffered for the faith included **Protopriest Flegont Nikolayevich Pongilsky, who** was born in 1871 in the village of Karyayevo, Uglich uyezd, Yaroslavl province, in the family of a priest. He finished his studies at the Yaroslavl theological seminary and served in the church of the Mother of God in Yaroslavl. He was the dean of the churches of Rybinsk, and demonstrated great care for the exiled Vladyka Benjamin. In 1928 he sent him 1000 roubles from faithful Christians. In a letter from his son Leonid to Bishop Benjamin dated September 5, 1929 we learn that Fr. Flegont was thinking of spending the winter in Petrograd with the Catacomb Archbishop Demetrius and receiving consecration to the episcopate from him. However, on August 8 (September 7), 1929 he was arrested for being “a participant in the Yaroslavl branch of the counter-revolutionary, monarchist church organization, True Orthodox Church”, and on January 3, 1930 he was sentenced to three (or five) years’ exile in the north in accordance with article 58-10. On August 8, 1933 (or in the autumn of 1934) he was released from exile and returned to Yaroslavl (Ivanovo province). In 1937 he was arrested, sentenced to death and shot.

**Protopriest Nicholas Nikolayevich Pongilsky** was born in 1879 in the village of Karyayevo, Uglich uyezd, Yaroslavl province. He went to a theological seminary, and served as the rector of a church in Rybinsk and, from the end of the 1920s, as dean of the district. On September 7, 1929 he was arrested for being “a participant in the Yaroslavl branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church”, and on January 3 was sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 to five years in the camps and sent to Sibltag. In the autumn of 1934 he was released from camp and settled in the village of Bolshoye Titovskoye, Tutayevo region, serving in the church of the Nativity of Christ in the Artemyevsky village soviet, Tutayevo region. On October 28, 1940 he was arrested for conducting anti-Soviet agitation among the worker-builders on the Yaroslavl-Rybinsk railway, and on January 11, 1941 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. On February 12, 1941 the sentence was upheld. He died on August 6, 1942 in Yaroslavl’s corrective labour colony number 3.

**Priest Leonid Flegontovich Rozov** was the son of Protopriest Flegont. He was born in 1890 in the village of Petropavlovskoye, Danilovsky uyezd, Yaroslavl province. He went to a theological seminary, was ordained to the priesthood in 1901, and was appointed to the church of St. George in Rybinsk. In a letter to Vladyka Benjamin dated November 25, 1928, he wrote: “We are all inspired by a rejection of Sergianism as a world-view, and cannot allow the imposition of this system within the bounds of the Yaroslavl ecclesiastical district.” He was arrested in Rybinsk on September 7, 1929 and cast into the House of Arrest in Ivanovo province for being “a participant in the Yaroslavl branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church”. The investigation found that Fr. Leonid was one of “the representatives of the Church who took a particularly irreconcilable position in relation to Metropolitan Sergius after the publication of his letter in which he calls for the introduction of a prayer for the ruling authorities in the churches. These people conducted illegal assemblies at which they studied the letters of exiled bishops and worked out ways of struggling against Sergianism.” On January 30 (3), 1930 he was convicted by the OGPU of “anti-Soviet agitation” and sentenced to five years in the camps in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11. He was sent to a camp. His was part of the group case, “The Case of the Clergy of Ivanovo Industrial Province, 1930”. Nothing more is known about him.

### **37. HOLY HIEROMARTYR STEPHEN, BISHOP OF IZHEVSK (+1933)**

#### **and those with him**

Bishop Stephen (in the world, Valerian Stepanovich Bekh) was born on September 13, 1872 in Zhitomir (according to another source, in the 1870s in Vologda province, and according to a third – in St. Petersburg) in a noble family. He graduated from the juridical faculty of St. Petersburg Imperial University in 1897. On November 8, 1897 he entered Moscow Theological Academy. A year later, when he was to be transferred to the second course, he was released from the Academy at his own request. On July 1, 1899 he was appointed zemstvo leader of the second district of the Yarensk uyezd, Vologda province. On August 15, 1900 he retired from the service, and on January 16, 1901 he was appointed teacher of the Law of God in church-parish schools. In September, 1903 he was again received into the number of the students of the second course at the Moscow Theological Academy.

"This is how Vladyka Stefan became a monk. The future Vladyka Stefan, then a young student, was walking along the street. He saw a big crowd in one entrance and asked:

"What's going on?"

"We're waiting for our dear Father John of Kronstadt."

"A carriage came up. The crowd rushed up to it and pushed the young future bishop so powerfully that he felt himself moving towards Fr. John, who was just getting out. He looked at him attentively and went into the house. The crowd remained outside the house. The future bishop also remained, although he didn't know why. Suddenly an unknown person came out of the house and asked:

"Is so-and-so here?" giving Vladyka Stefan's name in the world.

"That's me," said the amazed youth.

"Batyushka is calling you."

"His amazement increased. He followed the man who had been sent for him. Fr. John got up to meet him, calling him 'Vladyka'..."

On December 20, 1903 he was tonsured into monasticism. On November 5, 1906 he was ordained to the priesthood. In 1907 he graduated from the Academy with the degree of candidate of theology. On October 11, 1908 he was appointed assistant supervisor of the Solikamsk theological school. From July 28, 1911 he was supervisor of the Mengrelia theological school with the rank of archimandrite. (According to another source, he was ordained to the priesthood and became an archimandrite in about 1919.) From October 8, 1913 he was supervisor of the Bezhet'sk theological school. On October 8, 1914 he retired from service in the theological schools and was appointed protopresbyter in the Army and Navy clergy. From October 28, 1915 he

was supervisor of the Kargopol theological school. From 1918 to 1920 he was an archimandrite of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. In 1919 he was arrested in Petrograd, but soon released.

On September 26 / October 9, 1921 he was consecrated Bishop of Izhevsk, a vicariate of the Sarapul diocese. He is also mentioned by one source as having been temporary administrator of the Kirov diocese. On November 9, 1922 he was arrested in Izhevsk and cast into Butyrki prison in Moscow. On December 27 he was sentenced to two (or three) years' exile in Narymsk region for "counter-revolutionary activity". At the beginning of 1924 (according to another source, on March 21, 1923) he was again arrested and put in the Taganka prison in Moscow. From there he appealed to E.A. Peshkova of the Political Red Cross to give him a sheepskin coat since "the frosts in Narymsk are savage". On March 26 he wrote again to Peshkova thanking her and congratulating her on the feast of Holy Pascha. He was sentenced to two years in the camps and sent to Solovki.

In August, 1926 he was released, but encountered problems in Izhevsk, where Bishop Alexis (Kuznetsov) of Sarapul objected to Metropolitan Sergius' decision to re-open the Izhevsk diocese and succeeded in making Metropolitan Sergius reverse his decision. Although a part of the clergy and laity in Izhevsk did not want to submit to Bishop Alexis, suspecting him because of his temporary fall into renovationism, Bishop Stefan found it difficult to serve in the circumstances and in the autumn of 1926 went into retirement in Petrograd. There he served in the church of St. Alexis the Man of God and, from September 21, 1927, in the church of the Transfiguration.

**Protopriest Fr. Basil Bondyrev**, who had been with Vladyka Stephen during his first exile and was later shot, told the following story: "A huge bear lumbered up to us while we were preparing timber. He filled all of us with terror. At that time Vladykya Stephen and I and the other exiles were going to cut timber. Once we were working when we suddenly heard someone crashing through the grove. A bear! We all ran off in different directions. I, too, hid. Then I looked out and saw Vladyka Stephen standing where he was and the bear stretched out at his feet. Vladyka was feeding him with some bread and stroking him. And from that time the bear became completely tame; he would come up and lie down beside Vladyka, who would feed him."

Bishop Stephen enjoyed great authority among the believing people. He was considered to be a clairvoyant elder. He had the courage to tell people exactly what he thought of them.

He was in opposition to both the renovationists and the sergianists, and was the spiritual father of the first bishop who came out openly against Metropolitan Sergius' declaration - **Hieromartyr Victor of Glazov**. At the beginning of 1928 he was banned from serving by Sergius. According to one (dubious) source, he participated in the "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church in 1928 through Monk Obadiah.

He served in various churches in Petrograd. Natalia Georgievna Kiter tells the following story about him:-



"Mama and I arrived in Petersburg in 1930, after a ten-year absence. Mama was a pensioner (she had been a teacher for many years), and received a pension, I don't remember exactly, of either 12 or 18 roubles a month. She went out one dark and frosty morning and returned only late in the evening, half-dead from tiredness. She hadn't eaten a thing all day.

"The doctor discovered that I have cancer and has ordered me to have an operation immediately,' she said, dropping exhausted onto the bed.

"My heart trembled, but I tried to say with complete calm:

"We shall go tomorrow. If one catches it early, it's not dangerous.'

"I spoke confidently in this vein. Mama was calm. I managed to get her into the hospital without any particular difficulty. In the evening I was visited by my neighbour, a very believing and intelligent old woman, Vera Alexandrovna Arbuzova, who lived with her daughter, Musya, a nurse.

"At this time I had no idea of true spiritual life, and only recently, 'to spite the Bolsheviks', I had begun to go to church. My soul had been searching for something for a long time, life seemed pointless. At the age of 18 I had suddenly been attacked by a terrible thought which deprived me of the strength to live. What was the point of working, of studying, of seeking, of hoping for anything, if everything ended in death? At this point my path crossed with that of the theosophists, and their teaching seemed to me, who did not know the truth, to be a revelation. I must add that from the age of 9 I had grown up without the beneficial influence of my deeply and sincerely believing parents. When the persecutions against the Church began, I, out of a confused feeling of protest, began to go to church. There I found rest to my soul, although I had no idea about the true life of the spirit. But the church was the only place where I felt in Russia, where the present disappeared without a trace.

"And now Vera Alexandrovna tried to direct me along the right path. But I didn't give in to her, relying self-confidently on my experience alone.

"You know, Nata,' she turned to me. 'I want to suggest that you ask Vladyka Stephen. Remember, I told you about him, that he could pray for your mama. Let's go to Pesochnaya tomorrow, to the church where he is.'

"I put no particular hope on the prayers of an unknown bishop, but you clutch onto anything when grief comes.

"The next morning the three of us set off for the Liturgy. During the service I noticed, not far away, among the worshippers, an old, thin monk in a tattered old ryasa. His pale face looked ascetic, and there were straggly strands of grey hair sticking out from under his old skufya. Something drew me to look in his direction.

"After the service Vera Alexandrovna said to me, pointing at the elder:

"That's Vladyka.'

"The people began to crowd up to him, asking for his blessing. A long queue was formed. We got up. Never before had I kissed the hands of a priest, and I immediately noticed that most people not only kissed Vladyka's hand, but also bowed to the ground before him. I was upset. All this seemed strange and barbarian to me. I was perplexed. How could this be?

"But while I was hesitating, I suddenly saw myself already standing in front of Vladyka. I raised my eyes to him and met his glance. What happened to me then! His glance penetrated into the very depths of my soul and immediately enlightened it, like a flash of lightning. I immediately saw its blackness and all his holiness. Suddenly I felt holiness. This was a new and unusual feeling for me, and I was struck, as if hit by something. Weeping, I fell at his feet and couldn't regain my calm. And to his sympathetic question I could only mutter:

"Vladyka, pray for mama.'

"And what is her illness?'

"I told him. He knitted his brow and shook his head.

"Alright, but you also pray.'

"I can't, Vladyka.'

"Pray as you are able. We shall pray together.'

"I returned home somewhat calmer. The operation was appointed for the morning, just at the time of the Liturgy. I rushed straight from the church to the hospital. Would she be alive? In fear and anxiety I went into the ward. From a cot in the distance mama nodded to me, smiling. She was weak, but in full consciousness and kind as always. Musya Abramova told me that the doctor had warned her, since she was a nurse, that he feared that the sick woman would die under the knife... The last words that mama heard were the word of the professor:

"We must be quick here.'

"But the operation not only went well, there was not even any of the festering from which so many sick people die, and her temperature did not even go up. Mama was released from hospital two weeks later. The stitches healed as if after a shallow cut in a young and healthy person.

"I don't understand a thing,' said the professor, spreading his hands. It couldn't end like that. The sick said that they were struck how calmly and happily mama went to the serious operation, as if she were going on a walk.

"Mama's first outing was to the church on Pesochnaya. After the service Vladyka had a long, tender conversation with us. He joked, and tried to encourage us. We both wept. We quietly left the church. Vladyka caught up with us; he greeted us, smiling radiantly. His tall figure could be seen for a long time at the end of the alley.

"We didn't see him again. Shortly after this they arrested and exiled him. The accusation was: 'Opium for the people'. And - evidently through the prayers of Vladyka Stephen - mama was given two more years so as to receive a crown to her life so full of harsh suffering - an angelic, monastic crown [with the name Eugenia]....

"Vera Alexandrovna told me how Margarita had seen mama in a dream on the very day of her death lying in the grave. Beside her stood an unknown elder-monk who was praying fervently. Vera Alexandrovna had had the thought of showing her the photograph of Vladyka Stephen.

"'That's him! That's him!' shouted Margarita, although she had never once seen Vladyka Stephen in the flesh.

"They say that during the fast Vladyka ate nothing except one prosphora a day with holy water.

"'Receive Communion while there is the Chalice,' were his constant words.

"Vera Alexandrovna told the following stories from her life:

"1. Once we were standing in the church. Vladyka Stephen was at the other end blessing the people. I also went up. But Musya said:

"'Wait, let him finish blessing all the women first.'

"Finally we went up. Vladyka smiled and said to us:

'I've finished blessing all the women, now I can bless you, too.'

"Vladyka could not possibly have heard the words that were said in a whisper at the other end of the church. Musya was ready to fall through the earth out of shame! What clairvoyance from the Lord!

"2. There was a lady staying with us, not a church person. Once she said:

"'You keep saying about your bishop that whatever he prays for he receives. I shall go to him. Let him pray that so-and-so gives up his wife and marries me.'

"Well, you know, I wouldn't advise you to go with such requests to Vladyka.'

"She went. She went ahead of us to receive his blessing. She had hardly opened her mouth when the tenderly smiling face of Vladyka suddenly darkened, he frowned

and, without saying a word, turned away from her, and turned to the next person. The lady was very upset both with us and with Vladyka."

Vladyka Stefan was arrested in Petrograd in 1929, and was sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 to three years' exile in the village of Pomozdino, Ust-Kulomsky region, Komi ASSR. On September 7, 1932 he was arrested in the village of Bad-Yel, Ust-Kulomsky region, and was cast into prison in Syktyvkar. On April 21, 1933 he was sentenced to be shot in accordance with articles 58-10 part 2 and 58-11 for creating a counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, 'The Union of Peasants', and leading this organization". This was part of the group case, "The Case of the Church Counter-Revolutionary Organization, 'The Union of Peasants', Komi, 1933". The sentence was changed to ten years in prison. However, before the sentence could be passed, Bishop Stephen died in prison on March 26 (or, according to another source, April 13/26), 1933.

Natalya Kieter continued her reminiscences: "A year passed. I had a dream. A door opened quickly and Vladyka Stephen entered in a fur coat. I had never seen him dressed like that, and he said:

"I remember, Natalya, I remember."

"That was all. I woke up. Immediately the news came of his death in exile..."

### **38. HOLY HIEROCONFESSOR VICTOR, BISHOP OF IZHEVSK AND VOTSK (+1934)**

**and those with him**

Bishop Victor, in the world Constantine Alexandrovich Ostrovidov, was born on May 20, 1875 in the village of Zolotoye, Kamyshinsky uyezd, Saratov province, into a peasant family. His father, Alexander, was a church reader. His mother was called Anna Ivanovna (born 1853). In 1893 he finished his studies at the Kamyshinsky theological school, and in 1899 - at the Saratov theological seminary. In 1903 he graduated from the Kazan Theological Academy. On June 28, 1903 he was tonsured by Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), the rector of the academy, and in the following days was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood.

In August, 1903 Fr. Victor was sent to serve in his native Saratov diocese, and in September was appointed by Bishop Germogen as superior of the Holy Trinity podvorye of the Saratov Spaso-Preobrazhensky monastery in Khvalynsk. This podvorye was founded in order to struggle with the Old Ritualists in Khvalynsk uyezd, and Fr. Victor was soon displaying exceptional talents as a missionary. However, he was transferred - to the great sorrow of the people - from the podvorye to Saratov, where in March, 1904 he was appointed diocesan missionary for the non-Russians - that is, the Chuvash. Before that, in February, Fr. Victor also delivered three lectures on the works of Maxim Gorky.

On January 25, 1905 Fr. Victor was appointed senior hieromonk of the Jerusalem Spiritual Mission. However, Fr. Victor was not happy in this post, and asked Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) whether he could be transferred back to Khvalinsk; but his requests were refused. He explained his reasons at the Fourth Missionary Congress in Kiev in July, 1908, at which Archbishop Anthony, the organizer of the Congress, had asked him to speak. The Mission, thought Fr. Victor, was in an ambiguous situation canonically and had no clear functions. He was also unhappy at the degree of cooperation with the other Orthodox Churches in the region.

On January 13, 1909 Fr. Victor was appointed supervisor of the Archangelsk theological school, and on March 4 he was appointed to work in the commission for the affairs of the Old Ritualist schism by Bishop Micah (Alexeyev) of Arkhangelsk. However, neither appointment appears to have satisfied him, and in September he petitioned Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky) of St. Petersburg to be numbered among the brothers of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. His petition was satisfied on October 15, 1909.

Fr. Victor arrived in St. Petersburg in November, but a year later, on November 22, 1910, he was appointed superior of the Zelenets Holy Trinity monastery (Saint Petersburg diocese) in the rank of archimandrite.

After eight years' peaceful activity in this monastery, in September, 1918 he was appointed deputy of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra by Metropolitan Benjamin. In

1919, according to one source, he was arrested, but then released.

On December 26 (15), 1919 Fr. Victor was consecrated first bishop of the newly created see of Urzhuma, a vicariate of the Vyatka diocese, in Petrograd. He arrived in January, 1920, but in May was arrested and imprisoned by the Vyatka revolutionary tribunal for anti-Soviet agitation – or, as Vladyka put it later, for “agitation against medicine”! What had happened in fact was that during an epidemic of typhus Vladyka had called on the people to repent and advised them to sprinkle their homes with holy water. He was sentenced to imprisonment until the end of the war in Poland.

After five months, in November, he was released. Apparently the authorities did not allow him to return to Urzhuma, and he remained in Vyatka. Eventually he was appointed Bishop of Sloboda, a vicariate of the Vyatka diocese. On January 9, 1921 Vladyka was appointed temporary administrator of the Vyatka diocese (the ruling hierarch, Bishop Nicander (Fenomenov) was at this time in exile), while the former temporary administrator, Bishop Eusebius (Rozhdestvensky) was released from the post at his own request. However, Bishop Eusebius continued to live in Vyatka and tried to persuade the people to petition for his appointment as diocesan hierarch. Many in Vyatka were unhappy with this, and it reached the point where the parishioners of the cathedral of the Forerunner expelled Bishop Eusebius from the church, forbidding him to serve there.

This made for difficult relations between Bishops Victor and Eusebius. According to one source, Bishop Victor was appointed temporary administrator of the Tomsk diocese in April, 1921. But the disturbances ended when Bishop Paul (Borisovsky) was appointed ruling Bishop of Vyatka on May 13, 1921.

On September 14, 1921 he was appointed Bishop of Glazov, a vicariate of the Vyatka diocese. He lived in the Vyatka St. Tryphon monastery with the rights of superior. “In Vyatka Vladyka was surrounded by the people, who saw in the firm and never despondent archpastor a support for themselves in the disorders and troubles of life. After each service the people surrounded him and accompanied him to his cell in the St. Tryphon monastery. On he way he did not hurry, but answered all the many questions put to him, always and in all circumstances retaining the spirit of goodwill and love.” In return, Vladyka greatly valued his Vyatka flock. “You won’t find people like the Vyatkians anywhere,” he said. “There are no such people as the Vyatkians anywhere in Russia!”

In March, 1922 the Bolsheviks started their campaign for the requisitioning of church valuables. It went smoothly in Vyatka – it turned out that the people did not know about the Patriarch’s epistle on the subject, because it had been concealed by the president of the Diocesan Council, Protopriest A.A. Popov. And when there was a meeting of the clergy in Vyatka on March 3 under the presidency of Bishop Paul, all its participants unanimously voted to support the government campaign. It began on March 7 without excesses or any active opposition.

However, in April, 1922 Bishop Paul was arrested for “not handing over enough

from the list of church valuables". At that point Protopriest Popov showed Bishop Victor "in secret" the epistle of the Patriarch, explaining that he had concealed the epistle because "it was late and was similar in character to his previous epistles with their sorrowful consequences for the clergy". On April 25 Bishop Victor wrote to Patriarch Tikhon asking forgiveness for himself and the other clergy and laity for their sin of ignorance. He said in the city of Vyatka the clergy had been prepared to give away everything, even the holy chrism, considering them to be "trifles". The only exception, he said, had been Fr. Basil Perebaskin, and he asked that only Fr. Basil should be awarded with promotion so as to warn the others not to act so lightmindedly in matters of the faith and the Church.

In May the administration of the Church was unlawfully seized by the "Living Church" renovationists. Bishop Victor condemned them in an epistle, comparing them to Kore, Dathan and Abiran, who rose up against Moses and Aaron. Addressing his flock, Bishop Victor urged them not to follow the renovationists, who, far from being a "living church", were in fact "a stinking corpse", being false bishops and false priests. At the same time, he urged them to display civic loyalty to the government.

Bishop Victor categorically refused any cooperation with the renovationists, even refusing to allow their representative to cross his threshold.

On August 25, 1922 Bishop Paul, having been released from exile, ordered that all the Vyatka uyezd sees should be raised to the rank of independent sees while remaining in canonical communion with the Vyatka Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Thus Bishop Victor was made Bishop of Orlov, a vicariate of the Vyatka diocese, while continuing to live in Vyatka, with the rights of an independent bishop for the administration of the affairs of the Orlov uyezd. He was also entrusted with the legal and marital affairs of the Vyatka uyezd. Until the see of Glazov was filled, he also administered its affairs. Bishop Paul remained in charge of Church affairs in the cities of Vyatka, Sloboda, Kotelnich and Nolinsk with their uyezds. And the Urzhuma diocese was in the administration of Bishop Sergius of Yaransk. Bishop Paul's epistle was probably written by Bishop Victor.

On the next day, August 26 Bishops Paul and Victor were arrested together with Protopriests A. Popov, V. Perebaskin, N. Tikhvinsky and Tikhonitsky. On August 28 the arrested were interrogated, as a result of which Protopriests Tikhvinsky and Tikhonitsky were released. On September 5 Protopriest Popov was also released. On the same day the two bishops were accused of violating the resolution of August 24, 1918 on the carrying out of the decree "On the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church", which was expressed by their "interfering in secular matters, assuming to themselves judicial functions, re-resolving marital-divorce cases, carrying out investigations into these matters, and having a special apparatus for this". Besides, they were accused of "links with underground monarchist groupings" and for "distributing the illegal appeals of Patriarch Tikhon, Metropolitan Agathangelus and the Brotherhood of the Zealots of Orthodoxy". Then they were cast into the Butyrki prison in Moscow together with Alexander Bonifatyevich Yechugin, the secretary of the Vyatka governing

council of people's judges. On February 23, 1923 they were sentenced by the OGPU to three years in exile in the Narymsk region in Siberia. This was "The Case of Bishops Paul (Borisovsky) and Victor (Ostrovidov), Vyatka, 1923".

Vladyka was exiled to a very small and remote village. He was accompanied by **Nun Maria** (Tomilova). Together they carried out the Divine Liturgy, refusing to go to the local church whose priest, as Vladyka wrote, "has gone over to the side of the heretical antichurchmen (the livingchurchmen), but communion in prayer with heretics is destruction for the soul". In a letter written from exile in 1923 to his "Vyatka friends and beloved in the Lord", Bishop Victor called the livingchurchmen "the most dangerous heretics that the Orthodox Christian world has ever known", "new blasphemers, savage wolves, who have stolen for themselves the name of an Orthodox Church".

In Vyatka, meanwhile Bishop Sergius of Yaransk and a large part of the clergy joined the renovationists. However, in August, 1923 there began a return of parishes to the Patriarchal Church. A large part in this was played by the clergy of the Resurrection cathedral, especially Fr. Gregory Popyvanov, who spoke against renovationism and summoned a parish meeting that expelled the renovationist priests Tikhvinsky and Favorsky.

On February 23, 1926 Vladyka Victor's exile came to an end and on March 29 he returned to Vyatka. The next day he and Archbishop Paul, who had also just returned from exile, were forced to sign that "until the organization of a Vyatka diocesan administration and its registration in the Vyatka Gubispolkom, he would not rule the diocese - in particular, not appoint, move or remove priests, and not sent appeals round the dioceses in the name of the administration of the diocese".

In spite of this, Archbishop Paul and Bishop Victor carried on a fierce struggle against the renovationists, insisting on their public repentance on returning to the True Church. On May 14 Archbishop Paul was arrested in Vyatka, and Bishop Victor - on the train to Petrograd as it was passing through Vologda. On May 16 the two bishops were accused of "(1) non-submission to the decrees of the organs of Soviet power, (2) propaganda and agitation among the believing population of the province against the state structure existing in the USSR, and (3) grouping around themselves elements hostile to Soviet power and introducing church-reactionary activity into the province in forms that violate social peace and order in the province". Bishop Victor was accused of assisting Archbishop Paul in his undertakings and of giving sermons which, in the opinion of the authorities, were counter-revolutionary in content.

On May 20 both hierarchs were cast into the Butyrki prison in Moscow. On August 20 Bishop Victor was convicted of "resisting the renovationists" and "creating an illegal diocesan chancellery". In accordance with article 69 he was forbidden from living in six major cities in the USSR and also in Vyatka.

On August 24 Bishop Victor was released. Not being allowed to go to Vyatka, he travelled instead to Glazov, which sent 1920 was not part of Vyatka province



but of the Votkinsk autonomous district. This was appropriate, for he had borne the title of Bishop of Glazov since 1921. On the way to Glazov Vladyka visited Metropolitan Sergius in Nizhni Novgorod, and was appointed by him temporary administrator of the Vyatka diocese. On August 31 Bishop Vyatka left Moscow for Glazov. Very soon, on September 3/16, another decree came to him from Metropolitan Sergius ordering him to turn the Izhevsk vicariate of the Sarapul diocese into an independent diocese and decreeing that "from now until the appointment of a hierarch for the vacant Izhevsk diocese his Grace Bishop Victor of Glazov should be entrusted with the re-opened diocese".

Metropolitan Sergius had been coming to the decision to make Izhevsk into an independent diocese already at the beginning of the year. However, at that time Bishop Alexis (Kuznetsov) of Sarapul had objected to Metropolitan Sergius' decision to re-open the Izhevsk diocese and succeeded in making him reverse his decision. So when Bishop Stefan (Bekh) of Glazov returned from exile in Solovki to take back the administration of the diocese, he encountered opposition from Bishop Alexis. Although a part of the clergy and laity in Izhevsk did not want to submit to Bishop Alexis, suspecting him because of his temporary fall into renovationism, Bishop Stefan found it difficult to serve in the circumstances and early in the autumn of 1926 went into retirement in Petrograd.

At first Bishop Victor could not obtain permission to leave Glazov to take Bishop Stefan's place in Izhevsk. But, on receiving a telegram from the president of the parish council of the cathedral Shishkin that all formalities had been settled, he arrived in Izhevsk on October 10. However, it turned out that Shishkin had not completed the formalities correctly, and so Bishop Victor, much to his annoyance, was forced to leave the city on October 13. When Metropolitan Sergius tried to find out what had happened, he was told by Protopriest N. Tonkov of the Mikhailov church in Izhevsk that Bishop Victor had shown no desire to take over the diocese. Misled by this false information, Sergius then suggested to Bishop Simeon (Mikhailov), who had been petitioning for the post, that he take over the Izhevsk diocese. However, the parishioners of the Alexander Nevsky church in Izhevsk did not accept Bishop Simeon, who immediately left. Finally, with Metropolitan Sergius' blessing, Bishop Victor took over the administration of the Izhevsk diocese.

On January 20, 1927 Bishop Victor accepted the village of Starie Zyatsy from the Sarapul into the Izhevsk diocese. This annoyed Bishop Alexis of Sarapul, who then accused Bishop Victor of violating the canons and also of unlawfully occupying the Izhevsk diocese, which should belong to Bishop Simeon. Bishop Victor replied that the purpose of the creation of the Izhevsk was to make its boundaries coincide with the Votksk autonomous diocese, which would aid the conversion of the Votksk (Udmurt) people. Moreover, he said that Metropolitan Sergius had permitted him to administer the diocese in November, and that it was also with Sergius' permission that the Starie Zyatsy and other parishes in the Votksk autonomous region were allowed to join the Izhevsk diocese. The quarrel could not be resolved by Metropolitan Sergius since he had been in prison since December. Bishop Victor advised the dean of Izhevsk to write a protest to Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich,

who was now the deputy of the Patriarchal Locum Tenens. However, Archbishop Seraphim was not able to help because he was forbidden to occupy himself with administration of the Church.

On March 25 Bishop Victor, as temporary administrator of the Vyatka diocese and Bishop of Glazov, blessed the decree of the Glazov administration that the Glazov vicariate should be separated from the Vyatka diocese and enter the new Votsk diocese, since there were many Votsk people living in Glazov. He sent a report about this to Metropolitan Sergius, and on May 3 Sergius, having recently come out of prison, confirmed the formation within the boundaries of the Votsk autonomous region of an independent Votsk diocese with its see in the city of Izhevsk and with the retention of a semi-independent see in Glazov. Parishes not in the Izhevsk and Glazov dioceses but on the territory of the Votsk autonomous region could petition to join the newly formed Votsk diocese. On May 4 Bishop Victor was appointed Bishop of Izhevsk and Votsk by Metropolitan Sergius. In this way, it seemed, the quarrel with Bishop Alexis was resolved.

However, it was not to be. On May 10 Bishop Victor received three parishes from the Votkinsk diocese, about which he informed Bishop Onesimus (Pylaev) of Votkinsk. Bishop Onesimus objected and placed the clergy of the parishes under ban. On May 24 Bishop Victor wrote to Bishop Onesimus explaining that he was not acting wilfully but with the blessing of the Higher Church Authority, which he was obliged to submit to. Bishop Onesimus then protested to Archbishop Alexis of Sarapul, who was also experiencing problems with the parish of Novie Zyatsy, which on May 14 had joined the Votsk diocese, and with the deanery of Seltinsk, which had petitioned for such a transfer. Both bishops appealed to Metropolitan Sergius.

In about July, 1927 Bishop Victor was appointed Archbishop of Omsk and Pavlodar, but was not allowed to leave for the Urals. On August 31, at a session of his temporary synod that reviewed the administrative chaos in the Vyatka and Votkinsk dioceses, Metropolitan Sergius decreed that Archbishop Victor had acted hastily, and that petitions for parishes to join the Izhevsk diocese could not be decided by one bishop only. Archbishop Victor should have consulted more with the bishops of the neighbouring dioceses, and the final decision rested with the Higher Church Authority. So until a final decision of the question of the three parishes of the Votkinsk diocese and the Seltinsk deanery, they were to remain in their former administration.

These administrative difficulties were not entirely the fault of any one or more bishops, and were complicated by the fact that the authorities continued to forbid the bishops from carrying out any administrative activity until the registration of the Churches. It is understandable, therefore, that Bishop Victor should have expressed the hope, in a letter to Bishop Alexis dated May 30, that the registration of a temporary synod under Metropolitan Sergius would bring the beginnings of church peace. "The possibility is opened also of our diocesan registration. Then the [renovationist] heretics will have no way of enticing and deceiving the weak in spirit..."

However, in July, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius issued a "declaration", which dashed these hopes by placing the Russian Church in more or less unconditional submission to the militant atheists, Bishop Victor refused to allow it to be distributed among his flock. In "Thoughts of an Orthodox Christian with regard to the Epistle of Metropolitan Sergius of July 16/29, 1927", he wrote: "The aim of the epistle is clear. In the first place, it is to declare and establish the political attitudes and relationship of the Orthodox Church to the Soviet government, with the clear recognition that this relationship was mistaken and false in the past, and with a direct attack on the servants of the Orthodox Church for their striving towards monarchism and for their participation in word and deed in counter-revolution. Special emphasis is made on the political speeches of the clergy abroad against Soviet power. Secondly, it is to declare not only his own loyalty and non-participation from now on in any speeches against Soviet power, but also his inner union with it against its foreign and internal enemies, as being his own enemies, that is, the enemies of the Orthodox Church."

To the question: what should be our attitude to this epistle, Bishop Victor replied: "What is written in the epistle does not correspond to the truth and reality: the True Orthodox Church always had to be apolitical and spiritual, and for that reason it was not and cannot be in any active external struggle with Soviet power. But clergy can be subject to punishments either as private citizens for their political crimes outside their relationship to the Church, or as confessors of the Orthodox Church. As regards the union of the Church and Soviet power on the basis of spiritual interests and needs, sympathies and shared joys, etc., there never can be anything of the sort, since the views on life of the Church and Soviet power are diametrically opposed to each other. The aims of the activity of Soviet power are exclusively material-economic and are foreign to faith in God, while the aims of the activity of the Church are exclusively spiritual-moral, and through faith in God they raise man beyond the bounds of earthly life to attain the eternal heavenly good things. Therefore in defining the mutual relations of the True Church and every state, we can talk only about a relationship in the plane of civil duty and obligation, and this not out of fear but for conscience's sake.

"... The epistle, by covering itself with the words of Holy Scripture and reasonings from the sphere of the spiritual interests of man, masks the drawing of the Church into the sphere of earthly tasks, thereby diminishing the Holy Orthodox Church, humiliating it and inexorably pushing it onto the path of new earthquakes and divisions. Therefore it demands not only careful attention, but outright rejection."

In the autumn of 1927 it appears that Metropolitan Sergius sent Bishop Victor a decree abolishing the Votkinsk diocese. In October Bishop Victor wrote to Metropolitan Sergius asking him to confirm the existence of the newly-created Votkinsk diocese and not allow the Votkinsk flock to be divided administratively "into five parts". He wrote: "I am writing this out of sorrow for the Holy Orthodox Church.

“Dear Vladyko! You know, it is not so long ago that you were our brilliant helmsman, and for all of us our most longed-for first pastor, and the mere mention of your most holy name poured strength and joy into our hearts. And suddenly – such a sad change for us. Our minds are wavering, our hearts have lost their support, and we feel that we are again without a leader and defender from those who attack us, and this is from the time that your counsellors surrounded you. Our souls are exhausted, we are horrified at the sight of what is now happening around us in the Church, it’s oppressing us like a nightmare, and everyone is overwhelmed by a terrible fear for the future of the Church. There distant Tashkent has for some time been thinking of separating, here Petrograd is seething and grumbling. There Votlandia is groaning and crying out to heaven, and Izhevsk is again rebelling, while Vyatka, Perm and many other cities have collapsed in sorrow and perplexity. And over and above all these Moscow is just now preparing to utter its deciding voice. After all, everywhere the Church is just being destroyed, and this is ‘by administrative means’. What is this? Why? Has the Holy Church suffered only a little from ‘outsiders’? What can be the use of these destructive measures which are ruining our peace? Take our Votkinsk diocese which has hardly seen the light. How glad the people were, and how great were the possibilities of the development of church life in her. Then suddenly, to please ‘an evil genius’, for the sake of his avaricious and malicious aims and intrigues (I have in mind a bishop), and also for the sake of the personal desires of Ar., this diocese which had scarcely begun to live through you is being destroyed. Would it not be more just before God and men to confirm its existence by your decree alone within the territorial bounds of the Votkinsk region, for which Heaven and earth would bless you. After all, the Truth itself speaks in favour of this: a people united in the civil sense should necessarily be united in the ecclesiastical sense, and should not be given to dividing up into five parts out of mercantile considerations.

“Vladyko, spare the Russian Orthodox Church. She is entrusted to you, and much depends on you to see that she is not given over to destruction ‘by administrative means’. May your all-honourable head not be subjected to reproof, and may it not be a cause of schisms and fallings away from the Church. But if this is not done and observed, then God and His Angels are witness that a great schism will take place in the Church, from which even the suggested Council will not save her, the Council which already now beforehand is being called by a name which should not be pronounced...”

It is not known how Metropolitan Sergius replied to this letter. But, according to Metropolitan Ioann Snychev, the Synod now warned “Bishop Victor” (although they had made him an archbishop in the summer) that he, as a vicar-bishop, should know his place and submit in all things to his ruling hierarch. Then, a little later, there follow a decree transferring him to the Sverdlovsk diocese as Bishop of Shadrinsk.

Bishop Victor refused to submit to this decree. He was immediately supported by four churches in Vyatka: the Resurrection cathedral (**Fr. Gregory Popyvanov** and **Fr. Michael Glushkov**), the St. Seraphim church (**Fr. Alexander Shirokikh**), the church in Fileiki (**Fr. Leonid Yuferev**) and the Alexander Nevsky cathedral (**Fr.**

**Nicholas Zhilin**). He was also supported by **Abbess Emilia** and forty nuns from Fileiki and **Abbess Febronia** and her nuns, who had moved to Vyatka from the Pokrov monastery.

On December 16/29, Bishop Victor wrote to an unknown person in Moscow: "I sent back the 'appeal' to Moscow, and for that reason it is completely unknown to the majority in our Votkinsk diocese. In Vyatka four churches, including the two main cathedrals, also did not accept it at first, although they did not break communion with Archbishop Paul, but commemorated him during services. The believing people began to group around these churches and distance themselves from those who had accepted (signed) the 'appeal' and ceased to commemorate my name. Soon a fifth church was joined to the four. Imagine the commotion among those deceived in Vyatka! Following the example of their kinsmen, the renovationists, they rushed to the civil authorities for help – but they did not help. Then they resorted to insinuations and accusations of counter-revolution – but nothing came of that. Glory to God! One recourse remained: they went to you in Moscow and tried to save the position of Archbishop Paul. This pastor was in a great fury. The souls of the Orthodox trembled at his arrival, expecting all kinds of repressions, and they telegraphed me asking for my advice and help. I was no less alarmed for them and did not know what to do. At two o'clock at night my heart unexpectedly rejoiced, one thought and one decision calmed me. I got up and wrote this telegram to one of the Orthodox priests: 'In view of the arrival of Archbishop Paul in Vyatka, it is necessary to suggest to him that he offer repentance and renounce the appeal as being a defilement of the Church of God and a deviation from true salvation. Only if he fulfils this condition is it possible to enter into communion of prayer with him. If he is stubborn, stop commemorating his name during Divine services.' That is what the pastors did. And how pitiful were his justifications, and how meagre his reasoning on this subject."

On January 11, 1928 Bishop Victor gave some more details about these "pitiful justifications": "I wrote to you that Archbishop Paul came to 'punish', but he was met with the suggestion that he repent and renounce 'the appeal of July 16'. He refused, and his justification was very pitiful – in that case, he said, I can expect prison and all kinds of privations. One of the priests guaranteed him complete security, but he did not agree. From the questions put to him it became clear that they are acting without the blessing of Metropolitan Peter and are conscious that if he were to arrive, he would remove them, 'and we will go', he said. But he didn't bat an eyelid at the fact that in that time they would impose so much evil and destroy thousands of souls. He admitted that they had done this at the insistence of the civil authorities, and to the question what had they achieved, he replied that now he felt himself to be a hierarch. O what blindness! He does not feel that he has been erased from the book of life..."

On December 14 Archbishop Paul wrote to the clergy and believers of Vyatka diocese: "In order to avoid misunderstandings, to calm minds, to give a warning and put an end to the vain rebellion and disturbances among the Orthodox (patriarchal) parishes of the Vyatka diocese entrusted to me, I consider it my service duty briefly to acquaint you with the content and direction of the activity

of the Temporary Patriarchal Synod headed by the Deputy of the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, his Eminence Sergius, Metropolitan of Nizhegorod." Being not only a member of Metropolitan Sergius' synod, but also one of the active defenders of his politics, Archbishop Paul hastened to calm his flock and "rejoice in a certain success achieved in the past six months for the good of the Church of Christ": "The appeal of July 16/29 of this year, in which Metropolitan Sergius and the members of the Synod definitively declared their complete loyalty and sincere submission to the Soviet Government, has created for Metropolitan Sergius and the Sacred Patriarchal Synod a condition of completely peaceful work for the good of the Church that is hindered by nothing and nobody under the protection of Soviet legislation which envisages the self-definition of cult associations in their religious life in their inner church discipline."

Archbishop Paul went through some of the Synod's administrative decisions, including the transfer of bishops from one see to another, and called them also "success for the good of the Church".

And all this at a time when the persecutions against the Church were increasing steadily...

"Truly," writes Fr. Alexander Mazyrin, "the July Declaration provided the opportunity for 'a peaceful and undisturbed life' not so much for the Russian Church as a whole, so much as for the Synod of Metropolitan Sergius (and that not for long: as is well-known, even his Eminence Paul himself, together with the majority of the other members of the Synod, were shot in 1937.) However, besides Archbishop Paul, none of the members of the Synod publicly spoke out with such a sincere acknowledgement of what had finally been achieved thanks to the declaration that introduced so many disturbances into church life.

"Archbishop Paul's admission elicited the most shocked reactions. Thus, for example, **Bishop Paul** (Kratirov), while citing this place in the Vyatka archbishop's epistle, wrote: 'It is difficult for me to resolve the question who uttered this: a scoundrel, a church rascal, or a fool... I would never have believed that this phrase could belong to an Orthodox, as he calls himself, archbishop, a member of the sergianist synod, if I had not read this disgusting, idiotic epistle with my own eyes.'"

In any case, the epistle did not succeed. As Bishop Victor noted, Archbishop Paul's attacks on the True Orthodox and on himself, "and his unsuccessful attempts to prove that he is not a renovationist, have finally torn his flock away from him, and the movement against the 'appeal' has encompassed the whole diocese".

In the same month of December Bishop Victor wrote a "Letter to those close to me": "Let everyone know that the recent declaration-appeal of Metropolitan Sergius of July 16/29 is a clear betrayal of the truth. 'Whom have those who signed the "appeal" betrayed, and whom have they renounced?' They have renounced the Holy Orthodox Church, which is at all times and in all things pure and holy. They

have condemned it openly, before the whole world, they have bound it and handed it over to be mocked by outsiders as an evil-doer, as a criminal, as a traitor to its Most Holy Bridegroom Christ – the Eternal truth, Eternal justice. What horror!...

“The Holy Church, which the Lord acquired for Himself from this world through His own Blood (Acts 20.28), and which is His Body (Colossians 1.24), but which is for all of us the house of eternal, Grace-filled salvation from this destroying life – now this holy Church of Christ god is being adapted to serve interests that are not only foreign to her, but even completely incompatible with her Divinity and spiritual freedom...

“The Church of Christ in its essence can never be any kind of political organization, otherwise it ceases to be the Church of Christ, the Church of God, the Church of eternal salvation. And if now, through this ‘appeal’, the Church is united with the civil authorities, this is not simply an external manoeuvre, but at the same time a terrible defilement and destruction of the Orthodox Church, Here there has also been committed the great sin of the renunciation of the truth of the Church, which no attainment of earthly goods for the Church can justify...

“Don’t tell me that in this way a Central Administration has been formed for us, together with local administrations, and that an appearance of external calm has been acquired for the Church, or, as the appeal says, ‘the lawful existence of the Church’ – this and similar things all those love to say who have already been caught by the enemy-devil in falling away from the Orthodox Church. What good is it if we, having become and being called the Temple of God (II Corinthians 4.16), have become useless and disgusting in the eyes of God, while acquiring an external administration for ourselves?

“This lie, alas, is for us sinners much bitterer than the three preceding ones: the livingchurchmen, the renovationists and the Grigorians, whose madness was evident to all without difficulty, while the destructiveness of the last lie cannot be discerned by everybody, and it is especially difficult for those whose mind and heart are turned to earthly things, for the sake of which people are accustomed to renounce the Lord.”

Sergius’ Synod wrote to Bishop Victor asking him why he was not leaving Glazov, and on what basis he was looking after the affairs of Vyatka.

He replied with a second letter to Metropolitan Sergius: “In the month of October I with filial love was bold enough to express to your Eminence my sorrow with regard to the ruinous destruction of the Orthodox Church that was beginning ‘by administrative means’.

“Such a destruction of the Church of God is a completely natural and inevitable consequence of the path on which your ‘appeal of July 16 [ /29]’ has placed you and which is completely unacceptable for us humble and God-fearing people and for all those who love Christ.

"From beginning to end it is filled with terrible untruth. It is an insult to the Holy Orthodox Church, and to our confession for the truth of God, that disturbs the soul of the believer. Through betraying the Church of Christ to mockery by 'outsiders' it is a most sorrowful renunciation of your own salvation or renunciation of the Lord Saviour Himself.

"This sin, as the Word of God witnesses, is not less than any heresy or schism, but is rather incomparably greater, for it plunges a man immediately into the abyss of destruction, according to the unlying word: 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men...' (Matthew 10.33), etc.

"Insofar as we have been able we have protected ourselves and our flock so as not to become partakers of this sin, and for this reason we have sent the appeal itself back. Acceptance of the appeal would be a witness before God that we are indifferent in relation to the Most Holy Church of God, the Bride of Christ.

"In accordance with the fear of God I also cannot accept your order for my transfer: 'I fear,' as one hierarch writes to me, 'that the expression of obedience on our part will be considered by "them" (the Synod) as an approval of what "they" have done. And for that reason, if I were given full freedom of movement, which I do not have as being in administrative exile, I would ask myself: will I not have to answer before God for this obedience, for it in essence unites me with people who have been alienated from God. But I have expressed my thoughts that the appeal is truly worthy of many tears, and that it alienates a man from God in the form of a letter to those close to me, which is here attached.

"What of the future? In the future I would beseech God, and not only I, but the whole of the Orthodox Church, that he not harden your heart as He once hardened the heart of Pharaoh, but that He give you the grace to understand the sin you have committed and repent for the rest of your life. Then all the believers would thank God in joy and tears, and would again come to you as to a father and pastor – as to the first pastor, and the whole of the Russian Church as to her sacred head. The enemy has lured and deceived you for a second time with the idea of an organization of the Church. But if this organization is bought for the price of the Church of Christ Herself no longer remaining the house of Grace-giving salvation for men, and he who received the organization ceases to be what he was - for it is written, 'Let his habitation be made desolate, and his bishopric let another take' (Acts 1.20) - then it were better for us never to have any kind of organization.

"What is the benefit if we, having become by God's Grace temples of the Holy Spirit, become ourselves suddenly worthless, while at the same time receiving an organization for ourselves? No. Let the whole visible material world perish; let there be more important in our eyes the certain perdition of the soul to which he who presents such external pretexts for sin will be subjected.

"But if the hardening of your heart has gone so far, and there remains no hope of repentance, then in this case we have a word to enlighten us: 'Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and do not touch their impurity,



and I will receive you, and I will be to you and a Father and you will be to as sons and daughters' (II Corinthians 6.17-18)."

And he concluded that Sergius' pact with the atheists was "not less than any heresy or schism, but is rather incomparably greater, for it plunges a man immediately into the abyss of destruction, according to the unlying word: 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men...' (Matthew 10.33)."

In this second letter to Metropolitan Sergius, Bishop Victor still addressed him respectfully, as "Merciful Archpastor, Deeply Revered and Dear Vladyko". Nevertheless, on December 10/23 Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod decreed: "Taking into account not only his disobedience to Higher Church Authority, the refusal of Bishop Victor to accept the appointment given him and the disturbance spread by him among the people by the distribution of his epistles, but also his slander against the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, to relieve his Grace Victor immediately of the administration of the Shadrinsk vicariate and the Sverdlovsk diocese and hand him over to a canonical trial of bishops, forbidding him to serve until the conciliar judgement on him, his repentance and recognition of his guilt."

Bishop Victor therefore became the first bishop to be banned by the sergianists for rejection of the declaration of July 16/29. He rejected the ban, and at the end of December, as the ruling Bishop of Izhevsk and Votksk, separated from Metropolitan Sergius.

On December 22 / January 4, 1928 the Glazov Diocesan Administration met to discuss the note of the chancellery of Bishop Onesimus of Votkinsk dated December 15 "On the Acceptance by the Bishop of Votkinsk of the Temporary Administration of the Votkinsk Diocese". They listened to Metropolitan Sergius' declaration of July 16/29, and Bishop Victor's letters to him about it. Then they decreed: "Temporarily, until the repentance of Metropolitan Sergius and his renunciation of the 'Appeal' he has issued: (1) To refrain from communion with him and the bishops with him; (2) To recognize Bishop Victor as our spiritual leader, chosen by the whole of the Glazov diocese in 1924; and (3) To call him Bishop Victor of Glazov and Votkinsk. Bishop Victor, Metropolitan Sergius and Bishop Onesimus of Votkinsk, together with the deans of the Glazov diocese, are to be informed of this."

On the same day Bishop Victor wrote on this protocol: "I rejoice in the Grace of God, which has enlightened the hearts of the members of the Spiritual Administration in this difficult and great work of choosing the way of truth. May its decision be blessed by the Lord, and may it be to the joy and consolation of the Holy Orthodox Church. With regard to the third resolution on the renaming of my title, [I have decided that it should] remain as before, 'of Izhevsk and Votkinsk' until a resolution of this question by a general Diocesan Congress."

Three days later, on Christmas Day, Bishop Victor wrote to Igumen Arcadius of the Pokrov cathedral in Izhevsk: "The bans of Onesimus and other hierarchs who

have fallen away from the Orthodox Church through the appeal can have no significance for us, but rather fall on their heads. Serve in the peace of the Holy Spirit.”

On December 29 / January 11 Bishop Victor wrote a second letter to Moscow: “I wrote to you that Archbishop Paul came to punish, but he was met by the suggestion: repent and renounce the ‘appeal’ of July 16...”

“So as to protect themselves from all the mad bans, the parishes together with their pastors separating themselves beforehand from him through decisions of parish councils and choosing or asking me to accept them under my spiritual archpastoral leadership before God and men. Our Spiritual Administration has done something similar in relation to Metropolitan Sergius in the name of the whole of the Votsk Diocese, placing it out of communion with Metropolitan Sergius until his repentance and renunciation of the ‘appeal’, of which they have informed him. The decree is attached...”

“It is necessary that Moscow should begin to act, and not merely passively endure their insults to the Orthodox Church. Then other dioceses will be encouraged. Our Votsk diocese is not authoritative for those who are accustomed to establish themselves, not on the truth, but on authority.”

On January 15 Vladyka wrote to Bishop Abraham: “Outside the Orthodox Church there is no Grace of God, and consequently, no salvation either. Nor can there be any true temple of God, but it is simply a house, according to the word of St. Basil the Great. In my opinion, without the Grace of God, a temple becomes a place of idolatry, and the most holy icons, when stripped of their Divine Grace, become dead idol-boards. And suddenly you write that you would like to pray in every place that the name of God is praised. But don’t you know, if you go on further, you will fall not only in with all kinds of heretics, but also with Mohammedans, Buddhists, etc., for the name of God is praised among them, but you yourself see that such thoughts of complete indifference destroy not only the meaning and significance of the Orthodox Church, but also Christianity itself. And what use then is our confession for the truth of the Orthodox Church? For what do we suffer deprivations, sufferings, and perhaps we shall have to endure death itself!...”

“This from your first letter, and now from your second you mention schism, the Catharoi, etc., as if, between the lines, you are ascribing this to us. Against this destroys all your praises of us for the true word of ours which, in your opinion, we should have said.

“No, sacred head, we are not renegades from the Church of God and we are not schismatics that have cut ourselves off from her: may this never happen with us. We reject neither Metropolitan Peter, nor Metropolitan Cyril, nor the most holy Patriarchs, and it goes without saying that we with blessing preserve all the teaching on the faith and structure of the Church that has been passed down to us by the Father, and in general we are not crazy and do not blaspheme the Church

of God.

“Look, in 1923 we confessed the truth of the Church in exactly the same way, and we attained by our sufferings that the impious should be expelled from the Church of God and form their ‘renovationist’ meeting separately from us. So, in your opinion, we were schismatics at that time in our confession? I don’t think that you thought that, for you yourself blessed us and kissed our wounds. It was the traitors of the Church who taught that about us, saying that we were schismatics deceived by the devil. In this way they wanted to defend their own abdication and fall. The people who accuse of schism now are doing exactly the same thing. But we are not creating a schism in the Church, but are only demanding that the traitors of the Church of God should leave their places and hand over the administration into other hands or repent with tears for the evil they have done. Or do you think that Sergius is better than [the renovationist] Antonin? His errors with regard to the Church and the salvation of man in her were clear to me already in 1911, and I wrote about him [under the pseudonym ‘Wanderer’] in an Old Ritualist journal [*The Church*], that there would come a time when he would shake the Church. That is what happened. And we have to take all measures to protect and preserve the sheep of the Orthodox Church from the new deception. And it is not only we who are striving for this: the council of the Solovki bishops (26) is with us, the great majority of the servants of God is with us. The horror at the evil that these wolves are producing within the fold of Christ has suppressed fear of them of the masters of the House of God, although they are not the masters. Metropolitan Peter blessed neither the ‘Synod’ nor the ‘appeal’ nor the acts whereby Metropolitan Sergius has increased his prerogatives. - And now in various parts of the Russian Orthodox Church voices have been raised reproaching the traitors, and there have been attempts, as in 1923, to remove them from leadership. But the destroyers of the Church hope that Metropolitan Peter will not return to ‘life’ - just as the previous apostates from the Church, the livingchurchmen, hope that his holiness the Patriarch would not be resurrected. But we have a different hope, that their very memory will perish noisily, since they have defiled Christian souls.

“With childlike simplicity we believe that the strength of the Church is not in organization, but in the Grace of God, which cannot exist where there is betrayal and renunciation of the Orthodox Church, even if it is under the guise of the attainment of the external good of the Church. After all, here we do not have simply a [personal] sin of M. Sergius and his advisors. If it were only that! No! Here we have the systematic destruction of the Orthodox Russian Church according to a definitely thought-through plan, the striving spiritually to mix up, defile and degrade everything. Here is laid the destruction of the whole of the Orthodox Church, and precisely her conscious adaptation - of the Heavenly Bride of Christ - to the service of evil, for the world lies in evil.

“Truly, these evil intentions against the Church are not from man, but from him who from the beginning was the murderer of man and who thirsts for our eternal destruction. The new traitors have become his servants, subverting the very essence of the Orthodox Church of Christ; they have changed her from being heavenly to being earthly, and turned her from being a Grace-filled union into a

political organization.

“‘Be not yoked together with unbelievers’, etc., commands the holy apostle (II Corinthians 1.14-18). But these teach the opposite. And all this has to spread through the Orthodox Russian Church, for everybody must approve of the new impiety, otherwise – bans, for, they say, ‘we are the bosses’. O, what blindness of mind! O, what horror we are living through!

“During the trial of 1923 and later it was clearly revealed that the support of the Orthodox Church was the confessors of the Truth – the Bishops who were bound by indissoluble grace-filled bonds and love with their flocks. But what are the new enemies of Orthodoxy doing? They are moving these Bishops from their sees and their places are being taken by their appointees. And there are not just one or two cases of this; it is being accomplished in accordance with a definite system throughout the Russian Church. You can imagine what groans and crying and horror has covered the Orthodox Church, when this cutting asunder of the indivisible has begun.

“The Petrograd clergy and laity have asked Metropolitan Sergius how he can explain this evil act, and he naively replies that it is not the Church that is suffering here, but the bishops and the flock. – But is this not the Little Church? Is it not a cell of the Universal Church? But this is necessary, in the words of Metropolitan Sergius, for the supposed revealing of loyalty in relation to the civil authorities. – What madness! Revealing the loyalty of the Church by killing her!

“Then the second support of Orthodoxy turned out to be the parish councils. And what are these new enemies of Orthodoxy doing? They are giving orders to reduce the significance of these parish councils to nothing, and this in order their appointee-bishop may distribute the clergy places at their own discretion. What a defilement of souls is now being begun by impious clergy whom the bishops will stuff everywhere; and others, not recognized by the believing people, will produce a terrible dissolution of faith and fall of religious life.

“In conclusion, I beseech you, as a friend whom I venerate for your piety, to flee from the poisonous seductive speeches (letters) that are tempting you like snake, and wish to separate you from the live-giving tree of the Truth.

“Let us remain firm and unbending in our confession for the Truth of God that we undertook in 1922, so that the Lord may not refer to us the voice of the prophet: ‘My priests have rejected My law and defiled My holy things. They do not distinguish between the holy and the defiled. They are all the same for them’ (Ezekiel 22.26).

“Remember the great confessor Theodore the Studite, whom we read together. He ceased communion with the Patriarch only because the patriarch did not want to defrock a priest who had consciously carried out an unlawful crowning. But there is no way that you can want the destruction of the whole Orthodox Church by these spiritual robbers, and only because they have put on the mask of masters

of the House of God, although you yourself know that they are criminals.

“No, this will be, not a blinding of the heart, but the opposite – the defence of the Truth of God, and not a schism. Remember also the words of another confessor, St. Maximus, who said: ‘Even if the whole inhabited earth were to commune with the apostate Patriarch, I alone will not commune with him to the end of the age.’ By the Grace of God we shall imitate this confessor...”

On January 18, Bishop Victor was summoned to the Vyatka OGPU, but was released after answering a series of questions. On returning home, he wrote “The Replies of his Grace Victor to 15 questions put to him by the OGPU”. He gave this document to his acquaintances, “for information on the new synodal movement”. The first two questions and replies were as follows:

“How would you interpret, from the civil and ecclesiastical points of view, the appearance of the new church tendency – the platform of the Declaration of July 29, 1927?”

*From the ecclesiastical point of view: as an incorrect teaching on the Church and on the matter of our salvation in Jesus Christ – an error of principle by Metropolitan Sergius...*

“How do you look at the ‘Declaration’? etc.”

*From the Church point of view it is an incorrect teaching on the Church and on the matter of our salvation in Jesus Christ (Metropolitan Sergius’ error in principle), while from the civil point of view it is the desire to be freed from this oppressive and disturbing situation in which the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church find themselves.*

*The ‘Declaration’ is a separation from the truth of salvation. It looks on salvation as on a natural moral perfection of man (a pagan philosophical doctrine of salvation), **or otherwise as the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth**, and for its realization an external organization is absolutely essential. In my opinion, this is the same error of which, as early as 1912, I accused Metropolitan Sergius, warning that THROUGH THIS ERROR THEY WOULD SHAKE the Orthodox Church. I said this in the article, ‘The New Theologians’, published in the Old Ritualist journal “The Church” N 16 for 1912, signing it with the pseudonym ‘Wanderer’. They knew who printed this, and for a long time I experienced their ill disposition towards me. By dint of this error of theirs, they cannot even THINK of the Church without an external organization, and since the authority of the USSR as a civil political organization is unacceptable for them in this respect (since it has suppressed various of their external activities and diminished their external position), it is entirely possible that they will oppose this authority. Then they repented of this and recognized their mistake, or rather, the uselessness of OPPOSITION.*

*The personal composition of the Synod has no great significance as regards its acceptability. It is the very platform [of this Synod] that is unacceptable, for it sees in the Church an external political organization which is united with the civil organization of the authorities of the USSR, and in accordance with this aims for a corresponding external political activity for the Orthodox Church, and thereby pushes the Church onto the path of*

*new upheavals and surprises, at the same time distorting THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE CHURCH.*

Bishop Victor was loyal to the civil authorities. But he understood this loyalty in a quite different way from Metropolitan Sergius, as he made clear in the epistle he wrote to his flock on February 28 / March 12, 1928 (new calendar): "Judge for yourselves: what significance, for example, can the bans of Catholics, Protestants, living churchmen and others have for an Orthodox priest if they were to think of applying them to us? None at all. It's exactly the same here. The only difference is that the Catholics, Protestants and others fell away earlier from the Church of God, while the apostates (antichurchmen) have only now, in our time, been deceived by the devil, 'who has taken them captive at his will' (II Timothy 2.26). And this fall of theirs is not little and not secret, but very great and evident to all those who have sense (I Corinthians 11.16). It was revealed in the well-known 'appeal' of July 16/29 and the bold destruction of the Orthodox Church which followed it. The 'appeal' is a disgusting sale of that which cannot be sold and is priceless - that is, our spiritual freedom in Christ (John 8.36); it is their attempt, contrary to the word of God, to unite that which cannot be united - the portion of the sinner with the work of God, God and Mammon (Matthew 6.24), light and darkness (II Corinthians 6.14-18).

"The apostates have transformed the Church of God from a Grace-filled union of the salvation of man from sin and eternal destruction into a political organization, which they have united with the organization of civil power in the service of this world which lies in evil (I John 5.19). The loyalty of individual believers to the civil authorities is one thing, and the inner dependence of the Church herself on the civil authorities is quite another. In the first situation the Church preserves her spiritual freedom in Christ, while the believers become confessors under persecution for the faith; in the second situation, she (the Church) is merely an obedient weapon for the realization of the political ideas of the civil power, while the confessors for the faith are here state criminals. We see all this in the activity of Metropolitan Sergius, who by dint of his new relationship to the civil authorities has been forced to forget the canons of the Orthodox Church, and in spite of them he has removed all the confessor-bishops from their sees, considering them to be state criminals, and in their place he has of his own will appointed other bishops who were not and are not now recognized by the believing people. For Metropolitan Sergius now there can no longer be any exploit of confession of the Church, and for that reason, in his conversation with regard to the 'appeal', he declares that every cleric who dares to say anything in defence of THE TRUTH OF GOD against the civil power is an enemy of the Orthodox Church. Is this not madness, madness that has overtaken a man in spiritual deception? You know, if we think like that, then we shall have to consider as an enemy of God - the hierarch Philip, for example, who once rebuked Ivan the Terrible and was strangled for that. Moreover, we shall have to count among the enemies of God the great Forerunner himself, who rebuked Herod and was beheaded for that.

"To such a sorry state have the apostates been brought that they have preferred an external earthly freedom - for the sake of a specious earthly prosperity joined to it - to our spiritual freedom in Christ. And if Archbishop Paul shouts and swears

that he, in signing the 'appeal', was thinking that he was not violating the dogmas and canons of the Orthodox Church and that he had not renounced her, then may [God] forgive him – Pilate, too, by his words claimed that he was innocent in the killing of Christ, while with his quill (pen) he confirmed His death. For the antichurchmen, the apostates from the Church, their preservation of the dogmas and canons is a comparatively small matter. He who has cut off someone's head is not justified by the fact that he did not harm any of the hairs on the head: to think otherwise is risible. But they all affirm: 'Everything with us is in the old style'. True, their appearance has remained Orthodox, and this disturbs many; but they do not have THE SPIRIT OF LIFE, THE GRACE OF GOD, and consequently the eternal salvation of man. That is why this deception is bitterer than the first ones.

"Christ did not bow down to Beliar when he was tempting Him in the desert and offered him all the power of this world – provided, he said, you bow down before me (Matthew 4.8). But they have bowed down. And, being a spiritual authority, they have forcibly drawn all the rest into their sin, their destruction. But only lack of faith in the grace of God and a lack of understanding of our salvation in it and through it can force a man to set out of the path of union with apostates. For all their proofs in defence of the 'appeal' are words 'sounding from the earth' (Isaiah 29.4), from foreign laws and the crowd stirred up by human fear to say everything. But their threatening with canonical sanctions is only a trap for the ignorant and fainthearted. After all, the canons of God were not given by the Holy Fathers so that by their means, as with a whip, to drive to their destruction those who declare that they, out of fear of God, cannot follow someone caught by the enemy-devil.

"Moreover, the very content of the canons to which the apostates refer cannot according to their meaning be applied to us in any way. For example, what do Canons 13, 14 and 15 of the First-and-Second Council [of Constantinople in 869], and other similar ones they refer to, talk about? – The Canons says that if a PERSONAL misunderstanding arises between one of the clergy and his bishop, or between a bishop and the metropolitan of the province, or between a metropolitan and a patriarch, or if a local bishop expresses a PERSONAL opinion on questions of faith and piety that is doubtful, then in all such cases, first, it is necessary to pass this matter on to the review of a higher authority, and secondly, nobody on account of these PERSONAL matters of his or BECAUSE OF DOUBTFUL OPINIONS must break canonical communion with his president.

"How can these canons now apply to the matter of our confession... [*a gap in the text*] [when] neither do you have any personal misunderstandings with your bishop, nor me with Metropolitan Sergius? Our case is not personal and does not touch on local interests, or any dubious unproven opinions, but it concerns the immediate practical destruction of our common eternal salvation by the ecclesiastical authorities themselves through their substitution of the false church, the great harlot (Revelation 17,1) for the true Church, the woman clothed with the Sun (Revelation 12.1). In other circumstances of church life Metropolitan Sergius and all his accomplices would be subject to immediate trial by the Orthodox Church in the form of a local council. But not that council which is being prepared

by the apostates from the True Church themselves, and which will be an offshoot of the 'robber council' of 1923. It is necessary that the council should be perfect, that is, with the participation of all the Orthodox Bishops, and most of all the confessors of the Church. But such a council can never take place in the present conditions. And in reality in the conditions that have been created we do not even have the possibility of complaining to anyone against the apostates from the true Church.

"So what must we do now? In the opinion of the apostates themselves, we must as it were become accomplices in their crime against the Orthodox Church, and consequently, we, like they, must subject ourselves to God's judgement and even before the judgement deprive ourselves of the Grace of salvation. But how can we justify ourselves before God for participating in sin?

"True, we, as men, are subject to spiritual authority. But at the same time each one of us is directed in his life by the commandments of God, in accordance with which we shall be judged, and if we turn out to be accomplices in the impiety of our spiritual authorities, even that should be in the person of the Patriarch himself, then in no way can we be justified before God. For the commandment of God declares: 'He who renounces Me before men, I will renounce before My Heavenly Father' (Matthew 10.33).

"That is why, when they tried to persuade St. Maximus the Confessor by means of terrible tortures to enter into communion of prayer with a wrong-thinking patriarch, he cried out: 'even if the whole universe begins to have communion with the patriarch, I alone will not communicate with him'. Why was that? Because he feared to destroy his soul through communion with a patriarch who had been drawn into impiety, although at that time he had not yet been condemned by a council and was, on the contrary, supported by the majority of the bishops. You know, the ecclesiastical administrative authority, even in the person of councils, did not always defend the truth in former times, to which clear witness is borne by the story of the hierarch Athanasius the Great, John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Theodore the Studite and others. How, then, can I remain unreasonable and indifferent? That cannot be. That is why we have set out on the only possible way out in our present situation - the way of the confession of THE TRUTH OF SALVATION. This way is difficult, it is the way of exploit [podvig]; but we do not trust on our own strength, but look to the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12.2). And our action is not a separation for the Church, but the defence of the truth and justification of the Divine commandments, or - still better - THE PRESERVATION OF THE WHOLE ECONOMY OF OUR SALVATION. That is why a whole pleiad of archpastors have rebuked Metropolitan Sergius: Metropolitans Joseph, Agathangel and Arsenius, Archbishops, Bishops and a multitude of individual pastors, who have told Metropolitan Sergius that they can no longer recognize him to be the leader of the Orthodox Church, and will rule independently for the time being..."

On April 4, 1928 Bishop Victor was arrested in Glazov and cast into Butyrki prison. He was accused of "systematically distributing anti-Soviet documents



composed by him and printed on a typewriter. The most anti-Soviet of them in content was the document, 'Epistle to Believers' with an appeal to them not to fear and not to submit to Soviet power as being the power of the devil, but to suffer martyrdom from it, just as Metropolitan Philip or John, the so-called 'baptist' suffered martyrdom for the faith in their struggle with the power of the state".

A week later the sergianist synod decreed: "To keep in force our resolution concerning the former vicars of the Leningrad diocese, Bishops Demetrius of Gdov and Sergius of Kopor, the former Bishop Victor of Shadrinsk and the former Bishop Alexis of Urazov, the more so in that the mentioned bishops not only have not repented of the sin of creating a schism, but by their activities, speeches and epistles continue to sow disturbance, undermining the faith of the Church of Christ. They send a prepared text renouncing Metropolitan Sergius and the Patriarchal Synod for signature, calling of them to unite with them, while Bishop Victor, although banned from serving, ordains clergy for dioceses not subject to him."

On May 18 Bishop Victor was sentenced to three years on Solovki. Before leaving, he entrusted his Vyatka flock to Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov. On June 14, 1928 M.A. Novoselov wrote to V.M. Loseva: "Bishop Victor is here. The other day they sent him to Solovki for ten years. Now there will be three decisive anti-sergianists here, and they, I hope, will leave the local Christians with a good leaven."

According to one (doubtful) source, Vladyka Victor signed the decisions of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church, which took place in various places between March and August, 1928, through the reader Athanasius Beregovy.

At some time in 1928 Bishop Victor wrote: "In his scattering of the Church together with his treachery, Metropolitan Sergius has also committed a terrible blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which according to the unlying word of Christ will never be forgiven him, neither in this life, nor in the life to come.

"'He who does not gather with Me,' says the Lord, 'scatters.' 'Either recognize the tree (the Church) as good and its fruit as good, or recognize the tree as bad and its fruit as bad' (Matthew 12.33). 'Therefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto me, but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto me' (Matthew 12.31). 'Fulfilling the measure of his sin,' Metropolitan Sergius together with his Synod, by his ukaz of October 8/21, 1927, is introducing a new formula of commemoration.

"Mixing together into one, despite the word of God, the 'faithful with the unfaithful' (II Corinthians 6.14-18), the Holy Church and those fighting to the death against her, in the great and most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, the metropolitan by this blasphemy of his destroys the prayerful meaning of the great sacrament and its grace-filled significance for the eternal salvation of the souls of Orthodox believers. Hence the service becomes not only graceless because of the gracelessness of the celebrant, but an abomination in the eyes of God, and for that reason both the celebrant and he who participates in it subject themselves to severe

condemnation.

"Being in all his activity an anti-church heretic, as transforming the Holy Orthodox Church from the house of the grace-filled salvation of believers into a graceless, carnal organization deprived of the spirit of life, Metropolitan Sergius has at the same time, through his conscious renunciation of the truth and in his mindless betrayal of Christ, become an open apostate from God the Truth.

"Without a formal external trial by the Church (which cannot be carried out on him), he 'is self-condemned' (Titus 3.10-11); he has ceased to be what he was - a 'server of the truth', according to the word: 'Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one live in it; and his office let another take' (Acts 1.20).

"A series of archpastors, God-wise fathers and Orthodox men of the Church have in the course of many years exhorted him, but to no effect - they did not bring Metropolitan Sergius to a consciousness of the sin he had committed and did not elicit repentance in his heart.

"For that reason, we, by the grace given us by our Lord Jesus Christ, 'by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ' (I Corinthians 5.4), declare the former Metropolitan Sergius deprived of prayerful communion with us and all those faithful to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, and give him up to the judgement of God: 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord' (Hebrews 19.30).

"This present act, in addition to our earlier declarations made in 1927 and 1928, we carry out in strict consciousness of our archpastoral duty before our flock, all the faithful children of the Orthodox Church, in obedience to the Church of Christ, in dutiful submission to the canons of the Ecumenical Councils and the Council of the Russian Church of 1917-1918, which is headed today by the patriarchal locum tenens, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa and his deputy, Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich.

"Fear not, little flock! For your Father has determined to give you the Kingdom!" (Luke 12.32)."

In another document Archbishop Victor wrote: "Metropolitan Sergius' crime consists not only in canonical transgressions in relation to the Church order, but, as has already been demonstrated more than once in various addresses to him,... it touches the very essence of the Church. It is precisely in his declaration that Metropolitan Sergius as it were confessed, and in his deeds is carrying out a lawless merging of that which is God's with that which is Caesar's, or rather, that which is Christ's with that which is Antichrist's, which is a dogmatic sin against the Church and is defined as the sin of apostasy."

From 1928 to 1930 Archbishop Victor was on the main island of Solovki. He worked as an accountant in the Solovki rope factory. Academician Demetrius Sergeyevich Likhachev, who knew Vladyka Victor on Solovki, said that he was a highly educated man with several theological publications to his credit, but he

looked like a village priest. He had a sparse beard, rosy cheeks and dark blue eyes. He met everyone with a broad smile, and radiated kindness and joy. He tried to help everyone, and was truly able to help them, because everyone thought highly of him and trusted him.

When, writes Likhachev, "during the winter of 1929 I returned from the typhus 'brigade of convalescents', he sent me some green onion and cream through Fedya Rozenberg. How tasty that onion and cream was! Once I met Vladyka (among ourselves we used to call him 'Vladychka') in a particularly radiant and joyful state. It was on the square in front of the Transfiguration cathedral. An order had been issued that all the prisoners should have their hair cut and were not to wear long clothes. Vladyka Victor refused to carry out this order, so they took him into the lock-up, forcibly shaved him, in the process seriously wounding his face, and cut his clothes crookedly from below. He walked towards us with a towel wrapped round his face and smiling. He said that they had dragged him into the lock-up in order to shave him, and had bound him, but that he had demanded that they first cut the long 'chekist' greatcoat (in the style of that in which Dzerzhinsky is depicted on the Lubyanka) of the escort who had dragged him into the lock-up. I think that Vladyka had resisted without spite and that he considered his suffering to be the mercy of God."

Professor I.M. Andreyev remembers that "Vladyka Victor was short, stocky, kind and welcoming to everyone, with an unchangingly radiant and joyful subtle smile and radiant eyes. 'One must comfort everybody in some way,' he used to say, and he had the ability to comfort each and every one. He had a welcoming word for every person he met, and often even a little gift... Within a few days Vladyka would distribute all his parcels, leaving almost nothing for himself. He 'comforted' very many, often prisoners whom he did not know at all, taking special pity on the 'urkas'.., that is, the petty thieves who had been sent as 'socially harmful' elements into isolation, according to article 48.

"... Both Vladykas (Victor and Maximus) loved each other; unhurriedly, without ever quarrelling or getting irritated, but attentively they studied a single complicated phenomenon from *different* points of view. Vladyka Maximus was a pessimist and was getting ready for the heavy trials of *the last times*, not believing in the possibility of a regeneration of Russia. But Vladyka Victor was an optimist and believed in the possibility of a short, but radiant period, as a final gift from heaven for the tormented Russian people. At the end of 1930 Vladyka Victor completed his three-year term, but instead of being released was sent to Mai-Guba."

Bishop Victor's sentence ended in the spring of 1931, but he was not released. On April 10, 1931 his case was reviewed, and according to one source he was sentenced to three years' exile in Onega, Archangelsk district. From Solovki he was taken to the mainland, to Mai-Guba (according to I.M. Andreyevsky, this was already in the autumn of 1930). Vladyka worked as an accountant at Mai-Guba, and then, in November, 1931, or perhaps earlier, was sent to the north. According to one source, he was sent to Novaya Birzha on the White Sea - Baltic canal.

According to another source, in the summer or early autumn of 1931 he was sent to Ust-Tsilma, Komi province via Arkhangelsk, the White and Barents Seas and the Rivers Pechora and Tsilma. There he found the "Victorites" **Protopriest John Fokin** and **Nuns Angelina** (Tomilova) and **Alexandra** (Lopatina).

He was arrested again on the night of December 12-13, 1932, and the next day was sent with ten others (four priests and six laymen) to prison in Syktyvkar.

On December 22 he was interrogated and accused that, "living on the territory of the Ust-Tsilma region, he joined a monarchist counter-revolutionary grouping which under the guise of religious prejudices conducted counter-revolutionary work against the undertakings of Soviet power". The monarchist organization created by them was supposedly descended from one before the revolution, "The White Sea - Karelia Society of the Archangel Michael", and, in 1918-1919, from "The Patriotic Society" and "The Union of Clergy". The protocol ends with the following declaration of Bishop Victor: "According to my religious convictions, I am a follower of Patriarch Tikhon. I do not recognize renovationism or sergianism."

L.A. Sikorskaya writes: "The initiator of the creation of the 'counter-revolutionary organization' was named as the exiled Ekaterina Ivanovna Povarova, who organized material help for the exile through people she knew in Arkhangelsk. Her correspondence with Bishop Apollos (Rzhanitsyn), who blessed her activity, Anna Vasilyevna Morgunova, the warden of the central church, and the active parishioners Elena Konstantinovna Veshnyakova and Ekaterina Akindinovna Tsvetkova, who sent help to the exiles in Ust-Tsilma, was sufficient for them to be drawn into the group case as 'participants in the counter-revolutionary group'. Bishop Apollos, E.E. Veshnyakova and E.A. Tsvetkova were arrested in Arkhangelsk at the end of January or the beginning of February, 1933. A.V. Morgunova managed to hide and a search was initiated for her.

"Many 'witnesses' at the interrogations affirmed that, on the instructions of the accused Bishop Apollos (Rzhanitsyn), his parishioners went from Arkhangelsk to Ust-Tsilma and brought money, food and clothing to help those priests and laity in administrative exile as 'suffering for religion'. The 'witnesses' and some of the accused gave testimony that the exiles conducted active agitation that people should leave the collective farms and refuse logging work, and that they spread provocative rumours. Maria Nuromskaya [the daughter of Archbishop Anthony of Arkhangelsk, who died in 1931] was also accused of deliberately giving the administrative exiles certificates that they were freed from work, by means of which she supposedly 'systematically weakened the working strength'.

"The main information for the investigation's version of events was given at the interrogations of the accused priests. Thus A.D. Nechaev detailed by name, in his own words, 'the undoubted participants in our counter-revolutionary grouping' - ten people in Ust-Tsilma, including Victor Alexandrovich Ostrovidov, and five people in Arkhangelsk. I.A. Nikolsky told in detail, point by point, about 'the practical counter-revolutionary activity of the participants in our grouping', and

these points were transferred in the same words into the 'Concluding Indictment'. Apparently, such testimonies were demanded of Bishop Victor, but Vlayka did not recognize his guilt in the writing of the 'novel' thought up by the investigation."

On March 23 Bishop Victor and six others were formally accused that: "(a) they were active participants in a counter-revolutionary grouping of administratively exiled clergy and churchmen in the village of Ust-Tsilma; (b) they took part in group meetings conducted by the leadership of the grouping in which general methods and tactics of counter-revolutionary work were worked out; (c) in the mass of the peasantry they conducted daily anti-soviet agitation directed at the undermining of the enterprises of Soviet power; and (d) they spread provocative rumours about the inevitability of a war and the destruction of Soviet power with the aim of strengthening defeatist sentiments."

On May 10, 1933 he was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 to another three years in exile. First he spent at least another three months in an isolator in Syktyvkar, where he miraculously found an icon of Christ lying on the ground - it was a copy of the wonder-working icon from the Holy Trinity - St. Stephen monastery in Ust-Sysolsk uyezd. Vladyka brought it into his cell and prayed: "Lord, Thou has appeared to me. So intercede for me!" Soon he was freed.

After prison Vladyka served several liturgies with other exiled priests in the flat of the exiled Fr. Nicholas in Arkhangelsk. "What a joy it was for us!" said Vladyka. "And then the icon was with us."

Then he was sent to the village of Neritsa, some thirty kilometres from Ust-Tsilma. Here he was surrounded by atheists, who followed his every movement. Vladyka arrived in a sad mood. But the believers in Ust-Tsilma, who were now free, promised not to abandon him. Although no parcels could be sent directly to him in Neritsa, the Vyatka and Glazov parishioners constantly sent him things, which he immediately distributed to the needy villagers (there was a famine in the winter of 1933-1934). He prayed for the sick twelve-year-old daughter of the man in whose house he lived, and she recovered. Vladyka's neighbour, a communist, was constantly playing something on the gramophone very loudly. Vladyka went up to the wall, made the sign of the cross on it - and the gramophone fell down. There was no more noise...

A little more than two months before his death, on February 23, 1934, Vladyka wrote a letter to Ekaterina Pavlovna Peshkova of the Political Red Cross asking for help, since he was in a difficult situation. Peshkova's reply was dated May 8. In August it was returned again to Moscow with the note: "Returned to the sender because of the death of the addressee".

At the beginning of spring, Vladyka would go out into the woods to pray. He helped in the cutting of wood and the carrying of water. According to one source, Vladyka talked about the faith with some Old Ritualists living in the region.

Before his death Bishop Victor entrusted his followers to Archbishop Seraphim

of Uglich. This is witnessed by Bishop Damascene of Glukhov, whom Archbishop Seraphim, in his turn, asked to be useful to his "Vyatka children" in the summer of 1935.

Vladyka often went into the taiga to pray. At the end of April, 1934 he caught a cold and pneumonia – according to another source, meningitis. He could not be sent to the regional centre because the river had overflowed its banks. Two days before his death Nun Angelina came to visit him. On May 2, 1934 he reposed in the Lord. On that same day a woman called Nastya went into his former room in Ust-Tsilma and smelt incense...

Mother Angelina carried the body away on a sledge, pretending he was ill. But, being unable to cross the river on which the ice was beginning to melt, she had to send back to Neritsa for help. Eventually some men came, brought the body back to Neritsa and buried him there. No priest could go to the village, so Fr. Nicholas carried out the funeral service for him in Arkhangelsk.

On the fortieth day after Vladyka's death the nuns asked one of the men in whose house he had lived to catch fish for his commemorative meal. He was at first unwilling, but then Vladyka Victor appeared to him in a vision and asked him to do this. He set off, and he caught a huge of fish. "It was not a simple man who lived with us," he said in amazement to his wife.

On July 1, 1997, the incorrupt relics of Archbishop Victor were revealed in Neritsa. The witnesses among the villagers were so amazed by what they saw that they immediately asked to be baptized. They were baptized the next day.

The fragrant relics of the saint were taken to Moscow, and then, on December 2, 1997, to the St. Alexander Nevsky church of the Holy Trinity-Macarius monastery in Vyatka. All his life St. Victor had served in churches dedicated either to the Holy Trinity or to St. Alexander Nevsky...

In 2005 the holy relics were transferred to the Holy Transfiguration monastery in Vyatka.

Many miracles of healing have been recorded at the shrine of St. Victor.

### **39. HOLY HIEROMARTYR JOHN, ARCHBISHOP OF RIGA (+1934)**

#### **Early Years**

Archbishop John, in the world Janis Andreyevich Pommer, was born in Latvia, in Venden (Tsisis) uyezd, Praulenskaya volost, Lazdonsky parish, into a Latvian peasant family. He had no Russian blood. The peasants of that region had begun to show an interest in Orthodoxy in the middle of the nineteenth century, thanks to the preaching of the faith in their native language; and Janis' great-grandfather had been one of the first to accept Orthodoxy in the region, for which he was subjected to persecution by the local German landowners. When he died he was buried outside the bounds of the local Lutheran cemetery (there were no Orthodox cemeteries at that time) as the leader of the "rebels". The native peasants raised a mound over the place of his burial and put an eight-pointed star on top of it, but both the mound and the cross were removed by the Lutheran authorities.

During his childhood the future archbishop helped his parents in the fields, and his first "obedience" was to look after the sheep. He was taught to read and write by his father, and was so outstanding in his studies that he skipped primary school and went straight into the state upper school. From his first year of study he so distinguished himself that the teachers fervently recommended that his parents send him either to the gymnasium or to a seminary school. On the advice of a local priest, the latter course was adopted. Having passed the entrance examination, the future bishop joined the Riga theological school in August 1887. In 1891 he went to the Riga theological seminary. Owing to his success in his studies and his exemplary behaviour he was granted a scholarship, so that his parents did not have to pay anything for his education. He unflinchingly spent his summer holidays at home, helping his parents in their work.

In 1897 he finished his seminary education brilliantly, but owing to the disturbances taking place in the educational system at that time he was not able to continue his higher education immediately. In 1897 he became a teacher in the church-parish school in the village of Lazdon. In 1899 he became a reader in the cathedral in Libava (now Liepaya), while working at the same time as a teacher in the church-parish school in Libava. In 1898 and 1899 was given awards for his labours.

In 1900, having passed the entrance examinations brilliantly, he became a student at the Kiev Theological Academy, where he was popular both for his academic achievements and for his prowess at sport. However, he never tried to use his physical abilities for his own ends, but only in order to support the weak.

Those who knew well were not surprised when, in 1903, he was tonsured as a monk in the Archangel Michael monastery in Kiev. Even before his tonsure his friends had called him "monk" because of his great sobriety and abstinence. On September 23, 1903 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on June 13, 1904 - to the priesthood.

He finished his studies at the Academy so brilliantly that he was given a choice between a career as a scholar and practical work as a teacher. He chose the latter, working as a teacher of Holy Scripture in the Chernigov theological seminary. Here he had such success in motivating and interesting his students in the subject that several of them later devoted their whole lives to the study of Holy Scripture (for example, Uspensky and Bessarabov).

In 1906 he was transferred to the post of inspector of the Vologda theological seminary. Here he continued to teach Holy Scripture, and among his pupils was the noted scriptural expert and Hebraist Prakhov. But he was also given administrative work in the seminary, and his success in rapidly introducing order into the large and ill-disciplined Vologda seminary was such that in the next academic year, in spite of his young age, he was entrusted with the post of rector of the Vilnius theological seminary and superior of the Vilnius Holy Trinity monastery. On September 26, 1907 he was raised to the rank of archimandrite.

He was the first priest in the history of Vilnius who organized cross processions to village churches with the "Hodigitria" icon of the Mother of God. The worshippers accompanying the processions attained ten thousand. This elicited the gratitude of the simple people and cross processions from the village churches to Vilnius. Fr. John showed great simplicity in his dealings with people, and was very responsive to the needs of the poor. He was especially valued by the Russian and Belorussian poor, who received through him work and support wherever it was required.

Already in his previous posts in Chernigov and Vologda, the future bishop had been given responsible assignments in diocesan government. And the same took place in Vilnius. He was made president of the educational council administering the people's schools throughout the extensive north-western region, and he was elected president of almost all the church-educational and charitable institutions of the region. He also administered local societies fighting alcoholism and helping the neediest acquire work.

### *First Episcopal Service*

On March 12, 1912 Fr. John was consecrated Bishop of Slutsk, a vicariate of the Minsk diocese, in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg. He was then the youngest bishop in Russia. Almost immediately he moved to Minsk to help the ailing Archbishop Michael of Minsk. On the way he participated in the canonization of St. Joasaph of Belgorod. When Archbishop Michael died, the clergy and laity unanimously petitioned that Bishop John be made diocesan bishop in his stead. However, the petition was refused on the grounds that the diocese was considered one of the oldest in Russia, while Bishop John was at that time the youngest bishop in Russia.

Instead, on April 4, 1913, Bishop John was sent to Odessa as Bishop of Taganrog and vicar of Archbishop Demetrius of Kherson and Odessa, who had been rector of the Kiev Academy when John was studying there. On April 4, 1913, on the death of Archbishop Demetrius, Bishop John was sent to establish good order in the newly



opened diocese of Priazovsk. His place of residence was Taganrog. On October 5, 1916 he was appointed Bishop of Priazovsk and Taganrog.

The best evidence of the good relationship between the archpastor and his flock here was the fact that Priazovsk was the only see in Russia whose upkeep - the salaries of the bishop and clergy - the local Christians took upon themselves. Bishop John took part not only in all the spiritual institutions of the diocese, but also in all its educational and charitable institutions. Here, too, his labours were crowned with success. In the four years of his rule there (from 1913 to 1917) he visited every corner of his diocese, paying attention not only to his flock's spiritual needs but also to their social and economic needs, which became especially pressing because of the war. There were cases when the bishop was chosen as mediator in conflicts between employers and workers, and his decisions were always accepted without a murmur by both sides. In gratitude the workers elected him to honorary posts in their organizations and looked on him as the best defender of their interests, resorting to his mediation before both the local and the central authorities.

A wave of refugees from the war came right up to "the quiet Don". Thousands of refugees from Galicia and what is now Czechoslovakia settled on the Don, and these people found in Bishop John one who cared for their needs. Under his immediate supervision schools and shelters for the refugees were established. Hundreds of Galicians and Czechoslovaks gratefully converted to Orthodoxy, including many intelligentsy.

When the revolution broke out in February, 1917, the revolutionaries wasted no time in attempting to dispose of Bishop John. They stirred up complaints against him, and Bishop John demanded a trial. When Metropolitan Plato came to investigate the complaints, he found in favour of Bishop John. However, open and secret revolutionary agents followed the bishop everywhere, led by Commissar Pelikh. But they could find nothing to accuse him of. However, Bishop John was cast into prison in Taganrog, in response to which the people organized a cross procession to the prison demanding his release. The gates opened and the bishop came out. As he blessed them, hundreds of hands lifted him up and placed him in an adorned truck, which took him, to the accompaniment of chanting and prayers, to the cathedral to serve a moleben. Then volunteers from among the workers and soldiers organized watches to guard the bishop day and night. On his way to and from services he was accompanied by vast crowds of people ready to defend their pastor by force. This created a delicate situation for the authorities, from which they devised the following escape: Bishop John's transfer, on September 7, 1917, to the Staritsa diocese, a vicariate of the Tver diocese. However, this device also failed; for after a farewell service in the cathedral the people surrounded him in such a way as to prevent his departure or removal. All the authorities could do was to beseech the bishop, for the sake of preserving their own authority, to depart for a time to Moscow. They guaranteed him a safe and honourable return to his flock. Then Bishop John persuaded his guard to let him go to Moscow to sort the matter out in the centre.

He departed, but the conflict between the local authorities and the people did not end there. Representatives from the clergy, laity, soldiers and Cossacks went with

Bishop John to Moscow so as to protest against the behaviour of the local revolutionary authorities, and in Priazovsk it was decided to make a protest in the form of daily gatherings in the churches to pray for the successful return of the bishop to Taganrog. Meanwhile, the delegation in Moscow obtained a favourable response from both the spiritual and the secular authorities.

However, this favourable response coincided with the October revolution, and Bishop John's return to Taganrog became impractical. In Tver he soon won the love and esteem of his flock and was able to put in order the diocesan administration that had been destroyed by the crude expulsion from Tver of Bishop Seraphim. He said of the Bolsheviks: "They have put Marx in the dust-jacket of the Gospel and think that the people will accept it instead of the Gospel. They have dressed commissars in sacred vestments and think the Orthodox will accept them as their pastors and follow them. They have substituted the portrait of Lenin for the icon of Christ in the icon-cases and expect the people to come up to kiss it. Ilyich is not at all like Christ. It is impossible to put Marxism in the place of Christianity, whatever vestments the preachers of Marxism put on. The blasphemous utterance of the name of Marx from the church kathedra only emphasizes more vividly the irreconcilable contradiction between Christ and Marx. Here is love incarnate, pouring out its blood for its guilty brethren. There - satanic malice pouring out the blood of brothers guilty of nothing like water."

### *Persecution in Penza*

On April 22, 1918 Bishop John was transferred to the see of Penza and Saransk, with promotion to the rank of archbishop. He was sent during a time of troubles caused by the defrocked former archbishop Vladimir (Putyata-Grinstein). While the local authorities, who supported Putyata, were extremely hostile to the newly arrived archpastor, the people showed their love for him by organizing guards to defend him from his enemies. Immediately after his arrival, the local cheka searched and interrogated him. But no reasons for repressing him were found.

Irritated by his popularity with the people, the authorities decided to mark Pascha, 1918 by killing him. On Bright Thursday evening the former officer Rudakov and the worker Dubovkin appeared at his residence in the Transfiguration monastery armed to the teeth, and began to demand that they be allowed to see him. The guard composed of believers sounded the alarm, and at the sound of the alarm the chekist Dubovnik took to his heels. But Rudakov broke down the door of the archbishop's cell and fired several times. Fortunately, he missed, only wounding the archbishop slightly in the leg, and he was disarmed by the archbishop himself. Then the people ran up, making it clear that they wanted to lynch the chekist. He was saved only by the vigorous intervention of the archbishop. At this point - wonder to behold! - Rudakov fell on the neck of the archbishop, crying "Christ is risen!" He then claimed that his attempt on the life of the archbishop had been instigated by the authorities. The authorities denied this, but Rudakov had proof of the truth of his words in the form of a mandate signed by them. Rudakov was arrested and put on trial, but the trial did not take place because Rudakov, overcome by his experiences, fell ill and died in prison.

This incident served to unite the flock of Penza diocese still more tightly round their archpastor, and the authorities, taking note, abstained from open demonstrations against the archbishop for the time being, which gave him the opportunity to organize the believers in parishes and other church organizations. The liberal intelligentsia, which had previously been indifferent to the Church, began to return to the Church. Among them was the lawyer V.A. Bezsonov, who became the archbishop's subdeacon and as his legal adviser was of great service to him. The workers, led by Z.Z. Pozdnyakov and A.S. Baikov, who had been among the best known fighters against alcoholism in Petrograd, attached themselves to the archbishop. As for the clergy, they gave an excellent example everywhere, and church life began to revive and get stronger throughout the diocese. Church feasts and meetings began to be carried out with exceptional exaltation of spirit.

In May, 1918, a regiment of Czechoslovaks who were on their way from the Don to Siberia passed through Penza. During a battle with the Bolsheviks, the latter's artillery suddenly for no reason began to fire on the Transfiguration monastery where the archbishop was living. Several shells fell on buildings adjoining the bishop's cell. The Bolsheviks tried to explain this incident by reference to a misunderstanding, but the people interpreted it as an attempt on the life of the archbishop, and registered a strong protest with the authorities.

On September 7, 1918, the Cheka carried out an extensive search in the cell and offices of the archbishop. They found nothing incriminating, but after the search they took him for a confrontation with one of the prisoners who had been condemned to death. This meant that the archbishop could not arrive on time for the All-Night Vigil for the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God; and when the people arriving for the service learned that the archbishop had been taken away "to the house of no return", and, moreover, on the day when executions were carried out, they decided that he had been shot together with the others condemned to death. An expedition was quickly organized, which confirmed the theory about his execution. Thus when Archbishop John arrived very late for the service, he found, not an All-Night Vigil in progress, but a pannikhida for "the newly departed Archbishop John".

On October 12, 1918, the archbishop was serving in the Peter and Paul church in Penza in the presence of a huge crowd of people. During the service "Archbishop" Vladimir Putyata arrived and tried to enter the church together with his supporters. The people forcibly prevented him doing this, and there were disturbances around the church. As a result of this, the archbishop was put in prison for a whole month and sentenced to death. His innocence was obvious to everyone, even to the Cheka, but evidently it had been decided to conduct an experiment to see how the people would react to the removal of the archbishop. They reacted by besieging the Cheka headquarters with delegations of believers demanding the archbishop's release. The local German consul noted that among those under arrest was a native of the Baltic region, which was then under German occupation, and demanded an explanation from the Cheka. This compelled the chekist to free the archbishop in the following manner.

On October 14 at midnight they began to summon the prisoners one by one into the hall where the tribunal was sitting in order to listen to and sign the tribunal's sentence. It was a Saturday, the day on which executions were usually carried out, and those who were called out on the list went away and did not return. This meant that after the explanation of the sentence they had been handed over to the executioners for the carrying out of the sentence. On the long list of the doomed, Archbishop John's name was the last. Evidently they were forcing him to go through everything that the prisoners about to be executed went through. At about one o'clock in the morning Archbishop John was told that he was free.

On leaving the Cheka headquarters, Archbishop John learned that all the diocesan organs of administration had been dissolved by the authorities. This meant that he had to take the whole administration of the huge diocese upon himself. Only on February 19, 1919 did he succeed in securing the restoration of the diocesan council and the other organs of diocesan administration.

On July 28, 1919, Archbishop John was summoned to the military commissariat and subjected to a medical examination, after which he was pronounced fit for military service. He was appointed to a regiment in the rear. However, a collective appeal by the parishes of the diocese delayed his enlistment for two months. At the end of this period the parishes had to repeat their appeal, a procedure which had to be repeated regularly.

It was characteristic that while the archbishop was registered on all military documents as "John, Archbishop of Penza and Saransk", when he was given a mandate to visit the parishes of his diocese, he was called "citizen John Andreyevich Pommer".

Towards the end of 1919, the Whites began to approach the borders of the Penza district from the south. At this point the authorities began to get very nervous, which was reflected in the first place in blows directed against the Church. Prominent church workers were arrested and kept in the Cheka prison. At the invitation of the parishes, the archbishop set out on a long journey round the diocese. Everywhere a heightened religious mood was observed. The people flowed in huge masses to the archbishop's services with striking fervour. Meanwhile, the authorities were quiet.

But when the archbishop returned to Penza on November 11, he found the way into his cell barred by the chekists, who subjected him to a body search and then searched his cell which had been searched so many times already. Although the search, as before, produced no results, the archbishop was arrested for "participation in a counter-revolutionary organization<sup>2</sup> and taken to the Cheka headquarters. There it turned out that a certain mythical counter-revolutionary organization had been uncovered, tens of members of which had already been shot (including Vladyka's subdeacon and legal adviser, **V.A. Bezsonov**). Evidently, the same fate now awaited the archbishop.

The archbishop categorically protested against both the accusation and the sentence, and demanded that his case be reviewed in Moscow - which it was, by the

famous Latsis, the president of the secret operations department of the Cheka. Latsis immediately broadened the scope of the accusation to include everything that might be hurled at the archbishop in the course of his whole life. The gathering of this material took three months, the whole of which period the archbishop spent in the Cheka prison. On February 11, 1920, Archbishop John gave explanations concerning the whole of this material to the terrible Latsis himself. The accusation that he belonged to a counter-revolutionary organization was not supported, for the Cheka could provide no proofs. The material gathered from the places where the archbishop had previously served were so trivial that even the conscience of the chekist was forced to renounce their use as evidence against him. Even the press, which was not noted for its squeamishness in the use of material that could be used against the clergy recognized its inferiority and did not begin to use it. (Later, these accusations were seized on and published by the Social-Democrats in Latvia.)

On March 11, 1920, the cheka pronounced the archbishop innocent on all counts and gave him a certificate allowing him to carry out his archpastoral service without hindrance.

Thus the future martyr's service in Penza immediately after the October revolution turned out to be one of the most trying periods of his life. Some years later, on the tenth anniversary of his episcopate in Riga, his former parishioners in Penza recorded the following reminiscences of his life and work in Penza: "Your stay in Penza coincided with the moment when the furious attacks of the forces inimical to the Church were turned into open warfare against her servants and representatives which threatened violence in all its forms and from all sides. In opposition to this you displayed the greatest strength of spirit and power of will. These powerful foundations of your strong character enabled you to survive and overcome all those extraordinarily burdensome conditions of life which fell to your lot in recent years. Following every step of your thorny path in life, we can only marvel at your spiritual firmness and the unusual restraint with which you encountered the trials and sufferings sent you by destiny. We clearly and vividly remember all the physical and moral torments which you endured in Penza in the years of savagery and, at the same time, the spiritual solidarity and unity of the people of Penza which served as a support for you in your terrible struggle legality and righteousness and which placed you at an unattainable spiritual height before the face of the whole population. Those who attended services in the Penza Pokrov church between 1918 and 1920 know what spiritual authority and love from all was enjoyed by our adored Archbishop John. They also will not forget you, your Eminence, who took part in the cross procession at the Penza cemetery of the holy myrrh-bearing women, which symbolized that way of the cross which the physically exhausted, spiritually suffering and morally tormented people had to tread. At that holy and heavy hour all eyes and hopes were trained directed on the man who in the name of the Lord called the people to obedient patience and expectation of the resurrection of a Russia cleansed from the sins of the past, for which she had to pay so dearly and cruelly.

"The people well recognized and felt that in their prayers and petitions to the Lord, Vladkya would not forget those dreams of freedom from the yoke and violence by which crucified Russia had lived and meditated, and those righteous sons of hers who

by their sufferings and blood had atoned the guilt of the evil-doers who did not know what they were doing. This spiritual sympathy was the basis for that huge moral force which bound you, your Eminence, with the people by bonds of unseen but powerful kinship and closeness.

"Therefore, wherever you may be, the people of Penza will always nourish towards you a feeling of great gratitude and the deepest devotion and attachment..

"No dark powers can cast a shadow over your exceptionally profitable and beneficial activities, which always remain in the memory of a people grateful to you... If there are people for whom your radiant life is harmful, and they wish to discredit you in the eyes of the people, even if it is for political reasons, then they are terribly wrong in thinking that they can attain their end by slander. The work of your slanderers and political adversaries has always produced the opposite effect: the more they have striven to slander and offend you, the higher and nearer and dearer the devoted and loving people has valued you."

### Archbishop of Riga

On February 23, 1920, a council of the Latvian Orthodox Church elected Archbishop John to the see of Riga. Patriarch Tikhon could not find anyone to take his place in Penza for the time being. On April 14, 1921, after a second petition from the Latvian Orthodox Church, the Patriarch blessed Archbishop John to go to Latvia. But on May 23 he had to rescind his decision at the request of the clergy and laity of Penza. It was only on July 6/19, 1921 that, "in view of the persistent request of the Latvian Church", he gave his final consent to Archbishop John's departure for Latvia, bestowing on him a gramota expressing his gratitude for his self-sacrificial and fruitful labours in various places in Russia.

Before his departure, Patriarch Tikhon, in agreement with the Holy Synod and the Higher Church Council, gave Archbishop John the widest canonical autonomy in administering the Latvian Orthodox Church. This act was the expression of the high degree of trust which they had for the archbishop, both as a man and as a church server. The further life and activities of Archbishop John showed that he was completely worthy of this trust: by his martyric end he witnessed to his faithfulness to the behests of the confessor Patriarch.

Finally, on July 24, 1921, Archbishop John arrived in Riga and began to administer the Orthodox Church of Latvia. He was met at the railway station and conducted to the cathedral church by the Orthodox clergy and people, with crosses and sacred objects from all the Orthodox churches. Even while he was serving in the cathedral (where an Orthodox hierarch had not celebrated since 1917), the local Orthodox leaders had no idea where he was going to live, since the bishop's residence had just been seized by the government. But at the conclusion of the service, after giving his blessing to the people, Archbishop John, to the astonishment of everyone present, went to the basement of the cathedral and said: "I will live here."

In this way he testified to the persecution of the Latvian Church and made the cathedral the centre of his struggle to restore the rights of the Orthodox Church in Latvia. And the fact that he lived there was a decisive factor that prevented the realization of the campaign conducted by the Latvian government and in the Latvian press to have the cathedral demolished.

His arrival marked the beginning of a new era in the life of the Latvian Church. Vladyka succeeded in getting a law on the position of the Orthodox Church passed. This regulated the relations between the Church and the State and provided the Church with a series of rights - in particular, substantial subsidies from the State. Finally, an end was put to the transfer of the property of the Orthodox Church to the heterodox, in particular the Catholics, who had already seized the Alexeyev monastery.

With Vladyka's arrival the senseless destruction of the Orthodox holy things - for example, the removal of the chapel in front of the main railway station in Riga - was halted. In general, the situation of the Church was piteous: churches had been sacked in part during the First World War and in part during the Civil War. They needed repairs, objects used in Divine services and church-servers: most of the parishes were widowed, and there were no candidates for the priesthood. Besides, in everything that concerned the Orthodox Church arbitrariness reigned; she was seen as doomed to extinction. The first leaders of the Latvian Church were not admitted into Latvia since it was considered expedient to keep the Orthodox Church without a head.

Even after the arrival of Archbishop John the situation in Latvia was such that support from outside was not to be expected; the existence of the Church depended, in general, on the solidarity and organization of all her inner resources. This was the immediate aim that the archpastor set in front of him. It was necessary to liquidate the dissension between the Orthodox Russians and Latvians. In spite of opposition from various quarters, Vladyka succeeded in this, the decisive factor being the fact that both the Russians and the Latvians considered him to be their own. Already by the council of 1923 there was complete unanimity between the Russian and Latvian parishes. A "Statute of the Orthodox Church in Latvia" worked out by Vladyka was accepted by all. This guaranteed the children of the Church the rights stipulated by the canons without regard for nationality. The enemies of the Church made attempts to hinder the union of all the Orthodox, but without success. The Church felt united in herself and began to get stronger.

In 1925, Vladyka became the representative of the Russians in the Seim, the Latvian Parliament. From this moment his activity took on enormous dimensions. He managed to obtain the return from the Soviet Union of Church holy objects and property for great sums of money. Orthodox Latvians, who before Archbishop John's arrival had largely concealed themselves "for fear of the Jews", now stepped out boldly behind their fearless pastor, and the Latvian Church experienced the best years of her brief existence. This is shown by the fact that whereas in 1922 the Orthodox in Latvia numbered 138,803, by 1935 they numbered 174,389. The Russian department of the ministry of education witnessed to his heroic efforts, often at great risk to his personal safety, to defend the Church and Russian culture from the attacks of its enemies, to

provide Russian schools and subsidies for them, and to broaden the political, national, cultural and economic rights of the Russian population in Latvia. The churches destroyed in the war were repaired, and the unfinished buildings were completed. The theological seminary was re-established, and there began a flow of candidates for the priesthood. In a few years, according to official statistics, the Orthodox population increased by twenty per cent; thirteen new churches were built and consecrated, and four others were under construction, with still others planned, when the archbishop was martyred.

Vladyka served triumphantly and majestically. His powerful voice became softer when he pronounced the humble litanies. The prayers were said with great feeling which produced an ineradicable impression on those praying, filled as they were with a deep spirit of prayer.

There were few Russian families in the country whom Vladyka did not benefit in one way or another. He also helped foreigners. He was truly the father and defender of his flock. Most of the "state people" of Latvia were his colleagues from the seminary - the wise Tsarist government used to give free education in the seminaries, which was the stepping-stone to entrance into higher educational institutions, and many ministers and directors of departments in Latvia did not forget their old friendship and carried out Vladyka's requests.

In 1927 Metropolitan Sergius issued his notorious declaration, which placed the Russian Church in submission to the God-hating atheists. Archbishop John was one of the first to react negatively to this declaration. He explained his reasons for rejecting the declaration in a letter to Archbishop Eleutherius of Lithuania dated November 2, 1927. Archbishop John continued to have good relations with the Russian Church Abroad, who also opposed Metropolitan Sergius. In 1931, on the tenth anniversary of Vladyka's episcopate in Riga, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), first hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, called him "a courageous defender of Orthodoxy".

Neo-Silvester writes: "Numerous enemies, mainly political ones, energetically worked to weave a thick net of intrigues around him, spreading disgusting slanders against him round the city and defiling his good name, not only as a pastor of the Church, but also as a man. It is difficult to say who precisely occupied himself with this disgusting work. At that time Riga was teeming with Soviet spies, international adventurers and in general seekers of adventures who were ready to commit any abomination for dollars." Intrigues were woven even in the cathedral, a question arose about a shortfall of money in the cathedral cash-box, and there were other attacks. However, "when these and other unconfirmed denunciations failed to shake the trust and respect of the parishioners for the archpastor, the secret enemies turned from complicated intrigues to helping hired thieves and robbers."

Certain secret forces cleverly and systematically led the persecution against Vladyka: breaking off from one form of attack, they quickly turned to another. They must have employed no small amount of energy and money on blackening the great archpastor, and, alas, they had some success.



In the last years of his life, the persecution against Vladyka was conducted mainly through the so-called Russian Christian Student Union or Movement. Vladyka himself, who very much loved children and young people, gladly received the representatives of the young, so groups and even whole classes of students (there were more than a dozen Russian elementary schools and several gymnasia in Riga at that time) often visited him. At the beginning Vladyka was very sympathetic to the newly formed Union. However, as time went on and the essence of this organization with its international links became clear, he left it. The members of the Union resorted to persecution (without being its leaders). Things reached such a pass that at one of the twelve main feasts it was decided, on going up for Holy Unction, not to kiss his hand in a demonstrative way. This plot did not succeed only because Vladyka had been warned and went away into the altar, entrusting the unction to the senior priest.

This persecution became particularly intense after Archimandrite John (Shahovskoy), the future archbishop of San Francisco for the schismatic "Orthodox Church of America", stayed in Riga. Vladyka did not allow him to serve in Riga, evidently because he rightly judged that such a disobedient clergyman must not be encouraged. It seems that the archimandrite went away in a rage. Perhaps this was the first time he had been affronted in such a way in his life. And his pride made the blow still more painful. Although he left, his numerous supporters (mainly female admirers), who constituted the majority of the Union, applied all their efforts to poison Vladyka's life.

His political enemies went so far as to set hooligans on him as he was returning to his dacha one evening. He was walking, as was his wont, the several kilometres from the last tram stop when the hooligans attacked him. However, they had not reckoned with the physical strength of their adversary. Having knocked their heads together so that they saw sparks, he so talked with them that they repented and became his friends. And this was not the only incident of this kind.

A certain Snegiver bought an evening newspaper in Riga and immediately set about using it to attack Vladyka. He wrote an article attacking Vladyka's candidature to the Seim and brought it to the maker-up. But the maker-up brought it to others who reworked it in such a way that it became a hymn of praise to the archbishop's pastoral and social activity. On reading the article, Snegiver went red in the face, beat his fist on the table and shouted that as the publisher he had editorial rights. Vladyka said about Snegiver with his innate wit: "Snegiver is a greyish bird, but its breast is red..."

Again, a certain hysterical young woman brought an action against Vladyka in court saying that he had raped her. The procurator asked her under what circumstances this had taken place. She replied that she had been invited to Vladyka together with a group of young people, and while the other young people had been in the next room he had raped her. The procurator drily explained that this was not called rape. But the slander continued to go the rounds in the city, and someone sent Vladyka postcards written in a woman's handwriting and containing indecent and, of course, completely false details of their "meetings".

Of course, all this could not fail to have an adverse effect on Vladyka's health. His hair began to go grey, deep wrinkles appeared, he became thinner, and his eyes lost their previous glitter. But he patiently bore his cross, following Christ. He probably suffered in soul for the fate of his slanderers and those "little ones" deceived by them.

One of Vladyka's most vivid speeches in the Seim was "In defence of pensions for the clergy". The communist fraction in the Seim had put forward the suggestion that the clergy be deprived of their pensions (the Orthodox Church, like the other Churches, was a State Church, and the priests were usually teachers of the Law of God in schools). The local communists naturally spoke under the slogan: "Why feed these idlers in vain?" Vladyka objected and delivered a brilliant speech. As a result the arguments degenerated into personal attacks against the archbishop, and someone cast aspersions on his past. Vladyka replied that his activities, like those of the whole Latvian clergy, were well-known to all: he organized the Latvian Church, and the priests served it. Then he in his turn posed a question: what does this deputy who has raised this question do? At this point he pulled out a newspaper, in which was printed the order to shoot several Latvians during the Civil War under the signature of this same communist deputy.

Vladyka ended his speech approximately as follows: "I have tried, as far as I have been able, to be of use to the Church and the country, while you have been shooting honourable Latvian patriots!"

What an uproar there was then! The communist fraction showered blows on Vladyka, while he, following the Gospel commandment (Luke 6.29), accepted the blows without defending himself. Finally, one of the Russian deputies came to his aid. The session was adjourned. As a result the law on the pensions of the clergy was passed, and Vladyka's prestige only increased.

Neo-Silvester describes an incident which probably hastened Vladyka's end. It took place once again in the Seim, and Vladyka had delivered a thunderous speech against the leaders of the extreme left parties, unmasking their treachery in favour of the Bolsheviks. Again he waved a sheaf of papers, indicating that they contained deadly documents revealing the base work of the Latvian Marxists and their supporters, even on the right.

"The day will come when these documents here will become public knowledge and the people will know those who are guilty of its woes, will be horrified and will be filled with wrath."

An extraordinary scandal broke out: the Social-Democrats jumped from their seats, shouting: "Out! Out!", while some of them, shaking their fists, hurled themselves menacingly at the orator.

The archbishop stayed calmly in his place, waiting for the passions on the leftist benches to die down. When the president of the Seim had finally introduced order, the orator continued with a smile:

"This whistling, noise and whooping remind me of an incident which took place a very long time ago in one of the villages in the south of Russia. One night a young peasant came for me - I was then a young priest still - and took me to his dying mother. On entering one of these villages, the dogs fell on us with ferocious barks and howls, evidently wanting to throw themselves on me and tear me to pieces.

"Fear not, father,' said my driver, 'they're welcoming you in their doggy language.'

It was impossible to make out what else the orator said because of the extraordinary noise, which drowned even the tinkling of the president's bell...

### Martyrdom

In the life of Archbishop John there were some circumstances which for a while seemed enigmatic. For a long time his slanderers reproached him for the fact that he lived alone, without a cell-attendant. "He is afraid of witnesses," they said.

But when his well-wishers asked him about this, he replied that it was better for him to live alone. Various people came to him, and, besides, he did not want to subject anyone to danger. The meaning of these words became clear only after his martyric death.

And indeed, people of the most various sorts would come to see the archbishop. Famous foreign prelates would come, and poor people and some suspicious-looking ragged creatures. To the end he maintained some sort of underground ties with Russia, and he received information from there by ways known to him alone. No matter how hard the communists tried to seal Russia hermetically, still people would go there and back, and Archbishop John was some kind of transfer point. But he knew how to keep quiet, and hardly anyone knew the details of this aspect of his activities.

Archbishop John was dangerous to the Bolsheviks not only because of his outspoken attacks on them in the Seim and in his sermons, but also because of these "catacomb" activities. And they considered him so dangerous that they killed him. The generally accepted version of his death, which comes from his brother, Anton Pommer:-

Archbishop John was living in his archiepiscopal dacha on Kish lake, where he used to go to recover from the rheumatism he suffered from living in the damp cathedral cellar. Sobinov, a famous singer and a friend of the archbishop's, was passing through Riga. He called on the archbishop, and when the archbishop let him in - his murderers also pushed their way in. Sobinov died the same day in his hotel in mysterious circumstances.

Firemen were called at two o'clock in the morning, and found the archbishop's residence in frightful disorder: cupboards and drawers had been thrown out, the desk had been rummaged, and furniture had been overturned. The archbishop had evidently been wounded in the hall, had been carried on the leaf of a door to the attic, had been tied down on the carpenter's bench (Vladyka liked to do carpentry in his free

time), had been tortured and then set alight with kerosene. An examination of his lungs revealed that he had still been alive at this time, for there was smoke in his lungs. Both stoves in the hall were burning, and in them some papers (probably papers incriminating the Latvian communists in treasonable activity) had been burned. The dacha itself was greatly damaged by fire.

The crime was never properly investigated or explained. But the people knew the truth. At the funeral the whole city was in mourning; 100,000 people - about a quarter of the population of Riga - were in the streets, and over one hundred Orthodox priests together with several representatives of other faiths were present.

A Russian student, M.I. Dobrotvorsky, saw the archbishop, vested and surrounded by unknown worshippers with shining faces, praying beside his body. The body of the archbishop was accompanied by a vast crowd from the cathedral to the Holy Protection Cemetery, where a small chapel was later raised over the grave. Archbishop John died for Christ and the Orthodox Faith on October 12, 1934.

#### 40. HOLY HIEROMARTYRS AND MARTYRS OF MAGADAN (+1934)

At the beginning of 1934 four priests and three laymen were accommodated together. All of them except the layman Alexander were under investigation for conducting religious propaganda among the prisoners. Their names were:

**Hieromonk Raphael**, in the world Roman Korneyevich Melnichuk (Milchuk?), was born in 1888 in Kiev province or St. Petersburg into a peasant family. During the civil war he worked as assistant to the chief of police in Vladikavkaz. Until 1925 he was a teacher in Turkestan, but left this work because of his religious convictions and in 1928 became the cell-attendant of Bishop Mark (Bakaldin). He was of medium height, thin, nervous, a little hunched, and with dark hair. In March, 1931 **Bishop Barsanuphius of Vladivostok** tonsured him into monasticism and ordained him to the priesthood. He was sent to the village of Prokhory, Spassky region, Far Eastern district. However, on May 24, 1931 he was arrested there for "counter-revolutionary activity", and on February 15, 1932 was condemned to five years in the camps for counter-revolutionary activity and for being a member of "the Tikhonite clergy and monastics of the Far Eastern region". He was sent to the Magadan camps.

There he found himself in a tent thirteen kilometres from Magadan, North-East Siberia, on the road to Atka, together with a group of priests, - **Fr. Joseph Telitsa, Fr. Alexander Romanovich Romanov, Fr. Sergius Ananyev**, - and the laymen **Paul Sviridov, Stepan Kozlov** and Alexander. They all, with the exception of Alexander, had been accused of religious propaganda among the prisoners and were under investigation.

Priest Joseph was small, thin, old and hunched over. He was sick, walked with difficulty and kept away from the others. It was clear that he was exhausted from hunger and the heavy work.

Priest Alexander was born in 1903 in Nizhni-Novgorod province into a peasant family. Before 1929 he worked as chief clerk on the Ussuriysk railway. He was sacked because of his religious convictions and became the cell-attendant of Bishop Panteleimon (Maxunov) of Khabarovsk. On June 13, 1931 he was arrested for counter-revolutionary activity, and on February 15, 1932 he was convicted by the OGPU of counter-revolutionary activity and of being "a member of the Tikhonite clergy and monastics of the Far Eastern region". He was of medium height, broad-shouldered, with light-brown hair and beard, big blue eyes and regular features. In spite of his open and welcoming face, he spoke little, not because he didn't trust the others, but rather because of the intense inner work which he carried on within himself.

Priest Sergius was tall, slender, fairly thin, about 40 or 45 years old, with reddish hair and a pale face from which there seemed to come a kind of inner light. Alexander remembered him as a strong, unbreakable man. Externally, he was quiet, silent, a mild-mannered man with unusual self-control. After work, when everybody had gone to sleep, he would stand alone in the passage between the bunks and pray almost the whole night through. Alexander was younger than he, but after work he would fall

asleep completely exhausted. At night he would often wake up and see the figure of the priest praying. For whom was he praying? Apparently for those who surrounded him, for those who needed the Lord's help. Sometimes a criminal would wake up during the night and hurl abuse at him: "Get out of here, or else you'll pray some devil into our midst!" Fr. Sergius quietly moved to another place and continued to pray. What Unseen Power supported him? That Unseen Power which turned simple fishermen into the apostles of Christianity, which gave courage to the first Christians in the age of persecutions.

Paul Svidirov was a simple peasant, of medium height, fairly thin, an elderly man with an open and welcoming face; he attracted people to himself. Everyone thought well of him, even the criminals did not touch him. After arriving at this place, Alexander very quickly got to know him.

Stepan Kozlov was a peasant, a tall, strongly built man with a severe face with strongly marked features and a military bearing, like a soldier of the old school. He spoke very little and usually only with Sviridov and the priests.

They worked together. Once Fr. Raphael said to the layman Alexander: "Believe me, Alexander, in difficult moments I have received help or support. Sometimes it was a person, or the Lord sent me a book which resolves my doubts. But there was always help."

Again, Alexander was once working in a "troika" with Fr. Sergius. The third person was a peasant boy who worked silently, paying no attention to anyone. It was a sunny day, the frost was not fierce, and it was quiet in the forest. They sawed wood, dragged the logs and laid them on a sledge. For a few minutes Alexander and Fr. Sergius were alone together, and could speak. Alexander admitted to Fr. Sergius that in the depth of his soul he was a believer, but hid this from others. Fr. Sergius smiled a kind, all-forgiving smile.

"In the age of the persecutions against the Christians, very many people were secret Christians. So you belong to them."

In the middle of January the four priests, Sviridov and Kozlov were transferred to a strict regime camp. They worked inside the camp, sawing and cutting up wood for the kitchen, or they did cleaning work. Alexander saw them only rarely, mainly only Sviridov. Several times he shared the bread the cook gave him as a reward with Alexander. The snow became deeper and deeper, the wood-felling area was further and further away from the camp, and with each day it became more difficult to fulfil the norm. Almost everyone began to give up. One had to eat one's bread immediately after receiving it, otherwise it could be stolen. In the evenings people crowded into the kitchen asking for more, which nobody usually gave them. Quarrels and fights broke out for no reason. The criminals began to steal from each other; earlier it was only the politicals who had suffered from them. In the evening people would dry their wet mittens and foot bindings by the stove, and they wouldn't leave them for one minute in case they were stolen. After work people would swarm round the rubbish pit looking for the remains of food. These people were doomed to die from disorders

of the stomach or kidneys. Alexander had scurvy and could not get better; he weakened from day to day. The stronger prisoner "troikas", which were made up of peasants, would not accept him, and he had to work with people who were as weak as himself.

Once Alexander had a strange meeting with a man who saved his life. It was morning. Alexander's bast shoes had completely collapsed, and he went to the depot in the hope of exchanging them for better ones. But there was nothing better in the depot. Alexander came out of the gates and ran to catch up with the members of his "troika". Suddenly an unknown man stopped him. He was dressed in a new camp uniform that was dark in colour.

"Where are you going?" he asked. "Why is your footwear torn?"

Alexander explained that he had wanted to exchange his shoes for others, but hadn't found anything.

"But your feet will get frost-bite."

"What can I do? I must go. My mates have already left."

The man in black was silent for a moment, then he began to speak as if trying to convince an invisible interlocuter. He said that the politicals, who were considered to be "enemies of the people", were more conscientious than the criminals, for whom they did everything possible, but who, in spite of that, only stole, lied and were too lazy to work. He made such a strange impression on Alexander, while what he said was completely seditious. Then he turned to Alexander and said:

"I'm the new educator in the penal battalion. My surname is... What is your name? What is your speciality and how did you come here?"

Alexander gave him all this information. The man in black said:

"I shall try and help you. I shall put you on the list for release from the penal battalion and transfer to an ordinary camp."

Alexander thanked him and ran to catch up his team. This man with the strange manners and quiet voice was not like any of the crude administrators, but Alexander did not attach any significance to his promise. The administration in the camps were such inveterate liars that it was impossible to believe them.

However, Alexander was soon released and sent to the Construction section in Magadan. He felt bad, and it was difficult to hope that he would get better. He had to work together with the free workers of the Dalstroy trust, most of whom distanced themselves from the prisoners. Some of them really considered them to be enemies of the people, while others feared to compromise themselves. Only engineer E. showed Alexander any compassion - every day for a month he gave Alexander his coupons for supper in the refectory. It may have been this help which gave Alexander strength

again. The Construction section was housed in a big wooden barracks. A corridor went down the whole length of the barracks, and places for work were on both sides. The entrance into the barracks was in the middle. On the left side of the entrance were the camp institutions, and on the right - the Construction department. In the spring of 1934, at the end of April, during the lunch break, when all the workers scattered, Alexander quickly had his lunch and returned to the barracks. On entering he saw Fr. Raphael at the end of the corridor a soldier with a gun. Disturbed and glad at the same time, Alexander asked the soldier for permission to talk with Fr. Raphael. On receiving permission, he ran to his room, where, fortunately, there lay a whole loaf of black bread - a present from engineer E. He gave the bread to Fr. Raphael, they sat together, and Fr. Raphael told the story of what had happened after Alexander had been transferred from the penal battalion to Magadan.

"We were all put in a separate tent which was within the courtyard and was surrounded by barbed wire. Besides us, there were several criminals who were under investigation. They were all accused of serious crimes committed in the camp. At first they used some of us for work inside the zone, but then they let nobody out of the tent into the courtyard. Once, late in the evening - it was at the end of February or beginning of March, - when everyone was sleeping, the tent was surrounded by soldiers of the military guard. Then an OGPU agent entered with a list in his hands. He called Fr. Alexander Romanov, Fr. Joseph Telitsa, Paul Sviridov, Stepan Kozlov and me. We were all led out of the tent and taken under a redoubled guard in a truck to Magadan. In the truck was one other prisoner. In Magadan the truck went up to the building which housed the I.I.S. (the Information and Investigation Section). All five of us got out of the truck and stood on the street at the entrance. Then they began to summon us to enter the house one after the other. I was taken in last. In a big room by the window, near a writing table, stood K. - the acting head of the I.I.S. At the entrance and around the sides stood OGPU agents. In the middle of the room on the floor sat the two priests, Sviridov and Kozlov. Their hands were bound behind their backs. K. looked at me with a smirk and said:

"Do you see?"

"I see,' I replied.

"Well, what do you see?"

"I see death,' I replied loudly.

"If you don't renounce your Christ, you too can expect the same.'

"No, I will never renounce Him,' I replied.

"He made a sign, they bound my hands and sat me on the floor next to the others. The OGPU agents talked about something with each other. Then they helped us get up from the floor, took me outside and sat me in the truck. We travelled for a comparatively short time and soon turned off the main road. It was late at night. In a glade near a hill was a freshly dug pit. They brought them up to it two at a time and



shot them. I was brought up last. Once more they asked whether I would renounce Christ. I replied that I would not, and read a prayer over myself. In my heart I felt joy that I was counted worthy of a martyr's crown. But they did not shoot me. They unbound my hands and ordered me to dig the grave. The prisoner who had come with us in the truck helped me bury the slain.

"What did you feel?" Alexander interrupted.

"I felt a terrible sorrow and anguish. I had prepared myself for death in Christ, but it had not been given me to die with them, and I had to remain on earth. They sat the two of us in the truck and took us back to the penal battalion. The courage of the slain made a great impression on the soldiers of the guard, they sat in a depressed state, and one of them, who was next to me, somewhat incoherently said that they were not bad people, they were just doing what they had been ordered to do. It seemed that he was justifying himself to himself. But before my eyes a picture rose in my imagination. It seemed to me that I was standing on the bank of a river with a fast and powerful current. The water was black, while the bank was covered with snow. All four of them sat in white clothes in a boat. They pushed off from the bank and sailed across the river, and I alone remained on the bank, longing for them to take me with them in the boat."

Fr. Raphael sat in silence for some time. Apparently he was reliving everything that he had seen. Then he continued:

"When I returned alone to the tent, nobody was sleeping. Fr. Sergius was praying. The next day one of the criminals told me that when they had taken us away, they had all been seized by panic. Some shook as if they had a fever. And then Fr. Sergius got up, he who almost never spoke with anyone, and began to speak. And even the most inveterate thieves and bandits listened to him, holding their breath. And he spoke about the vanity of our life and about that eternal blessedness which awaited those who repented. He spoke about the wise thief and about his forgiveness. And all this was so new and unusual for them. And it seemed to them that someone else was speaking through his lips."

"What happened to Fr. Sergius?"

"Fr. Sergius was soon released from the camp and left."

This was the end of Fr. Raphael's story. Alexander said goodbye to him and never saw or heard of him again. He outlived all the others in this story, and decided to devote himself to writing about the Christian martyrs.

**41. HOLY HIEROMARTYR DEMETRIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF GDOV**  
**(+1935)**

**and those with him**

Archbishop Demetrius (Lyubimov) was born on September 15, 1857 in Oranienbaum into the family of Protopriest Gabriel Markovich Lyubimov (1820-1899), a well-known benefactor and outstanding church-builder and friend of St. John of Kronstadt. The Lyubimovs were from Tambov province.

The future archbishop finished his studies at the St. Petersburg Theological seminary in 1878, and then graduated from the St. Petersburg Theological Academy in 1882 with the degree of candidate of theology. On graduating from the academy he was appointed reader at the Russian church of St. Nicholas in Stuttgart, where the priest was his elder brother Sergius, who later became the rector of the Russian church in Nice. After serving for two years in Stuttgart, Demetrius returned to Oranienbaum, and on September 11, 1884 was appointed teacher of Latin in the local St. Demetrius theological school.

Having married Agrippina Ivanovna Chistyakova, the young teacher was ordained to the priesthood to the priesthood on May 6, 1886 in St. Isaac's cathedral in St. Petersburg by Archbishop Palladius (Rayev) of Kazan and Sviyazhsk, and at the request of his father was appointed to the palace church of St. Panteleimon in Oranienbaum. From September 5, 1895 he took the place of his father as rector of the city church of St. Michael the Archangel.

By 1898 Fr. Demetrius had five children: Sergius, Demetrius, Anna, Gabriel and Nadezhda. A younger son Demetrius may have been born later.

On September 12, 1898 Fr. Demetrius was transferred to St. Petersburg to the big parish church of the Protection of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Kolomna (Sadovaya street), St. Petersburg, where he served until 1925. This church carried out a wide range of charitable works; it ran an orphanage, old age homes, schools, etc. It was located near Senny marketplace, made famous by Dostoyevsky's writings, where the poor and outcasts of society were to be found. Fr. Demetrius had a great love for the poor and his selfless labours for them well justified his surname Lyubimov, meaning "beloved".

On May 14, 1903 he was raised to the rank of protopriest.

After the revolution Fr. Demetrius' wife died. His surviving children were looked after by **Schema-Nun Anastasia** (in the world Alexandra Georgievna Kulikova). By 1935 only Vera remained alive.

On September 6 (5), 1922, Fr. Demetrius was arrested for resistance to renovationism and on September 14 was sentenced to three years' exile. On September 26 he was sent to Uralsk, and at the beginning of 1923 was transferred to Tedzhen in Turkestan. On March 1, 1925 he was released, and on March 31 returned to Petrograd.

In July, 1925, Fr. Demetrius was tonsured into the mantia in the Danilov monastery in Moscow and raised to the rank of archimandrite.

On December 30 / January 12, 1925/26, he was consecrated Bishop of Gdov, a vicariate of the Petrograd diocese by Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and other bishops, but continued to serve in the church of the Protection.

In July, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius issued his famous declaration submitting to Soviet power. In the middle of August Bishop Demetrius, Protopriest Alexander Sovetov and other clergy of the Leningrad diocese sent a letter to Metropolitan Joseph expressing their disagreement with the church position of Metropolitan Sergius. While continuing to serve in the Protection church, Bishop Demetrius now preferred to serve in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, where they did not commemorate Metropolitan Sergius' supporter, Bishop Nicholas (Yarushevich) of Peterhof, commemorating instead Metropolitan Joseph. In December he wrote to the clergy of Siverskaya station: "We had to change our relationship to him [Metropolitan Sergius] only when it was discovered that the epistle [Declaration] was beginning to exert a powerful influence on purely church affairs and to distort the face of the Church not only canonically, but also dogmatically."

On December 12, 1927, Bishop Demetrius, Protopriest Basil Veryuzhsky, I.M. Andreyevsky and Professor Sergius Semyonovich Abramovich-Baranovsky were received in Moscow by Metropolitan Sergius. Bishop Demetrius handed him an appeal by six Petrograd bishops; Fr. Basil gave him one written in the name of the clergy, which had been written by Protopriest Theodore Andreyev; and Andreyevsky gave him one written in the name of the church intelligentsia and written by Professor Abramovich-Baranovsky. The letters called on Sergius to abandon his present church policy, stop transferring bishops arbitrarily and return to the position adopted by Patriarch Tikhon.

Sergius read everything slowly and attentively, but occasionally broke off to make a comment.

"Here you are protesting, while many other groups recognize me and express their approval," he said. "I cannot take account of everyone and please everyone and each group. Each of you judges from your bell-tower, but I act for the good of the Russian Church."

"We also, Vladyko," we objected, "want to work for the good of the whole Church. And then: we are not just one of many small groups, but express the church-social opinion of the Leningrad diocese composed of eight bishops – the better part of the clergy. I express the opinion of hundreds of my friends and acquaintances and, I hope, thousands of likeminded scientific workers of the Leningrad diocese, while S.A. represents broad popular circles.

"You are hindered in accepting my appeal by a counter-revolutionary political ideology," said Metropolitan Sergius, "which was condemned by his Holiness

Patriarch Tikhon," and he got out one of the papers signed by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon.

"No, Vladyko, it is not our political convictions, but our religious conscience that does not allow us to accept that which your conscience allows you to accept. We are in complete agreement with his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon (in the indicated paper). We also condemn counter-revolutionary speeches. We stand on the point of view of the condemnation of your declaration made by Solovki. Do you know this epistle from Solovki?"

"This appeal was signed by one man (Bishop Basil Zelentsov), but others approve of me. Do you know that I was accepted and approved by Metropolitan Peter himself?"

"Forgive us, Vladyko, that is not quite right. It was not the metropolitan himself. But did you hear this through Bishop Basil?"

"Yes, but how do you know?"

"We know this from the words of Bishop Basil. Metropolitan Peter said that he 'understands [ponimaiet]', but does not 'accept [prinimaiet] you. But has Metropolitan Peter not written anything to you?"

"You must know that I have no communications with him!" said Metropolitan Sergius.

"They why, Vladyko, do you say that Metropolitan Peter himself recognized you?"

"Well, what's special in commemorating the authorities?" said Metropolitan Sergius. "Since we recognized them, we also pray for them. Did we not pray for the tsar, for Nero and the rest?"

"But is it possible to pray for the Antichrist?" we asked.

"No, that is impossible."

"But can you vouch that this is not the power of the Antichrist?"

"I can vouch for it. The Antichrist must come for three and a half years, but in this case ten years have already passed."

"But after all, is this not the spirit of the Antichrist, who does not confess that Christ has come in the flesh?"

"This spirit has always been with us from the time of Christ to our days. What antichrist is this, I do not recognize him!"

“Forgive us, Vladyko, you ‘do not recognize him’. Only an elder can say that. But since there is the possibility that this is the antichrist, we do not pray [for him]. Besides, from the religious point of view our rulers are not an authority.”

“How not an authority?”

“A hierarchy is called an authority when not only someone is subject to me, but I myself am subject to someone higher than myself, etc., and all this goes up to God as the source of every authority!”

“Well, that’s a subtle philosophy!”

“The pure in heart simply feel this. But if one reasons, then one must reason subtly, since the question is new, profound, complex and subject to conciliar discussion, and not such a simplified understanding as you give it.”

“But prayer for those in exile and prison is excluded because they have made a political demonstration out of this.”

“And when, Vladyko, will the tenth beatitude be repealed? After all, it, too, can be seen as a demonstration.”

“It will not be repealed, it is part of the liturgy!”

“Prayer for the exiles is also part of the liturgy!”

“My name must be raised in order to distinguish the Orthodox from ‘Borisovschina’, who commemorate Metropolitan Peter but do not recognize me.”

“But do you know, Vladyko, that your name is now pronounced in the renovationist churches?”

“That’s only a trick!”

“Then ‘Borisovschina’ is also a trick!”

“Well, what about the Synod, what don’t you like about it?”

“We do not recognize it, we don’t trust it, but we trust you for the time being. You are the deputy of the Patriarchal locum tenens, but the Synod is some kind of personal secretariat attached to you, is it?”

“No, it is a co-ruling organ.”

“So without the Synod you yourself can do nothing?”

“[after a long period not wanting to reply] Well, yes, without conferring with it.”

"We ask you to report nothing about our matter to the Synod. We do not trust it and do not recognize it. We have come personally to you."

"Why don't you like Metropolitan Seraphim?"

"Can it be that you don't know, Vladyko?"

"That's all slander and gossip."

"We haven't come to quarrel with you, but to declare to you from the many who have sent us that we cannot, our religious conscience does not allow us to recognize, the course that you have embarked on. Stop, for the sake of Christ, stop!"

"This position of yours is called confessing. You have a halo..."

"But what must a Christian be?"

"There are confessors and martyrs. But there are also diplomats and guides. But every sacrifice is accepted! Remember Cyprian of Carthage."

"Are you saving the Church?"

"Yes, I am saving the Church."

"The Church does not need salvation, but you yourself are being saved through her."

"Well, of course, from the religious point of view it is senseless to say: 'I am saving the Church'. But I'm talking about the external position of the Church."

"And Metropolitan Joseph?"

"You know him only from one side. No, he categorically cannot be returned."

According to another account, Bishop Demetrius - who was then 70 years old - fell to his knees before Sergius and exclaimed:

"Vladyka! Listen to us, in the name of Christ!"

Metropolitan Sergius immediately raised him up from his knees, seated him in an armchair, and said in a firm and somewhat irritated voice:

"What is there to listen to? Everything you have written has been written by others earlier, and to all this I have already replied many times clearly and definitely. What remains unclear to you?"

"Vladyka!" began Bishop Demetrius in a trembling voice with copious tears. "At the time of my consecration you told me that I should be faithful to the Orthodox Church

and, in case of necessity, should also be prepared to lay down my own life for Christ. And now such a time of confession has come and I wish to suffer for Christ. But you, by your Declaration, instead of a path to Golgotha propose that we stand on the path of collaboration with a God-fighting regime that persecutes and blasphemes Christ. You propose that we rejoice with its joys and sorrow with its sorrows... Our rulers strive to annihilate religion and the Church and rejoice at the successes of their anti-religious propaganda. This joy of theirs is the source of our sorrow. You propose that we thank the Soviet government for its attention to the needs of the Orthodox population. But how is this attention expressed? In the murder of hundreds of bishops, thousands of priests, and millions of faithful. In the defilement of holy things, the mockery of relics, in the destruction of an immense number of churches and the annihilation of all monasteries. Surely it would be better if they did not give us such 'attention'!"

"Our government," Metropolitan Sergius suddenly interrupted the bishop, "has persecuted the clergy only for political crimes."

"That is a slander!" Bishop Demetrius cried out heatedly.

"We wish to obtain a reconciliation of the Orthodox Church with the governing regime," Metropolitan Sergius continued with irritation, "while you are striving to underline the counter-revolutionary character of the Church. Consequently, you are counter-revolutionaries, whereas we are entirely loyal to the Soviet regime!"

"That is not true!" exclaimed Bishop Demetrius heatedly. "That is another slander against the confessors and martyrs, those who have been shot and those who are languishing in concentration camps and in banishment... What counter-revolutionary act did the executed Metropolitan Benjamin perform? What is 'counter-revolutionary' in the position of Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa?"

"And Karlovtsy Council [of the Russian Church in exile], in your opinion, also did not have a political character?" Metropolitan Sergius interrupted him again.

"There was no Karlovtsy Council in Russia," Bishop Demetrius replied quietly, "and many martyrs in the concentration camps knew nothing of this Council."

"I personally," continued the bishop, "am a completely apolitical man, and if I myself had to accuse myself to the GPU, I couldn't imagine anything of which I am guilty before the Soviet regime. I only sorrow and grieve, seeing the persecution against religion and the Church. We pastors are forbidden to speak of this, and we are silent. But to the question whether there is any persecution against religion and the Church in the USSR, I could not reply otherwise than affirmatively. When they proposed to you, Vladyka, that you write your Declaration, why did you not reply like Metropolitan Peter, that you can keep silence, but cannot say what is untrue?"

"And where is the untruth?" exclaimed Metropolitan Sergius.

"In the fact," replied Bishop Demetrius, "that persecution against religion, the 'opium of the people' according to Marxist dogma, not only exists among us, but in its cruelty, cynicism and blasphemy has passed all limits!"

The two-hour interview failed to convince Metropolitan Sergius. And so, on December 26, in his flat at Kanonerskaya street 29, Bishop Demetrius together with Bishop Sergius of Narva signed an act breaking communion in prayer with Metropolitan Sergius until such time, as he wrote to the priests of the diocese on January 4/17, "as a complete Local Council of the Russian Church, at which will be represented the entire active episcopate - i.e. the present exile-confessors - shall justify by its conciliar authority our way of acting, or until such time as Metropolitan Sergius will come to himself and repent of his sins not only against the canonical order of the Church, but also dogmatically against her person (blaspheming against the sanctity of the exploit of the confessors by casting doubt on the purity of their Christian convictions, as if they were mixed up in politics), against her conciliarity (by his and his Synod's acts of coercion), against her apostolicity (by subjecting the Church to worldly rules and by his inner break - while preserving a false unity - with Metropolitan Peter, who did not give Metropolitan Sergius authorization for his latest acts, beginning with the epistle (Declaration) of July 16/29, 1927). 'Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions' (II Thessalonians 2.15)."

Vladyka Demetrius also considered that "only royal power can be a lawful power". And at his interrogation he said of Soviet power: "We consider that Soviet power, according to our religious reasoning, is not for us a State power that we can submit to. For us an authority is a hierarchy, when not only is someone subject to me, but I myself am subject to someone higher than myself, that is, everything goes up to God, as the source of every authority. In other words, such an authority is the anointed of God, the monarch... We have not hunted after quantity of believers. For us it was important that the members of our organization and our supporters should remain firm, fearing nothing. Our directive, that is, the necessity, if need be, of 'suffering until blood', must be understood in the sense of martyrdom."

On December 30, Sergius banned Bishop Demetrius from serving. Bishop Demetrius expressed his attitude to this ban in a letter to **Fr. Alexander Sidorov**, rector of the church of the Elevation of the Cross on Vozdvizhenka, Moscow, as follows: "Do not be disturbed by any restrictions that the apostates from the Christian Faith are preparing for you. No interdicts or ejections of you from your rank by Metropolitan Sergius, his Synod or his bishops are valid for you. As long as there remains just one firmly Orthodox bishop, have communion with him. If the Lord permits it, and you remain without a bishop, then may the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, be with you all, inspiring you to solve all the questions which you may encounter on your path in the spirit of True Orthodoxy."

At this time Bishop Demetrius was supported by **Bishop Sergius** (Druzhinin) of Kopor, **Bishop Basil** (Dokhturov) of Kargopol and **Bishop Barsanuphius** (Vikhvelin) of Nikolsk. To these should be added the former Petrograd vicar, **Archbishop Gabriel** (Voyevodin) of Yamburg, who was living in retirement in Vitebsk. In exile at that time were other bishops who thought like him: **Bishop Victor** (Ostrovidov) of Glazov and



**Bishop Maximus** (Zhizhilenko) of Serpukhov, and in freedom still – **Bishop Ioasaph** (Popov) of Dmitriev, who was living in Yekaterinoslav (then Dnepropetrovsk). He was also in contact with the canonical head of the Russian Church, **Metropolitan Peter** (Polyansky) of Krutitsa, who was in exile in Siberia at the time and who wrote to Metropolitan Joseph: “We bishops must ourselves reject Metropolitan Sergius”.

Vladyka Demetrius was also supported by forty-two churches in the Petrograd diocese (including monasteries and monastic podvoryes), and in the Novgorod diocese – by the parish of the Spassky church in Novgorod, the churches in the villages of Velebitsy and Makovishchi, and the men’s Theophany Perekom monastery on Ilmen lake.

On January 4/17, 1928 Bishop Demetrius wrote “to Father Superiors”: “Metropolitan Sergius... has sinned not only against the canonical order of the Church, but also dogmatically against her person, blaspheming the holiness of the exploit of her confessors by suspecting that their Christian convictions were impure and supposedly mixed with politics, against her Catholicity – by their and the synod’s violent actions, against her Apostolicity – by subjecting the Church to secular orders and by the inner break with Metropolitan Peter (while preserving a false unity), who did not give Metropolitan Sergius the right to carry out his recent actions...”

On January 25, Metropolitan Sergius retired Vladyka while keeping him under ban, mercilessly declaring that for insubordination "our Church threatens direct excommunication and anathema, depriving those guilty of even the right to a conciliar judgement (!)". On February 8, Metropolitan Joseph appointed him temporary administrator of the Petrograd diocese. With the agreement of Metropolitan Joseph, whose advice he always sought, he also accepted many other parishes under his omophorion from as far afield as the Urals, Krasnoyarsk and Archangelsk. Indeed, until his arrest Archbishop Demetrius was the most active and authoritative of all the bishops of the Catacomb Church who were still in freedom.

On March 27, Vladyka Demetrius was again retired and placed under ban by Metropolitan Sergius. In this decree Vladyka was accused of “deviating from Orthodoxy”, of calling on the people “to break canonical communion in prayer with Metropolitan Sergius... and the bishops who think like him”, and of calling all the sergianist churches “neo-renovationist churches”.

According to one (doubtful) source, Vladyka Demetrius signed the decisions of the so-called “Nomadic Council” of the Catacomb Church, which took place between March and August, 1928, through **Protopriest Victorin Dobronravov**.

On Christmas Day, December 25, 1928 Bishop Demetrius was raised to the rank of archbishop by Metropolitan Joseph.

At the beginning of 1929, the Bolsheviks had laid a tax on the sale of candles in churches. The churches which had separated from Metropolitan Sergius then refused to sell candles. This served as an excuse for the arrest of Archbishop Demetrius on the night of November 28-29, 1929. At that time he was living in a two-storeyed house on

Segalevskaya (then - Yunij Proletarij) street in the village of Taitsy, not far from Gatchina. This belonged to the young priest Fr. Peter Belavsky, the rector of the local church of St. Alexis of Moscow. Together with them the chekists also took Protopriest Peter Ivanovich Belavsky, Vladyka's cell-attendant **Deacon Paul Morozov** and his faithful housekeeper, **Nun Anastasia** (Kulikova).

At dawn, as they were being taken to the railway station, parishioners who met them silently bowed to them. Suddenly Vladyka Demetrius said:

"Forgive me, Father Peter, that you also have come into suffering because of me!"

The chekists had "mercifully" allowed Fr. Peter's wife, Xenia, to accompany her husband. At the crossroads she parted from them and received Vladyka's last blessing. On returning to her emptied house and her two daughters, matushka sat by their beds and explained to the elder daughter, Xenia, what had happened...

That evening and the following day all the clergy of the Petrograd cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ ("The Saviour on the Blood") were arrested: **Protopriests Basil Veryuzhsky, John Nikitin, Alexander and Sergius Tikhomirov, Priests Nicephorus Strelnikov and Nicholas Prozorov** from the St. Panteleimon church on Piskarevka, **Hieromonk Gabriel (Vladimirov), Fr. Nicholas Zagovorsky, Fr. Sergius Alexeyev, Fr. Basil Vertosky**, and also many monastics, including **Nun Cyra**, and about **15 laypeople**. The arrests continued until March, 1930 and included among others **11 monks** of the Theophany Perekom monastery near Novgorod, and also **clergy and laity** of the Pskov diocese. In all forty-six people were indicted under article 58-10-11 of the criminal code, as belonging to the fictitious "All-Union counter-revolutionary church-monarchist organization 'The True Orthodox Church'". Vladyka himself was accused of being "the leader of the church group, 'Defence of True Orthodoxy'". The operation began throughout the whole country in the spring of 1929 and ended in 1932.

Vladyka was put in solitary confinement in the prison on Voinova (the former Shpalernaya) street. He was charged with counter-revolutionary activity as the head "of the centre of a counter-revolutionary monarchist organization of churchmen calling themselves 'Josephites'". From April he was placed in solitary confinement in Butyrki prison, Moscow in connection with the affair of the "All-Union Centre of the True Orthodox Church".

On August 4/17, 1930, he was sentenced to ten years in a political isolator in Yaroslavl. In the autumn of 1930 Archbishop Demetrius was investigated in connection with the affair of "the All-Union Centre of the True Orthodox Church". On September 3, 1931 he was sentenced to be shot. However, "in view of his advanced age", the sentence was commuted to ten years in prison. According to the witness of one Catacomb Christian, he was savagely tortured in prison. According to a sergianist source, Vladyka "behaved calmly and firmly during interrogations". From 1931 to 1935 he was in Yaroslavl isolation prison, and in December, 1935 the Political Red Cross told his daughter, Vera Dmitrievna, that he had died on May 17, 1935 -

according to one source, in the arms of **Bishop Sergius** (Druzhinin), the future hieromartyr. His body was buried in a cemetery next to the prison.

**42. HOLY HIEROMARTYRS SERAPHIM (+1921), THEOGNOSTUS  
(+1921) AND HERACLIUS (+1937) OF KIRGIZIA**

**and those with them**

**Hieromonk Seraphim**, in the world Alexander Efimovich Bogoslovsky, was born in 1881 in the city of Glukhov, Chernigov province. He was the son of pious parents, Euthymius and Maria. Euthymius was the steward of a landowner. Maria was a meek woman who constantly went to church. When Priest Seraphim was still a boy, it was revealed to his mother in a dream that her son would receive a martyr's crown. Another time, when Priest Seraphim was singing some church songs, his mother saw a wreath over his head and angels with him, and she again told him that he would have a martyric end. Thinking deeply about these words of his mother, he reasoned: "If my end is going to be martyric, what is there for me to look for in the world?" And he set off for Glinsk Desert in Kursk province, where he became a monk in 1907.

Priest Seraphim was a highly educated monk of a lofty spiritual life. He had a talent for iconography and was endowed with a fine voice. His spiritual father was Hieromonk Domnus (Aggeyev), with whom he maintained a spiritual link even after his death in 1908. In Glinsk Desert Priest Seraphim had an obedience in the icon-painting workshop, but was also a fine reader.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Bishop Alexander (Kulchitsky) of Verny and Semirechiye consecrated a men's monastery of the Holy Trinity in the village of Kuturg near Przhevalsk on the Issyk-Kul lake. In the second decade of the century **Hieromonks Seraphim, Theognost, Heraclius, Pachomius and Anatolius** were sent there to Central Asia to do missionary work from Glinsk Hermitage. In 1909 Fathers Seraphim and Anatolius were ordained to the priesthood in the cathedral church of Verny (Alma-Ata), and in 1916 Hieromonk Anatolius was placed in charge of the choir of the cathedral church.

Priest Seraphim did not like the vanity of city life, and in his spare time he together with other monks would go away to the mountainous region of Medeo, where they built a skete with wooden cells and an underground church in honour of St. Seraphim on Mokhnataya mountain. Priest Seraphim made all the utensils and painted the icons for the church.

At about this time a women's community was founded in Verney which was turned in 1910 into the Iveron-Seraphimovsky monastery. Priest Seraphim was placed in charge of the nuns' spiritual direction.

In 1911 Bishop Demetrius allowed Priest Seraphim to live a desert life in the mountains, fifteen versts from the city. Within a year he was joined by Priest Anatolius, and in 1913 two other monks joined them, Priest Anthony, who was from the monastery in Issyk-Kul, and Priest Ezekiel, who was from Mount Athos. Finally, they were joined by several laymen who wore long hair, ryasas and podryasniks: Michael, Elijah, Firs and others. They lived on herbs and vegetables. In 1913 major disturbances began in the women's Iveron-Seraphimovsky monastery. Priest

Seraphim, grieving over the fate of the monastery, in which spiritual life was fading away, took his spiritual children out of it and decided to find for them a more remote place. He found it in the Aksai gorge on the Maly Kyzyl-Zhar mountain. Ascending the mountain, the monks towards dusk saw an unearthly radiance. Returning, they said: "What a wonderful place this is! How joyful it is there! What holiness there is there, what beauty, what grace!" On the mountain the monks built cells about one hundred metres from each other. They dug out three caves: in one they kept food, and in the two others they prayed. (The caves exist to the present day.) In the mountains the monks sowed oats, harvested hay, kept bees and, perhaps, cut little crosses and church utensils out of wood. On the other side of the gorge, across the little river, there was an apiary where an old bee-keeper lived with his children. The monks loved to be with the bee-keeper and chat with him.

Many years later, when the monks were already living in the Aksaisky gorge, Priest Seraphim had the following vision in a light sleep. The three of them - Priest Anatolius, Priest Theognostus and Priest Seraphim - were walking along the gorge, when they saw a church. And what a church! How beautiful it was! All three of them went into the church, but Priest Anatolius came out of the church and ran away. Five burning chandeliers were hanging in the church. One of them, the central one, began to sway as if someone were pushing it from side to side. It broke off and fell to the ground, but two chandeliers continued to hang without moving. Then Priest Seraphim woke up...

In the summer of 1916 there was an uprising of the Kirgizians, and they attacked the Issyk-Kul monastery. At that time Hieromonks Pachomius and Theognostus were there, as well as Monk Heraclius. In 1916 Priest Theognostus was confirmed as dean and assistant of the laypeople's spiritual father. Priest Heraclius told the story of how the Kirgizians burst into the monastery and began to demand valuables. But the monks had no treasures. The bandits shouted and raved, and finally ordered them to get what valuables they had ready by a definite day, threatening them with punishment if they failed to carry out this command. Then a part of the brotherhood left the monastery: some into the mountains, others to the nearest settlements. Priest Heraclius and the elderly monks remained. On the appointed day they all received Confession and Communion of the Holy Mysteries. The Kirgizians arrived in the morning and began to knock on the doors with their sabres. The monks did not open up and prayed.

"I was filled with fear," remembered Priest Heraclius, "it was evidently not time for me to die, I was not ready. I ran to the bell-tower and began to look for a place to hide. I rushed around and climbed under some planks which were lying near the iron roof. The Kirgizians broke down the doors, went into the monastery and looted it: they smashed the icons and took away the church utensils - the chalices, the trays and the crosses. Then the execution began in the courtyard. I was lying under the roof, and I could see everything. It was very hot. The iron of the roof was glowing so much that I almost burned up. I very much wanted to drink, but I had to endure everything. The monks' noses, ears, arms and legs were cut off by sabres. They made a man like a samovar, blood was pouring out of him. I don't know how I bore all this. Then they hung one elder up head down and began to tear the skin off him. They tore it off and stuffed it into his mouth with the cry:

"Hold it!"

"His head hung down holding his own skin. He was covered in blood. They didn't spare any of them, but cut off limbs from everyone. Towards evening, at the setting of the sun, the Kirgizians got on their horses and left. All this time I had been lying under the roof. Then people appeared from the settlements and the monks who had gone away began to come up. Then I tried to get out of my hiding place. I collapsed onto the floor of the bell-tower. I couldn't move my arms or my legs. I wanted to drink, and slid over the floor so as to get away, if only for a short distance. Finally I fell down. The brothers saw me and gave me water. We all wept. By morning the wounded had died, and we buried them. The authorities came from the town, and they decided to close the monastery."

When the revolution came, terrible scenes were witnessed. Women dressed up in priests' vestments and hierarchical mitres and went round the city on carts singing and dancing. During the night Nun Magdalene ran to Priest Seraphim in his mountainside skete. She had not yet opened the door to his cell when he met her and said:

"I know why you've come. Domnus told me:

"Seraphim, Seraphim, they'll remove the tsar and quick-quick! everything will go to ruin."

The monastery was closed after the revolution, and the monks dispersed in different directions. Fathers Heraclius, Seraphim, Theognostus, Pachomius and Anatolius went to Medeo on the Moknataya mountain. In 1917, after the closure of the Verny Iveron-Seraphim women's monastery, they gave the skete on Medeo to the nuns and moved to the skete on Kyzyl-Zhar. There was communication between the sketes on Medeo and Kyzyl-Zhar; they went through the mountains on horseback. Every Sunday Priest Seraphim would go to the nuns' skete to serve the Liturgy. Nun Magdalene remembered that when he served the Liturgy it was impossible to look into the altar - there was an unusual radiance there. And when the door of the vestry opened into the altar, it was impossible to look at Priest Seraphim, for he was standing in some kind of radiance. At that point fear and trembling would come over Nun Magdalene, and she would have to leave the altar.

One of the first victims of the repressions that followed the October, 1917 revolution was a spiritual daughter of Priest Seraphim, **Nun Eudocia**. Nun Magdalene tells the story:

"This took place in the summer. Priest Seraphim served the Liturgy in the morning on Medeo. Mother Eudocia went to him for confession and communion, but forgetfully ate a poppy-head which grew in our flower-garden. Priest Seraphim accepted her confession, but did not communicate her, saying:

"It's wrong, why did you eat the poppy?"

"And he sent her back to the monastery.

"Later he was upset: 'If only I had known they were going to kill her, I would have given her communion, of course.'

"In the evening some people with guns came to the monastery demanding that the general's daughter be handed over to them. The sisters were frightened and hid Mother Euphrosyne in the barn behind some sacks of flour. The soldiers, having searched for the abbess without success, took their revenge by placing the **Nuns Eudocia** and **Animaisa** against the monastery wall and firing at them. A bullet pierced Mother Eudocia's head and tore away the lower part of her face. Mother Animais was wounded in the shoulder, but soon recovered in one of the town hospitals.

"The shooting of the nuns took place in front of the eyes of the monastery sisters. Sister Theodora (Daurtseva), a close friend of Nun Eudocia, on seeing her disfigured face, suffered shock and fell ill with a nervous disorder. The bloodied and mutilated face kept appearing before her eyes. Mother Eudocia appeared to her in her sleep and said:

"Theodora, why are you weeping, what are you afraid of? Don't weep, you can see that I am as I was.'

"After this vision Mother Theodora stopped seeing the disfigured face and became calmer."

Not long before his death, Priest Seraphim was sitting with his spiritual children, **Nuns Alexandra, Tatyana, Darya, Eusebia and Magdalene**, in the flower-garden by the cross on Moknataya hill.

"Sisters," he said, "after me you will suffer great sorrows."

He gave them the Holy Gifts in a small box sewn into a cloth cover with a strap for carrying on the breast, and said:

"When you are in prison and you find out that there is a priest there, write your sins on a piece of paper and secretly hand it to him, so that he can give you absolution. When he has absolved you, read the prayers which you remember, and, having taken the Holy Gifts in a spoon, communicate."

At the beginning of the thirties all four nuns were in prison, and they had great consolation in their suffering through the Communion of the Holy Gifts which Nun Magdalene had kept under the framework of an icon.

Foreseeing his death, Priest Seraphim said to his spiritual daughters: "I will die. I will be buried here. You come to my grave every year."

The nuns, novices and parishioners fulfilled his command...

The summer of 1921 was very rainy and a very powerful mountain torrent was formed which rushed through the town of Verny on the day of the feast of the Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God. In August, all five of the monks went to the town for the feast of St. Panteleimon the healer. Two of the monks - Fathers Heraclius and Pachomius - spent the night in the town, while Fathers Theognostus, Seraphim and Anatolius returned to the mountains. When they came up to the skete, they saw that two Red Army soldiers (one Russian and one Dungan) were tending a herd of horses. In the evening, the soldiers went to the cell of Priest Seraphim, who treated them to tea and honey. Then Priest Seraphim went and told Priest Anatolius:

"They're rather suspicious. They arrived, drank tea and were silent, looking round like wild beasts. I gave them a place to sleep, but they're not sleeping, they're all the time talking."

"Look," said Priest Anatolius, "don't say anything superfluous."

Priest Seraphim always used to preach to everyone about the end of the world, that it was coming soon. So Priest Anatolius said:

"Don't make a mistake in what you say."

"What can I tell them? - I'm frightened for them, my whole soul is trembling."

The three lay down to sleep, but Priest Seraphim did not sleep. At dawn, the soldiers came up to Priest Seraphim's cell and stuck a gun in his back.

"Anatolius!" he shouted.

At that moment they shot him twice. Then they went into the cell of Priest Theognostus, who was sleeping at that moment, and shot him point-blank. On hearing the shots and Priest Seraphim's shout, Priest Anatolius rushed towards the apiary. He arrived dead tired, naked, having almost drowned in the river. The soldiers ransacked the cells; evidently they were looking for money. They came away with nothing.

Priest Heraclius, who was spending the night in the town, saw in a dream that Ethiopians were attacking the skete. In the morning some people came from the apiary into the town and told what had happened. The monks, nuns and several parishioners went to the skete, but it was three days before they arrived: the river had overflowed and carried away the footbridge. They crossed the river only on the fourth day. They found Priest Theognostus lying in his cell with his prayer-rope in his hands. Priest Seraphim was lying in a glade, in the very place where the graves of the martyrs are now situated. Apparently he had been wounded and died from loss of blood. They dug out a grave, covered it with planks and, wrapping the monks in their mantias, buried them without coffins. They put crosses on it and planted four fir-trees beside it.



Then they went to the skete on Medeo and Priest Anatolius served the burial service. How he wept! And they commemorated Priest Seraphim for forty days in the cell which he had built. They did the same in all the churches in the town. There was a Liturgy every day, because he was greatly venerated by all.

On the fortieth day after the death of Fathers Seraphim and Theognostus, the eight-year-old Stefanida, the daughter of Nun Magdalene's sister, Eudocia Volkova, whose family was often visited by Priest Seraphim, had a vision just before waking. Priest Seraphim was walking with a joyful, radiant face, and in front of him was a burning candle on a candlestick, and behind him, also very joyful, was Priest Theognostus. They were dressed in the same clothes they had been buried in: Priest Theognostus in a cassock, and Priest Seraphim with the light half-coat that he had put on over his cassock on the night of his murder. They were going to worship the Lord.

At that moment the girl was woken up by her mother. She wept:

"Mama, angels were meeting them, but you didn't let me see the Lord giving them new clothes."

They found the murderers, but the military tribunal refused to judge them. They said:

"They killed some monks, but we ourselves kill monks."

Later these two did away with some official. They were judged and sentenced to be shot.

The old bee-keeper who lived near the monks gave the following testament to his children:

"Give tea and honey with table-spoons to those who come to the funeral meals. Let them eat the honey with the spoons and commemorate the batyushkas."

In the 1950s the believers used to go for a funeral meal there after the feast of St. Panteleimon; and, as always, they would drop in on the bee-keeper. The apiary had become state property by this time, but the bee-keepers descendants still remained there. On the bee-keeper's side of the mountain they built dachas. The bee-keepers were amazed by the arrival of the believers, and asked whether they had not already been to the graves that year. It turned out that one night they had heard church chanting coming from the direction of the graves, and saw a light on the mountain through the fir-trees. They thought it was a bonfire. They decided that the pilgrims had come ten days earlier than usual, and were offended that they had not dropped in on the apiary. In their sorrow, the next morning they poured out a small barrel of honey - we'll eat it nevertheless, they said - and themselves went to the graves. But they found no evidence that anyone had been there. Then they remembered that their relatives had said that they had more than once heard church chanting at the graves.

Metropolitan Joseph was very interested in this question, and often said in conversations that a miracle took place at the place of the burial of the martyrs, but he did not say what this miracle was. People who have made pilgrimages to this place unanimously recognize that there is a special presence of the grace of God there.

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In 1922 the monastery at Medeo was closed, the nuns were expelled, and part of the buildings was torn down to be used in building works. After all that had happened, Fathers Pachomius, Heraclius and Anatolius did not remain at the skete.

**Schema-Monk Heraclius**, who was born Sergius Mityakha in 1863 in Chernigov province, was tonsured on March 25, 1905 in the Holy Trinity monastery in Issyk-Kul. Having escaped the uprising of the Kirghiz in 1916, he went to live in the skete on the Kyzyl-Zhar mountain. After the shooting of Frs. Seraphim and Theognost he lived in the mountains near Alma-Ata, and in 1927 went to the Issyk-Kul lake. In Talgar station he lived with I.D. Dmitriev. He refused to settle in his house, but built himself a cell in the garden. He was sometimes visited by the Verny nuns Alexandra, Theodora, Euthalia, Maria and Magdalene. Priest Heraclius often went off for long periods into the mountains. In 1928 Dmitriev and his whole family were arrested and sent into exile by the Aral Sea. Then Priest Heraclius became a schema-monk. Not long before his arrest, Priest Heraclius moved to the village of Sazanovka (now Ananyevo) near Przhivalsk on Issyk-Kul and settled in the garden of the family of Adrian Maximovich Dubinin, who gave the following account:

"When Priest Heraclius arrived in Sazanovka in 1928, he did not know where to lay his head. My brother Miron took him to live in his house. He plastered and whitewashed the bath-house in the garden and settled Priest Heraclius there. In 1929 they carried out a search in my brother's house and I took Priest Heraclius to live with me, settling him in a small room in my house. He was already an old man. He rarely left the house and went into ever deeper reclusion in his cell. People were coming to him all the time, everyone with his own needs. He was the only such elder we had in the whole region.

"In 1936, on the eve of Pascha, Priest Heraclius went to the neighbouring village of Semenovka, where a sick monk lived. He said he very much wanted to pray with a monk at Pascha. At that time it was like this for the feast - all the priests were in prison. They would hold them for about a week and then release them. On the Friday the shroud would be brought out, and then on the Saturday morning they - they were our own village fishermen, but they had been given authority to devastate the population - went into the church. The service was taking its usual course, and they went straight through the Royal Doors. They dragged the priest out of the altar, began to roll those cigarettes and smoke and - puff-puff - the church was filled with the stuff. So we ourselves served that Pascha ourselves, without a priest, as best we could.

"In the morning, when the kuliches were blessed, Priest Heraclius came. He was joyful, all radiant. We exchanged kisses, sat down to break the fast and talk. He said:

"Well, brother, this is my last Pascha. At Ascension I will depart to the Lord.'

"Batyushka,' I said, 'you know, at Ascension they'll take the priests without fail. Who, then, will take you out and bury you?'

"You will.'

"Then he gave me some oil from Jerusalem and said:

"You'll pour this oil over me. You'll cut out a woven cherubim and cover my face with it.'

"He lay down on the Wednesday, the eve of the Ascension, and on the Thursday, the very day of the feast [June 10, 1937], he quietly died. My father and brothers and I dressed him in the vestments of a schema-monk and I did as he had showed and explained to me: I covered his face with a cherubim. The whole community came to bury him. What a lot of people! They came from all the surrounding villages. We buried him beyond the village, not far from the monks of the Issyk-Kul monastery who had been killed by the Kirgizians..."

In 1975 Priest Heraclius' grave was found to be completely incorrupt, as if new...

**Priest Anatolius** was a highly educated man who was ordained to the priesthood in 1909. He lived for a while in Verny, serving in the All-Saints church of the Iveron-Seraphim monastery, until it was closed in 1922. (It continued to function for a while after its official closure.) He used to direct the choir, write music, sing and play on the accordion. In the middle of the 1920s he left for Sukhumi, where he lived in the mountains. He continued to correspond with the Verny nuns. Then the news was received that he had been arrested and shot.

**Monk Victor** (Matveyevich Matveev) was born on October 11, 1871 in the village of Borovichi, Novgorod province into the family of a soldier. In his youth he was healed of an incurable disease by St. John of Kronstadt, who blessed him to live the life of a wanderer, living on bread, sugar and tea. He came to Alma-Ata before the revolution. A fool-for-Christ, he was a great man of prayer. Alexandra Nastenka Nagibina recalled seeing him praying about 1.5 metres above the earth with his arms outstretched. He lived with Hieromonk Pachomius and Schema-Monk Tikhon on the Gorelnik mountain in the Medeo region. When Priest Pachomius left his cell, Priest Victor remained. As before he visited the nuns in the Nikolsky church. However, after the arrest of Priest Alexander Skalsky and Priest Stefan Ponomarev on December 10, 1931, he no longer went to the church. Then A. Nagibina and Nun Mariamna would go to him on Gorelnik mountain. From the beginning of the 1930s to his arrest he lived in Aksai gorge. On September 2, 1935 he was arrested at night in the mountains. Alexandra Nagibina was arrested at the same time. Priest Pachomius and the other monks were arrested a little later in the town. On January 28, 1936 he was convicted of being "the leader of the Alma-Ata part of the counter-revolutionary group of churchpeople", and in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 was sentenced to five years' exile in Kazakhstan. From prison in Alma-Ata Priest Victor was taken to

Karaganda, and from there, in 1936, to Kzyl-Orda. He was in exile in Orlovka settlement, Chayanovsky region, South Kazakhstan. In December, 1937 he was arrested again, and on December 30 was convicted of being "a participant in a counter-revolutionary organization of churchpeople", of "systematic counter-revolutionary activity", of "wide links with clergy and believers for counter-revolutionary ends" and of "taking measures to build cells in the mountains". He was sentenced to death in "The Case of the Counter-Revolutionary Organization of Churchpeople of Chayanovksy region, South Kazakhstan province, 1937". **Priests John Mironovsky and Vladimir Preobrazhensky** were also indicted with him. The indictment claimed that this group of churchpeople were led by the Catacomb hierarchs Joseph of Petrograd, Cyril of Kazan and Eugene of Rostov. On December 31, at 24.00, Monk Victor was shot with Frs. John and Vladimir. (According to another version, in 1936, on the way from Alma-Ata to Karaganda, Priest Victor was thrown out of an airplane.)

**Hieromonk Pachomius**, in the world Prochor Petrovich Rusin, was born in 1880 in the village of Generalshino, Kursk province. He became a novice in the SS. Peter and Paul monastery in Chernigov province before joining the Glinsk monastery. After 1921 he lived for some time secretly together with Frs. Victor and Tikhon on the Gorelnik mountain. Occasionally he would go to the town and stay with the nuns. He was very quiet.

A. Nagabina recalls: "We would come after the all-night vigil and drink some tea. Matushka Euphalia would ask him:

"Father Pachomius, say two or three words, say a living word for the salvation of the soul!"

"Ha, ha,' he said. 'Sisters, pray. Read the Jesus prayer.'

"And that was all. Or he would serve in his cell on Medeo and the sisters would ask him:

"Father Pachomius, today is such a great feast, say a few words!"

"And all he would say would be: 'Sisters, you must pray, truly pray. You must not forget the Jesus prayer.'"

Priest Pachomius also organized a secret monastic skete near Talgar in the Tyan-Shan mountains. There he dug out two cells in the Aktar gorge. He wandered much at this time, always with Priest Victor.

At the end of the 1920s there was a severe persecution of the clergy, monastics and laity. They also attacked the desert-dwellers in the mountains, and so Priest Pachomius was forced to leave and lived in the Alma-Ata with various people. He served in secret and at night, performing liturgies, weddings and funerals in the dug-out of Callistratus Ivanovich. During the day he would go to his cave-cell in the mountains. He often went with the nuns to the graves of Fathers Seraphim and

Theognostus. After the Liturgy in the morning he would weep and weep. Then he would cough and say:

"The Lord took them to Himself, but I knock about all the time. How good it would have been for me to have been together with them. Well, I was not counted worthy of it."

Another struggler in the mountains was **Hieromonk Macarius**, in the world Akim Ivanovich Ermolenko, who was born in 1864 in the village of Nikolayevka, Voronezh province. In 1914 he became a regimental priest in the 275<sup>th</sup> Izyum regiment. For many years he struggled in the village of Pekha, Sukhumi region, Abkhazia. In 1929 he moved to Alma-Ata and settled in a dugout in the mountains.

Another struggler was **Hieromonk Dositheus**. Until 1914 he had struggled on Novy Afon. Then he went to Russia for some reason, but could not return because the border was closed by the war. He lived a very strict life in the mountains, and near him there lived Nuns Dosithea, Dorothea, Claudia and Maria.

In the summer of 1933 **Hieromonks Pachomius, Macarius and Dositheus** were arrested together with the church warden **Ivan Savelyevich Merzlikin** (born 1874 in the settlement of Talgar, Alma-Ata province, where he also served) and **Nuns Rafaila** (S.P. Arkhelova, a former inhabitant of the Kazan monastery in Barnaul, from Tashkent), **Seraphima** (Dombrovskaya, also from Tashkent), **Dorothea, Dosithea and Claudia**. They were all driven on foot to Dzhalal-Abad, thirty versts away in Kirgizia.

Details of the condemnation and punishment are not known. However, in September, 1935 Hieromonks Pachomius and Macarius and several of the nuns were arrested again in the village of Talgar. Also arrested, on September 2, was **Monk Anthony**, in the world Anatolius Mikhailovich Kischenko, who was born in 1902 in the village of Shiryaevo, Yaroslavl province. On January 28, 1936 a special commission of the NKVD heard "The Case of Hieromonks Macarius (Ermolenko), Pachomius (Rusin) and others, Kazakhstan, 1936". Again, full details of the condemnation and sentence are not known. However, there were reports that Priest Dositheus and Nuns Dorothea, Dosithea, Claudia and Maria were shot, while Priest Pachomius was taken to Alma-Ata, suffered terrible indignities in the prison, and was finally shot there in 1938. Priest Macarius was released because of old age. Priest Anthony was exiled to Kazakhstan for three years in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11. Nun Rafaila was exiled to Samarkand in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 and died there. Nun Seraphima died in Tashkent.

**Nuns Alexandra, Tatyana, Darya and Magdalene** were sentenced to three years in the camps in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11. They were all sent to the Komi region.

Also convicted in this case were:

**Subdeacon Michael Nikolayevich Kapkanov** was born in 1902 in the village of Yelen, Penza province, and served in the Nikolskaya church in Alma-Ata. He was

arrested in 1936, and on January 28 was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 to three years' imprisonment. Nothing more is known about him.

**Monk Tavrion**, in the world Titus Polikarpovich Karasenko. He was born in 1889 in the village of Lebedevka, Kursk province. He was arrested in Alma-Ata on November 16, 1935, and on January 28, 1936 was sentenced to three years in the camps in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11.

**Nun Modesta** (M.P. Kontsevykh). She had been struggling in the community in Talgar. She was arrested on September 8, 1935 and condemned to three years' exile in Kazakhstan on January 28, 1936. She was imprisoned in Alma-Ata, and then sent to Komi ASSR.

**Nun Eusebia** (Xenia Churlyayeva). She joined the Iversko-Seraphimovsky monastery in 1913 at the age of twelve, and was a spiritual daughter of Hieromonk Seraphim (Bogoslovsky). When disturbances began in 1913, Nun Eusebia was one of those whom Priest Seraphim took to the skete at Medeo near Alma-Ata. Then nuns themselves then chose a more secluded place on Kyzyl-Zhara mountain in the Aksaisk gorge. Priest Seraphim was martyred in 1921, and in 1922 the nuns were expelled. They continued to live in the mountains. In 1930 it was suggested that they join a collective farm, but they refused. They left their property in the forest area, and left for Alma-Ata. In September, 1935 Nun Eusebia was arrested with **Nun Barbara** (Marinina) in Alma-Ata and condemned to three years' exile in Kazakhstan on January 28, 1936. They were imprisoned in Alma-Ata, and then sent to Komi ASSR. Ten years later Nun Barbara returned from prison and told her fellow nuns that Nun Eusebia had died in prison from exhaustion. To her last breath she was singing: "O Ardent Protectress..." and other hymns. And when she felt her strength leaving her, she asked Barbara: "Sing, Barbara, help me, help!" So she died with prayer on her lips.

**George Yakovlevich Shulgin**. He was born in 1893 in Talgar settlement, Alma-Ata province. On January 28, 1936 he was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 to three years' exile to Kazakhstan. Nothing more is known about him.

### 43. HOLY MARTYRS AND CONFESSORS OF OPTINA AND SHAMORDINO

**Hieromonk Nikon**, in the world Nicholas Belyaev, was born on September 26, 1888, to a family of Moscow merchants. His parents were called Metrophanes Nikolayevich and Vera Lavrentyevna. He was the fourth son in the family. His parents were distinguished by their piety, and his mother was especially religious. Many years later, the Optina Elder Barsanuphius said to Nicholas:

"Thank God that you had such a mother... Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile..."

From his youngest days Nicholas' life was marked by the Providence of God. In the year of his birth the family was visited by St. John of Kronstadt, who served a moleben and blessed the young mother.

A still more significant event took place when Nicholas was eight years old. The young Kolya fell ill with some sickness of the throat (perhaps diphtheria). The illness became very serious, and the doctor told the parents that the case was hopeless. One evening the child became so ill that there was no doubt that he would die. He lay unconscious and without breathing. Only his parents remained at his bedside. Poor Vera Lavrentyevna constantly rubbed the little body, which was becoming cold, and ardently, weeping hot tears, besought St. Nicholas for help from on high. The father advised her to leave the dead boy and not torment herself and him. Without listening to her husband, she continued to rub the body and call on the saint of God with tears. And - a miracle took place. The child sighed... Encouraged, both parents began to rub his body still more eagerly. The mother's prayer did not remain unanswered. By the prayers of St. Nicholas the Lord gave the child life. Later Elder Barsanuphius underlined the mystical significance of this event.

Kolya's childhood passed in an atmosphere of Christian piety, mutual love and respect. There were eight people in the family: two girls - Lyubov and Nadyezhda, and six boys: Vladimir, Nicholas, Sergius, John, Metrophanes and Alexis. The family was well-off; the children not only never experienced any material need but one could say that they lived almost in luxury. Nicholas was everyone's favourite. By nature he was cheerful and energetic. These traits distinguished him from his brothers. His love of life infected the rest of them. And thus he remained to the end of his days, with only this difference, that the thoughtless happiness of childhood was replaced by a quiet joy - the fruit of a lofty spiritual culture.

Judging from the reminiscences of his brother John, Kolya's distinguishing feature, even in childhood, was patience and great abstinence. His mother, too, said that he was patient from his very swaddling clothes. Once, when he was twelve years old, he fell and ripped the palm of his hand on a big rusty nail. Although his mother wept, and his brothers looked on with horror as his wound was bound up, he neither uttered a groan nor let fall a tear. Only his bitten lip and paleness showed the pain he felt.

The deaths of his grandparents, and then of his father, began to produce a change in Kolya. He began to think of death and hell, and the thought of the eternal torments awaiting sinners disturbed him. The superior of the church "The Joy of All Who Sorrow", Fr. Simeon Lyapidevsky, had a good influence on him. Nicholas began to go to church, even on weekdays, in the company of his brother John. He read and chanted on the cliros, and helped in the altar. The brothers began to go to church every day. Their only reading was the New Testament and "The Path to Salvation" by Bishop Theophanes the Recluse. The words "Leave the dead to bury the dead" and "Take up your cross and follow Me" were written deep in their hearts. They went to the Chudov monastery in Moscow on the feast of the Meeting of the Lord and had confession and Communion. This day remained in their memory for the rest of their lives, and a desire for the monastic life began to awake in their souls. John found a list of the Russian monasteries, they drew lots, and the lot fell on Optina monastery. They had never heard of it. Fr. Peter Sakharov advised them to go to Bishop Tryphon, a former monk of Optina. Then, in February, 1907, the brothers told their mother of their decision to go into the monastery. She was astonished, but with tears in her eyes she blessed her sons with crosses as they knelt before her.

With the blessing of Bishop Tryphon, the two brothers arrived in Optina on February 24, 1907, and on December 9, the feast of the icon "Unexpected Joy", they were officially received into the monastery - according to Elder Barsanuphius, through the prayers of their grandfather, Laurence Ivanovich, who worked in the church where this icon was especially revered.

In October, 1908 Fr. Nicholas became Elder Barsanuphius' correspondence secretary, and was freed from all other obediences except reading and chanting in church. St. Barsanuphius said to him:

"Use this time, when you can still read. The time will come when you will not have the opportunity to read books. In five or six years... you will have to read the book of life."

On November 3, 1909, Fr. Nicholas was freed from the obligation of military service because of a great widening of the veins in his left leg. Elder Barsanuphius congratulated him, saying that he must have obtained this through the prayers of Bishop Tryphon. And he blessed Fr. Nicholas to say the Jesus prayer, first at all times except during church services, and then even during church services.

In April, 1912, Elder Barsanuphius was exiled from the monastery, and a year later he died. Fr. Nicholas was greatly saddened at this loss. He was now transferred from the skete to the main monastery, where he worked in the chancellery together with Fr. Peter Krutikov (later Hieromonk Parthenius).

On May 24, 1915 he was tonsured with the name Nikon in honour of the holy Martyr Nikon. On April 30, 1916 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on November 3, 1917 - to the priesthood.



Then began a period of great privation for the monastery, as Elder Barsanuphius had once prophesied to his disciple: "The monastery will be greatly persecuted and straightened. The time will come when it will be hard in Optina. The true Christians will take shelter in small chapels. Perhaps you, too, will live to those times when they will torment the Christians, and the torments will be like those of ancient times. We will be gone by then, but you will be a participator in and contemporary of those horrors. You will live to the horrific times."

On September 17, 1919, Fr. Nikon was arrested and imprisoned in Kozelsk for being a monk. After a short time he was released and returned to the monastery. The remaining monks decided to remain in the monastery come what may.

In 1922 he wrote to his mother: "During these days I have remembered Father Barsanuphius many times: 'The Apostle exhorts: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (II Corinthians 13.15), and he continued: 'Look at what the same Apostle says: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown" (II Timothy 4.7-8). Yes, it is a great thing to preserve the faith. Therefore I also tell you: Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith. If you keep the faith, you can have a good hope over your lot.'

"When the reposed elder told me all this..., I felt that he was saying something wondrous, exalted, spiritual. My mind and heart seized on his words with eagerness. I had heard this utterance of the Apostle before, but it had not produced in me such a response, such an impression.

"It seemed to me that 'keeping the faith' was something special. I believe, and I believe in the Orthodox way; I have no doubts at all regarding faith. But here I felt that in this utterance there was something great - that indeed it is great, in spite of all temptations, all the experiences of life, all the offending things, to keep in one's heart the fire of holy faith unquenched, and unquenched even until death, for it is said: 'I have finished my course', that is, the whole of earthly life has already been lived, finished, the path which one had to travel has already been travelled, I am already at the boundary of earthly life, beyond the grave another life already begins, the life which has been prepared for me by my faith which I have kept. 'I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.' And my wondrous elder gave as his testament to me to test myself from time to time in the truths of the Orthodox faith, lest I might, unnoticed by myself deviate from them...

"Now, when the foundations of the Orthodox Russian Church have been shaken, I see how precious is this instruction of the elder. Now, it seems, the time of testing has come, to see whether we are in the faith. Now one must also know that the faith can be kept by one who believes warmly and sincerely, to whom God is dearer than everything, and this latter can be true only in one who preserves himself from every sin, who preserves his moral life. O Lord, keep me in the faith by Thy grace!"

In 1923 the monastery was dissolved and turned into a monastery. Abbot Isaac blessed Fr. Nikon to serve in the Optina Kazan cathedral and receive worshippers, while he and the other monks settled in Kozelsk. At this time Fr. Nikon began to take

on the role of a counsellor and elder. He became the spiritual father of a group of Shamordino nuns who settled in Kozelsk under the leadership of Mother Ambrosia, a nun of a lofty spiritual life.

At the beginning of 1924 the last Optina church was closed, but Fr. Nikon stayed and served all-night vigils in his cell until it was impossible to stay any longer. At the end of July, 1924 he settled in Kozelsk with Fr. Cyril Zlenko. He served in the Dormition cathedral at the invitation of the superior, and unexpectedly for himself he began to display a gift for preaching. At this time Elder Nectarius, Abbot Isaac, Fr. Dositheus and Fr. Meletius began to send people to him, and he accepted them out of obedience. He had a great gift for understanding and consoling souls.

On June 16, 1927 Fr. Nikon was arrested together with several others. On December 19, 1927 they were convicted by the OGPU, and sentenced to three years' exile in Kazakhstan in accordance with article 58-10. Theirs was the group case, "The Case of Hieromonk Nikon (Belyaev) and others, Kozelsk, 1927". They included:

**Hierodeacon Cyril** (Yevdokimovich Zlenko). He was born in July, 1887 in a peasant family in the village of Pask, Piryatin uyezd, Poltava province. He finished village school. In 1905 he entered Optina, and on January 26, 1907, he became the secretary of Elder Barsanuphius. From November, 1908 to the end of 1912 he served in the army. From 1912 until the death of his elder he again became his secretary in the Staro-Golutvin monastery, where he was tonsured. He returned to Optina Hermitage with the coffin of Elder Barsanuphius and was tonsured into monasticism. On April 24, 1913 he was ordained to the diaconate by Bishop George of Kaluga. From 1916 he lived in the skete, where he carried out the duties of librarian and teacher. After the dispersal of the Hermitage in 1924 he lived in Kozelsk in the same flat as Hieromonk Nikon. Together they visited the city's Dormition cathedral and sang on the cliros. In 1925, at the invitation of Abbess Sophia (Grinev), they were both in Kiev, where they tonsured many novices of the Protection women's monastery. In 1927 Fr. Cyril was exiled to Turkestan with his cell-attendant since 1924, Anastasia Efimovna Bobkova, who was born in Gomel on October 29, 1898 and had worked as a cleaner in the hospital-ambulatory of the former monastery. Elder Anatolius at a general blessing had called her "a cherub" sent by the Providence of God to the monastery. In exile Fr. Cyril's his health was finally undermined. On returning from Kzyl-Orda in 1929, he settled in Belev. After the arrest of Elder Isaac (Bobrikov), he was condemned, on May 23, 1930, to deprivation of the right to live in six places and was exiled to Kozlov. He died on July 19, 1930, being communed by Fr. Sebasian (Fomin). After the death of Fr. Cyril, Anastasia Bobkova returned to her native land of Gomel, where, in the middle of the 1930s she was tonsured into the mantia as **Nun Animaisa**. In 1977 she took the schema, retaining her former name. She died in 1978.

**Monk Agapetus**, in the world Michael Mikhailovich Taube. He was born on November 4, 1894 in Gatchina, St. Petersburg province, into the family of an engineer. In 1916, after finishing three courses at Petrograd University, he was mobilized into the tsarist army, where he was wounded. From 1918 to 1922 he served in the Red Army. In 1922 he became a monk in Optina, and in 1924 worked in the museum "Optina Desert" which took the place of the closed monastery. He also gave private

lessons. In he was arrested and cast into prison in Kaluga. He was sentenced to three years in the camps. At first he was sent to the Kemperpunkt camp with Fr. Nikon. Then, in August, 1928 he was sent to another destination in the woods, according to one source, and to Solovki, according to another. On May 23, 1930 he was sentenced to three years' exile in the north, to Pinega in Arkhangelsk province. In 1931 he was arrested in Arkhangelsk and condemned by the OGPU for being "a participant in a counter-revolutionary grouping among the local and exiled clergy in Arkhangelsk". He was sentenced to the camps and exile in the north. He died in 1941 in Orel not long before the German invasion of Russia.

In January, 1928 Fr. Nikon was sentenced to three years in the camps, and on January 27 his spiritual children gathered at Kaluga station to see him off on his long journey whence he never returned. He and Fr. Agapetus were sent to Kemperpunkt camp. There, because of his illness of the legs, he was freed from physical labour and appointed watchman of the warehouses. This suited him well, for he was able to pray and, sometimes, to read. In April, 1929 he was transferred (according to one source, via the Butyrki prison in Moscow) to Popov island in Karelia, where he worked as an accountant in the camp chancellery. Not long before the end of his term in the camps, Fr. Agapetus returned. Both monks were then exiled to the town of Pinega, Archangelsk region.

There Fr. Nikon had to part from his faithful friend. With great difficulty he found accomodation with an elderly woman in the village of Vospol, three kilometres from Pinega. In spite of his very poor health (he had advanced tuberculosis of the lungs), his landlady treated him very badly. But Fr. Nikon bore everything with exemplary patience.

In 1930 or 1931 Fr. Nikon was visited in Pinega by **Hieromonk Parthenius** (in the world Peter Krutikov), with whom he had worked in the chancellery in Optina, **Hierodeacon Peter** (Drachev) and his sister, Nun Valentina (Ustyusha). Fr. Peter suggested that Fr. Nikon move elsewhere, but he refused.

**Nun Valentina** (Justinovna Dracheva) was born in 1893 in the village of Kozinka, Volovskaya volost, Liven uyezd, Orel province. In 1915 she entered the Shamordino convent. In 1918, because she was very ill, she was tonsured into monasticism. In 1923, after the closure of the monastery, she became a cleaner in the St. Nicholas church in Kaluga. In 1930 she went to Moscow to look for work, and stayed with a chance acquaintance from the church. On December 28 she was arrested for "anti-Soviet agitation". She met her brother, whose address she did not know, in Butyrki prison. On January 3, 1931 she was sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 to three years' exile in the north.

When Fr. Nikon fell seriously ill, his landlady threw him out of her house. Fr. Nikon remembered the words of Elder Barsanuphius:

"Lord, save Thy servant, this Nicholas. Be to him a Helper. Defend him when he will have neither roof nor shelter."

However, Fr. Peter came to the rescue and the two monks found another flat very quickly. But Fr. Nikon was fading fast. Towards the end his sufferings were eased, and once he had a vision of Elder Macarius of Optina. Finally, on the evening of June 25, 1931, he died, having received Communion and the last rites. Thus he died on a feast of St. John the Baptist, as he had entered the monastery on the day of St. John the Baptist. For, in the words of Elder Barsanuphius:

"Our whole life is a wonderful secret. Always and in everything there is a certain linking of circumstances, but the aim of this linking is unknown to us. Take note of the events of your life. Later everything will be revealed."

The righteousness of Fr. Nikon was revealed after his death. Thus Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles relates: "Two days prior to Great Lent 1989, I slipped in my room on a piece of paper and, losing my balance, fell backwards, hitting my ribs on the corner of a metal chair. The orthopaedic doctor found that I had broken several ribs. Torturous pain was the result of any careless movement. Giving the exclamations after the Litanies during the Divine services, and even breathing, caused pain. To do full prostrations was out of the question and even prostrations from the waist were impossible. I walked with difficult and unsure movements and constantly risked falling. However, it was imperative that I serve, read the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, and give a sermon. Two doctors told me that such a painful condition would last two weeks. I was given a bandage.

"On Wednesday of the first week of Great Lent, five days after my accident, I read to those gathered in church the deeply edifying exhortations of Hieromonk Nikon, one of the last Optina elders, which was printed in the journal Nadezhda (Hope). Prior to the reading I spoke of the last five years of the elder's life - spent in great suffering, in prisons, concentration camps, and exile in the far north. There he lived in the polar cold, suffering from tuberculosis, without any medical care. All these sufferings he endured with amazing calmness and patience. Both I myself and those listening in the church were deeply moved by the elder's life and by his wonderful teachings, which reflect the great holiness of one who can, indeed, be called a Great-martyr.

"Having finished the reading, I suddenly felt an unusual lightness. My pains had disappeared and I felt well again. Then and there I was able to move about quickly and, to the amazement of the parishioners, make prostrations without any difficulty.

"With all my soul I thank God and the elder Nikon, by whose intercessions I received God's healing so quickly and miraculously, contrary to the doctor's diagnosis. Who has ever heard of bones mending instantly!"

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**Hieromonk John** (Shustin), the brother of the priest Fr. Basil Shustin, was born in St. Petersburg. He was the disciple and biographer of Elder Barsanuphius of Optina, was a cell-attendant and a secretary of Elder Nectarius. From his early childhood he was influenced by his religious grandfather, who had visited Mount Athos. His talks inspired his nine-year-old grandson to make a pilgrimage from St. Petersburg to

Mount Athos on foot. One February day he and his friend put a loaf of rye bread and a bottle of water on a sled and went on their way. Their path lay through a thick forest. They saw wolves in the woods. This made them turn aside to his grandmother's, who lived on her estate near the village of Rybatsk. They spent the night there, and on the next day were brought back to Petersburg to their parents' home.

However, the thought of Mount Athos never left the young Shustin – he eventually attained his dream and lived on Mount Athos for a long time, and visited Jerusalem three times. He also lived on Valaam, but it was in Optina that he became a monk, in 1914.

Fr. John was a great book lover, and even learned the art of bookbinding. While in Optina he would write home asking for money to buy books, spiritual books. When Fr. Basil complained to Elder Nectarius that monks shouldn't ask for money, since they have given up everything, the Elder replied that it was good to gather spiritual books, because a spiritual famine was approaching, when books and Bibles would be illegal and destroyed. And very shortly this indeed took place.

After the revolution they lost contact with him. His sister Maria, while living in free Volhynia, corresponded with a relative in Petersburg, who wrote back her last, but cryptic letter:

“Your younger brother (Basil) works above ground, but your oldest brother (John) works under the earth, being in the same rank, behind the Smolensk Institute near the Neva River. Do not write to me anymore.” It was then dangerous to write outside the Soviet Union.

Later on, when Maria came to Africa, to her brother Basil who lived there, he told her about a dream he had had: “I saw the Neva River covered with thick ice. There was a hole cut in the ice. A wide rainbow arched across from one bank to the other. Under this arch were standing St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. Alexander Nevsky, and with them stood my brother John, pointing with his hand to the hole in the ice.”

From this they understood the meaning of the cryptic letter from Petersburg – John had been drowned and was now with the saints.

It is possible that this Fr. John is the same as the Hieromonk Nilus (Shustin), who was ordained by Bishop Sergius of Narva in the autumn of 1930 and was sent to the camps for the confession of True Orthodoxy.

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**Monk Vincent** was born in the 1880s in St. Petersburg in a well-to-do official's family by the name of Nikolsky. He completed law school and became interested in philosophy to such an extent that it gripped his thoughts and feelings. At that time he was far from Christ and His Church. Just then one of his brothers died unexpectedly. This had a profound effect on his life. His first thought was to commit suicide. He was studying Nietzsche who, in a sense, whispered this idea into his ear. The only thing

holding him back was his love for his mother. He wanted to prepare her for this, and so he secretly left home and hid on his family's estate, where no one lived during the winter. As if accidentally, upon the table in the room where Fr. Vincent was hiding, she had left a book by Bishop Theophan, who cured him of the thought of suicide.

Soon Fr. Vincent became acquainted with Archbishop Parthenius (Levitsky) of Tula and Belev, whom he remembered with special gratitude, considering him an ascetic and a truly humble monk. Vladyka Parthenius directed him to go to Optina Hermitage.

Fr. Vincent came to Optina when Archimandrite Xenophon was the abbot. His first monastic obediences were working in the kitchen and reading out loud the monastic rule to the already sick Archimandrite Xenophon. The guidance of his spiritual life was in the hands of Fr. Nectarius, who, after the repose of Elder Joseph, was selected to be the spiritual father of all the brethren and the monastery elder. Fr. Nectarius was a great doer of the Jesus prayer. He was taught the Jesus prayer by the great Elder Anatolius (Zertsalov). The mental activity of the Jesus prayer - when one acquires the habit of walking in the remembrance of the Name of God - became the tone of the whole life of Fr. Vincent. This inward activity was the determining factor in his life. All external things were viewed from this all encompassing, spiritually refined way of life. Nothing else in his life interested him. He had only one aim - to abide in the Name of the Lord. He was always filled with joy. He encountered no difficulty in the monastery obediences since the main task was the acquisition of spiritual sobriety. He worked in the bakery, the proshpora bakery, in the office and, much to his liking, he was often sent to get the mail. From the monastery to the post-office in Kozelsk it was almost four miles. The journey there and back was filled with great joy, for during this time he fulfilled his obedience concerning sobriety and prayer.

The revolution took place. The young monk did not wish to leave in those first difficult years when the monastery was gradually torn apart. According to Fr. Vincent, his father, a dignitary, did not want him to enter the monastery. He was very disappointed that his son had thrown away the possibility of rising in the secular world. But in the turbulent years of the revolution, his father wrote him a letter:

"Fr. Vincent (in such a way did he address his son), how you were right! Oh, how I wish I could change my already spent life. How I wish that from my youth I had accepted your way of life. I am dying, and, looking towards my grave, I weep. An unworthy servant of Christ."

This letter of a father to a son gave strength to Fr. Vincent at a time when the wave of the revolution was destroying monasteries, and causing their inhabitants to seek some other shelter. Fr. Vincent did not seek anything. He was, as before, in obedience to his elder and conducted his own spiritual work. At this time, Optina Monastery was looking for places to send her monks. Elder Nectarius sent Fr. Vincent to a parish priest, Fr. Adrian Rymarenko [the future Archbishop Andrew of Rockland], so that under the protection of the parish church the life of the monk-ascetic might be preserved. Fr. Adrian later wrote concerning Fr. Vincent:

"The Lord enabled us to behold a candle burning before God... It is difficult to say what this monk spent his time doing. I can only say that now I weep, remembering the past. I know that I didn't always know how to cherish this refined and polished vessel of the grace of God... For the two years he stayed with us, he was not once of his own accord outside the gate of the church. Not once did he sit at the table at trapeza. He never conversed with anyone for the sake of his own interest. He never pushed upon anyone his own ideas. The whole time he was with us one could sense in him the power of God.

"The godless authorities who arrested and sent him away from me treated him in a peculiar manner. It seemed that they feared his sanctity. He was sent, as I was, on 'administrative exile'. Automatically the thought came to me: how would he survive the approaching trials? Fr. Vincent wrote his elder a letter in the style of a Soviet person - it sounded like nonsense: he asked the elder to bless him to be a pauper. In the Soviet Union there was no place for a pauper. The elder blessed him. I know that the Lord did not abandon His slave. Nor did our parishioners forget him; they sent him parcels of food and other necessary things.

"In 1933 he returned from his first exile and arrived in Kozelsk at the time of the common arrest of the last Optina monks. He was arrested again and exiled to Tashkent. There, in the first month of his exile, according to the authorities, he died from some obscure disease. I know that before he was arrested one of our Kievan monks visited him while he was still in Kozelsk and told me that he was living in a small cabin that reminded one of a cave. Utter poverty. Deprivation. Yet at that moment he was a rich man - only his riches were not earthly, but heavenly. He was already prepared to die as a monk-martyr."

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The following were convicted in "The Case of Archimandrite Panteleimon (Arzhanykh) of Optina Desert and others":

**Archimandrite Panteleimon**, in the world Paul Timofeyevich Arzhanykh, was born on June 29, 1868 in the village of Zaminayevka (Zalipayevka or Zalilayevka), Maloarkhangelsky uyezd, Orel province. In 1895, being on military service, he entered the Volhynia military school for medical orderlies, and then passed an exam on the subject. In 1898 he entered Optina Desert, and was tonsured into monasticism by Archimandrite Xenophon on August 31, 1908. His obedience was as a medical orderly in the monastery hospital. On March 15, 1909 he was ordained to the diaconate. In November, 1910 he went with Elder Barsanuphius to Leo Tolstoy at Astapovo. On March 25, 1911 he was ordained to the priesthood. On February 6, 1914 he was appointed treasurer, and was in charge of the monastery's hospital for sick and wounded soldiers. On Palm Sunday, 1923 he was arrested with other Optina monks. After the liquidation of the monastery he worked in a workhouse and a museum. From 1926 he served as a parish priest in the church of St. Nicholas in Kozelsk. In 1930, according to the court records, he wrote a declaration to Metropolitan Sergius giving the facts about the persecution of the clergy. It was signed by "Brilliantov, Arzhanykh, Chilikin, Nikolsky and others". On August 18, 1930 he was arrested for being "a

participant in the Kaluga branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church”, and was cast into the Domzak in the city of Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. He was accused of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. On November 27, 1930 he was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 to ten years in the camps. During his trial he denied that there was an underground monastery in Kozelsk, and declared that he did not perform illegal tonsures into monasticism. From 1932 he served in the church of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple in Yelets. On September 16, 1937 he was arrested in Yelets, and on November 15 was convicted by the UNKVD of “spreading counter-revolutionary slanders against the leaders of the Bolshevik Communist Party”, of “praising the tsarist order and calling on the population to rise up against Soviet power”. He was sentenced to death with confiscation of property in accordance with article 58-10 part 1. He did not recognize his guilt. The sentence was carried out on November 29. According to one report, Fr. Panteleimon and **two priests** were killed in the village of Klykovo, some kilometres from Shamordino, sometime in the 1930s.

**Hieromonk Macarius**, in the world Michael Nikolayevich Chilikin, was born in 1869 in the city of Kashira, Tula province. He was trained in handicraft in Kashira. In 1900 he became a novice in Optina monastery, and was tonsured by Bishop Micah. In 1912 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Alexander of Kaluga. After the closure of the monastery in 1923 he settled in Kozelsk, serving in the church of St. George. After the closure of the church in 1929 he transferred to the Annunciation church. From 1930 he lived in a flat with Hieromonk Gerontius (Yermakov). According to the case records, “he secretly tonsured monks in his flat. He tonsured several people.” The case records say that his nearest relative was his brother Vladimir. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested for being “a participant in the Kaluga branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church”, and was cast into the Domzak in the city of Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. He was accused of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. On November 27, 1930 he was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 to three (or five) years’ exile in the north. Nothing more is known about him.

**Hieromonk Alexander** (Pavlovich Panayev) was born in 1879 in the village of Gorki, Borovichi uyezd, Novgorod province, and received an elementary education. He entered Optina desert as a novice in 1906, and was tonsured by Archimandrite Xenophon in 1912. After the liquidation of the monastery he worked as a watchman in an artel on the territory of the monastery. In 1924 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Nicetas in his homeland. In the 1930s he was living in Kozelsk. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested in connection with the Kaluga branch of the True Orthodox Church, and was cast into the Domzak in the city of Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. He was accused of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. On November 27, 1930 he was sentenced in accordance with



articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 to five years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about him.

**Hieromonk Dositheus** (Demetrius Stepanovich Chuchuryukin (Chukuryukhin)) was born on February 18, 1871 in the village of Streletskaya Sloboda, Venevsky uyezd, Tula province into a peasant family. In 1892 he was recruited into the army. In 1898 he joined Optina, becoming a medical orderly in the monastery hospital. In 1914 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Micah (Alexeyev). He was an educated monk with the gift of prophecy. He was a disciple of Elder Anatolius (Zertsalov), and later, of Archimandrite Agapetus (Belovidov). In 1923, after the closure of the monastery, Fr. Dorotheus went to live in Kozelsk, working as a medical orderly. He was the spiritual father of Elder Nectarius and Monk Apagetus (Taube). "He confesses only monks of Optina Desert. Participation in the leadership of the brotherhood takes place only in the process of confession." On August 18, 1930 he was arrested and cast into Sukhinichi Domzak. He was convicted of "organized counter-revolutionary activity, anti-Soviet agitation" and "the organization of, and direct participation in, massive disorders (the speeches in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9, 1930)". On November 27 he was sent to Sibltag in Krasnoyarsk region. Having served his term, he went to Orel, where he was arrested again on November 23, 1937 and cast into prison. On November 27 he was convicted of being "an active participant in a counter-revolutionary church-fascist organization", and in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 was sentenced to death. This was "The Case of the Branch of a Counter-Revolutionary Organization of Churchmen in Orel, 1937". On November 29, 1937 he was shot in Orel.

**Hieromonk Gerontius**, in the world Gregory Yakovlevich Yermakov. He was born in 1885 in the village of Gorelovo, Tambov province into a peasant family. From 1907 to 1910 he was on military service. In 1911 he joined Optina desert, becoming a hierodeacon in 1924. After the closure of the monastery he remained living on its territory as a bee-keeper, and served in the Nikolskaya church in Kozelsk. In 1928 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Stephan of Mosalsk. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested, and was cast into the Domzak in the city of Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. He was accused of "organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)". On November 27, 1930 he was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 to five years in the camps. Nothing more is known about him.

**Hieromonk Macarius**, in the world Nicetas Maximovich Khorkov, was born in 1871 in the village of Gorodnya, Gomel uyezd, Mogilev province into a peasant family. He was on active military service until 1896. In 1903 he entered Optina desert as a novice; his obedience was bee-keeping. In 1908 he was tonsured with the name Macarius. When the monastery was closed in 1923 he went to live in Kozelsk. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Joasaph. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested, and was cast into the Domzak in the city of Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. He was accused of "organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)". On November 27, 1930 he was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-

10, 58-11 and 59-2 to five (or three) years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about him.

**Priest Nicholas Dmitriyevich Lebedev** was born in 1865 in the village of Groshevo, Peremyshl uyezd, Kaluga province. For two years after completing his studies at Kaluga theological seminary he worked as a teacher. In 1909 he became priest of the Annunciation church in the city of Kozelsk, Kaluga province. In 1930 he was widowed. He had two sons, a daughter and a grand-daughter. In 1930, according to the court records, he wrote a declaration to Metropolitan Sergius giving the facts about the persecution of the clergy. It was signed by "Brilliantov, Arzhanykh, Chilikin, Nikolsky and others". He was arrested, and on November 27, 1930, in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2, was condemned to five years exile to the north for "organized counter-revolutionary activity, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)". According to other sources, he was sentenced to five years in the camps. Nothing more is known about him.

**Priest Alexander Nikolayevich Brilliantov** was born in 1874 in the village of Kolchino, Bryansk district. He went to Mescherskoye theological school (1884) and Kaluga theological seminary (1889). Then for one year he served as a reader in the Nikolo-Kozinskaya church in Kaluga. In 1915 he went to serve as priest in the village of Rozhdestvo, Peremyshl uyezd, Kaluga province. He was married. He signed the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, and for this Bishop Micah accused him of belonging to "the red heretics" and banned parishioners from going to his church, the St. Nicholas church in Kozelsk. However, on August 18, 1930 he was arrested for being "a participant in the Kaluga branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church", and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi. On November 27, 1930, in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2, he was condemned to ten (or eight) years in the camps for "organized counter-revolutionary activity, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)", and was sent to a camp. In the summer of 1937 he was arrested again and sentenced to death. He was shot on September 24.

**Hierodeacon Pitirim**, in the world Alexis Stepanovich Kudryavtsev, was born in 1873 in the village of Streletskaya Sloboda, Kozlov uyezd, Tambov province into a peasant family. He became a monk in Optina in 1907, and was ordained to the diaconate in 1923 by Bishop Joasaph of Kaluga. After the closure of the monastery he lived in Kozelsk with Archimandrite Isaac and Monk Misael. They cultivated the kitchen garden, and were employed in day labour. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested, and was cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. He admitted that he was a member of a monastic monarchist organization, but refused to admit that he indulged in counter-revolutionary activity. On November 27, 1930 he was convicted of "organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)", was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 to five years in the camps, and was sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about him.

**Hierodeacon Barsonuphius**, in the world Basil Mikhailovich Vanyushkin, was born in 1879 in the village of Zenovka, Krasnoslobodsky uyezd, Penza province into a peasant family. He joined the Optina monastery in 1904. In 1927 he was ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Herman of Mosalsk, and began to serve in the Nikolsky church in Kozelsk. He was “a member of a monastic brotherhood”. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested, and was cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. On November 27, 1930 he was accused of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. He was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 to five years in the camps. Nothing more is known about him.

**Hierodeacon Ignatius** (Akim Timofeyevich Shelamkov (Shelomkov)). He was born in 1876 in the village of Sagutyevoye, Trubchevsky uyezd, Orel province into a peasant family. In 1903 he joined Optina. From 1914 to 1917 he served in the army, then returned to the monastery. After the closure of the monastery in 1923 he remained in Kozelsk. In 1925 he was ordained to the diaconate, and served as reader in the Annunciation church in Kozelsk. He lived with Monks Cleopas and Avenir. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested, and was cast into the Domzak in the city of Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. On November 27, 1930 he was accused of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, agitation, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. He was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 to five years in the camps. Nothing more is known about him.

**Monk Victor** (Alexandrovich Nikolsky) was born in 1888 in St. Petersburg, the son of an official. He entered Optina in 1903, and after the closure of the monastery in 1923 remained in Kozelsk. He lived on casual jobs, and received help from an aunt in Tula. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. On November 27, 1930, in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2, he was condemned to five years in the camps for “organized counter-revolutionary activity, and the organization and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. Nothing more is known about him.

**Monk (or Novice) Gregory** (Alexeyevich Larin). He was born on November 11, 1886 in the village of Zagudayevka, Tagansky region, Simbirsk province into a peasant family. He became a novice in Optina in 1903. From 1914-18 he served as a private in the army. In 1918 he returned to Optina, and after the closure of the monastery in 1923 remained in Kozelsk, staying in a flat with Monk Barsanuphius (Vanyushkin). On August 18, 1930 he was arrested, and on November 27 he was condemned for “organized counter-revolutionary activity, and the organization of and direct participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)” as part of “the affair of Archimandrite Panteleimon (Arzhanykh) of Optina Desert and others”. In accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 he was sentenced to five years in the camps. He refused to recognize his guilt. From 1935 he worked in the city

of Belev, Tula province, and then, from 1937, as a metal worker. He was condemned for “being a member of an underground monastery, counter-revolutionary activity”.

**Nun Pelagia** (Timofeyevna Bolotskaya) was born in 1880 in the village of Krivets, Liven uyezd, Orel province into a peasant family. In 1911 she entered the Shamordino monastery, and was a nanny in the monastery orphanage. After the closure of the monastery she lived in Kozelsk. On August 18, 1930 she was arrested and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. On November 27, 1930 she was convicted of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, anti-Soviet agitation, the organization and immediate participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. In accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 she was sentenced to three years’ exile in the north. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Mariamna** (Arkhipovna Perepechko) was born in 1895 in the city of Bykov, Mogilev province into a peasant family. She was educated in a diocesan school. In 1925 she entered the Seraphimo-Ponetayevsky Skorbyaschensky women’s monastery in Arzamas uyezd. After its closure in 1928 she lived in Kozelsk together with Nuns Anna Dubrovskaya, Anna Tregubova, Pontyatovskaya. On August 18, 1930 she was arrested in Kozelsk and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi. On November 27, 1930 she was convicted of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, anti-Soviet agitation, the organization and immediate participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. In accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 she was sentenced to five years in the camps. She refused to recognize her guilt. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Sophia**, in the world Elena Konstantinovna Somova, was born in 1872 in the village of Ploskoye, Kozlov uyezd, Tambov province. She was educated at the Tambov Yelizavetinskoye diocesan school. In 1896 she joined the Kazan women’s monastery in Voronezh province. After its closure in 1927 she moved to Kozelsk, where she lived together with Nuns Solovyeva, Levchenova and Talanova, earning her living by selling things and casual jobs. On August 18, 1930 she was arrested in connection with the Kaluga branch of the True Orthodox Church and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. On November 27, 1930 she was convicted of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, anti-Soviet agitation, the organization and immediate participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)”. On June 21, 1931, in accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2, she was sentenced to three years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Anna** (Lavrentyevna Dubrovskaya) was born in 1904 in Bykov, Mogilev province into a peasant family, and received an elementary education. In 1925 she joined the Seraphimo-Ponetayevo monastery in Arzamas uyezd, Nizhegorod province. In 1927 the monastery was closed and she went to live in Kozelsk with other former inmates of the monastery **Perepechko**, **Tregubova** and **Starikova**. They read the psalter and lived according to the monastic typicon. On August 18, 1930 she was arrested in connection with the Kaluga branch of the True Orthodox Church and cast into Sukhinichi Domzak. On November 27 she was convicted of “organized counter-revolutionary activity, anti-Soviet agitation and the organization of, and direct

participation in, the massive disturbances (the speeches in the bazaar on June 9 in Kozelsk)". In accordance with article 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 she was sentenced to five (or three) years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Novice Anna** (Fyodorovna Tregubova) was born in 1897 in the village of Vtoraya Berezovka, Bobrov region, Voronezh province into a peasant family. She entered the Seraphimo-Ponatayevsky monastery of the Mother of God, "The Joy of All Who Sorrow", Arzamas uyezd in 1915. In 1927 the monastery was closed, and she settled with some other inmates of the monastery in Kozelsk. She lived by doing casual jobs. On August 18, 1930 she was arrested and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. On November 27, 1930 she was convicted of "organized counter-revolutionary activity, anti-Soviet agitation, the organization and immediate participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)". In accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 she was sentenced to three years in the camps. Nothing more is known about her.

**Novice Agatha** (Petrovna Talanova) was born in 1894 in the village of Petki, Kobrinsky uyezd, Grodno province in a peasant family. During the First World War she and her parents were evacuated to Voronezh province. There, in 1917 she became a novice in the Kazan women's monastery. After its closure in 1927 she moved to Kozelsk, where she lived together with Nuns Solovieva, Levchenova and Talanova. She lived on the proceeds of selling things and casual jobs. On August 18, 1930 she was arrested and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi, Kaluga province. On November 27, 1930 she was convicted of "organized counter-revolutionary activity, anti-Soviet agitation, the organization and immediate participation in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)". In accordance with articles 58-10, 58-11 and 59-2 she was sentenced to three years' exile in the north. She refused to recognize her guilt. Nothing more is known about her.

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**Schema-Archimandrite Isaac**, in the world Ivan Nikolayevich Bobrikov, was born in 1865 in the village of Ostrov, Maloarkhangel'sky (or Liven) uyezd, Orel province, into a peasant family. Later his father became a schema-monk in Optina. He went to an elementary school, and in 1884 followed his father's example by joining Optina as a novice. According to the account of Elder Nectarius, Blessed Basil led him to Elder Ambrose and said: "Bow to his feet, he will be the last archimandrite of Optina". But to the young man he said: "They will execute you." On June 7, 1898 he was tonsured into the mantia with the name Isaac. On October 20, 1898 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on October 24 - to the priesthood, and was then given the obedience of seeing to the good order of the services in the monastery. On November 7, 1914 (or in August, 1913), after the death of Archimandrite Xenophon, he was appointed superior of the monastery in the rank of igumen. On November 16 he was raised to the rank of archimandrite. He was the last abbot of Optina monastery, and was distinguished by his great calm, simplicity and by the abundance of tears he shed during Divine services. From 1916 Optina entered into difficult times, but Fr. Isaac never lost his inner calm. He was a member of the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1917-18. After the formation of an artel in the monastery in 1919,

the monks began to be expelled and replaced by hired workers. Fr. Isaac protested against the destruction of the monastery's well-ordered economy, and was arrested together with other monks. He was released after some weeks or months. When Optina was closed on Palm Sunday, 1923, Fr. Isaac was arrested and cast into prison in Kozelsk. On being released he began to serve in the St. George church in Kozelsk, and became the superior of an unofficial monastery in the city to which many of the exiled Optina monks and Shamordino nuns belonged. In Optina itself there remained only the blind, the halt and the hunchbacked, the young Hieromonk Gerontius and Monk Raphael (Rodion Sheichenko).

In 1929 the authorities closed seven city churches, which was followed, on the second or third day after the Transfiguration, by the arrest and imprisonment of almost all the Optina monks, headed by Fr. Isaac. Only the very old and sick Fr. Joseph (Polevoy, +1932-33) remained in freedom. Also arrested at that time were all the priests of the Kozelsk churches, many monastics, including the mother of Elder Ambrose, and also laypeople close to the Church from Kozelsk. The arrested were sent to Sukhinichi prison, and from there to Smolensk. Fr. Isaac was accused of being "a participant in the Kaluga branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church".

In January, 1930, after the end of the "investigation", all the imprisoned were sent to various distant places. Fr. Dositheus, the former treasurer, Fr. Panteleimon and many others were exiled to Siberia. Fr. Isaac was exiled to the north for three years. In 1932 he was released early and settled in Belev in Tula province, where he served in the church of St. Nicholas, the only one that was not in the hands of the renovationists. In 1932 he was arrested in Bryansk, where he had bought an icon, and was taken to Belev, where he was sentenced for "an unlawful currency operation". Five months later he was released, but was not allowed to stay in Belev. In reply Fr. Isaac said: "I will not run away from my cross," and remained in Belev.

In 1937 after a trial about one hundred people were shot. On December 16, 1937, Bishop Nicetas (Pribytkov) was arrested together with priests, monks, nuns, novices and three laypeople in "The Case of Bishop Nicetas (Pribytkov), Tula province, 1937". Among them was Archimandrite Isaac, who was accused of "being in a secret monastery" and "conducting counter-revolutionary activity among the population". In spite of constant tortures, Fr. Isaac was firm, denied all accusations and said: "I did not enter an underground monastery..." On December 30, 1937 he was sentenced to be shot by a "Troika" of the UNKVD for Tula province. He was shot on January 8, 1938 and was buried in the fraternal grave on the 162<sup>nd</sup> kilometre of the Simferopol highway. Fr. Isaac was among the fourteen Optina elders canonized by the Russian Church Abroad in 1991.

Others convicted in the same trial in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11, and shot at the same time and place, included:

**Priest Michael Nikolayevich Preobrazhensky** was born on October 20, 1871 in the village of Novgorodskoye, Bogoroditsky region, Tula province. He was educated in Tula theological seminary, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1896. He went to

serve in Ephremov uyezd (from 1896) and then Belev (from 1906). He stopped serving in 1933. He was convicted of "being in an underground monastery" and of "counter-revolutionary activity".

**Priest Nicholas Sergeevich Rudnev** was born on December 26, 1892 in the village of Dolinino, Zaoksky region, Tula province. He went to the Kiev Theological Academy, and in 1918 became a priest in the Belev region. After the closure of his church, from February 1, 1930 he worked as an assistant accountant in an artel of invalids. In the same year he was arrested and sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 to three years' exile. He returned to Belev in October, 1932. He was convicted by the OGPU of "being in an underground monastery" and of "counter-revolutionary activity".

**Hierodeacon George** (Fyodrovsky Antonov). He was born on April 23, 1892 in the village of Krasny Klyuch, Belev region, and in 1913 joined Optina desert. From 1918 to 1920 he was in a reserve regiment. In 1930 he was arrested in Tula province and was sentenced to three years' exile in accordance with article 58-10. He was convicted of "being in an underground monastery" and of "counter-revolutionary activity".

**Schema-Abbess Augusta**, in the world Lydia Vasilyevna Zashuk. She was born into a noble family in 1867 (or 1871) and was a highly intelligent, educated and discerning journalist. She first came to Optina Hermitage not long before the revolution of 1917. She knew six foreign languages, had literary talent, and it was precisely she who, after the revolution, founded the "Optina Hermitage Museum", which was controlled by Glavnauka. With the blessing of Elder Nectarius she administered this museum. On August 10, 1927 she was arrested in Kozelsk, and on December 19 was condemned together with Hieromonk Nikon. She was sentenced to three years' exile with deprivation of the right to live in seven areas of the country. She went to live in Tula, but when Archimandrite Isaac came to Belev she went to live there, receiving the schema with the name Augusta. From 1934 she was the abbess of an underground women's monastery in Belev. She was accused of being "the abbess of an underground convent 'of Tikhonite orientation'". She had to endure sixteen days of interrogations, during which time she was not allowed to sleep or sit down. When she would fall, cold water was poured over her.

**Nun Ariadne**, in the world Agrippina Matveyevna Proselkova, who was born in the village of Kostomarovo, Krapivensky region, Tula province.

**Nun Anthisa** (Alexandra Matveyevna Sysoyeva). She was born on April 17, 1868 in the village of Ivanovskoye, Arsenyevsky region, Tula province. She joined the Belev monastery in 1878 as a lampada-trimmer and cleaner, and received the tonsure before the revolution. In accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11, she was sentenced to three years' exile in the case of the nuns of the Belev monastery. However, according to another source, she was given five years in the camps commuted to exile to Kazakhstan for the same period. She was released in 1934 and returned to Belev. She was convicted of being "in an underground monastery" and of "counter-revolutionary activity".

**Nun Rachel**, in the world Matrona Alexandrovna Zhilina. She was born in 1879 in the village of Bashkotovo, Mtsensk uyezd, Orel province into a peasant family. She entered the Belev monastery in 1897 as a novice. After its closure she worked in the St. Stephen church in Belev, living in a flat in the city. She was sentenced to five years in the camps, commuted to exile to Kazakhstan for the same period. In 1936 she returned from exile. She was condemned for “being in an underground monastery” and for “counter-revolutionary activity”.

**Nun Macaria**, in the world Praskovya Afanasyevna Saprykina. She was born on October 28, 1867 in the village of Telyazhe, Maloarkhangelsky uyezd, Orel province into a peasant family. She finished her studies at the village school. She entered the Belev monastery in 1887, and in 1921, when the monastery was closed, was deprived of civil rights. Until 1930 she lived on the territory of the former monastery and worked at the monastery’s still functioning St. Stephen church. She was sentenced according to articles 58-10 and 58-11 to five years in the camps, commuted to exile to Kazakhstan for the same period. She was released at the end of her sentence in 1936. Then she went to work in the “Red Producer” artel. She was condemned for “being in an underground monastery” and for “counter-revolutionary activity”.

**Nun Sebastiana**, in the world Maria Gavrilovna Tarasova. She was born in 1877 in the village of Kazanskoye, Livny region, Kursk province. She became a novice in the Belev monastery in 1897, leaving it in 1918. In 1931 she was sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 to five years’ exile. In 1934 she returned to Belev. She was convicted of “being in an underground monastery” and “counter-revolutionary activity”.

**Novice Christina Yakovlevna Pyatibratova** was born in 1889 in the village of Bobichevka, Kremenchug uyezd, Poltava province. She was the sister of Monk Daniel (Yakovlevich Pyatibratov). In 1914 she entered the Belev monastery, leaving in 1918. She was convicted of “being in an underground monastery” and “of counter-revolutionary activity”.

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For seven years after the closure of Optina monastery **Hieromonk Theodotus** lived in Kozelsk with his sisters Helena and Lyubov in a private flat. In 1929 or 1930 he was arrested and exiled to Arkhangelsk province. Nothing more is known about him.

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**Monks Sergius** (Borisov), **Theodore** (Lavrov) and **Nicetas** (Chuvenkov) lived in Kozelsk after the closure of the monastery. In 1937 all three were shot.

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Another of the last monks of Optina was **Hieromonk Barnabas**. He came from a peasant family, but was well-educated. In his youth he worked in some mines where he suffered a catastrophe and lost his leg. As he was lying in hospital he decided to



become a monk. According to another version, it was when he was falling down the mine-shaft that he promised to be a monk if he were saved. And miraculously, he was the only survivor of the catastrophe. God healed him, but he remained lame for the rest of his life as a result of the accident. He went to Optina where he eventually became the cell-attendant of Elder Anatolius (Potapov) of Optina, being present at the elder's blessed repose.

Fr. Barnabas was known by the persecuted believers as the last carrier of the Optina spirit - the incarnation of humility and meekness. When he served he was transported into another world. He was obviously clairvoyant, a highly experienced father-confessor to whom the soul of the penitent was opened and who knew how to heal sick and tormented souls. He was tall, had a large, black beard, and the long dark hair on his shoulders was greying. He had a special penetrating gaze; his eyes were dark, kind and shone as if exuding some inward light, especially during the Divine services. He never smiled, but his whole countenance was joyous. His sense of humour emphasized simplicity and submission to God's will. He taught complete monastic renunciation of the will.

After the closure of Optina monastery he was arrested, humiliated, tormented and banished somewhere into exile. Fr. Barnabas returned from prison homeless and infirm. The wound on his amputated leg would not heal, causing him constant and severe suffering. He did not have a false limb, and had to use a wooden stick which prevented the wound from healing. He was received with love by some kind people. By 1932 he had been ordained hieromonk and served in a tiny wooden chapel on the territory of the St. Sergius hermitage on the Gulf of Finland near the capital, which was founded by Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov.

It was there that Natalia von Kieter met him and became his spiritual daughter. She described her first confession with him as follows: "In trepidation I knelt before the analogion. For the first time in my life my soul automatically fully opened up. I clearly felt the closeness of the Lord. As the experienced elder posed me questions, forgotten sins arose in my memory. I admitted that earlier I, a baby in religion, did not even consider them as sins. But here, suddenly, they rose up as grave sins. And my soul, freed from their heavy burden, became winged with light-hearted joy and limitless devotion to the grace-bearing elder. One felt like telling him everything, because he would understand everything in the light of Christ's wisdom and love. He was not only a witness of the confession, but also a transmitter of Light and Grace. This was my first real confession. Only then did I understand what confession really is. The darkness which had been enveloping my senses began to fade away and the laws of spiritual life began to reveal themselves to me. For the first time in my life I began to strive consciously towards the Light. And I was not alone. How many other people did he also lead to that Light!"

In the autumn of 1932 Fr. Barnabas was arrested. Two years later he was released, and immediately went into the catacombs. He served the Liturgy and received people for confession in his own little one-room cabin. In 1938 he was arrested once more and was never heard of again. From information received it is clear that he received the

crown of martyrdom then, in 1938. However, according to one of his spiritual children, A.S. Igovskaya, he fell ill with meningitis and died in torments.

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Another Optina monk was **Fr. George**. One of his spiritual children, who lived with him in exile, relates the following story about him. Fr. George had just been transferred from Optina to another monastery as abbot, and happened to be going through Kaluga on monastery business. As he was walking down one of the streets, he came up to one large white house and saw a woman there, her head covered with a large shawl. She looked at him with a very sad expression.

“Batyushka,” she said, “I implore you, come into this house, please. My husband is dying, and he needs to receive communion.”

Fr. George went into the house and confessed and communed the dying man. He was fully conscious and said:

“Batyushka, I am a merchant. I am dying. I have four children, and I am in great debt. They’re already about to sell my house. The auction has already been appointed. And my family and children will remain penniless.”

Fr. George said: “Well, perhaps I can help you there.”

He returned to the hotel room where he was staying and rang his spiritual son, a lawyer who lived in Kaluga. He summoned him to the hotel and told him the whole story. The lawyer took it upon himself to buy the house. The merchant died a day or two after receiving communion. When the day of the auction arrived, the lawyer was so fervent in his help that he hiked the price up to 25,000 (it was not a bad house), and the house was sold. Since the merchant’s debt was 17,000, the widow was able to retain some money from the proceeds. With that she bought a small house for herself...

After the closure of Optina, Fr. George went to the Danilov monastery, and was then arrested and imprisoned. He was put in the death cell with seven other people (there were more originally, but seven remained). Every night people were taken out and killed. Once, late at night, Fr. George went out into the dark corridor, and the guard whispered to him:

“Batyushka, they’re going to take you tonight, at four in the morning.”

That is, they were going to kill him.

Fr. George went into the cell and told the others that they were going to take them at four o’clock. He had an epitrachelion and cuffs with him. He put them on, went out into the corridor and prayed as he had never prayed in his life. Tears poured down his face and soaked his silk epitrachelion, making it faded. Suddenly he heard a voice in his right ear:

“Batyushka! They’re not going to shoot you.”

He shuddered.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m that merchant to whom you gave communion before his death. We don’t forget a good turn.”

That was all. After this voice he saw the wall opening up, and a field and woods. Then he saw the face of his deceased mother, and she said to him:

“Yegorushka, they’re not going to shoot you. We’ll see each other again in ten years’ time.”

That was all. He went into the cell and told the people there that they weren’t going to shoot them, that they would remain alive. One kissed his hands, another his shoulders, a third embraced him. Joyful weeping was the order of the day. At four o’clock, in truth, they were not taken out to be shot. They were taken... to a transfer point.

Ten years later, Fr. George did meet his reposed mother. For it was then that he died of cancer in Gorky.

\*

**Archimandrite John**, in the world Ivan Alexandrovich Sokolov, was born on September 26, 1874 in (the village of Vedernitsy,) Moscow. In 1890 he joined the brotherhood of Optina. He was tonsured, ordained to the priesthood, and raised to the rank of Igumen. After the closure of the monastery he served in the church on Meschanskaya street in Moscow. On October 19, 1929 he was arrested for being “a participant in the Moscow branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church”, and was sentenced to three years in exile in Tyumen region. After his release, he was in an illegal situation, hiding in the houses of believers in Moscow province. In 1940 he was arrested and exiled to Kustanai for five years. In the middle of the 1940s, after his release, he hid in the homes of believers in Moscow province. On July 16, 1950 he was arrested, and on September 23 he was condemned according to article 58-10 to compulsory treatment in a prison psychiatric hospital in Petrograd. In 1953 he was released, and went to live in Moscow. He died on July 5, 1958 and was buried in Vagankovskoye cemetery in Moscow (the Armenian section).

\*

**Hieroschemamonk Meletius**, in the world Michael Ivanovich Barmin, was born in 1862 in the village of Rastyapino, Balakhin uyezd, Nizhni-Novgorod province. In 1890 he went to Optina, and in 1891 was tonsured by St. Ambrose of Optina – the last person to be tonsured by the great elder. In 1909 he was ordained to the priesthood.

In 1913 he began to serve in Shamordino convent, being its last spiritual father. He was a great man of prayer, and spoke very little. They would ask him: "Well, batyushka, how should we live?" And he would reply: "Pray without ceasing" – that was all. A special peace reigned around him. People who came to him for confession in a disturbed state of mind would return in peace.

In 1923, after the closure of Optina, Fr. Meletius lived in Kozelsk and served in the churches of St. Nicholas and the Annunciation. He was in spiritual communion with St. Nikon until the latter was arrested and exiled. On August 18, 1930 he was arrested and cast into the Domzak in Sukhinichi. On November 27 he was condemned by the OPGU for "directing a monastic monarchist counter-revolutionary group, organizing counter-revolutionary activity and anti-Soviet agitation, and organizing and directly participating in mass disorders (demonstrations in the bazaar in Kozelsk on June 9)" as part of "the affair of Archimandrite Panteleimon (Arzhanykh) of Optina Desert and others". During the trial he said: "I did not direct a monastic monarchist group, the directing was done by Elders Anatolius and Nectarius. Recently there has been no direction, I was the spiritual father of only a part of the nuns... I did not take part in the meeting of Bishop Micah with the supposed daughter of the tsar Anastasia." He was sentenced in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 to five years' exile to the north. On returning from exile he lived to the end of his life near the destroyed Optina Desert. He was in contact with Fr. Raphael (Sheichenko) and other priests. He continued to look after Shamordino nuns, of which there were very many in Kozelsk. Towards the end of his life he became blind, and communed of the Holy Mysteries every day for three years. He died on November 12, 1959 and was buried in Kozelsk city cemetery.

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The sufferings of the Optina monks were shared by the **nuns** of Shamordino. It is known, for example, that not far from Shamordino, in one of the villages there existed a gold-weaving artel consisting of sisters from the Shamordino monastery. In 1937 they were all shot.

**Nun Ambrosia**, in the world Alexandra Dmitrievna Obrucheveva, was born in Sochi in 1870, and studied in the women's medical institute in St. Petersburg, after which she worked as a zemstvo doctor. From 1914 to 1917 she was a doctor in the army. On June 12, 1917, with the blessing of Elder Anatolius, she entered the Shamordino monastery, and was tonsured as a rasophor nun on October 22, 1918. On March 18, 1918 she was tonsured into the mantia by Elder Anatolius. After the closure of the monastery she lived in Kozelsk, and led a monastic community. On August 27, 1929 she was arrested in Kozelsk and imprisoned in Smolensk. On January 1, 1930 she was transferred to the "Makarikha" camp in the region of Kotlas, Archangelsk province. Later that year she was exiled to Veliky Ustyug, and was allowed to give medical help to sick exiles. (According to one source, on November 27, 1930 she was sentenced to five years' exile and sent to the north.) In the spring of 1932 she was exiled to Kichmensky, on the bank of the river Yug. In 1933 she was imprisoned in Veliky Ustyug, but was released because of her health. From 1935 to 1944 she lived in Zagorsk, and died on September 9, 1944.

**Nun Anysia** (Stepanovna Kozhukhova) was born in 1891 in the village of Yurty, Maloyaroslavl uyezd, Orel province, and was a nun in the Shamordino monastery. At the end of the 1920s she was living in Kaluga province. In 1931 she was arrested in connection with the Kaluga branch of the True Orthodox Church. On June 28 she was sentenced to three years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Agrippina** (Ivanovna Nekazakova) was born in 1874 in the settlement of Kupachi, Orel province, and was a nun of the Shamardino monastery. In the 1930s she was living in the village of Shamardino. In 1931 she was arrested in connection with the Kaluga branch of the True Orthodox Church, and on June 28 was sentenced to five years' exile and sent to Kazakhstan. Nothing more is known about her.

#### 44. HOLY HIEROMARTYRS AND MARTYRS OF SAROV AND DIVEYEVO

**Barbara** was a wanderer who used to visit the Sarov and Diveyevo monasteries in the 1920s. Once she was captured by bandits near a bridge and tortured for a long time. The local inhabitants found the tortured body of the wanderer and buried it in the cemetery at the village of Bolshoye Cherevatovo, Ardatov region, in the south-eastern part. Her grave is venerated to the present day.

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**Blessed Maria Ivanovna**, born Maria Zakharovna Fedina, was born in the village of Goletkova, Elatemy sky uyezd, Tambov province. When asked why she was called Ivanovna, she replied:

"We all, the blessed ones, or fools-for-Christ, are 'Ivanovna' because our father is St. John the Baptist."

Her parents, Zachariah and Pelagia, died when she was hardly thirteen years old. Her father died first. After the death of her husband Pelagia settled with Masha in the family of her elder son. But there they did not get on with Pelagia's daughter-in-law, and they had to move. From childhood Maria was distinguished by her calm character and many strange features. She often went to church, was silent and solitary, never played with anyone, wasn't gay, was not interested in clothes, and was always dressed in rags, in a dress thrown away by somebody.

Often while working she saw in front of her eyes the Seraphim-Diveyevo monastery, although she had never been there.

Her mother died a year after the death of her father. She was given absolutely nowhere to live by her relatives.

Once, in the summer, several women and girls got together to go to Sarov. Maria obtained leave to go with them. She did not return home.

Not having a constant refuge, she wandered between Sarov, Diveyevo and Ardatov - hungry, half-naked and persecuted.

She walked in all weathers, winter and summer, in heat and frost, during the spring thaw and in autumn, in bast shoes that were often torn, without foot-cloths. Once she went to Sarov for Passion Week during the spring thaw up to her knees in water mixed with dirt and snow. A peasant in a cart caught up with her, took pity on her and offered to give her a lift. But she refused. In the summer Maria apparently lived in the woods, because when she arrived in Diveyevo her body was completely covered with ticks, and many boils from her wounds were already coming to a head.

She most often went to the Diveyevo monastery. Some of the sisters loved her, sensing in her an unusual person. They gave her clean, strong clothes instead of rags. But within a few days Maria would again turn up, having been bitten by dogs and beaten up by evil people, and her clothes torn and dirty. Others among the nuns did not understand her ascetic exploit; they did not love her and drove her away. They went to complain about her to the village constable; they wanted him by the authority given him to "release them from this beggar-woman", who was lousy and coarse. The constable summoned her, but could do nothing since she presented the picture of a complete fool; and he let her go. Maria again went up to people, and, as if swearing, she would reveal their secret sins. For that reason many people took a particular dislike to her.

Nobody ever heard her complain, or groan, or get despondent or irritable, or complain about human injustice. And the Lord Himself for her God-pleasing life and great humility and patience glorified her among men. They began to take notice of her; if she said something or warned about something, it would be fulfilled, and those with whom she stayed received grace from God.

One woman, Pelagia, had twelve children, and they all died before the age of five. During the first years of her marriage, when two of her children had died, Maria Ivanovna went to her village, walked up to the windows of her house and began to chant:

"Moss-footed moor-hen, give birth to a few children."

The women surrounding her said to her:

"She hasn't got any children."

But she replied: "No, she has many."

They stuck to their opinion: "No, she has none."

Then Maria Ivanovna explained to them: "The Lord has a lot of room."

Once she said to a woman: "Quick, quick, go. Nucharovo's on fire."

But the woman was from Ruzanovo. She arrived in Ruzanovo, and everything was in order, nothing had happened. She was perplexed, but at that moment they began to shout:

"We're on fire!"

And the whole of Ruzanovo burned down from one end to the other.

Maria Ivanovna received spiritual instruction from the great fool-for-Christ, Blessed Praskovya Ivanovna, to whom she went for advice.

Blessed "Pasha of Sarov", as she was known, was listened to even by the Tsar. When Tsar Nicholas came to Sarov in 1903 for the uncovering of the relics of St. Seraphim, he and the empress had a long talk of several hours with Blessed Pasha. She foretold to them their own martyrdom as well as that of Holy Russia. At one point the Empress was near to fainting and said:

"I don't believe you, it cannot be!"

Now this was one year before the birth of the heir to the throne and they very much wanted an heir. So Blessed Pasha got up from her bed with a piece of red material and said:

"This is for some little trousers for your son, and when he is born, you will believe what I have been telling you."

On leaving they kissed each other's hands. The Emperor and Empress promised to come again soon to open the relics of Mother Alexandra, the first abbess of Diveyevo, because she had appeared to them in the palace and had worked miracles there. When the Tsar left, looking pale and shaken but resolute, he said that Paraskeva Ivanonva was the only true servant of God. Everyone everywhere received him as Tsar, but she alone received him as a simple person.

From Blessed Pasha they went to Helen Motovilov, the young wife of N.I. Motovilov, who is now well-known for recording his conversation with the saint about the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. She gave him a letter given to her seventy years before by St. Seraphim "for the Tsar in whose reign I shall be glorified". On receiving the letter, the Tsar reverently put it into his chest pocket, saying that he would read it later. But Elena Motovilov received a spiritual illumination and spoke to them for about two hours - later she could not herself remember what she said. She died on December 27, 1910 as a secret nun.

When the Tsar read the letter, on his return to the abbess' quarters, he wept bitterly. The courtiers comforted him, saying that although Seraphim was a saint, he could have been mistaken. But the Tsar wept inconsolably. The contents of the letter remain unknown.

Towards evening on the same day, July 20, everyone returned from Diveyevo. After this, the Tsar sought the advice of Blessed Pasha on all serious questions. He used to send the Great Princes to her, and according to her cell-attendant, Eudocia Ivanovna, one would no sooner depart than another arrived. After the death of Blessed Pasha's cell-attendant, Matushka Seraphima, they would put all their questions to her through Eudocia Ivanovna, who relates that she once said:

"Your Majesty, come down from the throne yourself!"

Blessed Pasha died in August, 1915. Before her death she was constantly making prostrations to the earth before the portrait of the Tsar. When she was weak, she was lifted and let down by her cell-attendants.



"Mamashenka, why do you pray to the Tsar like that?"

"Stupid, he will be higher than all the tsars."

And she also said about the Tsar: "Perhaps he'll be a monk, perhaps a martyr!"

Not long before her death she removed the portrait of the Tsar and kissed his feet with the words:

"The dear one is already near his death."

She took seven dolls and laid them out with the words:

"I'll put them in a row, let them sleep."

In this parabolic way she foretold the martyric death of the Royal Family.

Blessed Pasha's death was long and very painful. She was paralyzed. Some were surprised that such a great servant of God could die such a difficult death. But to one of the sisters it was revealed that by these sufferings she was redeeming the souls of her spiritual children from hell.

Praskovya Ivanovna herself, sensing her coming death, said to those close to her:

"I'm still sitting and guarding the camp. There's another who's dashing about, she's still walking, but later she will sit down."

She blessed Maria Ivanovna to stay in the monastery, but said to her:

"Only don't sit in my chair."

Nevertheless, she was placed in the cell of Parasceva Ivanovna, where she lived two years in all.

On the very day of the death of Blessed Pasha of Sarov, Maria Ivanovna experienced a small temptation. Vexed by her strangeness, the nuns had driven her out of the monastery, ordering her not come to there again, otherwise they would have to resort to the help of the police.

The blessed one said nothing in reply; she just turned and left.

Before the coffin with the body of Blessed Pasha was brought into the church, a peasant arrived at the monastery and said:

"What a servant of God you have just driven out of your monastery! She has just told me my whole life and all my sins. Bring her back to the monastery, otherwise you will lose her forever."

They immediately sent messengers after Maria Ivanovna. She didn't wait but returned to the monastery at the time that Blessed Pasha was lying in the coffin in the church. The blessed one went in, and, turning to Nun Zenobia, who was the sacristan, she said:

"Look, you lay me out just like Pasha."

Mother Zenobia got angry with her - how did she dare to compare herself with Pasha? Maria Ivanovna did not say a word. From that time she finally settled in Diveyevo.

At the beginning she lived with the Nun Maria, but then the abbess gave her a separate room. The room was cold and damp, especially the floor, and the blessed one lived in it for almost eight years. Here she was finally deprived of the use of her legs and developed a very severe rheumatism in her whole body.

From almost the first year of her life in the monastery they gave her Pasha (in monasticism Dorothea) as her novice. At first she did not love Maria Ivanovna and went to serve her only out of obedience. But Maria Ivanovna had already said before that they would bring Pasha to serve her.

Pasha became very sad as she saw Maria Ivanovna gradually fall ill with a tormenting illness and being deprived of the use of her legs. But she could do nothing.

It was only when so many people began to come to the blessed one so that it was impossible to fit them into the narrow room, that the abbess allowed her to be transferred into the little house of Pasha of Sarov.

This little house was at the very gates of the monastery, and the Soviet authorities, seeing the large numbers of people coming to her, raised up a persecution against the blessed one, so that in the end they transferred her into a separate room attached to the work-house, where she lived until the closure of the monastery.

Blessed Maria spoke much and at a quick pace. She articulated her words very well and even rhymed. But she used foul language, especially after 1917. She swore so much that the nuns had to go out into the street so as not to hear her. Dunya, the cell-attendant of Praskovya Ivanovna, once asked her:

"Maria Ivanovna, why do you swear so much? Mamenka, Praskovya Ivanovna didn't swear like that."

"It was okay for her to indulge her whims during the reign of Nicholas, but try that under Soviet power!"

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Soon after the revolution the Bolsheviks began to plan the destruction of St. Seraphim's monasteries.

On July 14/27, 1918, a communal instructor arrived at the monastery of Sarov. Having assembled the brotherhood in the refectory, he declared that he had been sent to found a commune, that is, a communal form of life, in the monastery. This decision was justified, said the instructor, by the fact that the Church was separated from the State, and the monastery was not a juridical person, so there could be the arbitrary imposition of people to live in the monastery and seizures of property. The former monastery brotherhood was formed into a labour community.

On November 3rd, the superior of the monastery reported to the Tambov diocesan council: "On October 13th, two people arrived at the monastery from the Soviet authorities in Temnikov, accompanied by four armed red guards. On Sunday the 14th, after lunch in the refectory, they went into the superior's residence and demanded that he pay 300 thousand rubles to the soviet, indicating that in the event of non-payment the strictest measures would be taken. One hour was given for him to think it over.

"When the hour was up, the elder brethren explained to them that there was no money. As proof they produced the accounts for 1915, which showed that all income had been spent without remainder; throughout the war no timber had been sold from the woodland, and at the beginning of the summer of 1918 all the woodland had been handed over to the Temnikov uyezd forestry department, which was why the community was eking out a very meagre existence. The delegates did not listen to the explanation, but made threats. At 4 p.m. they arrested the treasurer, Hieromonk Rufinus; then at 5 there was a general meeting in the refectory to which the two delegates came. The brotherhood asked them why they had made the arrest - there was no reply. After the meeting, in spite of being threatened with shooting, the brotherhood freed the treasurer.

"On the night of October 19th, the delegates again arrived with fifteen armed red guards. The elder brothers entered into negotiations with them and were told to hand over the money immediately. Twelve of the elder brothers were arrested, and Ryasofor-monk Simeon Kondrashev was beaten with a lash. Having locked them in a room, they said that in fifteen minutes all twelve would be shot. Then a meeting of the brotherhood promised to contribute 20 thousand rubles from the money set aside for paying for firewood. The brothers were no longer allowed, under threat of being shot, to leave the monastery in groups.

"On the 20th the treasurer, Fr. Rufinus was searched. They took 15000 rubles from him. From the superior, Fr. Hierotheus, they took 6570 rubles, and from the elder Anatolius 2500 rubles and 50 ten-ruble pieces which had been given for his burial. Then they searched the cell of Hieromonk Clement, but found no money.

"After dinner they freed Ryasofor-monks Simeon Kondrashev and Nicanor Tyurin, Hierodeacon Job, Hieromonks Photius and Panteleimon. Six remained under arrest, to whom were added Ryasofor-monk Paul Dosik because he fervently interceded for those under arrest.

"At 6 p.m. on October 20th, the arrested men were given ten minutes for reflection, after which Gennadius, Ignatius, Methodius and Paisius were brought out into the courtyard of the guest-house and placed against the wall to be shot. At the word of command the red guards shot two salvos. Then one of the delegates stopped the shooting because a telegram had been received ordering the arrested men to be taken to Temnikov. After giving some single shots they locked them under arrest again.

"The next day, October 21st, after dinner, Hieromonk Paisius and Ryasofor-monk Paul Dosik were released, and in the evening the rest were also freed. The delegate said: "If you do not hand over 300 thousand roubles, penalties will be exacted - shooting and other means." Throughout the period of their arrest the brothers were subjected to abuse and tortured one at a time. The men went into the churches and the altars, grabbing crosses and Gospels. Besides the money, furniture was removed from the Tsar's palace, and from the bishop's and superior's residences. Blankets, pillows, mattresses and other things were taken, as well as a typewriter and 13 horses."

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The blessed one was not satisfied with the exploits of her previous wandering life, her illnesses, prayer, reception of the people. Once Mother Dorothea, Maria Ivanovna's novice, went into the larder for some milk. It was quite a long way from the cell of the eldress. She had put a boiling samovar on the table. As she was returning she heard the insistent shout of Maria Ivanovna:

"Help!"

The alarmed novice did not at first understand anything, but then she just collapsed from horror. In her absence Maria Ivanovna had decided to pour out some tea for herself, and had opened the tap, but had not been able to turn it, and the water had poured onto her knees before the arrival of Mother Dorothea. She had scalded herself to the bone, the whole of the front part of her body and her legs, and between her legs she was completely covered in blisters which then burst and became wet.

This happened in the hottest part of the year, in June. Dorothea was afraid that worms would get into the exposed and unhealed flesh, but the Lord preserved His chosen one, and by a miracle she recovered, God only knows how. Since she could not get out of bed, she urinated under herself, she was all wet, she lay there without an oil-cloth, it was difficult to lift her and change the bedclothes under her, and yet she recovered.

Once Dorothea was so tired and weakened from lifting Maria Ivanovna all through the night, and always for a minute at a time, that by morning she said:

"As you want, Maria Ivanovna, do what you want. I can't get up."

Maria Ivanovna fell silent, and suddenly Dorothea woke up from a terribly rumbling: the blessed one had decided to crawl out herself, but had got out on the wrong side and had fallen with her arm on the chair and broken her hand.

"Help!" she shouted, but did not want to call a doctor to bind her hand in a splint, but laid it on the pillow and lay in one position for six months without getting up or turning over. She again urinated under herself because she had drunk a lot and eaten almost nothing.

She had such terrible bed-sores that her bones were exposed and the flesh hang in chunks. And again Maria Ivanovna bore all these torments without murmuring. Only half a year later did the bones of her hand begin to knit and they knitted wrongly, which one can see on some photographs.

Once Mother Dorothea wanted to count how many times Maria Ivanovna got up during the night. For this purpose she got out a board and chalk and already in the moving notched up the first mark. Then she lay down to sleep, telling the blessed one nothing about her plan.

Towards morning she woke up and was amazed that Maria Ivanovna was not getting up or calling her. She went up to her, but she was not sleeping, but laughed. She was lying as if in a swamp, having urinated, and said:

"Look, I didn't get up once."

Mother Dorothea fell at the feet of the blessed one:

"Forgive me, for Christ's sake, mamushka, I shall never again count or be curious about you and what you do."

All those who lived with Maria Ivanovna were taught by her to practise asceticism, and these ascetic exploits became bearable through obedience and the prayers of the blessed one. Thus the blessed one did not allow Mother Dorothea to sleep except on one side, and if she lay on the other side, she shouted at her. Maria Ivanovna herself would scratch a place on her leg and not allow it to heal.

She was a true ascetic and God-pleaser, she had the gift of healing and prophecy. She healed the eyes of a woman named Helen by anointing her with oil from a lampada. One nun had eczema on her arms. She was treated for three years by the best doctors in Moscow and Nizhni-Novgorod - to no effect. Both her arms were covered with wounds. She became so depressed that she wanted to leave the monastery. She went to Maria Ivanovna, who proposed that she be anointed with oil from the lampada. The nun was frightened because the doctors had forbidden her to touch her arms with oil or water. But out of faith towards the blessed one she agreed, and after two anointings the wounds and even the traces from the wounds had disappeared.

Once a peasant came to Maria Ivanovna in despair. He was bankrupt, and did not know how he was going to live. She said:

"Install an oil-press."

He obeyed her, started this business and put his affairs in order.

The blessed one said about the renovationist Archbishop Eudocimus (Meshcheryakov) of Nizhny Novgorod, even before his apostasy:

"A red candle, a red hierarch."

She even composed a song about him. And she warned Bishop Barnabas (Belyaev) to have nothing to do with him.

Once a bishop decided to visit her out of curiosity, without believing in her gift of prophecy. He was just about to enter when Maria Ivanovna shouted:

"Hey, Dorothea, quick, sit me on the bed-pan."

She sat on it and began to swear and murmur and complain about her illness.

Vladyka was horrified by this reception and silently left. On the road he had a stomach upset and was sick for the whole journey, groaning and complaining.

\*

**Schema-Nun Anatolia** (in the world Zoya Victorovna Yakubovich) was born on February 12, 1874 into a noble family of Saratov. She finished her studies at the Saratov women's gymnasium. In 1909, having become a widow, she settled with her sister Lydia in the community founded by Elder Schemamonk Basil of Sarov. For one year she lived in Undol, Vladimir province.

Four years before she left her seclusion, Blessed Maria Ivanovna foretold the event, shouting at her:

"The swine schema-nun is coming out of her seclusion. She went into seclusion with the blessing of Fr. Anatholius (Schema-Monk Basil of Sarov), but her dead sister began to appear to her. Mother Anatolia got frightened, left her seclusion and began to go to church... It is not I, but the demons, who are driving her out of seclusion."

Until 1927 Mother Anatolia struggled in the Diveyevo monastery. From 1927 to 1930 she was in Vertyanovo. In 1930 she moved to Diveyevo, and then to Murom, and then to one of the villages near Murom. In the autumn of 1932 she was arrested and imprisoned in Vladimir. She was released because of illness. From 1933 to 1937 she lived in the village of Kulebaka. From 1937 to 1949 she lived in Murom, and died there on February 1, 1949.

Mother Anatolia had the gift of prophecy, and received sisters who came to her for instruction. She was close in spirit to Bishop Hermogenes (Dolganov), Elder Basil of Sarov, Blessed Paraskeva Ivanovna and Bishop Seraphim (Zvezdinsky).

\*

Once a boy came to Maria Ivanovna. She said:

"Look, Priest Alexis has come."

Later he really did become the Sarov Hieromonk Fr. Alexis. He greatly venerated her and often came to visit her. Once he came, sat down and was silent. But she said:

"I don't eat meat. I began to eat cabbage and guerkins with kvas, and got better."

"Good," he replied.

He understood that she was talking about his having begun to eat meat because he was frightened of falling ill. From that moment he gave up meat.

Once a certain lady from Murom came to the blessed one. Immediately she entered, Maria Ivanovna said:

"Lady, you smoke like a peasant."

It was true, she had been smoking for 25 years. Suddenly she began to weep and said:

"I just can't give it up, I smoke also at night and before the Liturgy."

"Dorothea, take her tobacco and throw it in the stove."

She took her elegant cigarette-case and matches and threw them all into the stove. A month later, Mother Dorothea got a letter from her and a sewn dress as a token of her gratitude. She wrote that she wasn't even thinking about smoking, it was as if a hand had taken it all away.

Rimma Ivanovna Dolganova was suffering from possession by demons; it showed itself in her falling in front of the holy things and not being able to receive communion. She began to ask the blessed one to let her go into a monastery.

"What need have you of that?"

"So I'll get better?" Rimma Ivanovna asked her hopefully.

"You'll be released before your death."

That night she fell ill with scarlet fever and went into hospital saying that she would not come back. She died, and not long before her death she was healed from demon-possession.

Once Vera Lovzanskaya (later the nun Seraphima) came to Maria Ivanovna asking her to allow her to go into a monastery. She looked at her and shouted:

"It's not necessary! It's not necessary! It's not necessary!... But in your old age you will look after a father. Go to Vladyka Barnabas, he will fix you up."

Later it turned out that as the nun Seraphima she had to look after her spiritual father, the Catacomb Bishop Barnabas (Belyaev), until his death.

In the monastery there was a certain fool-for-Christ called Onesimus. He was very friendly with Maria Ivanovna. They would stroll arm-in-arm through the monastery grounds, and she would call him her bridegroom. Onesimus lived his whole life in the monastery, and even called himself "she". When Tsar Nicholas II came for the uncovering of the relics of St. Seraphim in 1903, so many people came that they had to close the gates for a time. But Onesimus stayed outside the gates and shouted:

"Hey, I'm one of ours [in the feminine gender], let me in, I'm one of ours!"

Once Maria Ivanovna said to Vera Lovzanskaya:

"Look, Oniska is going to take my little girl far, far away."

Only when Bishop Barnabas himself took upon himself the exploit of being a fool-for-Christ and she followed him to Siberia, only then did it become clear what Maria Ivanovna was talking about.

Before going to Central Asia, Vera Lovzanskaya set off for Maria Ivanovna to say goodbye and receive her blessing. The Diveyevo monastery was closed, and Maria Ivanovna was living in a village.

Early in the morning Vera went to Arzamas - she had to go 60 kilometres from there to Diveyevo. It was December and the weather was cold. She went out onto the street and saw a peasant travelling on a low sledge. He stopped:

"Where are you going?"

"To Diveyevo."

"Good, I'll give you a lift."

They got as far as the village of Krugliye Pany. There was an inn there. The driver went in to get a bite to eat and got well and truly drunk. On the way he became exhausted, the sledge constantly wandered off the road and got stuck in the snow, but the horse somehow got herself out and finally stopped at the house where Maria



Ivanovna lived. It was one o'clock at night. The peasant woke up and began to knock at the window with all his strength. The nuns opened up. They said what had happened. All this time the blessed one had been in a rage, thumping on the table and shouting:

"The drunk peasant is driving the girl! The drunk peasant is driving the girl!"

"But what drunk peasant, and what girl?" said the nuns, trying to understand her.

But the blessed one only shouted: "The drunk peasant is driving the girl!"

Once a lady of the intelligentsia came to Maria Ivanovna with her two boys. The blessed one immediately began to shout:

"Dorothea, Dorothea, get two crosses, put them on them."

Dorothea said:

"Why should I give them crosses? They have taken communion today."

But Maria Ivanovna began to make a commotion and shout:

"Crosses, put crosses on them."

Dorothea brought out two crosses, unbuttoned the boys' jackets and, sure enough, there were no crosses. The lady was very embarrassed when Dorothea asked her:

"How could you receive communion without crosses?"

She mumbled something in reply, saying that she had taken them off them on the road, otherwise they would disturb the children.

Immediately after her a schema-nun arrived.

"Why did she put on the schema, take it off, take it off, put on a scarf and bast-shoes, and put a cross on her," said Maria Ivanovna.

With trembling Mother Dorothea went up to her: it turned out that she was not wearing a cross. She said that she had lost it on the road.

Maria Ivanovna very much loved Misha Artsybusheva. He often came to her for spiritual direction. Once some nuns, cousins of Misha, came to Diveyevo and asked Maria Ivanovna:

"How is Misha doing here?"

She said: "Misha's got tied up with a gypsy woman."

The sisters were very worried. A short time later Misha arrived. They asked him:

"What's happened to you? Maria Ivanovna told us that you had got tied up with a gypsy woman."

Misha laughed and then explained that for many years he had not smoked, but then, recently, he had been passing by a tobacco stall and had been ensnared - he bought a packet of cigarettes called "Gypsy woman" and started to smoke them.

People would come for miles from everywhere to see her. To many she would open up their whole lives. Bishop Barnabas (Belayev), vicar of Nizhni-Novgorod diocese and future confessor of the Catacomb Church, used to visit her and had great respect for her.

Blessed Maria precisely foretold many events and private destinies. On the 31st of December, 1926, before the vigil service, Maria Ivanovna asked Nun Seraphima (Bulgakova):

"Go outside and take a look. What kind of half moon is it, sharp or dull?"

When she was told, the blessed one said:

"Well, the old women will start dying."

And indeed, beginning on the first of January, in the course of two weeks many people began to die, more than one each day. Then the Blessed One began to say,

"What a difficult year is coming. Already Elijah and Enoch are walking upon the earth."

She would speak about this often, even during the vigil services.

On the Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican, 1926, the communists came to destroy Sarov. It continued until the fourth Sunday of Great Lent. Hieromonk Marcellinus had the obedience of guarding the relics of St. Seraphim. At that time, the ruling hierarch of Tambov was in Diveyevo. He called Fr. Marcellinus and ordered him to take the relics and to hide with them in the Caucasus. But he refused, saying that he had spent so many years before the relics, and had seen so many miracles that he was convinced that the Saint even now would not allow the relics to be stolen. For this Fr. Marcellinus was dismissed and in his place came Hieromonk Cyprian. Finally, on Monday of the week of the Cross, the communist authorities came and gathered all the holy things into a heap: the miraculous icon of the Life-Giving Spring, the cypress log in which for 70 years St. Seraphim's relics had rested in the earth, the coffin in which this log lay, and other things. They burned these in a bonfire near the northern exit from the Dormition Church, between the church and the Royal Suite. Novice Boris managed to photograph this.

But the relics of St. Seraphim, that is, his bones, just as they were tied in his mantia and clothing - all this the authorities tied together and placed in a blue chest. They sealed the relics and then divided into four groups, going off in various directions. They wanted to conceal where they were carrying the relics. They brought the chest with the holy relics to Arzamas by way of Unuchino. There they stopped, lodged for the night and fed the horses. No matter how hard they tried to conceal things, when the troika with the holy relics entered the village of Kremenki, they began to peal the alarm.

The relics were brought straight to Moscow, where they were received by a scientific commission. Fr. Vladimir Bogdanov managed to join himself to this commission. When they opened the box, according to the witness of Fr. Vladimir, there were no relics. That is what his spiritual children said. The reposed Vladyka Athanasius, who was later in exile together with Fr. Vladimir in Kotlas, said the same thing.

They said that when the blasphemers arrived at their place of rest for the night, they locked the box with the holy relics in a barn, and took the keys themselves. But they were very drunk...

In February, 1991, the supposed relics of St. Seraphim were brought from the former Kazan cathedral in St. Petersburg to Moscow, and later in that year they were returned to Diveyevo. However, Archbishop Lazarus of Tambov has another story: "In 1966 I was in Diveyevo with some Tambov and Diveyevo nuns. We arrived on the day of St. Seraphim, July 19 / August 1. We prayed a cell rule, as laypeople usually do when they are without a deacon or priest. The next day we went to the Kazan spring. Then Matushka Anna (Troyegubova) led me round the canal. Two nuns came up to us and told us about the place in Diveyevo where the relics of the saint are hidden. Not all the Diveyevo nuns knew about this, but only certain chosen ones.

"We are old, we could die, but you are young, and we are handing this knowledge on to you,' they said.

"And they showed me the place. The story of the acquisition of the relics from the godless is as follows: Matushka Anna had lived since the age of ten in the monastery. Her brother, **Hieromonk Gideon**, later a martyr, lived in Sarov. In 1927 the monastery was closed, and he lived nearby as a woodcutter. When the godless came to take the relics away to Moscow, he learned about this and sent his sister, Matushka Anna, to Diveyevo, to tell the abbess:

"They're taking away the relics of St. Seraphim'.

"Then the abbess prepared her nuns, and they came to Arzamas, where the monastery had a guest-house which the Bolsheviks had taken away, although nuns continued to occupy part of it. In the evening the chekists came with the box. The nuns stuffed them with sausage and vodka so that they were lying around senseless. Then they nailed up the box, took the relics of St. Seraphim, loaded them onto a horse and took them to Diveyevo. There they hid them, and only a few trusted people know

about the place. That is the story, exactly as they told me. When they brought the relics from Moscow in 1991, the inhabitants of Diveyevo did not believe in their authenticity, and one nun, Matushka Euphrosyne, who knows the truth, cried out when they brought the relics:

"Don't believe them.'

But they locked her up."

Fr. Marcellinus would often come to Diveyevo. He could not forgive himself his disobedience to the Bishop and was close to having a nervous breakdown. In 1931-32 he was arrested and sent to Alma-Ata. There, in a transit camp, he spent Great Lent of 1932, and on Passion Saturday he was sent further on, where he soon died (April 14).

Before the destruction of the monastery Hieromonk Gideon, a native of Kherson district, had the obedience of looking after the monastery's farmstead in the woods. He died in exile in Alma-Ata on Palm Sunday, March 26, 1933 at 8 o'clock in the morning. The night before he twice appeared to his sister, the Diveyevo nun Anyuta, and asked her:

"Don't forget to commemorate me at the Liturgy. Today this is particularly important for me."

He appeared to her in the same clothes that he was vested in when he was buried in the cemetery of Alma-Ata. On March 9/22, 1946, during a pannikhida, he was seen again by his sister in the corner in front of the icons. Then she remembered that he had been tonsured on that day. He remained visible until the end of the pannikhida.

During the fourth week of Great Lent Sarov was closed.

The church services in Sarov stopped and the monks left in various directions. In 1927 **Abbot Methodius** (Kokovikhin, born 1872) and some of the brothers were arrested and sent to Arzamas prison, where they were tortured. According to the witness of fellow-prisoners, when Fr. Methodius was once brought into their room after a long interrogation, none of the prisoners could recognize him. His whole face was puffed up, especially his chin. All the hairs of his beard had been pulled out. Soon after that he died under torture. According to another account, he died in exile in Siberia in the 1930s.

**Hieromonk Isaac** was a clairvoyant elder of Sarov. It was through him that St. Seraphim revealed to the monks what to do with his holy relics. At the time of the destruction of the monastery, as Hieromonk George of Sarov related from the words of Abbot Methodius, "the monks resisted the taking away of the holy relics and locked themselves in the Dormition Church where the relics of the Saint lay, declaring that they would all be killed rather than give up the relics. For three days the monks remained locked up in the church without eating... In Sarov at that time there lived the ascetic, Father Isaac, a disciple and successor of the renowned Elder Anatole (of Sarov), who died in 1922. Elder Isaac, grieving over what was happening and having

pity on the brethren, prayed to the Saint for three days that he would instruct them how to act. On the third day St. Seraphim appeared to him and said: 'It is the will of God that my relics be taken away from here and the Monastery destroyed; do not hinder this.' When the Elder told this vision to the brethren, the monks left the church, and the commission of secret police agents and local Soviet 'experts', having gathered the relics into a wooden box, took them away; and the monks in the evening of February 9, 1927, were all driven away from Sarov, and in this way the Sarov Hermitage ended its existence... The relics of St. Seraphim were taken to Moscow and placed in the Rumyantsev Museum (converted into an anti-religious museum); and in the newspapers it was announced that the bones of Seraphim of Sarov had been brought, and those who wished could view them. The people began to come in masses to the museum costing three rubles; but despite the high charge the people came, wept, prayed, and bowed down before the glass cover under which the relics lay. There were many healings. Then the Communists, seeing that not a mockery, but rather a glorification of the holy relics was occurring, announced that the relics were no longer in the museum, but had been taken away to the city of Penza. The faithful were not satisfied with this announcement, and many went to Penza to be convinced for themselves; but in Penza it was announced to them that there were no relics there. Thus the relics of St. Seraphim were hidden, and now it is not known where they are."

Fr. Isaac was arrested after the closure of the monastery and died in exile.

**Novice Theodore Maleshkin** was born in the village of Gavrilovka, Tashin uyezd, Nizhni-Novgorod province. After the closure of the monastery, he returned to his homeland and walked around the village reading the psalter. The peasants loved him for his meekness and lack of guile and always received him with joy. When the authorities ordered him to go to the elections, he did not go, but said to the representatives of the authorities: "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel [soviet] of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners". He was arrested and cast into prison, where he died.

In 1927, during the closure of the monastery, an old monk who used to sit by the holy spring, **Fr. Basil**, was killed. His obedience had been to give holy water to the pilgrims - a terrible crime in the eyes of the Bolsheviks. They destroyed everything in the monastery and turned it into the Temnikov concentration camp.

After Pascha, the authorities came to Diveyevo. They began to search the whole convent, all the buildings, registered all the inventory, and examined all private belongings. It was spring, everything was in bloom, but the sisters saw nothing and noticed nothing...

In these difficult days, Mother Seraphima went to see Blessed Maria Ivanovna:

"Maria Ivanovna, will we still live peacefully for a while?"

"We shall," she answered.

"But for how long?"

"For three months."

The authorities left, and it seemed as if everything was fine. But once the three months had passed, on the eve of the Nativity of the Mother of God, in September, 1927, the nuns were thrown out with only the clothes they were standing in. Everything was closed, and the monastery was turned into a collective farm.

During that whole summer, the monastery life during the day had experienced no unusual changes. But the moment the night would come, from somewhere owls would fly, sit on the roof of all the convent buildings and fill the whole monastery with ominous hooting; and so it was each night. When they announced the closure, all of the owls disappeared somewhere.

At that time two Bishops lived in the convent: Zenobius of Tambov and Seraphim of Dmitrov, the future Catacomb hieromartyrs. The former served the Liturgy on the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, in the Nativity of the Theotokos church. When the singers began to sing the stichera, 'Now upon the noetic altars abides God...', no one could continue to sing further. Everyone wept; the whole church was in tears.

Bishop Seraphim served in the big cathedral. After the Liturgy, he gave a sermon with the following words:

"Now each of us is presented with a cup. But each will accept it in a different way. Some will only touch it with their lips; others will drink one quarter, or half, or the whole cup to the dregs... Now in the monastery we are all burning as one huge candle, but now the time has come when this flame will be divided into small, separate candles."

That night both bishops, the abbess and the elder sisters were arrested and sent to Nizhni-Novgorod and then Moscow. But then they were released and allowed to choose their place of residence as long as it was not the same place.

On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, the last service was held in the church of the Joy of All Who Sorrow. After the Liturgy the singers began to sing, as on Forgiveness Sunday, the "Lamentations of Adam". Everyone in the church wept.

The sisters had to hide in various places in Diveyevo, Vertianova and local villages. With the blessing of Bishop Barnabas, a cell was built for Maria Ivanovna in the village of Puzo, some 18 versts (14 miles) in the direction of Arzamas. There she was brought immediately after the closure of the monastery, and stayed for three months. Maria Ivanovna's affairs were managed by Valentina Dolganova, and things were arranged in such a way that no one was allowed access to the blessed one. When Abbess Alexandra settled in Murom, Mother Dorothea came to her:

"Why did you let Maria Ivanovna out into the world? Bring her back," the abbess said to her. Mother Dorothea went off for her.

"Maria Ivanovna, will you come with me?"

"I will."

They immediately placed her on a cart covered with a red cotton blanket, and brought her to Elizarevo. Where could they hide her? They went to get an answer from Fr. Michael and Fr. James, and spent the whole winter there. In the spring they brought her to Diveyevo, to the deaf and mute brother and sister who lived there. And in the spring of 1930 they brought the blessed one to a farmstead near Pochinok, and then, finally, to Cherevatova.

Sometimes she would curse, and sometimes, when the nuns came to her, she would say tenderly:

"Look, my kittens have arrived!"

**Nun Seraphima**, in the world Sophia Alexandrovna Bulgakova, was born in 1903 into a noble family. She became a nun in Diveyevo in 1924. She used to serve in the church "Nikola the Great Cross" in Moscow. On April 14, 1932 she was arrested and imprisoned in the Butyrki prison in Moscow. On May 16, 1932 she was sentenced to three years exile in Kazakhstan.

Nun Seraphima and Tonya (she ended her life as Nun Seraphima in the Pokrov monastery in Kiev) often went to Maria Ivanovna.

Once Tonya said:

"You keep talking about a monastery, Maria Ivanovna. There won't be a monastery!"

"There will! There will! There will!" And she banged with her hand on the table with all her might. She would have broken her hand if they had not put a cushion on the table to make it less painful for her.

Nun Seraphima remembers how Maria Ivanovna would give obediences in the convent: "Some had to rake hay, some had to clean the canal of the Mother of God; to others she gave other obediences. But to me she would never give anything, so I said to her,

"Maria Ivanovna, will I live until there will be a monastery again?"

"Yes, you will live," and she squeezed my hand tightly and pressed it to the table."

Mother Seraphima was the only nun who survived until the opening of the monastery.

To one sister she said:

"Don't worry. You will all be in a convent. Only instead of your names, you will all have numbers."

Pointing at one sister she said her number would be 338.

"I remembered this number," this sister recalls, "and when we were in jail this was the number they gave me. So that was the convent for us."

In Arzamas, in banishment, there were over 2,000 nuns from two closed convents, that of Nikolayevsky and Alexeyevsky, as well as that of Diveyevo. One of the nuns who was in prison saw a dream. St. Seraphim was conducting two nuns into the yard saying,

"I am conducting my beloved ones into the prison."

And as she woke up she looked through the window; the two sisters were waking up.

At the same time the daughter of Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov) of Leningrad (author of The Diveyevo Chronicle and the Service to St. Seraphim) saw a dream: at a table nuns were sitting, and the Queen of Heaven was indicating which of the nuns was to be taken to prison.

Another woman relates: "Before her death, Maria Ivanovna would tell all her close ones how much they would read kathismas for her soul during the 40 days. And all that came to pass. To me she said, when I saw her last in October of 1930,

"But you will not read even a single kathisma for me."

"And in truth, I read nothing. I remembered her words only after the 40 days, when I found out about her death, but it was too late."

She died on the 26th of August, 1931, on the night of the feast day of the Vladimir Mother of God.

That night there was a terrible storm. They buried her there in the Cherivatova cemetery.

In the Kazan church of Diveyevo, which had been built by Abbess Alexandra, there were two priests and complete daily services. The priest there, **Fr. Paul Peruansky**, died on Pascha, April 7, 1938, in the Arzamas prison. They say that not long before his arrest they summoned him and asked:

"Are you a pastor or a hireling?"

"I am a pastor."



But the other priest, Fr. Simeon, in the 1930s, because of human weakness, renounced the priesthood and worked in a factory in Vyatka. The peasants recalled that once he came to Diveyevo, and in Arzamas he asked to be given a lift in an open truck. But when they recognized him they gave him a privileged place in the truck cabin. He refused and lay on the load in the back of the truck and wept the whole way. He died in the factory.

There was also **Deacon Michael Lilov**. He had many children and lived in poverty. It was so difficult for him that he decided to defrock himself. But then he had a vision: the Diveyevo Abbess-Foundress Alexandra appeared to him. It was remembered of him that on Great Passion Wednesday, when he read the Gospel during the Liturgy, he would burst into tears. He died together with Fr. Paul in the Arzamas prison.

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The Diveyevo monastery had seven podvoryes: a large one in Peterhof, a small one in Petersburg, and others in Moscow, Nizhni-Novgorod (2), Arzamas and Kharkov. **Abbess Alexandra (Trakovskaya)**, who died on February 4, 1942, sent to Kharkov from Diveyevo **Nuns Mariamna, Seraphima, Raphaela, Anna, and Novices Maria and Anna**. In 1922 persecutions began against all the True Orthodox in the city. 11 monasteries were closed down in the diocese. The nuns of the podvorye remained loyal to Patriarch Tikhon. In 1925-26 there lived at various times with them the exiled **Bishops Anthony (Pankeev) and Damascene (Tsedrik)**, and in 1932-32 – **Macarius (Karmazin)**.

After Metropolitan Sergius' declaration in 1927, the nuns joined the Catacomb Church and remained it to the end of their lives. Anna worked in a hospital, but to the end they considered themselves under obedience and gave everything that they had in excess to the secret abbess in Diveyevo. As late as the 1950s-60s they would travel there and help the nuns who were secretly living in Diveyevo and its environs.

In their house they had a house church in which there served at different times: **Hieromonk Amphilochius (Furs)**, who died on March 8, 1969, who lived with the matushkas in the podvorye and possessed the gift of prophecy and was a fool for Christ, **Hieromonk Pachomius (Petrov)** from Poltava, who died in 1989, and other Catacomb pastors. At prayer the nuns always wore their monastic garments, baked the prosphoras themselves and sang at the services. One of the nuns was always ill; she lay on the Russian stove and was looked after by the others.

The last to remain were Novices Maria and Anna. A priest suggested that they accept monastic tonsure, but they humbly refused, saying that they came there as novices and would die as novices, and did not dare to receive tonsure without the permission of the abbess. The nuns were buried in monastic garments. Nun Anna died on July 15, 1951, Novice Maria – on February 13, 1974, and Novice Anna – on November 16, 1976.

After their deaths the house remained empty for a while, and was then torn down together with a whole street of houses to make way for the widening of the road and the building of a factory.

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**Priest Paul Arsenyevich Borotinsky** was born in 1887 into a peasant family in the town of Gavasttus (or Tavstagus) in Finland. In 1908 he graduated from Petrograd theological seminary and became a priest, serving in the church in the village of Tomer. In 1918, fleeing from the persecution of the clergy in Finland, he moved to Russia, and until August, 1922 he served in the Diveyevo women's monastery. In 1922 he organized resistance to the requisitioning of church valuables in Diveyevo; following his advice, they substituted everyday items for valuables. In August, he was banned from serving by Archbishop Eudocimus because of his refusal to recognize the "Living Church". In 1923 he spoke up against the "Living Church" and distributed the epistles of Patriarch Tikhon, the "epistle of the Optina elders" and the letter of Hieromartyr Benjamin of Petrograd. From 1927 he was without work or a constant place of residence. In the same year he met Hieromartyr Bishops Seraphim, Zenobius and Arsenius in Diveyevo, broke communion with Metropolitan Sergius for reasons of the faith and joined the Catacomb Church, continuing to serve in secret. In the summer of 1928 he met Hieromartyrs Demetrius of Gdov and Theodore (Andreyev) in Petrograd, and in the same year he wrote a brochure, "The relationship to Soviet power from the point of view of Orthodox teaching", which was a reply to Metropolitan Sergius' declaration. He had links with the Petrograd and Samara Josephites. In January, 1930 he was arrested in the village of Kobylinka, Tambov province, and was in prison in Tambov for two months. According to another source, he was arrested on February 2, 1930 in the village of Vyezdnoye, Tambov province, but on March 14 he was released. He was arrested again in the village of Pushkarka, near Diveyevo on November 29, 1931 for being "a participant in the Moscow branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church". He was linked to the Samara "non-commemorators", and then of the "All-Union Centre of True Orthodoxy". There exists a very interesting protocol of Fr. Paul's interrogation on December 28, 1931, in which he expresses his extremely uncompromising rejection of Soviet power and refusal to work for it in any way, in accordance with Patriarch Tikhon's anathema of January 19, 1918 and the Decree of the Local Russian Council of January 22, 1918. On July 14, 1932 he was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to the White Sea Canal, where he refused to work "as a consequence of his non-recognition of Soviet power" and incited other prisoners not to work. At one time he was transferred to Kem, where he persuaded a whole barracks of prisoners not to work. On February 22, 1933 (or July 14, 1934) he was released from the camp because of illness and exiled to Vologda for the rest of his sentence. On the way there he escaped and hid with some nuns of the former Diveyevo monastery in the village of Vyezdnoye, Arzamas region, continuing to serve in secret. He was arrested again on February 3 (or 4), 1938 in Vyezdnoye, and was taken to Moscow, where on September 15 he was sentenced to death by a military college of the Supreme Court of the USSR. He was shot on the same day and buried in Butovo.

## 45. HOLY HIEROCONFESSOR ARSENIUS, METROPOLITAN OF NOVGOROD (+1936)

Metropolitan Arsenius, in the world Auxentius Georgievich Stadnitsky, was born on January 22, 1862 in the village of Komarov, Khotinsky uyezd, Kishinev province, in the family of a priest. In 1880 he finished his studies at the Kishinev theological seminary, and became a teacher at the Kishinev and Yedinets theological seminaries. In 1881 he entered the Kiev Theological Academy, and in 1885 graduated from it with the degree of candidate of theology. In 1895 he became master of theology and was tonsured into the mantia. In 1896 he was ordained to the priesthood and became inspector, later rector of the Novgorod theological seminary, and superior of the monastery of St. Anthony the Roman with the rank of archimandrite. In 1897 he became inspector of the Moscow Theological Academy, and in 1898 - rector of that Academy. In February, 1899, he was consecrated bishop of Volokolamsk, a vicariate of the Moscow diocese. From 1903 to 1910 he was bishop of Pskov. In 1904 he became a doctor of Church history. He was also an archaeologist, and published many works. In 1905 he became a member, and later president, of the Educational Committee attached to the Holy Synod. In 1907 he was raised to the rank of archbishop and was elected a member of the State Council. In 1910 he became archbishop of Novgorod. In 1917-18 he was a member of the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, the deputy president of the Council, being in fact the leader of almost all the Council's sessions. He was also a member of the Council's department on the legal position of the Church in the State. He was one of the three candidates to the patriarchal throne, and received the second highest number of votes after Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) on the first ballot. On November 28 / December 11, 1917, Patriarch Tikhon raised him and Archbishop Anthony to the rank of metropolitan. He was a close associate of the Patriarch, and a member of the Higher Church Council and the Holy Synod. In 1919 he was arrested, returning to his duties in 1921. In 1922 he was arrested again, put on trial together with Patriarch Tikhon and others, and served a term of exile in Central Asia. He spent 11 months in one of the GPU prisons, and was then exiled to Turkestan. According to one source, in 1926 he was in Butyrki prison, from whence he was transferred to Tashkent in the same year.

Sometime after 1927 he tried to persuade the future Archbishop Luke (Voyno-Yasnensky) not to accept an appointment from Metropolitan Sergius. And **Hieromartyr Victor**, Archbishop of Vyatka, witnessed in February, 1928 that Metropolitan Arsenius had reproached Metropolitan Sergius. In spite of that, the sergianists have always tried to claim Metropolitan Arsenius as one of their own because he was numbered among the members of Metropolitan Sergius' Synod in July, 1927, and was appointed metropolitan of Tashkent and Turkestan by him on August 11/24, 1933. But according to the Church historian Fr. Alexander Mazyrin, Metropolitan Arsenius became a member of the sergianist synod "only on paper. The distrustful authorities did not let him come to Moscow from his exile in Central Asia."

The truth is that he ended his days as a confessing anti-sergianist bishop. Thus it is known that he took part in Moscow in anti-sergianist conversations in 1934 and 1935

with, among others, the future martyrs, Archbishop Nicholas of Vladimir and Professor John Popov, who also corresponded with him when he was in Tashkent.

Again, one of his fellow prisoners, Protopresbyter Michael Polsky, wrote about him in his memoirs as follows:

"The Apostle Peter had much love for the Saviour, but in the hour of temptation he fell heavily. I recall many new illustration of this eternal example. Who in spiritual circles does not know the now reposed Metropolitan Arsenius Stadnitsky. He had a broad mind, excellent education, a powerful will, honourableness and uprightness. He had a very firm, decisive, unbending character, being strict both to his subordinates and to himself. And once when the Lord had united us for a short period in the Moscow Butyrki prison, this glorious and great man, the metropolitan of Novgorod, a member of the Synod and of the State Duma and Council, from a pure heart told me, a little, unknown priest, what feelings of pusillanimity and cowardice he had suddenly experienced in the inner prison of the GPU when he was awaiting execution by shooting.

"I am already an old man,' he said, 'I have nothing to look forward to. I have been a monk from my youth, finally I became a hierarch, an example and model of Christianity and Christian courage. And yet I was quite unable to conquer myself. I experienced such a thirst to live, such a lack of will to die, such despondency and struggle with myself and fear of death and pusillanimity - it was simply terrible. I fought, but could not conquer myself. Such is my bankruptsy and such is the sorrow I feel for myself.'

"Later the great man fearlessly wrote from his Turkestan exile to Metropolitan Sergius, protesting against his agreement with the God-fighting authorities and rejecting any possibility of compromise with them.

"Metropolitan Arsenius experienced and overcame his human weakness in his Gethsemane struggle before death, and with complete strength of spirit rejected every temptation, dooming himself to long and harsh imprisonment."

Fr. Michael also recounted the following fact:

"By the way, the bishops who fell into schism usually played a terrible role of agent provocateur for the GPU. In the GPU prison, the renovationist Metropolitan Eudocimus (Meshchersky) tried to force Metropolitan Arsenius of Novgorod to join renovationism. Metropolitan Arsenius told him, his former colleague in the Moscow Academy:

"But you must know that renovationism is unlawful.'

"What can one do - they demand it,' replied Archbishop Eudocimus, motioning with his head to the chekist's door.

"When Metropolitan Arsenius remained unbending, Archbishop Eudocimus angrily said to him:

"Well then rot in prison!..!"

"And with this he left the prisoner."

Metropolitan Arsenius died in Tashkent on January 28 / February 10, 1936. Sensing his approaching death, he asked to be laid in a coffin with flowers, since he very much loved flowers.

## **46. HOLY HIEROMARTYR SERAPHIM, BISHOP OF DMITROV**

**(+1937)**

**and those with him**

Bishop Seraphim, in the world Nicholas Ioannovich Zvezdinsky, was born on April 7, 1883, into a family of yedinovertsy, converts from the Old Ritualists. His father had secretly left his father, a prominent member of the priestless sect of the Old Ritualists, and then been ordained at a young age in St. Petersburg. John Zvezdinsky set about converting his erring brothers to the Church of Christ. Soon his zealous words had won him many followers. His brothers became yedinovertsy, and in Moscow the schismatics joined the Orthodox yedinovertsy Church in their thousands.

Seraphim was called Nicholas in Holy Baptism in honour of the hierarch St. Nicholas. In the second year of his life he lost his meek and prayerful mother. Thereafter he lived under the supervision of his father, his kind nurse and his sister. Early in the morning he would be brought into the church for Mattins, where he would go to sleep. His father was very insistent that he should not remain at home, saying:

"Let him sleep, but in the church."

The strict customs of yedinovertsy worship instilled in the young Nicholas the habit of attending services without laziness; he learned chanting and reading on the kliros. He would stand on a little stool by the analog, look into the Psalter and clearly and loudly read the words of the Prophet David. Once he went through the royal doors into the altar, to the astonishment of his father, who was standing by the altar. The people praying were not offended, but saw in this a sign from God that the young boy would himself become a church-server standing before the altar of God.

After leaving primary school near the yedinovertsy church in 1895, Nicholas was transferred to the Zaikonospasskoye school in Nikolskaya street in Moscow. On the way to the school there were many chapels, and the young pupil and his companions did not pass them by but went into all of them, praying for success in their studies. With the kopeks given to him for his breakfast, Nicholas would buy candles and place them before the wonderworking icons: to the All-good Quick Hearer, to the Great Martyr Panteleimon in his chapel, to the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God at the Vladimir gates, to St. Sergius at the Elijah gates, or to St. Nicholas in Nikolskaya street.

Kolya was good at his studies, but suffered a lot from his boisterous school-fellows, who, seeing his quiet and meek bearing, would take away his breakfast or the little money which his father had given him for his schooling and food.

After leaving the school in 1899, Kolya entered Moscow theological seminary. Two of his peers there were the future bishops Gabriel Krasnovsky and Nicanor Guduchi. The young Kolya was very attracted to another quiet orphan brought up without a mother by a nanny - Tanya, the daughter of some neighbouring factory-owners who

considered themselves higher than clergy children. Kolya did not draw close to Tanya, but only admired her from a distance.

At this point the Lord visited Kolya with a wonderful visitation. Kolya fell ill with inflammation of the lymph glands. This illness had carried a class-mate of his to the grave, and the young Nicholas was bound to go the same way. He suffered unbearable pain. For two months he could not sleep. His temperature was high. The doctors explained to the sorrowing father that the infection of the blood was irreversible and they had no way of saving him.

Having lost his wife, and standing now at the death-bed of his beloved son, the father sobbed inconsolably, begging the Lord to save the life of his son. The Lord heard his prayer.

The abbot of Sarov used to visit Fr. John in connection with the conversion of the schismatics, of whom there were many near Sarov. This time the igumen brought with him an icon of the God-pleasing Sarov elder Seraphim who was beginning to be glorified throughout Russia by his miracles.

"Father Protopriest!" said the igumen. "Do not despair of the life of your son. The elder Seraphim works glorious miracles and is able to intercede before the Lord for the healing of your Kolya. Ask him - he will console you!"

Touched, the father went up to the bed of his suffering son Kolya and said to him:

"Here's your doctor, Kolya, ask him, and he will heal you!"

And the dying youth quietly and firmly took hold of the icon of the elder Seraphim in his hand and tearfully began to pray for help and healing. His prayer was heard. He had not slept for two months already, but now in his tears he softly fell into a peaceful sleep. And, O wonder! On waking, he did not feel the slightest pain, but everything around him was wet from the pus which had flowed out.

"What's this?" the thought flashed through his head. "Am I healed?"

And he felt a heavenly sweetness in his heart and clearly knew that he was delivered from the terrible disease.

The news of the miraculous healing through the prayers of the elder Seraphim were immediately sent to Sarov: "To his Reverence, the Abbot of the Sarov monastery, Igumen Hierotheus. Your Reverence, deeply respected Igumen Hierotheus! It is good to keep the secret of the king, but it is commendable to preach the wonderful works of God, says the Scripture.

"I have the honour to inform your Reverence of the following event in my family: my son Nicholas, 18 years of age and a pupil in the third class of the Moscow theological seminary, fell ill this last January 12, 1902 with a swelling under the right armpit (lymphatic inflammation). At that time I informed you of my son's illness and

suffering. His illness got worse from hour to hour, and the patient became exhausted and began to have fainting spells. This lasted until January 28. On that unforgettable day, at six o'clock in the evening, I received from your Reverence the book The Life of the Elder Seraphim and his icon on white tin-plate. I brought this icon to my suffering son; I asked him to cross himself and with faith to kiss the image of the saint. With difficulty he crossed himself, kissed the icon and placed it on the painful place... O wonderful miracle! The illness disappeared, the sufferings ceased, the patient became calm. During the night, as he was sitting in his bed, he was praying and several times kissed the icon. At 5 o'clock in the morning he lost consciousness and fell asleep; an hour later he woke up and asked for his sister, saying:

"I'm all wet, I must have been sweating profusely'.

"But she saw that the abscess had burst, and that the bed and the bedsheets were all covered with pus. At the present time my son is completely healed.

"Such is the mercy of God which has been shown to my son Nicholas through the prayers of the holy Elder Seraphim. I and my children witness to this with our signatures and the seal of our names. Your Reverence's fervently grateful fellow-struggler in prayer and obedient servant, Protopriest John Zvezdinsky, dean of the yedinovertsy churches and of the Moscow yedinovertsy church of the Holy Trinity.

"July 30, 1902, No. 144, Moscow. Nicholas Zvezdinsky, Michael Zvezdinsky, Anna Zvezdinsky."

This healing was the more miraculous in that, as became clear at the inquiry, two doctors, an allopath and a homeopath, were called to the side of the sick youth. Both witnessed to the seriousness of the patient's condition. But their remedies did not help him, and the doctors themselves did not ascribe the healing to them. The witnesses of the event and the sick youth himself firmly believed that the healing was the work of God through the prayerful intercession of the God-pleaser Seraphim.

The doctors gave their witness concerning the miraculous recovery under oath.

On receiving the news, the Holy Synod petitioned the emperor concerning the opening and glorification of the holy relics of the Elder Seraphim, who was unceasingly pouring forth streams of miraculous help to all those who called on him with faith. When the emperor acceded to their request, the Synod ordered Protopriest John Zvezdinsky to compose the service to the God-pleasing wonderworker Seraphim of Sarov, which Fr. John did with zeal, displaying a wonderful gift and warmth of faith and love for the Elder Seraphim.

The troparion and kontakion were composed by Fr. John in gratitude for the saving of the life of his son.

The youth Nicholas, who had been healed in body, was also healed in soul. His heart no longer yearned for Tanya, it burned with love for God and his merciful healer, it burned with desire to give his miraculously prolonged life to the glory of God.



Soon he became a reader in the seminary and began to preach to the glory of the Holy Trinity.

His fiery words set the hearts of people on fire, his listeners burned with love for God and the Church of Christ. Hierarchs, teachers and students marvelled at the depth of his words. He was particularly eloquent when speaking about Holy Communion.

Nicholas Zvezdinsky graduated as one of the best students, and in 1905 entered the Moscow Theological Academy.

In his third year Kolya lost his father, who died on January 6, 1908. His father's house was occupied by his successor, another rector of the Trinity-Vvedensky church. His sister was living with her husband, and his nanny went to live in the country.

At this point the Lord sent Nicholas a spiritual father who took the place of his father. Near the Holy Trinity Lavra in the quiet Zosima hermitage there lived a hermit, **Hieroschemamonk Fr. Alexis**. The fiery student was led to him.

Fr. Alexis embraced his young spiritual son with all his heart, took him completely under his direction and became his elder. Kolya felt that through the power of the prayers of the holy hermit everything earthly had left him and his spiritual heart was set on fire. He conceived a desire for a pure monastic life. At the shrine of St. Sergius, Kolya, together with two student friends of his from the Academy, vowed to devote the whole of his life to God in monasticism.

The first student received the tonsure and became the future Archbishop Philip of Astrakhan. The second was attracted by a girl and broke his vow. But just before his marriage he unexpectedly fell down dead.

"God exists, and is a jealous God," said the rector of the Academy in his funeral speech.

The youth who had vowed to betroth himself to God was not allowed by God to betray Him, and the jealous God took him to Himself before he could betray Him. The sorrowful bride decided to devote herself to God for her betrothed; she took the tonsure and by her strict fulfilment of her monastic vows strove to redeem her guilt before God of having drawn the youth onto another path than that which he had sworn to follow.

The young Nicholas Ivanovich fulfilled the oath that he had made at the shrine of St. Sergius.

On September 26, 1908, he received the monastic tonsure and was ordained to the diaconate. The enemy fought strongly against the ascetic, not wanting him to become a monk. By night he was assailed by fears with regard to everything spiritual. When this did not work, the devil used the girl whom Nicholas Zvezdinsky had loved so long and so tenderly. Unexpectedly she began to look for him. But although the young

student felt drawn towards her and earthly happiness, still, calling on God, he rejected this temptation and hastened his steps to the elder Alexis, who in his hermit's cell blessed him not to delay in taking the tonsure.

On September 26, the rector of the Academy Eudocimus tonsured the third-year student Nicholas Zvezdinsky in the Academy church dedicated to the Protecting Veil of the All-Holy Mother of God during the all-night vigil. He gave his vows loudly, and was vested in everything monastic. His face shone with an unearthly light, and the Holy Spirit played on his ascetic face.

On October 22, the feast of the Mother of God of Kazan, he was ordained to the diaconate. And on July 8, 1909, the other feast of the Kazan Mother of God, he was ordained to the priesthood.

But soon the enemy took up arms against the warrior of Christ. Terror, fear, anguish, darkness and the despondency of solitude rolled in waves over his soul. Hell came up to his heart... then a terrible crash, the church collapsed, falling through onto the ground floor, the iconostasis was in pieces. The monk trembled, crossed himself and suddenly a terrible guffaw rent the air. The ascetic came to - everything was in its place, the church was intact, a quiet prayerful twilight and a grace-filled warmth filled the church.

In 1909, Hieromonk Seraphim graduated from Theological Academy with the degree of master of theology. Since he was the best preacher and a well-known ascetic, Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow, the future hieromartyr, left him in the Moscow diocese as a teacher of church history in the Bethany seminary. There Fr. Seraphim won the hearts of the students by his example and words; like their teacher they burned with desire to be faithful servers of the altar of God until their death. He was also a teacher in the Moscow theological seminary.

But the enemy did not sleep. He wanted to change the students' good opinion of their teacher. He insinuated into their midst an adulterous woman of great physical beauty, high rank and subtle charms. Under the guise of spiritual striving she tried to win over the ascetic Fr. Seraphim, loading him with valuable gifts and presents. But the warrior of Christ was very attentive to himself and did not give in to Satan's charms and wiles. He understood his subtle nets and guarded himself in a cell inaccessible to the female sex. And he refused to accept her rich gifts. Everybody condemned her and sincerely took pity on him. The devil, who wanted to become master in the academic institutions, could not stand Fr. Seraphim, who was a model of meekness, a rule of faith and abstinence, and a fine teacher.

In his sorrows Fr. Seraphim found joy under the roof of the Chudov monastery, where his spiritual father and friend Archimandrite Arsenius (Zhadanovksy), the future hieromartyr, was living. Always immersed in prayer and examining himself, the good pastor of a numerous monastic flock, Fr. Arsenius was of the same mind in everything with Fr. Seraphim. After the noisy worldliness of the seminary, Fr. Seraphim found here the monastic discipline and prayer-life that he was looking for. Fr. Arsenius immediately embraced him as a friend, and the elder of the Chudov

monastery, Igumen Gerasimus, prophesied to Nicholas Ivanovich that he would become the abbot of the monastery.

On September 21, 1912, Fr. Seraphim was given the post of teacher of homiletics, liturgics and pastorship in the Moscow theological seminary.

It was 1914. Fr. Arsenius was consecrated bishop of Serpukhov. A successor was needed for the Chudov monastery. The choice fell on Fr. Seraphim, who was well-known for his fiery sermons within the walls of the monastery, and on June 13 (10), 1914 he was appointed to this post with promotion to the rank of archimandrite, being at the same time inspector of the church schools of Moscow. From 1915 to 1916 he was also president of the Moscow section of the Orthodox Kamchatka Brotherhood.

Vladyka Arsenius saw in him a faithful helper, fellow struggler in prayer and friend; the brotherhood - a good leader and a lofty example of the monastic life; the parishioners - a wonderful consoler, director and teacher. But the temptress Eve came here, too, and tried to turn Fr. Arsenius and the brotherhood against the abbot. She embarrassed everyone by her presence, always appearing near Archimandrite Seraphim. But God preserved His warrior - everyone saw that he was chaste.

The revolution broke, and the Church was not unaffected. Soon the order came to abandon the Chudov monastery. The Kremlin came under bombardment, and the brotherhood of the monastery and the representatives of the higher clergy of the Local Council of the Russian Church were escorted into the basement of the Chudov monastery, where, 300 years before, Patriarch Hermogenes, the pillar of the Orthodox Church and the single upholder of Orthodoxy in the whole of Russia, had been starved to death by the Poles. Here unceasing prayer was sent up for the salvation of the Orthodox Fatherland; everyone wept, fasted and prepared for Communion. Here, too, St. Alexis was brought in his simple white coffin; by his relics he was as if present with them praying for his Russian flock...

In August, 1918, the Chudov monastery was deserted. Fr. Seraphim sealed the precious remains of St. Alexis with his abbot's seal, as if wishing to preserve the valuable treasure from his enemies. In tears he said farewell to his guide and the founder of the monastery.

The brotherhood was transferred to the Novospassky monastery, but they were not given accomodation. Vladyka Arsenius and Fr. Seraphim thought of staying in the Zosima hermitage, but the monks there were frightened of them, as if with the arrival of the well-known people from the Kremlin their monastery, too, would be closed. They had to settle, in August, 1919 (1918), in a small house in the Seraphim-Znamensky skete of the women's community of the Protecting Veil under the solicitous care of the abbess of the skete, Matushka Tamara. There, in the woods, was a house-church in the name of St. Arsenius the Great. Vladyka Arsenius celebrated the Liturgy there everyday, while Fr. Seraphim was the chanter; no-one else was present.

And so the two friends prayed for all their children, for Orthodox Russia, for everyone. Soon their spiritual children from the Chudov monastery began to visit

them. At this time Fr. Seraphim took no confessions. Vladyka Arsenius was the spiritual father of everyone. In this remote hermitage Fr. Seraphim imitated his heavenly protector, St. Seraphim. He devoted himself to prayer, reading the whole of the New Testament during the week - exactly as is written in the life of St. Seraphim. He also did physical work, chopping wood for fuel and making charcoal for the censer. In this way he prepared himself for the lofty apostolic feat that lay ahead of him.

In October, 1919, his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon called him to himself. Bishop Eudocimus of Nizhegorod had asked the patriarch to give his agreement to the consecration of Fr. Seraphim Zvezdinsky to the see of Arzamas. However, the authorities did not allow him to go to Arzamas. So the patriarch, who was at that time choosing helpers, said:

"I need you," and appointed him bishop of Dmitrov, a vicariate of the Moscow diocese.

The day before the consecration, on the feast of St. Ignatius the Godbearer, Fr. Seraphim vividly described the thorny path of the hierarch of Christ.

"Batyushka," said his spiritual children, "why did you preach such a sorrowful sermon on such a significant and joyful day in your life?"

"Because it will be sorrowful," said Fr. Seraphim firmly.

On December 15 (21), Patriarch Tikhon and other hierarchs consecrated Fr. Seraphim to the episcopate in the Trinity podvorye. After the Liturgy, Patriarch Tikhon pointed out that it was the feast of St. Peter, the first metropolitan of All Russia, and expressed the desire that Vladyka Seraphim would be like him:

"Just as the Hierarch Peter was the support of the city of Moscow, so you must be the support of the city of Dmitrov."

After saying farewell to his friend Vladyka Arsenius, Vladyka Seraphim left for the city of Dmitrov. When the patriarch saw him off, he said: "Go along the apostolic path, do not be upset by the inconveniences of life and the lack of necessities, but endure everything that comes your way."

On arriving in Dmitrov, Bishop Seraphim found himself a place to live, built a house church in the name of St. Seraphim and organized church services. These services attracted many people. Soon the new archpastor's love for his flock and devotion to God raised the souls of the worshippers, and church life in Dmitrov began to flourish.

Where Vladyka served, there were his spiritual children. In Great Lent they stood in the church from morning to evening without feeling tired, and would not be parted from their father even for an hour. They accompanied him to his house, chanting and

praising Christ, and could not be persuaded to leave until the door of the house closed behind him.

Vladyka gave himself totally to his flock. From the morning, after the daily Liturgy, crowds of people of all ranks and stations in life would come to him for advice and consolation. There were more than a hundred churches in his diocese, 300 hundred priests, 250 deacons and three monastic communities - for all he was father, comforter and pastor.

Even thirty years after he had been driven from the town into exile, people remembered his words and passed them on from mouth to mouth. One would recite his sermons by heart, another would recount incidents in his life in Dmitrov. There was no house in which his name was not known and practically none in which his portrait did not hang.

On December 12, 1921 Bishop Seraphim was arrested in Moscow and cast into Butyrki prison.

In January, 1922, Bishop Seraphim founded the brotherhood of the Life-creating Cross of the Lord in Dmitrov. Patriarch Tikhon had given his blessing to the formation of brotherhoods, which were not meant to replace, but to complement the parishes in the new conditions of Soviet life. Vladyka knew and loved each one of his flock, and was constantly visiting them. His cell-attendant, who was used to these wanderings of his, used to say to him as they were walking together through the streets of Dmitrov:

"Vladyka, there's a light, aren't they waiting for us? We haven't managed to visit everyone!"

The bishop was assiduous in serving, and considered it his duty to confess everyone - he was never content with the practice of general confession that was beginning to spread everywhere in the 1920s. And he would say to his children:

"Never and nowhere, under no circumstances of life must the members of the brotherhood be ashamed of their holy Orthodox Faith..."

His zeal did not go unnoticed, and on November 29, 1922, he was arrested and imprisoned in a subterranean prison in Moscow. He was accused, in particular, of firmly resisting the renovationists, to whom he surrendered not even a single church in his diocese. For nine days Vladyka ate nothing, being fortified only by the Holy Gifts. Then he was transferred to Butyrki prison for five months. Here he experienced sufferings similar to those experienced by the martyrs of the first Christian centuries. Insects gnawed at his flesh, which tore away in chunks; his whole body was one bare lump of meat. But the Lord appeared to His suffering servant in prison and strengthened him, in memory of which he wrote an akathist to the Suffering Christ the Saviour which contained the following words: "Strengthen me, who am thoroughly exhausted, in the bearing of the saving cross which Thy right hand hath sent to me."

He was transferred to hospital. His heart began to fail, but the Lord preserved his life since it was needed for the Church and his beloved flock, who unceasingly prayed for him with tears. The parcels they sent were so big that the hierarch was able to feed many prisoners on them. And even here he did not cease to catch souls by his love for Christ. People who had apostasized from Christ the Saviour, who had not approached the Holy Mysteries for thirty years, confessed their sins to him and were again united to Christ.

He was in this prison for five months. On March 30, 1923 he was sentenced to two years' exile in the north and sent to the village of Vizinga, Zyryan region. In April, 1923 he was transferred to the Taganka prison. On May 1 he set off on his first exile, accompanied by several of his spiritual children. A large crowd of people accompanied their archpastor to the station, and for a long time his children lay on the ground, giving him their last earthly bow, until the train disappeared from view. Two nuns accompanied him on his journey, providing him with food and seeing to his clothing. The hierarch had given away almost all his clothing to his fellow-prisoners. From Kotlas to Ust-Sysolsk he journeyed with Bishop Nicholas (Yarushevich). In Ust-Sysolsk, where he arrived on May 16, he met Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, and also the Fudel family: Sergius and his sister Marusya. The hierarchs comforted each other and then parted again. Vladyka Seraphim was sent to the remote village of Vizinga, arriving on May 27. There, in a simple peasant's hut in an ocean of forests, the hierarch. He was accompanied by Monk Philaret of the Chudov monastery, and Fr. Ivan Suraviev, the dean of Dmitrov, who had been condemned with him. Soon a house church was built, and the everyday services took up all their free time. The exiled hierarch gave himself to prayer for his flock, while his flock remained faithful to their lawful hierarch, not joining the renovationists.

"Only here, in saving exile," wrote Vladyka Seraphim to his friend Vladyka Arsenius, "have I learned what seclusion and prayer is."

And here he received food and clothing from his spiritual children, who wrote to him about their sorrows and needs. Vladyka replied to them in writing, comforting them and not allowing the renovationists to build their nest in his diocese.

Thus passed two years.

On the day of the Annunciation, April 7, 1925, Vladyka Seraphim rejoiced at the news that he had been freed from exile. On the next day, however, he was greatly saddened to hear that the patriarch had died. On May 4, he arrived in Moscow, having stopped at Sergiev Posad for confession with his elder, Fr. Alexis. (According to one source, he signed the Act of April 12 handing over ecclesiastical power to Metropolitan Peter.)

The Church in Moscow was in a pitiful state. Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, the patriarch's successor, was not trusted by many of the pastors and archpastors of Moscow, and the venerable hierarchs did not want to submit to a hierarch who had only just become a monk. But the pure-hearted Vladyka Seraphim understood that

the metropolitan was the most worthy successor to the patriarch. He knew that Patriarch Tikhon had been greatly comforted by Metropolitan Peter's devotion, faithfulness and love for him. And by supporting the locum tenens in his turn, Vladyka Seraphim helped to reconcile the Muscovite clergy with Metropolitan Peter.

Vladyka Seraphim spent the summer in the Borisoglebsk Anosin monastery in Moscow diocese. On November 11 Metropolitan Peter appointed Vladyka Seraphim, together with other vicar-bishops, to take his place in Moscow. He knew that he would not betray the Church of Christ.

In December, Vladyka retired to a wooded retreat twenty versts from Kubinki station in Zvenigorod uyezd, where there was a house church in honour of St. Sabbas of Zvenigorod. Quiet prayer gave peace to the soul of the archpastor, and he clearly understood that the enemy would not allow Metropolitan Peter to take the helm of the Church again. And in order to preserve his independence, Vladyka Seraphim retreated further into the catacombs.

On June 13 (July), 1926 he was exiled to Arzamas. On July 5, 1926, he made a pilgrimage to Diveyevo. The timid abbess took fright at the unexpected arrival of the popular hierarch and began to constrain him and prevent him from performing Church services. Vladyka Seraphim suffered this for a long time, but finally by his humility and prayers he won over the abbess. And so every day he would celebrate the Liturgy behind closed doors in the underground church of the Mother of God "Console my Sorrow", praying for the monastery and his orphaned flock. After the Liturgy he would go round St. Seraphim's canal and recite "Virgin Mother of God, rejoice!", in accordance with St. Seraphim's rule, 150 times.

Every day he prayed in St. Seraphim's hermitage. And on July 19, the feast of the opening of the relics of St. Seraphim, he served in Sarov. (St. Seraphim's relics had been removed from the monastery in March, 1926.) Thousands of pilgrims participated in the festivities. But soon Vladyka was given the order to leave Sarov. Thus just as the first celebration of St. Seraphim at Sarov was linked with Fr. John and his son, the future Vladyka Seraphim, so the last hierarchical Liturgy in Sarov was celebrated by Vladyka Seraphim on August 15, 1926.

"Where do you want to go?" they asked the exiled archpastor.

"Only back to my diocese," replied the hierarch.

"That is impossible!" they replied.

September 22 was Vladyka's last day in Diveyevo. During the night he was ordered to go he did not know where. Then in pouring rain he and other members of the Diveyevo community, including Abbess Alexandra, were brought to Arzamas. Late at night the damp, dark walls of Arzamas prison received the tormented prisoners. In the morning the nuns who accompanied him brought him dry, clean clothing. Soon the prisoners were taken to Nizhni-Novgorod, where the basement of a threatening institution hid the archpastor from the eyes of those who loved him. In these difficult

trials his gallstone illness got worse, and he was given over into the care of a nun who was his adopted daughter. He was released on October 8, and on October 17 he was ordered to appear before Metropolitan Sergius in Moscow

Vladyka Seraphim categorically refused to accept Sergius' infamous "declaration" of July, 1927, which placed the Church in more or less complete submission to the atheists.

"I am morally incapable of doing that which those who do not love Christ the Saviour want," was the reply of the wise confessor.

"Agree with the proposal," said Metropolitan Sergius, "otherwise you will not only land up beyond the Arctic circle, but your lot will be three times as bad as that of Metropolitan Peter."

At this point Vladyka produced a petition that he be retired, expressing thereby his refusal to submit his rank and conscience to those who did not love the Son of God and His glory.

Sergius, stunned by the decisive departure of the archpastor, hid Vladyka Seraphim's decision from all those round him in order that others should not follow his example and retire. According to Metropolitan Manuel, Archbishop Zenobius of Tambov was also present at this meeting. The two bishops refused to accede to Sergius' demand that they read out his declaration from the ambon to their flocks, which would have meant that they agreed with the declaration. Instead, the confessing bishops produced (from the sleeves of their cassocks) their petitions, which they had prepared earlier just in case. It was at that point that Metropolitan Sergius mentioned the Arctic circle, and the island of Khe on which Metropolitan Peter was exiled. Apparently, after this the bishops were given some time to consider their response. It is not known what Archbishop Zenobius did. But Vladyka Seraphim, who had been given the choice of returning to his flock or exile in the town of Melenki (on the river Unzhe in Vladimir province) if he did not accept the conditions, asked the advice of an elder. The elder said:

"Go to Melenki, and you will be beloved of God."

Soon Vladyka was ordered to leave Moscow and go to Melenki, where his new life in retirement began in October, 1927. For five years he did not leave his house, but lived a life of prayer in strict accordance with the typikon. Faithful pastors came to seek his advice from Moscow, and his spiritual children also visited him. (According to one source, Vladyka Seraphim lived with Vladyka Arsenius in the St. Catherine's women's monastery until its closure.)

According to one (dubious) source, Vladyka signed the decisions of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church, which took place in various places between March and August, 1928, through Protopriest Paul Borotinsky.



He also wrote (although these words may belong to Hieromartyr Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich): "Metropolitan Sergius has fallen away from the Church, that is, by his actions he has transgressed the Church canons. Metropolitan Sergius no longer remains in the bosom of the Orthodox Church. The Church which has recognized righteousness in communism is not a Church... An 'organization bought at the price of bowing down to the Antichrist is unworthy of the Church."

On April 11 (25), 1932 Archbishop Seraphim was arrested in Melenki in connection with the Moscow branch of the True Orthodox Church, and taken to Moscow. He was cast in Lubyanka prison. There he sat together with Vladyka Arsenius, who was soon released, while Archbishop Seraphim was transferred to the Butyrki prison. For three months he remained in Butyrki, sick and weak. On July 7 he was convicted of being "a member of a church-monarchist counter-revolutionary organization, 'The True Orthodox Church'", and was sentenced to three years' exile in Kazakhstan.

On August 1 Archbishop Seraphim was taken out of prison and put on a train, where his spiritual daughter, a nun, was waiting for him. They were taken to Alma-Ata, which was overflowing. For two months the hierarch could not find a place to stay. He lived on the roof of a poor old man's store-room. He had hardly had time to rest on the shed, which was quickly converted into living accomodation, when he was again taken away seven thousand kilometres through Syzran, Penza, Saratov and Uralsk to Guryev.

The unendurable heat of the Caspian played havoc with his health, and after seven months he was again taken on a very hard journey to Uralsk, arriving on August 1, 1933. Here the sufferer found shelter in a humble little cottage, where he fell victim to a bout of malaria that nearly killed him. After recovering from this illness, at the beginning of 1935, he was arrested and sentenced to three years' exile in Ishim. Sick, and without money or shelter, the exile arrived in Ishim. Having settled with his companions in the house of an old man, Vladyka gave himself up to prayer and the reading of the Sacred Scriptures. Here in his distant exile he was visited by his spiritual children.

On the night of June 23-24 (August 2), 1937, Bishop Seraphim was arrested in Ishim with 74 other priests. Soon the news came from prison that Vladyka was barely alive. To his heart illness were added kidney and liver pains. When his spiritual children came to him, he said: "Say goodbye forever..." On July 28 he was transferred to Omsk. On August 23 he was sentenced to death in accordance with article 58-10. On August 26 he was shot in Omsk prison and buried in a common grave.

## **47. HOLY HIEROMARTYR ARSENIUS, BISHOP OF SERPUKHOV**

**(+1937)**

**and those with him**

Bishop Arsenius, in the world Alexander Ivanovich Zhadanovsky, was born on March 6, 1874 in the village of Pisarevka, Volchansky uyezd, Kharkov province (according to another source, in the city of Chuguyev, Kharkov province) into the family of Protopriest John Zhadanovsky. From childhood was distinguished by his exceptional meekness and humility. In 1884, when he was enrolled in the Kharkov theological seminary as the shortest of the pupils, the seal of God's election revealed itself in the following remarkable manner.

"One day," he recalled, "Archbishop Ambrose of Kharkov, of blessed memory, arrived. We pupils were drawn up in rows in the assembly hall. Vladyka-archbishop passed down the rows, stopped at me, and drew me out into the centre of the hall.

"Look, now he is the smallest pupil, but he will be a bishop."

"Of course, as always happens in our life, nobody paid any attention to these words."

In 1888 he finished his studies at the Kharkov theological school and entered the Kharkov theological seminary. After graduating in 1894 he was appointed to the post of overseer-coach in a theological school, and then teacher in the Osinovsky church-parish school in Kharkov province. From January 26, 1896 to October 1, 1899 he was supervisor-tutor at the Sumsk theological school.

Once his father fell ill, and Arsenius decided to become the priest in his native village. But the Lord judged otherwise. Arsenius sent a letter to Fr. John of Kronstadt asking him to pray for his sick father and for him to know what path to choose in life. Fr. John replied with good wishes for the recovery of his father and a blessing for him to become a monk. After this his father soon recovered.

Arsenius was tonsured on July 17, 1899 in the Svyatogorsk Dormition desert in Kharkov diocese by Archbishop Ambrose. On August 14, 1899, Archbishop Ambrose came again to the Svyatogorsk monastery and ordained Fr. Arsenius to the diaconate. And the next day he blessed him to go to the Moscow Theological Academy.

In 1899 he entered the Moscow Theological Academy, and on his way through Moscow, he dropped in at the Chudov monastery. Here he venerated the shrine of St. Alexis, metropolitan of Moscow. When he approached, he felt an unusual joy and consolation, and it seemed to him that the shrine was surrounded by a kind of radiance. From that moment he became closely linked in heart to St. Alexis. At difficult moments of his life he resorted to his help and always received consolation.

On May 9, 1902 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Arsenius (Stadnitsky), rector of the Academy, and in 1903 he graduated from the Moscow Theological

Academy with the degree of candidate of theology. His thesis was: "The Conversations of St. Macarius of Egypt from a homiletic point of view."

According to one source, Fr. Arsenius was appointed teacher of homiletics in the Tbilisi theological seminary on August 5, 1903, and treasurer of the Moscow Chudov monastery on September 2. According to another source, having been appointed treasurer of the Chudov monastery by Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow, he arrived at the Chudov monastery on August 3, 1903 after attending the opening of the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov. On March 24 (26, according to another source) 1904 he was appointed deputy of the monastery and on March 27 was raised to the rank of archimandrite. It was here that an elder of the Chudov monastery, Igumen Gerasimus, prophesied that he would become a bishop.

Metropolitan Vladimir greatly valued the spiritual gifts and administrative skills of the new abbot. And indeed, during his time in this post Archimandrite Arsenius did much for the monastery, turning it into a seedbed of spiritual enlightenment for the whole of Moscow. He always attracted many worshippers to the Chudov monastery by his careful serving. And he catered for their spiritual needs by publishing the highly-esteemed publication Spiritual Diaries and various brochures on moral topics. During the last three years of his stay in the monastery he and the missionary Aivazov undertook the publication for the people of special religious-educational material called Mites of the Monastery of the Holy Hierarch Alexis. These Mites came out in tens of thousands of copies and were distributed throughout Russia. From 1912 Archimandrite Arsenius and Aivazov began to publish the journal Voice of the Church, which was considered one of the most lively and substantial theological monthlies. In 1911 Fr. Arsenius opened a branch of the Kamchatka missionary brotherhood attached to the Chudov monastery, and was responsive to the needs of the Moscow brotherhood of the Holy Hierarchs of Moscow.

Archimandrite Arsenius was also distinguished as an administrator. In the few years of his administration of the Chudov monastery he raised the standard of monastic life and significantly improved the material situation of the brotherhood. On being raised to the episcopate, he preserved his links with the monastery.

In 1913 Archimandrite Arsenius, together with his friend Hieromonk Seraphim (Zvezdinsky), the future hieromartyr bishop, went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

On June 8, 1914, in the St. Alexis church of the Chudov monastery, he was consecrated Bishop of Serpukhov, a vicariate of the Moscow diocese, by Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow, Archbishop Alexis, who was in charge of the Donskoy monastery, Bishop Palladius of Perm and other bishops.

In November, 1916 he was named fourth vicar of the Moscow diocese.

During the Local Council of the Russian Church in 1917-18, many members of the Council lived in the Chudov monastery. During the battle for the Kremlin, they prayed in the cave church dedicated to St. Hermogenes, patriarch of Moscow. In July,

1918, soldiers fired at the Chudov monastery, and the next month it was closed and later destroyed.

After the closing of the monastery, Bishop Arsenius and the brotherhood settled in a small house in the Seraphimo-Znamensky Skete of the women's community of the Protecting Veil, Podolsk uyezd, near Moscow, where he had been spiritual father from 1912 to 1916. **Schema-Abbess Tamara** had been told by Patriarch Tikhon to look after Bishop Arsenius, her spiritual father, and Archimandrite Seraphim in this remote place. And there, in the woods, in a house-church dedicated to St. Arsenius the Great, Vladyka Arsenius celebrated the Liturgy every day with Fr. Seraphim as chanter. He also occupied himself with medicine, painting, church singing and icon-painting. In the church was an icon of the Saviour not made by hands which had been painted by him.

In 1920 Vladyka went to his see in Serpukhov, where he was greatly venerated by the people.

In 1922 he founded the brotherhood of St. John the Theologian, which survived until the war. He used to say: "In view of the distressing condition of the Russian Orthodox Church, the brotherhood does not oppose itself to the official [Tikhonite] Church, but believes that it is a small, inseparable part of the one Body. The brotherhood rejoices in the joys, and grieves at the sorrows, of the Mother Church... With the blessing of a bishop, the brotherhood, in the event of a loss of communication with him (the death of the bishop or his imprisonment), does not suspend its existence, believing that it has the blessing, and is under the direction of, the Lord... All relationships within the brotherhood must be penetrated by freedom, which is inseparably linked with love in Christ. Only the combined realization of the apostolic feat reveals to the world, which is riven by passions and deception, the unbreakable unity of the Church of Christ..."

"The brotherhood of St. John the Theologian," writes Shemetov, "was a liturgical community. In the evening after work the 'little brothers' met in the flat of one of the members of the community. Then an altar was erected, candles were lit in front of an icon and the service began. And the huge cold city was daily lit up with the light of Christ kindled in the catacombs of the 20th century. In the words of an eye-witness: 'The Liturgy was the unifying centre, and often at that moment when the exclamation "Christ is in our midst!" was heard, the Divine Sufferer would enter the room noiselessly, and the prayer became winged. Moving apart the walls and penetrating through the ceiling, it strove upwards, to that City where every tear is wiped away and where unending joy reigns.' Bishop Arsenius, who was rather the inspirer and spiritual director than the organizer of the brotherhood, gave its members complete freedom, insisting only on one thing - the strictest secrecy, whose necessity was indicated as follows in the rules: 'The brotherhood recognizes itself to be open... to the Church hierarchy and all who are seeking salvation. However, the community has its meetings in secret from the world and does not disclose its existence to those who could reveal the secret or who for whom it could serve as a stumbling block, becoming wittingly or unwittingly co-workers with the spirits of evil... The little brothers consider it an important condition of the normal life of the community that they

should fear nothing in the world except sin, being ready to suffer for the confession of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In 1923 Vladyka was retired from the administration of his diocese. In 1924, after the closure of the Seraphimo-Znamensky skete, he moved to the village of Kuzmenki near Serpukhov and lived in the house of the superior of the local church, Protopriest Michael Pyatikrestovsky. Vladyka was accompanied by two sisters, Alexandra and Matrona, from the closed skete. Schema-Abbess Tamara and other nuns and spiritual children of Vladyka also came to live in Kuzmenki. At this time it is said that he was raised to the rank of archbishop.

At the beginning of 1926 Vladyka was in Kotelniki, near Moscow, for the burial of Metropolitan Macarius (Nevsky), to whom he was very close and whose biography he wrote. In March he was exiled to Nizhni-Novgorod province, and by the end of the year he was in the Seraphimo-Ponetayevo monastery, Nizhni-Novogorod province, where he was visited by Protopriest Basil Postnikov, Abbess Tamara and others. After the closure of this monastery in 1927 Vladyka moved to Arzamas, where he rented a house. In the first half of 1928 he went to Perkhushino, where Schema-Abbess Tamara, Hieromonk Philaret (Postnikov) and ten sisters were living.

Vladyka Arsenius refused to cooperate with Metropolitan Sergius, by which, according to the sergianist Metropolitan Manuel, "he caused the reposed Patriarch (then Metropolitan) Sergius much vexation". In 1928, according to one (dubious) source, he signed the decisions of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church through Hieromonk Andrew (Elbson). He lived in Arzamas and near Moscow, and gradually restricted the circle of those close to him, withdrawing further and further from the world.

In 1929 he was arrested in Moscow, but through the intercessions of his Serpukhov flock he was released from prison and exiled instead to the town of Zvenigorod, from where he was again allowed to live in Serpukhov.

In 1931, for his fearless defence of the Church and exposure of atheism, Vladyka Arsenius was again arrested and sentenced to hard labour on Solovki, where he was stripped of his clerical vestments, shaved and placed in a barracks with three hundred other prisoners. But even here he did not cease to preach the word of God and raise the spirits of his fellow prisoners, which aroused the hatred of the chekists.

Vladyka Arsenius was released from Solovki after two months and moved to Serpukhov, where, on April 21, 1932 he was again arrested and sentenced in connection with the Moscow branch of the True Orthodox Church. He was imprisoned in the inner isolator of the OGPU prison, but was released on June 10 or 11. At the beginning of 1933 he was living in the house of E.I. Shavrova near Perkhushkovo station, Zvenigorod region, Moscow district, but was arrested there in the spring, being condemned on May 27. However, on August 14 it was decided to consider his sentence conditional. From the autumn of 1933 to April, 1937 he lived in a house bought by his spiritual children in the village of Kotelniki, Ukhtomsky region, Moscow district.

On April 13 or 14, 1937, Vladyka Arsenius was arrested in Kotelniki and imprisoned in Butyrki, Moscow. On September 13/26 Vladyka was convicted of "leading and organizing an illegal, counter-revolutionary monarchist organization of churchmen - the followers of the True Orthodox Church." On September 14/27, 1937, Vladyka Arsenius and all those arrested with him were shot in Butovo field near Moscow. It is now known that between August 8, 1937 and December 19, 1938, the NKVD shot 20,762 people at Butovo, including about 370 church-servers.

Vladyka Arsenius appeared several times to his spiritual children after his martyric death. Tonya of Maroseika relates one of these appearances: "At the beginning of 1941 I again saw Vladyka in a dream. I saw him in some kind of private house. Vladyka was in light blue vestments with a golden mitre on his head; next to him there stood a hierodeacon in a sticharion of the same light blue hue. He was girded in cross-wise fashion in a golden orarion. Vladyka had a cross and sprinkler in his hands while the hierodeacon had a chalice with holy water, and they were loudly singing a moleben, and Vladyka was sprinkling all the people with holy water.

"I went up to Vladyka, he let me kiss the cross and sprinkled me abundantly with holy water, asking: 'Tell me, Tonya, do you have any bread?'

"I said: 'I have, Vladyka.' 'When you will no longer have any, take some from my sack, you won't starve with me. And do you have sugar?' 'I have, Vladyka,' I said. 'When you will no longer have any, take some sugar, too, from my sack.' And he again sprinkled me with holy water.

"I woke up and thought: would there really be a famine, as Vladyka had warned me in advance? And precisely four months later they began to give out bread by ration cards, and sugar also. Many began to be terribly hungry, but I, by his prayers, was in no need, and even had the opportunity to help others.

"That is how he looked after his spiritual children even when he was no longer with us."

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**Abbess Tamara**, in the world Tamara Alexandrovna Mardzhanova or Mardzhanishvili, was born on April 1, 1869 in a princely Georgian family. When young she lost her father, and then, at the age of nineteen – her mother. Having a good voice and musical talent, she was preparing to enter the St. Petersburg conservatory. But then her mother died, and she went to live with her aunt in the city of Signa, not far from which was a women's community, in Bodbi. Attracted by the spiritual beauty of the monastery, Tamara Alexandrovna firmly decided to become a nun there, of which she informed Abbess Juvenalia. However, her relatives resisted her intention and took her away to Tiflis. But Tamara left home and again came to the monastery, which she joined in 1889, remaining there for twelve years under the direction of Abbess Juvenalia. In 1900 she was tonsured into the mantia with the name Juvenalia, and during her tonsure, as Bishop Arsenius recounted, a white dove was seen to

descend upon her. On October 12, 1902 was made abbess of the Bobdi convent, which contained 300 sisters. She was helped greatly in this period by St. John Kronstadt, who, when she was in Petersburg as novice, had placed three abbess's crosses on her to signify that she would be the leader of three monasteries. In 1905 she became superior of the Pokrovskaya community in Moscow, where she often met Grand Duchess Elizabeth. In this period of her life she knew many prominent churchmen, including Metropolitans Flavian (Gorodetsky), Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) and Macarius (Nevsky) and the elders Schema-Igumen Herman, Hieroschemamonk Anatolius of Optina and Alexis of Zosima skete, all of whom respected her greatly. She was particularly influenced by St. John of Kronstadt, and by the image of St. Seraphim of Sarov. Her love for St. Seraphim gave her the desire to settle in Diveyevo, but Elder Alexis did not bless this undertaking, blessing her instead to found a skete. And so in 1910 she founded the Seraphimo-Znamensky skete. The nuns of the new skete lived according to a strict typicon; their main activity was prayer, and they were free from worldly concerns. They were often visited by the future bishops Arsenius (Zhadanovsky) and Seraphim (Zvezdinsky), and on September 21, 1916 Bishop Arsenius gave her the schema with the name Tamara. In 1924 the Bolsheviks closed the skete, but the nuns' skete continued to exist under the guise of a sewing artel, and Matushka went to live with ten nuns in Trubacheyevka, near the village of Perekhushkovo, Moscow province. In a separate little house there lived a priest, **Hieromonk Philaret** (Postnikov). There, in 1931, she was arrested and exiled to the village of Ust-Uda in Irkutsk province. She was accompanied by **Novice Anna**. From Siberia Matushka returned with tuberculosis of the throat. In 1934 she settled in a little house at Pionerskaya station on the Belorussian railway, Moscow province. There, on April 10, 1936 she died, and was buried by Bishop Arsenius in the Vvedenskoye cemetery in Moscow.

One of Abbess Tamara's spiritual daughters was **Novice Thecla** (Yegorovna Trusova). She was born in 1890 or 1891 in the village of Yakovlevo, Alexinsky uyezd, Tula province into a peasant family. From the age of twelve she worked in a factory in Serpukhov. In 1921 she joined the Seraphimo-Znamensky skete. After the closure of the skete she lived for a time in Serpukhov and in her native village. Then she rejoined the skete in Trubachkeyevka. On December 28, 1930 she was arrested in Moscow for "anti-Soviet agitation" and cast into Butyrki prison. On January 3, 1931 she was condemned in accordance with article 58-10 to three years' exile in the north. Nothing more is known about her.

Others condemned with Vladyka as part of the group case, "The Case of Bishop Arsenius (Zhadanovsky), Moscow, 1937" included:

**Hieromonk Andrew** (Boris Yakovlevich Elbson). He was born in 1896 in Moscow, and received an intermediate education. He was from a German (according to another source, a Russified Swedish) family. He was a spiritual son of Elder Nectarius of Optina, and was also close to Fr. Sergius Mechiev. He was tonsured and ordained to the priesthood. He served together with Fr. Alexander Gomanovksy in the church of SS. Constantine and Helena in Moscow, and later in the church of St. Nicholas in Podkapayevsky pereulok. He was also priest of the Alexandrian podvorye, and served in Murom and Kirzhach. He did not recognize the declaration of Metropolitan

Sergius. According to one (dubious) source, he signed the canons of the “Nomadic Council” of the Catacomb Church in 1928 on behalf of Archbishop Arsenius. At the beginning of the 1930s he was arrested and exiled from Moscow. He settled in Murom, where he served in secret. Then he moved to the city of Kirzhach, Vladimir province, Krasnoarmeiskaya street 41. He was arrested on February 23, 1937 in Kirzhach for being “an active participant in a counter-revolutionary monarchist organization of churchmen-illegals, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”. This was in connection with the case of Archbishop Arsenius. On September 26 he was sentenced to death, and on September 27 he was shot in Butovo and buried there.

**Priest Peter Sergeyevich Petrikov.** He was born on January 19, 1903 in the city of Mozhaisk, Moscow province. He had an intermediate education. Fr. Peter had a fine, purely Russian face of rare beauty, full of spiritual zeal, but calm and clear. He was close to Fr. Sergius Mechiev, and was a spiritual son of Elder Nectarius of Optina. There has been preserved a photograph of Fr. Peter in the epitachelion of Elder Nectarius of Optina. In 1922 he finished three courses at the medical faculty of the Second Moscow State University. In 1925 he became a priest. He served in Fr. Sergius Mechiev’s church of St. Nicholas on Maroseika, and in the church of St. Nicholas in Podkopayevsky pereulok. He also carried out secret services. On April 14, 1931 he was arrested in Moscow, and cast into Butryki prison. On June 5 accused of being a member of “the counter-revolutionary monarchist organization ‘The True Orthodox Church’”, of anti-Soviet propaganda and of helping the exiled. He was sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 to three years in the camps. This was part of the group case, “The Case of I.A. Babikov and others (R-35593), Moscow, 1931”. On September 17, 1931 his sentence was commuted to release with a ban on living in twelve places in the USSR for three years. In 1932, some Maroseika parishioners met him in Murom. On April 10, 1937 he was arrested in Mozhaisk in connection with the case of Bishop Arsenius Zhadonovsky. He refused to admit any guilt. On September 26 he was convicted by the UNKVD of “active participation in the counter-revolutionary organization of church illegals, ‘The True Orthodox Church’”, and in accordance with article 58-10 was condemned to death. He was shot on September 27 in Butovo, and buried in the Butovo polygon.

**Protopriest Sergius Alexeyevich Sidorov.** He was born on February 10, 1895 in the village of Klimovo, Murom district, Nizhni-Novgorod province, the son of a nobleman and state councillor, **Alexis Mikhailovich Sidorov**, who was taken as a hostage by the Bolsheviki in Orel and shot. The mother of Fr. Sergius, Anastasia Nikolayevna, was a princess Kavkasidze, a family that was related to the younger branch of the royal race of the Bagratians. She died soon after Sergius’ birth. The childhood and adolescence of Sergius were spent in the small estate of Nikolayevka in Kursk province, and then in Moscow. Until the revolution he took an active part in the spiritual life of Moscow. Among his friends were Sergius Nikolayevich Durylin and Sergius Iosifovich Fudel, as well as the rector of the Moscow Academy, Bishop Theodore (Pozdeyevsky). With his friend Nicholas Chernyshev (later an artist, who perished in Stalin’s camps), he went to Optina Desert, where he met Elder Anatolius (Potapov), becoming his spiritual child until his death in 1922. He went to the Popova gymnasium in Kiev, the historico-philological department of the people’s university of Shinyavsky and two summer theological courses at the Kiev Theological Academy



(in 1920-21). According to one source, he finished his studies at Moscow theological seminary and theological academy. In 1920 he married Tatyana Petrovna Kandiba, who was from a famous Ukrainian noble family. In the spring of 1921 he went to Moscow and received the blessing of Fr. Alexis Mechev to become a priest. On September 21, 1921 he was ordained to the priesthood in Kiev and was sent to the village of Pochtovaya Vita near Kiev. In 1923 he was transferred to the church of SS. Peter and Paul in Sergiev Posad, where he took an active part in the struggle of the Sergiev Posad clergy against renovationism. In this period he was often with Patriarch Tikhon, who was very fond of him. He was raised to the rank of protopriest. On October 5, 1924 he was arrested and cast into Butyrki prison. He was released on November 30, and went back to serving in Sergiev Posad. On November 30, 1925 he was arrested again for "participation in a Black Hundredist monarchist grouping, whose aim was struggle with Soviet power". He was in Butyrki prison until July 12, 1926. The investigators tried to force Fr. Sergius to confess that he knew of the existence of a letter to Metropolitan Peter saying that the patriarch's will should not be considered genuine, and that he should betray the author of this letter. Fr. Sergius suffered greatly in prison; his hands and legs were painful, as was an old wound in his spine. He was subjected to twenty-three interrogations, including the whole night of December 27. Physically and psychologically near to breaking point, he was greatly helped by the True Orthodox Archbishop Nicholas (Dobronravov), the future hieromartyr, who, seeing that Fr. Sergius was about to break down and slander both himself and others, said to the Bolsheviki: "I demand that you leave Sidorov in peace. I know that he is suffering from a nervous disorder." "And you," he said, turning to Fr. Sergius, "by my power as a bishop I forbid to say anything whatsoever to the investigator." Fr. Sergius later wrote in his memoirs: "If my children and those close to me read these lines, let them bow down before the wonderful personage of Bishop Nicholas, who once within the walls of the GPU delivered me from greatest misfortune, from the sorrow of betraying my friends to the enemies of the faith and the Church." On March 25 Fr. Sergius was taken to the prison hospital, and then returned to his cell. On July 12, the day of the patronal feast of his parish, he was released from prison. In August he and his family went to Vladimir, which he had chosen as his domicile since he was not allowed to live in Moscow. (On November 5, 1926 he was formally condemned in accordance with article 68 to three years' ban on living in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Rostov-on-Don and their provinces, being confined to one domicile.) Before departing he went to say goodbye to Elder Alexis, who, on learning where he was going, said sadly: "Well, go to collect crosses in Vladimir." Fr. Sergius served as a supernumerary priest in various churches in Vladimir province. From 1927 to 1928 he served in the village of Volosovo. However, the lack of a place to live, and the impossibility of feeding his family, which included three children, forced him to move in 1929 to the village of Vozdvizheniye (Lukino) in Serpukhov region, Moscow province. In the same year a fourth child was born to him. Life was very difficult, and to make things worse, on February 3, 1930, he was arrested again for "calling on believers not to fall away from Orthodoxy, and to go more often to church". On February 23 he was condemned for his "corrupting influence on the population", and for being "a socially harmful person". (According to another source, he was accused of being "a participant in the Moscow branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church", and was sentenced to three years in the camps and sent to a camp.) In accordance with

article 58-10, he was sentenced to three years in the camps and was sent to Penyug station on the northern railway line, 150 kilometres from Kotlas. There he was given very heavy physical work, cutting wood and trimming logs. In winter he was given easier work. There were many priests in Kotlas, and at Pascha they were allowed to leave their barracks and celebrate the feast in a fenced-off field. They had neither candles nor books... The priests served from memory; the guards stood silently around, and nobody interrupted the service. Fr. Sergius later said that he had been present at Paschal services in the Kremlin, in the Kiev Caves Lavra and in many monasteries, but never had he heard such wonderful chanting, such penetrating prayers as on that Paschal night in the camps. A year before his release Fr. Sergius was transferred to Sibltag in Novosibirsk province. There he worked on building a railway in a boggy wood. He was very tired, undernourished and was waiting for a meeting with his wife. But she could not come to him. In the spring of 1933 he was released, and became rector of the church in Dmitrievskaya Sloboda in Murom region, Vladimir province. (According to another source, in the middle of the 1930s he returned from camp and exile and settled in the village of Vozdvizhenka, Serpukhov uyezd.) However, in 1935 the church was closed and in 1936 Fr. Sergius was transferred to Klimovo in Murom region. Life was difficult, but Fr. Sergius served beautifully and gave sermons that were listened to with great attention and appreciation by the peasants. Sometimes he had to go round the neighbouring villages to give Holy Communion to the dying. Once he was going to such a person, but his horse took a long time getting through the autumn mud. On arriving, he saw a big crowd outside the hut and heard the terrible cries of the dying man. On seeing Fr. Sergius the dying man stretched out his hands to him and said: "Save me, batyushka, the accursed ones are attacking me, they're taking hold of me, they're terrifying me! Save me, I have no more strength." Fr. Sergius confessed the man, gave him Communion and, taking him by the hand, prayed for him. He became calmer. "They've gone away," he whispered. "They're only threatening me in the corners, but they're not coming up to me. Batyushka, sit beside me, don't go away, otherwise they'll try to get hold of me again." And so Fr. Sergius spent the whole night holding the dying man by the hand and praying fervently. Towards morning he died peacefully. Fr. Sergius more than once spoke of the activity of the dark powers and their influence on the moral life of man, and said that it was a great sin to depart from the bounds established by the Church and seek to get to know the world of invisible spirits that surround us by means of magical methods. We should resort for help only to the holy saints of God and our angel guardians. We must never resort to the dark powers, neither when we are in difficult straits, nor in order to learn something, nor simply out of curiosity. Yes, they can help us a little, but they bring with them an unbearable burden that lies on the soul of a man until his very death. In Murom Fr. Sergius remained linked with the spiritual life in Moscow. Several times he secretly visited the city, staying with Sergius Vladimirovich Gruzinov or Lydia Dmitrievna Kozhevnikova. In the last year he went to Maly Yaroslavets to Fr. Michael Shik, a Catacomb priest who led him to Archbishop Arsenius (Zhadanovsky). Both would be martyred together with the holy bishop... Fr. Sergius knew that they would arrest him sometime, and spoke about it with his wife. His spiritual daughter said: "1937 has arrived. Arrests have begun. I told Fr. Sergius that I was frightened of prison and exile, and was expecting a rebuke. But Fr. Sergius looked gently at me and said: 'I, too, am afraid. You cannot even imagine how afraid I am! It is not shameful to be afraid, we are all weak people. But


it is wrong to become faint-hearted. After all, God is with us and He will never abandon us." Fr. Sergius loved his children very much. Once he was asked how, having a family, he had decided to become a priest, and to whom he would leave them in the event of his arrest. Fr. Sergius said: "To the Heavenly Queen! If I perish, it will be for her Son. So how can you think that in that case she would abandon my children? Never! She will save and defend them!" Two months later, on April 13, 1937, Fr. Sergius was arrested for "active participation in the illegal monarchist organization of churchmen, the followers of the True Orthodox Church". But his faith that the Heavenly Queen would save and defend his children was justified. They did not touch Tatyana Petrovna, and Fr. Sergius' children did not grow up in a children's home but next to their mother, a person of great purity and self-sacrifice. Fr. Sergius was cast into Butyrki prison together with fourteen other people as a member of Archbishop Arsenius' group. The formal accusation was: for "active participation in an illegal monarchist organization of churchmen – the followers of 'the True Orthodox Church' and leadership of its branches". During interrogation Fr. Sergius did not deny that he belonged to the True Orthodox Church, and that he had criticized Soviet power for its attitude towards the Church, and for exiling Metropolitan Peter, the patriarchal locum tenens. On September 26 he was condemned to be shot in accordance with article 58-10. The sentence was carried out on September 27 in the Butovo polygon, where he was also buried.

**Priest Michael Vladimirovich Shik.** He was born on July 20, 1887 in Moscow, in a family of Jewish merchants. His father was an honourable citizen of Moscow and a merchant of the first guild. He finished his studies at the first Moscow gymnasium in 1905, and in 1912 graduated from the historico-philological faculty of Moscow University. Then he studied philosophy in Frankfurt. Returning to Moscow, he became a member of the historico-philosophical circle founded by his friends at university – the brother and sister Vernadsky, the sisters Shakhovskaya and others. From 1914 to 1918 he served as an under-officer in the engineers. In 1918 he converted to Orthodoxy and married Princess Natalya Dmitrievna Shakhovskaya. The young couple settled in Sergiev Posad. They had five children. According to one source, Fr. Michael finished his studies at Moscow theological seminary and academy. He was a deeply believing and very educated man, and knew several ancient languages – Greek, Latin and Hebrew – as well as Polish, French, German and English. He was a spiritual son of Elder Alexis of Zosima Desert, who entrusted him to the care of Fr. Sergius Sidorov. In 1919 he became a member of the commission for the preservation of the monuments of art and antiquity in the Holy Trinity – St. Sergius Lavra. At the same time he was a teacher of history in the Pedagogical Technicum until 1925. In 1925 he was ordained to the diaconate by Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky) and began to serve in the church of SS. Peter and Paul in Sergiev Posad. On December 1, 1925 he was arrested and cast into Butyrki prison because, "knowing of the existence in Moscow of a monarchist organization of churchmen and laity, he hid this". On November 5, 1926 he was exiled for two years to Turtkul in Kazakhstan in accordance with article 68. There, in 1927 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Nicodemus (Krotkov). In 1928 he returned from exile to Moscow and began to serve in Moscow churches, including Fr. Sergius Mechev's church of St. Nicholas on Maroseika and Fr. Vladimir Ambartsurmov's church of St. Nicholas at Solomennaya. In the latter church Fr. Michael had his closest spiritual children: the expert in literature **Boris**

**Dmitrievich Udintsev** and the pianist **Maria Vladimirovna Yudina**. According to one source, he began serving in secret after 1928, and in 1930 was summoned for investigation for being “an active participant in the Moscow branch of the counter-revolutionary monarchist church organization, the True Orthodox Church”, but managed to hide. Fr. Michael went to live in the town of Maly Yaroslavets, Moscow province. With the help of his parents a house was bought for him in which he received his spiritual children from Moscow and in which he built a house church. He worked as a translator of foreign literature, especially English. He was finally arrested on February 25, 1937 in connection with the case of Archbishop Arsenius (Zhadanovsky), and on September 26 was sentenced to death for his “active participation in the counter-revolutionary organization of illegal churchmen, ‘The True Orthodox Church’, Moscow, 1937”. The next day he was shot in Butovo, where he was also buried.

**Nun Valentina** (Valentina Konstantinovna Zasyapkina). She was born in July, 1897 in Tula into a family of traders. In 1924 she entered the chemical faculty of Moscow State University, and finished three courses. From 1927 she worked as a laboratory assistant. On April 14, 1931 she was arrested and cast into Butyrki prison. On May 26 she was convicted in accordance with article 58-10, but released under guard, in “The Case of I.A. Babikova and others (R-35593), Moscow, 1931”. She was working as a senior technician in the Moscow factory BIAM when she was arrested again on April 14, 1937 in connection with the case of Bishop Arsenius. On September 26 she was convicted of “active participation in a counter-revolutionary organization of churchmen-illegals”, and in accordance with article 58-10 was sentenced to be shot. The sentence was carried out at Butovo on September 27, 1937.

**Nun Vera** (Vera Emelyanovna Rozhkova). She was born in 1899 in the village of Pashkovo, Tula province. She had higher education and worked in the Bauman institute in Moscow. She was arrested on April 14, and on September 26 was convicted by the UNKVD of active participation in a counter-revolutionary organization of illegals-churchmen. In accordance with article 58-10 she was sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out on September 27 in Butovo, where she was buried.

**Nun Matrona**, in the world Vera Petrovna Chusheva. She was born in 1891 in the village of Akulichy, Bryansk uyezd, Orel province into a peasant family. She received primary education. She was Vladyka Arsenius' secretary, through whom he established contact with his spiritual children. In 1910 she joined the Our Lady - Pokrov community in Moscow, and in 1915 joined the  Seraphimo-Znamensky skete of that monastery as a novice. On July 19, 1915 she became a rasophor nun. In 1924, after the closure of the skete, she went to live in the village of Kuzminki, Serpukhov region, Moscow province, in the house of the rector of the local church, Protopriest M.I. Pyatikrestovsky. From the autumn of 1933 she went to live in the village of Kotelniki, Ukhtomsky region, Moscow province together with Bishop Arsenius and Nun Alexandra (Murasheva). In 1937 she was working as a labourer in a department store in Lyubertsy. On July 26, 1937 she was arrested in Kotelniki, and on September 26 she was condemned to death by the NKVD “for participation in secret prayer meetings and for regulating the reception of visitors to Bishop

Zhadanovsky". She was shot at Butovo the next day, and buried in the Butovo polygon.

**Nun Alexandra** (Petrovna Murasheva). She was born in 1891 into a peasant family. She received an elementary education. On November 27, 1914 she became a nun, having joined, and in 1915 joined the Seraphimo-Znamensky skete of the Our Lady - Pokrov community in Moscow in 1900 as a novice. In the autumn of 1924, after the closure of the skete, she lived in the village of Kuminki, Serpukhov region, in the home of the rector of the local church, Protopriest M.I. Pyatikrestovsky. In 1933 she went to live in the village of Kotelniki, Ukhtomsky region, Moscow province as a cell-attendant of Bishop Arsenius. On July 26, 1937 she was arrested in Kotelniki, and on September 26 was sentenced to ten years in the camps. She was sent to the White Sea - Baltic canal. Nothing more is known about her.

**Maria Artemyevna Godunova.** She was born in 1896 in the village of Gubino, Moscow province into a peasant family. In 1912 she finished her studies at a Moscow gymnasium. On April 14, 1931 she was arrested at Lianozovo station, and cast into Butyrki prison. On May 26 she was sentenced in accordance with article 58-10 in "The Case of I.A. Babikov and others (R-35593), Moscow, 1931", but was released. In 1937 she was arrested in connection with the affair of Archbishop Arsenius. On September 26 she was sentenced to ten years in hard labour camps. Nothing more is known about her.

**Tatyana Zinovyevna Grishanova.** She was born in 1900. In 1937 she was arrested in connection with the affair of Archbishop Arsenius. On September 26 she was sentenced to ten years in hard labour camps.

**Maria Nikolayevna Mikhailova.** She was born in 1890. In 1937 she was arrested in connection with the affair of Archbishop Arsenius. On September 26 she was sentenced to ten years in hard labour camps.

## 48. HOLY HIEROMARTYR SERGIUS, BISHOP OF NARVA (+1937)

### **and those with him**

Bishop Sergius, in the world John Prokhorovich Druzhinin, was born on June 20, 1863 (1858) in the village of Novoye Selo, Bezhetsk uyezd, Tver province in the family of a peasant. He was educated at home, and worked as a driver.

"My father," wrote the bishop during his investigation, "sold his land holding in Tver province and... bought, together with others, a plot of land in Yaroslavl province, where he lived until his death. Many in our family went into monasteries, and I myself from the age of 12 began to visit men's monasteries in which there lived relatives of my mother's. When I was 18, on the advice and insistence of my female cousins, who were nuns of the Resurrection Novodevichi monastery [in St. Petersburg], I left for Valaam. [But] the conditions of obedience in this monastery were so difficult that I was not able to fulfil them for reasons of poor health.

"For that reason, on the advice of the superior, I went to the Sergiev Hermitage..., where I spent six years as a novice [from September 9, 1887]. At first I was appointed to be under the direction of the elder Gerasimus, who had been the wealthy landowner Zagreby in the world, and who entered the monastery after graduating from university... and I remained with him after being tonsured for ten years until the death of Elder Gerasimus... Then, when I was already a hierodeacon, I came under the direction of Archimandrite Barlaam, and after his death - under the direction of Igumen Agathangelus, who was a former landowner from Yaroslavl province... and after his death - of the superior, Archimandrite Michael. My intercourse with the above-mentioned directors strengthened me in true Orthodoxy, in the monastic life, and in obedience to spiritual authority and devotion to the throne.

"... From the moment of my tonsure I lived in the rooms of the superior and fulfilled the obediences, first of assistant to the sacristan, and then of sacristan."

On September 24, 1894 he was tonsured, and was appointed assistant to the sacristan. On November 20, 1894 he was ordained to the diaconate, and on April 24, 1898 - to the priesthood. On January 9, 1902 he was appointed sacristan.

Not far from the Hermitage, in Strelna, Great Prince Demetrius Constantinovich (1860-1919) lived in his palace during the summer, while in Pavlovsk there lived his elder brother Constantine Constantinovich (1858-1915) with his numerous family. Since they were very pious people, they often visited the Hermitage for services. "After the services," reminisced Bishop Sergius, "the guests sometimes called on the superior, and I had to receive them and give them tea and monastery bread. According to the choice and appointment of the Great Prince [Demetrius], I was told to serve in the inner palace church during the summer, and from August 15 to May 21 - in the Pavlovsk palace."

After two years of service by the young hieromonk, **Great Prince Constantine Constantinovich** formed such a good opinion of him that he petitioned in the name

of all the "Constantinoviches" that he become their spiritual father. This took place in the Pavlovsk palace before Pascha, 1900. Bishop Sergius remained the spiritual father of the Great Princes until the arrest of most of this branch of the Romanovs in April, 1918.

Only once did he part from them for a short period, in 1904-05, when he was sent to the army in Manchuria.

Thus the destiny of Hieromonk Sergius was closely linked with that of the Constantinoviches. "After the February revolution, during the disorders, Queen Olga Constaninovna of Greece... suggested that I go to her in Greece. I turned down this offer and declared that I wanted to remain with my brothers during the times of trouble, and not only when I had to travel in the automobiles of the Great Princes."

Concerning the pre-revolutionary years, Archimandrite Sergius reminisced with the warmest emotion: "Since his Majesty received the court clergy at the Nativity of Christ and on the second or third day of Pascha, I also met him... On Nativity, 1916, I saw him for the last time and had quite a long conversation with him. I had the impression from the Tsar's appearance that he was a gentle, humble, wonderfully meek man... extraordinarily delicate in his way of speaking with people, and with a pleasant glance." To His Majesty's abdication, therefore, "I reacted with great compassion, being sorry for the anointed of God," while the Bolshevik revolution "I regarded as the greatest woe for the country, signifying the destruction of old Russia."

According to one source, Fr. Sergius often carried out the duties of spiritual father to the tsar.

Since he had spiritual vision, the old monk did not give in to the political insinuations of his time, which were being spread by the enemies of the throne. "I did not believe," he recalled, "in the Rasputin stories... One of my spiritual sons was a valet of the Tsar himself, having served with him for 24 years, a certain John Vasilyevich. However, during confession, I asked him: is it true what they say about the drunkenness of the tsar, Rasputin and the tsaritsa? The valet swore to me that it was all a lie, and this is enough for me." And yet the name of Rasputin is used to this day to slander the monarchy and the royal martyrs!

On May 6, 1915 Fr. Sergius was appointed superior of the Trinity-Sergiev Hermitage, with promotion to the rank of archimandrite (on May 24), by Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) of Petrograd, the future hieromartyr, on the recommendation of Great Prince Demetrius Constantinovich, although the sacristan stubbornly opposed this and put forward instead the candidacy of the deputy - Hieromonk Joseph. The Great Prince's recommendation cost the superior dearly immediately after the February revolution, when 25 monks, aiming to "make the atmosphere of the monastery healthier", denounced him to Metropolitan Benjamin (Kazansky), declaring that Fr. Sergius was "an appointee of Great Prince Demetrius Constantinovich, Metropolitan Pitirim and Rasputin".

In their denunciation composed of 22 points, the brotherhood, supported by the local "progressive" intelligentsia, accused Fr. Sergius, among other things, of "forcing the whole brotherhood to sign a paper against Bishop Antonin [Granovsky], who for six years suffered for freedom in this sacred community and requested that he retire here". That is, he was accused of not allowing the future renovationist heretic to return to the Hermitage. In reply the supporters of Fr. Sergius refuted this in Petrogradsky Listok (March 18, 1917, N 66) and sent the Over-Procurator a letter in which they said: "Fr. Sergius enjoys the general deep respect of the local population... He is strict, but his strictness is just... and is necessary for the maintenance of order." Directness and firmness were indeed the distinguishing characteristics of Fr. Sergius.

After an investigation which proved that Fr. Sergius' strictness was indeed just, the rebellious brotherhood had to repent of their slander. The "democratic rebellion" against the superior ended in complete failure, and he remained at his post for a further two years. Nevertheless, in 1919 the monks of the Hermitage succeeded in expelling their strict superior, and he went to serve in the parish church of St. Andrew of Crete at the Volodarskaya station two versts away.

In the first half of the 1920s, Archimandrite Sergius did not play a prominent role in the life of the Petrograd diocese. In 1922 he was arrested in connection with the requisitioning of church valuables, but was soon released. "During the requisitioning of the church valuables I took the position of the patriarch and considered that... the requisitioning of the valuables was an act of crude violence and arbitrariness on the part of Soviet power."

But in another situation he expressed himself fairly severely concerning the patriarch: "I was sorry about Tikhon's repentance before Soviet power [in June, 1923], and I considered that Tikhon had conceded more than was fitting."

At the request of his parishioners, the future hieromartyr, Fr. Michael Cheltsov, who had met Fr. Sergius in 1920 and become close to him, petitioned the patriarch to consecrate him to the episcopate, first of the Krasnoselsk diocese, and then of the Narva diocese. He wrote about this several times, and in October, 1924 had a personal meeting with the patriarch about this. In support of this petition 30,000 signatures had been collected.

However, the diocesan council headed by Bishop Benedict (Plotnikov) of Kronstadt, who was ruling the Petrograd diocese, objected to the consecration. Bishop Benedict rejected a special petition that was addressed to him on the grounds that he had no need of a bishop and that the candidate was not of episcopal material. He said that he had invited Archimandrite Sergius to see him, and had asked him not to seek the episcopate. Then the diocesan council sent a report to the patriarch in which they said, among other things, that "the lack of indication of the degree of power of the bishop (but only of 'the parishes which recognize him') threatens to have large consequences". At the end of the report there was even expressed the threat "to decline from further administration of the diocese" if the patriarch rejected the council's objections. However, the delegation insisted, and even said that they would attain their end without Benedict - they would go to the Patriarch in Moscow. Finally,



Archimandrite Sergius was called to Moscow, and there, on November 23, 1924, he was consecrated Bishop of Narva, a vicariate of the Petrograd diocese, by Patriarch Tikhon.

Since the new vicar bishop did not receive a Russian see - Narva was on the territory of Estonia (which is why it was later renamed Kopora), he, in his own words served in Petrograd "by invitation: in the [Trinity] Izmailovo cathedral [from 1926],... in the Synodal podvorye, in the church [of the Protecting Veil] on Borovaya", but most often in his former church on Volodarskaya, where he continued to live in the house of Melnikov. He also served in the church of the Resurrection of Christ, and from 1926 to 1927 was again superior of the Sergiev desert. The episcopate of Petersburg politely took no notice of him, considering him to be an uneducated peasant and not their equal, while some of them saw in him a certain "mercantile thriftiness".

In August, 1927 he was retired with the title Bishop of Narva (Kopora).

Bishop Sergius heard about Metropolitan Sergius' declaration of July 16/29, 1927 "from the priest Sergius Tikhomirov, my spiritual son, who, on arriving for confession, declared that 'it was impossible to have any communion with Metropolitan Sergius since he was a traitor of the Church and a Judas.'" It did not take long to persuade Bishop Sergius, who considered that "Soviet power is an atheist power, and to support an atheist power means to become an atheist oneself". Insofar as the deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens had "in his declaration supported Soviet power and led the Church of Christ along a false path to destruction", Bishop Sergius, having consulted with Archbishop Demetrius (Lyubimov) and the priests Nikitin, Veryuzhsky and Andreyev, "consciously passed over to this group, so as together with them to rise, and, if need be, die in defence of True Orthodoxy."

On December 14/27, 1927, Bishop Sergius, together with Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov, broke communion with Metropolitan Sergius, for they had become convinced "that the new direction and organization of Russian Church life undertaken by him would neither be repealed nor changed". They wrote: "This is 'the testimony of our conscience' (II Corinthians 1.12): It is no longer permissible for us, without sinning against the canons of the Holy Orthodox Church, to remain in ecclesiastical communion with the deputy of the Patriarchal locum tenens - Sergius, metropolitan of Nizhni-Novgorod, and his Synod, and with all who think as they do. It is not out of pride - let this never be - but for the sake of peace of conscience that we disavow the person and the deeds of our former head, who has unlawfully and immoderately gone beyond his rights and has introduced great disturbance and the 'smoky arrogance of the world' into the Church of Christ, whose duty is to bring to those who desire to see God the light of simplicity and the tribute of wisdom in humility (from the Epistle of the African Council to Pope Celestine)."

By his own admission, at the beginning Bishop Sergius "was fainthearted", wavering between True Orthodoxy and Sergianism. On December 17/30 he was banned from serving by Metropolitan Sergius, and he, "frightened by the punishment, declared to Bishop Nicholas (Yarushevich) that he was walling himself off from those who were breeding strife". However, Metropolitan Joseph gave him courage, and he

returned to the True Orthodox confessors, being appointed Bishop of Kopora. On feastsdays he served with Archbishop Demetrius in the cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, and on weekdays in the church of St. Andrew of Crete. On March 27, 1928 he was "defrocked" by Metropolitan Sergius for continuing to mix with the "schismatics", i.e. the True Orthodox, and continuing to serve after his ban.

According to one (somewhat dubious) source, Bishop Sergius signed the acts of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church, which took place between March and August, 1928, and distinguished himself particularly at that Council by his defence of the sanctity of the Royal Martyrs.

Until the arrest of Archbishop Demetrius, Bishop Sergius to a certain extent remained in the shadows. But from the time of Archbishop Demetrius' arrest in November, 1929, in accordance with the decree of Metropolitan Joseph, he embarked upon the administration of the Josephites in Petrograd. "I received all indications and instructions from Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh). Members of our organization came to me from all over the USSR asking me to ordain them to the priesthood or the rank of archimandrite... I don't remember who or how many I ordained." The closest assistant of Bishop Sergius at this time was the sacristan of the cathedral of the Saviour-on-the-Blood, Protopriest Nicephorus Strelnikov.

Bishop Sergius paid particular attention to the village clergy, making ordinations, appointments and transfers, especially from parishes which had joined the movement under Archbishop Demetrius. This was elicited by the fact that "the introduction of dekulakization and collectivization in the countryside, the closing of churches and the insupportable taxes made the peasants bitter towards Soviet power". Thus he sent Hieromonk Theodore to the village of Nadba in the Pskov region, and Hieromonk Barsanuphius to the village of Utorgoshchi in the Luga region.

Bishop Sergius' position was complicated by the fact that he did not enjoy the same authority as Archbishop Demetrius, so people went with their questions either to Metropolitan Joseph or to his representative in Petrograd, Fr. Alexander Sovyetov. Some of Archbishop Demetrius' admirers considered that he was the only bearer of True Orthodoxy, and even before the arrest of Demetrius, a part of the parish council of the cathedral of the Saviour-on-the-Blood affirmed that "it was impossible to trust" Bishop Sergius since he was a conformist. The new superior of the cathedral, Fr. Alexander Sovyetov, supported this far-fetched opinion. "After the arrest of Archbishop Demetrius, everyone was surprised that Bishop Sergius (Druzhinin) had not been subjected to arrest; they considered that he had betrayed [the Church] to the GPU... and they began to fear him." In the summer of 1930, after the priests Victorin Dobronravov, Nicholas Ushakov and Alexis Voznesensky had visited the Modensky monastery, Metropolitan Joseph proposed that Bishop Sergius limit his rights of administration to ten points.

In these points, for the sake of peace in the diocese and the security of Vladyka himself, the metropolitan suggested that he only served and prayed, nothing more - that is, not administer his diocese. Knowing Bishop Sergius' fairly abrupt character, Metropolitan Joseph advised him: "Be condescending, tender and respectful to all

alike". At the same time he demanded from Fr. Victorin and his supporters that after Vladyka Sergius had received these points they should cease to persecute him. And he warned them strictly: "Those who are not with them (Bishops Sergius and Basil of Kargopol) are not with me."

In this way, according to Victor Antonov, Metropolitan Joseph "distanced himself from the radical group of priests, who 'called on people not to register churches in Soviet institutions and declared that registration was criminal and sinful', pushing the Josephites prematurely into the catacombs."

In his parish in Strelna, Vladyka also had to experience unpleasantnesses. Since the priest serving with him, Fr. Basil Vishnevsky, had not joined the Josephites, the parish split into two. Then Bishop Sergius invited Fr. Ishmael Rozhdestvensky, the first priest to stand up in defence of True Orthodoxy, to a meeting. He arrived not alone but with other parishioners of the Strelna parish, and the church was saved.

Following the testament of Patriarch Tikhon, both Vladykas, Demetrius and Sergius, actively ordained not only priests, but also bishops. In the autumn of 1928, in the St. Panteleimon church of the Alexander-Oshevsky podvorye on Piskarevka, they secretly, behind closed doors, consecrated the doctor of the Butyrki prison, Michael Alexandrovich Zhizhilenko, as Bishop Maximus of Serpukhov. After the arrest of Archbishop Demetrius, Sergius selected "for the preservation of True Orthodoxy" the following local archimandrites as worthy of secret consecration to the episcopate: **Nicon** (Katansky), "since he has graduated from two higher educational institutions", **Alexis** (Tereschikhin) from the Alexander-Nevsky Lavra, and **Claudius** (Savinsky) from the Kiev Caves Lavra. However, he did not succeed in consecrating them.

Being a sincere man, Vladyka Sergius could not hide his political sympathies and antipathies. "He naturally gravitated to the old times and could not sympathize with the new Soviet government," noted Metropolitan John (Snychev), the contemporary historian of the Moscow Patriarchate. But it may be asked what true archpastor could sympathize with the atheist power that had mercilessly annihilated historical Russia? "I hate the Bolsheviks," declared Vladyka courageously to the chekists, "because they murdered him [the Tsar] and his heir. And I consider them to be outcasts of the human race [a quotation from Patriarch Tikhon's anathema against the Bolsheviks in 1918]... At the present time persecutors of the Christian Faith have been gathered from all over the world to assume power. The Russian Orthodox people is tormented under the heavy persecutions of this power..."

Bishop Sergius' ideal state was the monarchy, for "True Orthodoxy can exist only under a monarch... Only a monarchy can restore order to ravaged Russia."

On December 7, 1930, Bishop Sergius was arrested together with Bishop Basil of Kargopol and a group of Petrograd Josephites numbering 75 people in all in connection with an alleged "counter-revolutionary organization" which was supposedly aiming "to undermine and overthrow Soviet power by means of an armed rebellion". He was cast into the House of Preliminary Detention in Petrograd. He was

accused that, "being a member of the counter-revolutionary church organization, 'The Trues', under the leadership of the political centre, he created a church-administrative centre in Leningrad, grouping around himself all the reactionary forces of the clergy and the elements in the city and countryside that were hostile to Soviet power, and directed the activity of separate cells on the territory of the USSR. He formed parish-cells from pogromist-Black-Hundredist elements with aim of preparing an open attack on Soviet power, its overthrow and the re-establishment of the monarchy".

The investigation was conducted by the well-known "specialist in religious affairs", A.V. Makarov, and lasted for a comparatively long time. Bishop Sergius was condemned by the OGPU on October 8, 1931, and sentenced to five years in the camps in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11. This was "The Case of the 'True Orthodox', Leningrad, 1931".

Exactly a year after his arrest he arrived in the Yaroslavl political isolator, where Archbishop Demetrius was already imprisoned, and spent the whole of his term there with the exception of a three-month period from January 21 to April 26, 1935 in the Butyrki prison hospital in Moscow.

When his term was completed, on October 7, 1935, a special session of the OGPU despatched Bishop Sergius to three years' exile in Yoshkar-Olu, Mari ASSR.

Setting off under convoy on December 5, he soon arrived in the Trans-Volga town and settled at Volkova street 94 with the nun, **Anna Stepanovna Komelina**, where he lived a cloistered life, only rarely receiving news and parcels from kind acquaintances and spiritual children. One of his former parishioners sent him an antimins and vestments with the words: "Keep it somehow, so that it doesn't fall into the hands of enemies." **Ivan Kornilyevich Kornilov**, the warden of the St. Theodore church in Detskoye Selo who was living in exile in Arkhangelsk, having found out Vladyka's address from Bishop Abraham (Churilin), told him that together with him in Arkhangelsk there was living Fr. Basil Veryuzhsky, the superior of the cathedral of the Saviour-on-the-Blood in Leningrad, and that the cathedral's protodeacon, Fr. Basil Smirnov, was returning there from exile. In March, 1936 the pensioner **Catherine Averyanovna Kiseleva**, who had learned Vladyka's address from the Red Cross, came from Petrograd to look after him.

A month earlier, on February 14, the local chekists had arrested the peasant **Igor Ilyich Stenkin**, born in 1887, who under interrogation admitted that he was a member of a group of 21 people belonging to the "True Orthodox Christians", and that they gathered in his house and in the house of **Praskovya Alexandrovna Kirpichnikova** from the village of Vazhnanger, insofar as "from the moment of the arrest in 1932 of our Orthodox **priest Alexander Semyonovich Ignonosov** of the Malo-Sundyarsky church, we all stopped going to church and prayed at home, because the church was of the sergianist orientation, which, in accordance with our convictions, we consider to have fallen away from Orthodoxy and sold itself to Soviet power."

From 1934 this group of True Orthodox Christians corresponded with Archbishop Seraphim (Samoilovich) of Uglich, who, on serving his term on Solovki, lived in exile in Arkhangelsk.

Stenkin turned out to be talkative, and openly told the investigator about his profound disgust with Soviet power: "I did not pay taxes, nor did I pay grain or meat or other compulsory deliveries; I accepted no obligations or monetary gifts from the local authorities.. I did not go out to timber-felling; I do not admit my children to Soviet schools; I do not use medical aid or goods of Soviet manufacture." This total rejection was typical for Catacomb Christians from the first years of their appearance, and it was for this reason that they were subjected to especially heavy persecution.

The former church warden gave the following justification of his behaviour: "I refused and still refuse to carry out any of the laws of Soviet power because I am a True Orthodox Christian, and Soviet power was created not by God, but by Satan, and is an atheist power that has sold itself to the antichrist... The Law of God teaches us not to recognize it since it is an atheist power and not to support it materially. We True Orthodox Christians believe in and fulfil this law." Stenkin also spoke about the destiny of this power: "A power created not by God and not recognizing God will not exist for long, and we are waiting for a power that will support religion..." In the case of military action we shall not go to fight for Soviet power and we shall continue to conduct that political line which we are conducting now..."

Portraits of Tsar Nicholas II and articles about his Majesty were found among the True Orthodox Christians, which for the investigators was "material proof of their unquestionable desire to restore the old order in the country". "In our prayers we commemorated the Tsar," said Stenkin at his interrogation.

Vladyka Sergius was arrested on September 7, 1937 (NS), after the interrogation of the nuns who knew him - the community led by the former abbess of the Mother of God and St. Sergius monastery in Yoshkar-Ola, **Magdalene Bolshakova**. The nuns were very firm, and replied to the interrogators' questions very shortly and negatively. The investigators did not need complicated argumentation - those arrested themselves admitted their anti-Soviet views and acts. The main task of the interrogators was to link Bishop Sergius with the Catacomb nuns, who did not everywhere join the Josephites, and to make him out to be their leader. They were helped in carrying out this task by the sergianist priest Ioann Alexeyevich Demidov, who served in the Velyunovsky church. He gave the following evidence at the interrogation: "From the beginning of Sergius Druzhinin's political exile he surrounded himself with the most reactionary part of the clergy and monastics... conducting active counter-revolutionary work in the rallying and uniting of counter-revolutionary groups of churchmen, followers of the True Orthodox Church". Fr. Ioann gave evidence as to who had assembled at the bishop's house and when. He also said that in the summer of 1937 Bishop Hilarion of Belsk, a convinced opponent of Metropolitan Sergius, visited Bishop Sergius and "very much besought him not to join the sergianists and renovationists who had sold themselves to the Bolsheviks". Vladyka Hilarion had only just returned from imprisonment on Solovki and was soon also repressed.

Bishop Sergius was interrogated only once, on the day of his arrest. He praised Tsar Nicholas and placed him among the saints. This monarchism of Bishop Sergius was enough for the investigators to accuse him of "organizing a counter-revolutionary group of churchmen, through whom he waged an active struggle with Soviet power for the restoration of the monarchist order." However, Vladyka refused to admit that he was guilty of counter-revolutionary activity.

On September 11, Vladyka Sergius was condemned on the standard charge of a "fascist conspiracy". Together with him there suffered in the basement of the local prison: Fr. Chariton and the nuns Shakhmatova, Advorova and Starodubtseva. They were shot between 7 and 8 in the evening on September 4/17, 1937. Portnykh was also sentenced to death.

Bishop Sergius died, as he lived, with the conviction that "True Orthodoxy through the Church ravaged by the Bolsheviks will lead to our victory", to victory promised by Christ over "the gates of hell".

In November, 1981 Bishop Sergius was canonized by the Russian Church Abroad.

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The following True Orthodox Christians were sentenced with Bishop Sergius, being accused of being members of "the church-monarchist counter-revolutionary organization, 'The True Orthodox Christians'" as part of the group case, "The Case of Bishop Sergius (Druzhinin) and others, Yoshkar-Ola, 1937":-

**Priest Chariton Ioannovich Poido** was born in September, 1883 in the family of a peasant of the village of Dneprovo-Kamenki, Likhovsky uyezd, Yekaterinoslav province, he finished two classes in the village school and at the beginning of the First World War was a novice in the Svyatogorsk Dormition Desert, and then in the Trinity - St. Sergius Lavra. In 1914 he was at the front, and in 1915 he was captured by the Germans, and was in captivity for four years. On returning to his homeland in 1919, he was ordained to the diaconate and began to serve, although it is not known where. In 1920 he was imprisoned for three months for not concealing the miracle of the renovation of an icon. In 1927 or 1928, while living, in his words, "as a prisoner of the Orthodox Faith in the Soviet Union", he was arrested "for counter-revolutionary activity", and on April 20, 1928 was exiled for three years to Kotlas or Mari district. There, on September 20, 1929, he was arrested for being "a participant in a counter-revolutionary group of clergy and believers, followers of Bishop Victor (Ostrovidov)". On January 30, 1930 he was sentenced to three years in the camps and sent to Syzran camp, but was then transferred to Arkhangelsk. On June 24, 1931 he was arrested in camp for refusing to work on Sundays and feastdays, and was subjected to administrative punishment. However, on October 20 the case was shelved. In September, 1932 he was released from camp and went to live in the village of Sidorovo, working as a cobbler. On December 29, 1932 he was arrested for being "the leader of a counter-revolutionary group of followers of the True Orthodox Church", and on July 22, 1933 was sentenced to six months in prison. He was released in view

of the time he had already spent in prison. In 1935 he returned to Mari province, where he began to serve in secret. His flock included True Orthodox peasants from the Vilovatovsky, Kuznetsovsky, Kozhvozhsky and Krasno-Volzhsky villages, that is, of a fairly large Trans-Volga Catacomb community, which was canonically subject probably, although this is not certain, to Bishop Sergius of Narva. In the village of Vazhnanger, where 21 True Orthodox Christians gathered under the leadership of Fr. Chariton, a peasant called Stenkin betrayed them to the police. Fr. Chariton was arrested on August 26, 1937 in the village of Koryakino, in the house of **Nun Maria** (Bulygina), "who, together with him, conducted counter-revolutionary, destructive work among the collective farm workers". On being arrested, "Poido declared that he did not recognize Soviet power since it was the power of the Antichrist, and he was struggling against Soviet power and would continue to struggle against it in the future". He explained that he was struggling against it "by way of the defence" of the Orthodox Church and "the teaching of Christ". Fr. Chariton refused to answer most of the questions posed to him, but only admitted that "he taught Christians that peasants should not go into the collective farms, and should not believe in the teaching of Soviet power and should not submit to it", and he considered "Soviet laws to be atheist, and not in accordance with the spirit of Orthodoxy". On September 11 he was sentenced to death, and on September 17 he was shot in the prison in Yoshkar-Ola.

**Abbess Magdalena** (Bolshakova) was over 70 at the time of her arrest in 1937. She was condemned on September 17 to ten years in the camps in accordance with article 58-10. During the interrogation she was held in the city prison. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Anna** (Andreyevna Yamschikova) was born in 1871 in the village of Podomi, Yaransk uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being "a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the 'True Orthodox Church'", and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Pelagia** (Ivanovna Shikhaleva) was born in 1873 in the village of Moshkino, Nolinsk uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being "a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the 'True Orthodox Church'", and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Catherine** (Vasilyevna Shorygina) was born in 1874 in the village of Shiryaikovo, Yaransk uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being "a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the 'True Orthodox Church'", and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Stepanida** (Semyonovna Sharina) was born in 1875 in the village of Bolshoy Sabanur, Sernur uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was

disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Catherine** (Sergeyevna Sharikova) was born in 1870 in the village of Shulyatin, Yaransk uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. In 1942 she died in camp.

**Nun Antonina**, in the world Anna Ivanovna Shakhmatova, was born in 1865 in the village of Demytyevo, Sernur uyezd. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Ioshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to death. On September 17 she was shot in the prison in Yoshkar-Ola.

**Nun Eudocia** (Ivanovna Starodubtseva) was born in 1873 in the village of Lapshino, Tsarekokshaisk uyezd, Nizhegorod province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Ioshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to death. On September 17 she was shot in the prison in Yoshkar-Ola.

**Nun Anna** (Mikhailovna Komelina) was born in 1868 or 1887 in the village of Ovechkin, Orshansk uyezd, Nizhegorod province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she lived in Yoshkar-Ula without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Praskovya** (Demidovna Gryazeva) was born in 1868 in the village of Bolshoy Sabanur, Sernur uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in a counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 she was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp.

**Nun Vera** (Pavlovna Bakhtina) was born in 1878 in the village of Opali, Solobelyaksk uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ula without fixed occupation.. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.



**Nun Maria** (Ivanovna Portnykh) was born in 1893 in Arzamas, Nizhegorod province. In 1921 she was arrested, but released after three months. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to death and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Catherine** (Vasilyevna Shorytina) was born in 1874. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to death. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Justina** (Markovna Bashnina) was born in 1872. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. In 1942 she died in camp.

**Nun Martha** (Stepanovna Kozhevnikova) was born in 1872 or 1881 in the village of Sabanur, Sernur uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1918 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Aquilina** (Alexeyevna Kozhevnikova) was born in 1872 in the village of Maly Sabanur, Sernur uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1918 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Nun Anastasia** (Nesterovna Zadvorova) was born in 1871 in the village of Lavr. Pochinok, Yaransk uyezd, Perm province into a peasant family. In 1923 she was disenfranchised. In the 1930s she lived in the village of Semyonovka without fixed occupation. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. According to another version, however, on September 11 she was sentenced to death, and on September 17 she was shot in the prison of Yoshkar-Ola.

**Nun Irina** (Platonovna Zinovyeva) was born in 1885 in the village of Maidan, Sviyazhsk uyezd, Tataria into a peasant family. She was twice arrested, but released each time because of insufficient evidence of a crime. In the 1930s she was living in Yoshkar-Ola and worked as a seamstress in the artel “Truzhenik”. In 1937 she was arrested for being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the ‘True Orthodox Church’”, and on September 11 was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

**Maria Stepanovna Bulygina** was born in 1880 in the village of Zhukovo, Tsarekokshaisk uyezd, Nizhegorod province into a peasant family. In the 1930s she was living with her husband in the village of Koryakovo, and hid secret priests and monastics in her house. On August 26, 1937 she was arrested in her house and accused of being “a participant in the counter-revolutionary organization, the True Orthodox Church” and “conducting counter-revolutionary, destructive work among the collective farm workers” On September 11 she was sentenced to ten years in the camps and sent to a camp. Nothing more is known about her.

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**Priest Seraphim Vladimirovich Agafonnikov** was born in 1904 in the village of Bogoslovskoye, Kotelnichi uyezd, Vyatka province into the family of a priest, **Hieromartyr Vladimir Mikhailovich Agafonnikov**. Until 1914 he lived with his parents and studied at the village school. Then he went to study at a gymnasium in Vyatka until 1918, that is, until the murder of his father. Not being able to continue his education, he worked for a year as a copyist in the Batalovsky volost military commissariat, and then until 1922 he served on the railway at Vyatka station. Because of malnourishment he was not able to work for a year. Then he began to serve as a reader in his native village. In 1927 he was ordained to the diaconate. His widowed mother, a village teacher, was deprived of her house in the same year, so Fr. Seraphim had to serve in other parishes – first the village of Arkhangelskoye, Kotelnichi uyezd (1927), then the village of Istobenskoye, Verkhshizhensky uyezd (1928). In 1934 he was ordained to the priesthood by the Catacomb **Bishop Sergius** (Druzhinin) in Yoshkar-Ola, Mari republic, and went to serve in the village of Vozhgaly, Kumensky region, Vyatka province. Because of impossibly high taxes, the church in which Fr. Seraphim was serving was closed. Then, at the request of the villagers of Vozhgaly, he continued to serve needs in local houses. He could not set himself up anywhere as a priest, and they did not accept him to work anywhere. In 1928, with great difficulty, Fr. Seraphim constructed a little house with his own hands on the outskirts of Kirov (Vyatka), but it was confiscated. After this one of his parishioners gave him a shed built of logs, from which, together with his brother, he built a home for his family. Until the moment of his arrest he was illegally carrying out needs for believers in Kirov.

On November 29, 1939 he was denounced for serving church rites in the homes of believers, and was arrested and cast into prison in Kirov. On April 20, 1940 he was condemned in accordance with article 58-10 part 1, and sentenced to ten years' in prison. According to his niece, he was interrogated several times a day, with one interrogator taking the place of another, and undoubtedly tortured. He was not allowed to sleep night or day. “At the beginning of the investigation Fr. Seraphim declared that he did not occupy himself with politics, did not conduct agitation against Soviet power and did not criticise the measures introduced by the authorities. At the end, after unceasing physical and psychological pressure, he made a slip of the tongue, and the Soviet juridical meat-grinder deprived him of freedom for ten years, but within three years all trace of him had been lost.” On April 22, 1940 Fr. Seraphim was taken under convoy to colony no. 3 at Kirs station, Omutinsky region, Vyatka

province. He died there in 1943. "We may suppose," writes his niece, "only that in 1943 Fr. Seraphim was killed in prison or was starved to death."

**49. HOLY HIEROMARTYRS THEODORE (+1929), MICHAEL (+1931)  
AND VICTORIN (+1937) OF PETROGRAD**

**and those with him**

**Fr. Theodore Konstantinovich Andreyev** was born in a merchant's family in St. Petersburg on April 1, 1888 (or 1887). On finishing his secondary education in 1905, he entered the St. Petersburg Institute of Civil Engineering, but left during his fourth year and moved to the Moscow Theological Academy, from which he graduated in 1913 with a degree of candidate of theology. The subject of his candidate's dissertation was "Yu. F. Samarina as a theologian and philosopher". Then he became professor of systematic philosophy and logic in the Moscow Theological Academy, receiving his cathedra from Fr. Paul Florensky.

After the revolution, considering it "a time of self-definition", he decided to devote himself entirely to the Church. In 1918 he cooperated on the Orthodox journal, Vozrozhdenie. In 1919, after the closure of the Moscow Academy, he moved to Petrograd, where he became a teacher of Russian language and literature in the former Mikhailovsky artillery school. He was also a teacher of apologetics and liturgics in the Petrograd theological institute from 1921 to 1923. On July 18, 1922 he became deputy of the pro-rector, and in his first academic year read 81 lectures on Christian apologetics. In the second year he read 83 lectures on patrology, and led the philosophico-apologetic circle.

I.M. Andreyev writes: "In 1921-22 Prof. T.K. Andreyev would sometimes give lectures or, more frequently, debates. Especially striking was his talk at the 'Home of Scientists' in the discussion after the lecture of Prof. N.O. Lossky in 1921, 'On the Nature of the Satanic', when the young professor, with immense feeling and broad erudition, censured the renowned philosopher Lossky, reading as it were a counter-lecture on the theme of 'The Origin of Evil'."

He also very cleverly and tactfully refuted the uniate exarch, Fr. Leonid Fyodorov and the talented Yu.N. Danzas, who until their arrest in 1922 preached the unia with Rome among the professorial body, claiming that it was the only way to the spiritual and political regeneration of Russia. Thanks to Theodore Konstantinovich, only two people in the whole professorial world accepted the unia. In this period, Theodore Konstantinovich began gradually to depart from his former professor and friend, Fr. Paul Florensky, and come closer to the well-known church writer and publisher, Michael Alexandrovich Novoselov (the future secret Bishop Mark).

On July 23, 1922 Theodore Konstantinovich married Natalia Nikolayevna Florovskaya. It was a happy marriage, and the couple had two twin girls.

On December 17, 1922 Theodore Konstantinovich was ordained to the diaconate, then to the priesthood, and on December 19, 1922 was appointed fourth priest in the Kazan cathedral. After the seizure of the cathedral by the renovationists, he temporarily did not serve. In the autumn of 1923 Bishop Manuel (Lemeshevsky)

appointed him junior priest of the St. Sergius cathedral. He was raised to the rank of protopriest in 1927.

Fr. Theodore was tall, thin, well-built, with light-brown hair and beard, and with an exceptionally beautiful, inspired, but always waxy-pale face. He was distinguished for his asceticism, his simplicity and the strictness of his confession. Hundreds of inhabitants of Petrograd, especially from the intelligentsia, used to go to him for confession, when he gave many the Optina rule: "Live simply, say the Jesus prayer from day to day". However, he forbade many to receive Communion. It is known, for example, that once he did not allow the widow of a professor of the Military-Medical Academy to receive Communion because she had attended an anti-religious spectacle in a theatre. To another parishioner he offered either that she get married in church or that she terminate her living together of many years with a certain professor. Otherwise, he would not allow her to receive Communion.

From 1924 to 1928, Fr. Theodore taught Dogmatic Theology and Liturgics in the "Pastoral Courses" which had been set up in Petrograd by a number of theology professors as an answer to the two other theological schools remaining in the city, a "renovated" one and a "liberal" one. However, when the rector of these courses, Professor John Pavlovich Shcherbov died, the courses closed down. Fr. Theodore lost his professorship and began teaching in technical and high schools.

His sermons produced a powerful impression on his listeners. They attracted so many people that the huge cathedral could not hold all those who wished to hear his inspired Orthodox word. Among his listeners were many professors and students of the Military-Medical Academy and University, and scientific researchers at the Academy of Sciences, who gradually became his spiritual children.

In the summer of 1927, when Metropolitan Sergius issued his infamous declaration, Fr. Theodore refused to accept it. On July 14 he was arrested, but was released after signing a promise that he would not leave the city on August 31. On November 10, the case against him was dismissed by the OGPU. In December he left the Sergiev Cathedral, whose two mitre-bearing protopriests, Fr. John Morev and Fr. Basil Zapolsky, were sergianists, and moved to the Cathedral of the Resurrection on the Blood, where the clergy who did not recognize Metropolitan Sergius had gathered: the superior, Protopriest Basil Veryuzhsky, Protopriest Sergius Tikhomirov, Protopriest Alexander Tikhomirov, Fr. Nicholas Prozorov, Fr. Nicephorus Strelnikov, Protopriest Victorin Dobronravov and others.

In December, 1927 Archbishop Paul of Vyatka, a member of Sergius' Synod, wrote an epistle to his flock calling on them to maintain internal discipline - that is, obedience to Sergius for the sake of preserving the unity of the Church: "This discipline, this organization, is, after all, the most necessary framework, the skeleton of the mystical body of the Church. Therefore whoever by thoughtless speeches, or by zeal not according to reason, or by deceit, or by unconsidered, unprincipled stubbornness destroys this skeleton, and by his non-submission to the lawful hierarchy deals blows at the framework of the Church's discipline, is an enemy of Christ, and cooperates in the overthrow of the ecumenical Body of the His Church."

Fr. Theodore wrote in opposition to this in a letter to Bishop Innocent (Tikhonov): "Discipline – that is the fatal word by which you are bound and which resounds now from the lips of servants of the word, sometimes in a pure form, sometimes concealed by names that are more usual for the ears of the Church such as 'the Unity of the Church', 'the Good of the Church' (usually this Good does not coincide with the good of Her individual parts and members, in spite of the word of the Lord that one soul is dearer than the whole world), 'the Hierarchical order', 'monastic obedience', 'obedience' simply, 'humility', 'conciliarity [sobornost]', 'canonicity', 'lawful apostolic succession' – and a series of similar concepts. Of course, the tone is given by the hierarchy, beginning from those who are at the head of it. But, as a concept including within itself a whole systematic teaching, the word 'discipline' is borne even to the ranks of the 'faithful' who are most distant from the ruling church seniors – only faithful, alas, not in the proper Christian sense, but faithful to the same deadening discipline."

Archbishop Paul's comparison of discipline to the "skeleton" was, according to Fr. Theodore, a clear witness to the sergianist understanding of discipline as quite separate from "the mystical body of the Church", since "the skeleton is bared and can be seen separately, outside an organic relation to the body, only when the body has already rotted away, that is, in the whitewashed tomb where the sergianists are trying to dispose of the Holy Church".

On November 27, a delegation from the Petrograd clergy and laity went to Moscow to remonstrate with Metropolitan Sergius. Before going, they had sent a letter composed by Fr. Basil Veryuzhsky suggesting ways of averting the impending schism. Fr. Theodore was to have gone as a member of this delegation, but was prevented by illness, and Fr. Victorin Dobronravov went instead. (According to another source, the members of the delegation were Bishop Demetrius and Fr. Basil from the clergy, and I.M. Andreyevsky and Professor Abramovich-Baranovsky from the clergy).

When the delegation arrived in Moscow, they handed Metropolitan Sergius three letters, one from the episcopate which may have been composed by Fr. Theodore but which has not been preserved, another composed by S.S. Abramovich-Baranovsky from the academic world, and a third composed by Fr. Theodore from the clergy and laity. Fr. Theodore's letter read as follows:-

"Your Eminence!

"The present letter to you comes from certain representatives of the Orthodox clergy and laity of the city of Leningrad. It is elicited by your recent actions, beginning with the epistle of July 16/29 of this year. Our letter to you will probably be familiar to you in its contents. For us, however, who give it to you, it has to be decisive as regards the question of our further relationship to you and your activity. We therefore beg you to attend to us in your capacity as archpastor.

"We, your Eminence, - like, probably, the majority of the Orthodox people, - do not find that your recent actions have been perfect in the eyes of our God (Revelation 3.2).

"Do you remember what you undertook to do when you became the guardian of the Russian patriarchal throne, which had been widowed after the exile of its first locum tenens? You promised to maintain what was the only correct, though difficult, position in which the Lord had placed the Russian Church in relation to the present rulers of Russia. This position is difficult, for its common name is - rightlessness. But the Ecumenical Church as a whole has at times already known such a position; in individual parts she always known it; while the Russian Church, in the ten years of her living next to Soviet power, has likewise neither seen nor sought the possibility of any other kind of relationship. Orthodox people understood that an authority which has as one of its aims the spread of unbelief is unable not only to protect the Church, but even to preserve her order within the boundaries of its dominions.

"And truly, as we do not have to remind your Eminence, the position of believers in the country has become difficult. Remembering the words of the Lord and the teaching of the apostles, we have obeyed all the prescriptions of the civil authorities that do not contradict our Orthodox conscience, and we have suffered in silence all the repressions to which our faith has been subjected. But we did not hope to have any closer juridical relations with the unbelieving authorities, and did not seek them.

"That is how things continued for ten years, and that is how they should have remained in the future. The Russian Orthodox Church, seeing her Sun of Righteousness hanging on the wood of the Cross, stood in her order, reflecting the way of the Cross of her Master in her earthly wanderings during the time of persecution.

"You, your Eminence, wished as it were to help the Church and obtain for her certain rights from the civil authorities. But at what price did you obtain these? A price which for many Orthodox will become and already has become 'the price of blood' (Matthew 27.6). True, you did not act on your own, but as it were in the name of the Church, in your capacity as the guardian of the patriarchal throne. But you have gone far beyond the bounds of your remit. In fact, you know, your remit derives from the patriarchal remit and is defined by it; the Patriarch depends on the Local Council, and the Council expresses the voice of the whole of the Russian Church. These three grades of ecclesiastical authority were before your eyes when you composed your epistle. But how did you ascend on them to the primary source of your rights?

"You began with the Patriarch. Here, on your way to him, there arose before you the figure of the locum tenens. He had already been deprived of his place of service and had been sent into exile by the same authority from which you sought new rights for the Church, and was silently witnessing before the face of the whole of the Russian Church that his sorrows were not the sorrows of this authority, as your epistle claims, but were the same as our common, Orthodox grief. You understood that you could not justify your way of acting in the name of him whose closest deputy you were; and so, passing by the locum tenens, you never even mentioned him in your epistle. You extended your hand to the Patriarch himself through his exiled head, as it were.

"On the basis of certain unclear, as yet unconfirmed words of the reposed Patriarch concerning some 'three years' which he supposedly put forward as necessary for his completion of a work identical to your own, if death had not hindered him, you established this specious link of yours with him, at the same time that his nearest deputy, who was probably better initiated into the intentions of the reposed Patriarch, preferred to spend these three fatal years in exile, instead of working in the direction supposedly bequeathed to him by the Patriarch.

"Having established in this way an artificial link with the Patriarch, you turn to the next step - the Local Council. But here, not finding anything in the most recent Council which would authorize you to create those relations with the civil authorities which were laid down in your epistle, but even finding a decision contrary to your own in the decree of August 2/15, 1918, you, of course, did not seek for confirmation in the acts of previous Councils but preferred to turn to a Council that was still to come. It, you claim in your epistle, will solve the question concerning the higher ecclesiastical administration and 'those who tear the robe of Christ' - that is, evidently, the most recent schismatics and heretics. Moreover it will do a number of other things - but you did not say that it would review your own epistle [declaration] and everything done in the name of the council before its actual convening. It follows that there will be no proper Local Council, but only some new executive institution attached to your person. Moreover, in being called to establish a new form of higher ecclesiastical administration, it will evidently remove also that very patriarchate, on your links with which you have just tried to base your epistle. Don't you see the vicious circle you have fallen into?

"Let us now turn to the third, highest step of ecclesiastical authority - the conciliar mind of the Church. Perhaps, in bypassing the Council and the Patriarch, you succeeded in making immediate contact with the Orthodox conscience of the Russian members of the Church, and your epistle appeared as the expression of their voice? No, this voice would have had to assure you that if you seek the true witness of the Christian conscience, you would first of all have to find out the opinion of those who especially bear the name of witnesses of the truth, that is, the confessors who have suffered for it. You not only did not do this, but, on the contrary, you completely swept them aside as have sinned against that very authority with which you have so ardently been concerned to establish better relations. You swept aside both the witnesses and those whom you simply supposed would not be on your side, considering them to be 'ivory-towered dreamers'. You even suggested that they depart from you altogether, whether temporarily or forever. You recognized what remained from this selection to be the true Russian flock and began to act in their name. It is not surprising that they turned out to be in full agreement with you.

"And so the whole aim of the epistle was to give you the appearance of lawfulness, and yet it all stands on sand. Neither the Patriarch, nor the Council nor the conciliar mind of the Church is in fact in agreement with it. The epistle not only does not express their opinion: on the contrary, having first deviated from them, it substituted false likenesses of them and then clothed itself in its own fictitious rights. To put it bluntly, it is not the Russian Church that has drawn this epistle from her own depths; it is



rather that the epistle, having been torn away from the historical Church, has itself been laid as the cornerstone at the base of the new 'church of the evildoers'. It has constructed new logical steps of representation in its own image and likeness: it has revealed to the world a deputy standing above and beyond the person he deputizes for; it has thought up a council with previously prepared acts; it has gathered to its advantage only those voices of whom it knew in advance that they would have to be in agreement with it.

"And this 'shame of nakedness' (Revelation 3.18) which has been revealed by the epistle cannot be covered by the 'Temporary Holy Synod' attached to the deputy which has arisen with it. It is in vain that it tries to communicate the likeness of a Patriarch to its president, for in accordance with the conciliar decree it is conceivable only with a Patriarch; its claims to express the voice of the Church are crazy. The synod is only a kind of soft carpet that covers over the profanation of the steps of ecclesiastical authority. They are now so smoothed down that they have formed a single steep incline along which the Russian Church is bound to crash down into the pit dug for it by you and the synodical epistle.

"But the abomination of desolation extends even further, it has been set up on the holy place, it penetrates into the very holy of holies of the Christian sacraments. Already the name of the patriarchal locum tenens is commemorated as if unwillingly, without calling him 'our lord'; already the deputy is sending out warnings that this commemoration will shortly cease because of 'the absence of canonical basis for it'; already the name of the deputy, which up to now has not been commemorated aloud in the churches, has been set next to that of the locum tenens and is about the crowd it out; already the names of the lawful diocesan bishops are being substituted with those of new ones forcibly imposed by the higher authorities in spite of the church canons; the commemoration of the very civil authorities who have rejected all faith is being introduced - a new phenomenon which disturbs the conscience of many; and many other anticanonical acts are also being carried out.

"And so the *unity* of the Church, which, in the words of Hieromartyr Ignatius the Godbearer, has its external expression in the bishop, and so for the Russian Church as a whole - in the Patriarch, has already been shaken - as a whole, by your union with a synod that has exceeded its rights to the point of equality with you, and in individual dioceses - by unlawful transfers of local bishops and their substitution by others. The *holiness* of the Church, which shines in martyrdom and confession, has been condemned by your epistle. Her *catholicity* has been desecrated. Her *apostolicity*, as her link with the Lord and as an embassy to the world (John 17.18), has been destroyed by the break in hierarchical succession (the removal of Metropolitan Peter) and the movement of the world itself into her.

"The stormy waves of this unprecedented ecclesiastical unrighteousness have rushed up even to our city. Our metropolitan has been removed without guilt and without a trial - you know all about this, Vladyka, although you have paid no attention either to him or to those who ask about him. A new bishop has been consecrated without sufficient basis and against the will of many Orthodox; another banned

bishop takes part in church services; a series of other ecclesiastical iniquities have been committed, about which those who have given you this letter will tell you about.

"Our embassy to you, Vladyka, has been directly elicited by the pressure of this wave, but in coming to you we knew that were ascending to the very source of all the recent misfortunes, for that source is your epistle, and for that reason we beseech you on behalf of the needs not only of our diocese, but of the whole Russian Orthodox Church, whose members, by the mercy of God, we are. And we repeat what we said at the beginning: our embassy to you is decisive.

"You, Vladyka, must separate yourself, as the head of the Russian Church, from your own epistle, declaring it to be the expression only of your personal opinion which is not binding for the other members of the Russian Church, in accordance with the decree of the Council of 1917-18 of August 2/15, 1918, which made the taking up of this or that kind of attitude towards political questions a matter of the conscience of the believers themselves, for our Church by the legislation of the civil authorities themselves is separated from the state. Moreover, you must annul and reconsider all the canonically incorrect acts carried out by you and the synod and, in places by diocesan councils as a result of your epistle.

"But at the present time of our meeting we expect from you the simple witness of your conscience: do you accept our letter or not, so that we can inform our like-minded fathers and brothers who have authorized us to come to you whether we can expect from you the return of our holy rightlessness. Otherwise, our rejection of your epistle and your actions connected with it must, to our great sorrow, be transferred to your person, and, preserving hierarchical succession through Metropolitan Peter, we shall be forced to break canonical communion with you."

This letter was dated November 26-28 / December 9-11. Metropolitan Sergius did not respond to it. And so the True Orthodox Christians of Petrograd broke communion with him; and it was Fr. Theodore who composed the text of their "secession" in a letter dated December 14-16, 1927.

On September 8, 1928 he was arrested. First he was tortured. Then his throat filled with blood. The prison doctors diagnosed tuberculosis of the throat and pleurisy. At one of the interrogations they offered him freedom on condition that he supported Metropolitan Sergius. The investigator Makarov painted a rosy picture of all the "delights" of a flourishing Church recognizing the communist government and benefiting from the rights of a juridical person before the emaciated, barely alive pastor.

"We do not need your Soviet laws," replied Fr. Theodore, "leave us in our holy rightlessness".

Fr. Theodore defended his position in a work entitled "Apology of the Departed", which was published under the name of his close friend and mentor, M.A. Novoselov, but which is now thought to have been written by Fr. Theodore.

When the doctors had determined that Fr. Theodore had no more than one month to live, the GPU allowed him home without sentencing him. According to one source, he caught a chill at the beginning of Great Lent, 1929 while giving confession for hours in the cathedral of the Resurrection "on the Blood". On returning home he lay down, with blood frequently pouring out of his throat. But in a weak voice he exhorted his visitors to be faithful to the Church of Christ and Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. His last known words were: "I am always thinking about the events that have taken place, and as I examine myself before the face of death, I can say one thing - with that mind and that soul that the Lord has given me, I could not have acted otherwise..."

Protopriest Theodore died quietly in his flat on May 23, 1929, and thousands attended his solemn funeral service. According to Professor A.I. Brilliantov of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, the city had not known such an assembly for a funeral since the death of Dostoyevsky. Several future martyrs were there: **Bishop Demetrius of Gdov**, **Protopriest Sergius Tikhomirov**, **Fr. Nicholas Prozorov**, the young reader **Kartsev** (shot in 1931), and many pastors and laymen. Bishop Demetrius called him an "adamant of Orthodoxy" for his righteous criticism of Bulgakov, Berdyaev and other pseudo-Orthodox thinkers. It is known from the testimony of Hieromartyr Paul Borotinsky that Fr. Theodore, together with Bishop Demetrius of Gdov, was also opposed to Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky's teaching on "the Dogma of Redemption".

In September, 1930 Fr. Theodore's matushka, **Natalya Nikolayevna**, was arrested in connection with the case of "The All-Union Counter-Revolutionary Monarchist Organization, 'The True Orthodox Church'", and was sentenced to three years in exile. A search was carried out in the flat and many precious theological works by Fr. Theodore were taken away into the depths of the NKVD. On returning from exile, Matushka Natalya and her daughter **Zoya** were taken care of by his disciple and future Catacomb confessor and theologian, I.M. Andreyevsky. However, according to another source, she returned to Leningrad only in the middle of the 1950s, and died in 1970.

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**Protopriest Michael Vladimirovich Tikhomirov** was born in 1869 in St. Petersburg in the family of a priest. He was educated at the Riga theological seminary (1890), the juridical faculty of Yuryev university and St. Petersburg Theological Academy (1897). He was ordained to the priesthood on August 1, 1902, and from 1904 was serving as priest of the Guards Preobrazhensky regiment in the Saviour-Transfiguration Guards cathedral in St. Petersburg. In May, 1922 he was arrested for "resistance to the requisitioning of church valuables", but was acquitted.

In 1924 the church situation in Petrograd was grim. All the priests who had not joined the renovationists had been exiled except for two. One was Fr. Michael. The other was the former teacher of law at the Imperial Law School, Protopriest Xenophon Vinogradov. He was protected by the fact that he served in the Greek church on Ligovka, which was under the protection of the Greek embassy in Moscow (in 1924

Greece had renewed diplomatic relations with the USSR and had taken the Greek churches under her protection). He died in 1935.

It is not surprising that in the Great Fast all the believers who did not recognize renovationism confessed only with these two priests. Fr. Michael confessed between 200 and 300 people daily, and confession lasted no longer than between 2 and 3 minutes, because everyone understood that it was wrong to detain him and that simply appearing in his church signified faithfulness to Orthodoxy.

A year later, the vicar-bishops Alexis of Yamburg and Nicholas of Peterhof returned from exile, and immediately tens of churches passed from renovationism by way of the repentance of their clergy before Alexis into the Patriarchal Church. But the people did not know at that time that these men were the favourites of the authorities.

Fr. Michael was an ardent opponent of renovationism, and spoke out against the Patriarch's admission of Krasnitsky into the Synod. He was denounced by a renovationist and arrested on February 3, 1924 in connection with the case of the "Spassky Brotherhood". On April 30 he was released, but in October he was exiled to Tver.

In 1930 a case was created by the Bolsheviks against the council of the Preobrazhensky cathedral. The council were accused of illegally despatching the regiment's regalia to the Dowager-Empress Maria Fyodorovna in Copenhagen. In the autumn of 1930 Fr. Michael was summoned from Tver in connection with this affair. He was cast into the Domzak on Shpalernaya.

On January 30 / February 12, 1931, the following were shot in connection with this affair: Fr. Michael Tikhomirov; the former Preobrazhensky **General Kazakevich** (who had already been in exile for the faith in the Narymsk region in 1922-25); the well-known church writer **Poselyanin** (his real surname was Pogozhev); a fine young man aged between 20 and 22 by the name of **Kartsev**, the son of an admiral, who in spite of his young years had firmly exposed the falsehood of Metropolitan Sergius' actions; and the widow of the member of the Kazan Judiciary Palace **Rymkevicha**.

E. Poselyanin (Pogozhev) was the author of such major works as The Mother of God and two works on Russian ascetics from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. For many years he worked on the journal Russian Pilgrim.

After the revolution, according to the reminiscences of Nun Seraphima, he lived with his unbelieving sister in Petrograd. He was a parishioner of the Preobrazhensky Guards cathedral, which was noted for its anti-renovationist and anti-sergianist zeal. He was also a member of the parish council.

In 1930 the GPU initiated a case against the parish council, and one night E. Poselyanin had a dream. The telephone rang, and then some people came and took him away at night. In the morning Poselyanin woke up, went to his spiritual father, confessed and received Communion. That night his dream was fulfilled exactly: they

rang, then burst into the flat, searched it and took him away. Some time later his sister learned that he had been shot. Since she was not a believer, she did not arrange for a funeral service or tell any of the priests. However, his spiritual father, Fr. Boris, was once serving in the church. He came out with the censer and suddenly saw Poselyanin standing on the cliros. When the priest came closer, Poselyanin opened his jacket and Fr. Boris saw a bullet wound on his breast. Fr. Boris asked:

"When did this happen?"

In reply, Poselyanin pointed to the icon of the Three Hierarchs, whose feast is January 30 / February 12.

Several of the parishioners and members of the church council, including the mother of the shot young man, were sentenced on February 10, 1931 to ten years in the camps. On February 19 they were sent to Karelia, where they arrived at the Lei-Guba camp on Vyg lake on February 24. In the spring they were transferred to Solovki.

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**Archpriest Victorin Mikhailovich Dobronravov** was born on January 29 / February 10, 1889 in the Moldavian city of Kishinev. His father, Michael Dobronravov, was a priest, and he had a brother, Leonid.

The two boys' father died when they were still young, and their mother married a second time. Victorin's step-father was A.P. Rostovsky, the secretary of the Most Holy Synod in St. Petersburg; and it was to St. Petersburg that the family now moved. She had three other children from her second marriage, including an albino girl called Zinaida, to whom Victorin was particularly attached. She was blind from birth, which severely inhibited her studies. When the fame of St. John of Kronstadt first began to spread, Victorin's mother decided to go to Kronstadt with her handicapped daughter in the hope that Fr. John would cure the girl. As they approached the cathedral of St. Andrew, they saw the entire square in front of the cathedral filled with people. The Divine Liturgy had just finished, the doors of the cathedral swung open, and Fr. John stepped outside. Then, searching the crowd, Fr. John signalled the young albino girl to come closer. As she approached, he said,

"Well, little white girl, step closer to me."

When she came up to him, he laid his hand on her head, blessed her, and said,

"You will be able to see, little girl."

On the journey home she was able to see more and more clearly. Eventually she received enough sight to be able to finish secondary school. She became an artist, and was still painting at the time of her death in 1988 at the age of 93. This miracle of Fr. John so profoundly affected Victorin that he wanted to go into a monastery, but his mother stopped him.

On June 8, 1910 Victorin finished his studies at the St. Petersburg theological seminary, but he did not become a priest because he was not married, and on the insistence of his mother, on September 16, 1910 he joined the economic department of the Petersburg Polytechnic Institute.

He successfully finished his studies in 1915, but his desire for the spiritual life was overpowering. Not asking the blessing of his mother, he left school before finishing his final exams and went to see the Metropolitan of Moscow in order to get a blessing to become a monk. The metropolitan greeted him hospitably, but did not bless him to carry the cross of monasticism. The metropolitan said he would give his blessing for the priesthood, and convinced him to get married. The Metropolitan said,

"You are too handsome for the monastic life, you may be a stumbling block for many."

The question arose of whom to marry. At this time, Victorin and his brother Leonid were both subdeacons of the future hieromartyr, Bishop Benjamin of Gdov, who often used to visit the house of the family of K.I. Voronova. On one of these visits the bishop brought the two brothers, and introduced them to the daughters of the family. Victorin's future bride, Anna Constantinovna, was the youngest of the four daughters; at that time she was only 18. Victorin decided to propose to her, and if she refused him, to become a monk. Five years later they were married. Anna's family was a pious and zealous merchant family with Old Ritualist traditions. Her uncle was the warden of a church, and knew many priests and hierarchs. But Anna was a lively, worldly girl who loved entertainments, including Swedish gymnastics and swimming. Victorin and his brother also liked sport, music and painting (the brothers took lessons in drawing from Repin). In the house of the Dobronravov-Rostovskys, as in the house of the Voronovs, there were many young people, and on feasts there was much jollity in both houses.

After their wedding, the newly married couple did not go off on the traditional honeymoon, but undertook a pilgrimage to Diveyevo and Sarov, to the relics of St. Seraphim. Soon after this, in spite of the protests of his mother and wife, Victorin embarked on the clerical path. On October 4/17, 1915 he was ordained to the diaconate in the Transfiguration Koltovsky church on the Petersburg side. On December 21, 1915 he was ordained to the priesthood, and served in the Koltovsky church. In this no longer existing church Fr. Victorin served for three and a half years, and earned the respect and love of his flock. He also taught in several schools. On April 11, 1916 he was awarded with a nabadrennik for "exceptionally zealous service". On December 3, 1916 he was given a skufya, and on April 7, 1918 - a kamilavka. On January 31, 1918 his parishioners gave him a golden pectoral cross, which Metropolitan Benjamin blessed him to wear.

Fr. Victorin led a strict life. At home his word was law. His matushka used to say,

"My batiushka is heavenly, but I am earthly."

They had four children. The eldest daughter, Irene was born on October 23, 1915. After the arrest of Fr. Victorin, all the cares of the family on her fell on her. She went out to work without being able to continue her education, but her frail health could not hold out, and she died of tuberculosis in 1932. The child Nicholas, who was born in June, 1917, died in 1922. A second son, Seraphim, who was born in 1921, died at the front in 1942. Only the youngest daughter, Zoya, who was born in May, 1925, remained alive. After the Second World War she went to live in the United States, where she worked as a university professor until the beginning of the 1990s.

Fr. Victorin was an exceptionally spiritual man, though not a very good speaker. His fame as a spiritual director was such that even the future Hieromartyr Bishop Demetrius of Gdov spoke well of him. He always spoke with authority, insisting that his spiritual children adhere strictly to the fasts, and commune every Sunday. He advocated abstention from meat and attending church services as often as possible.

When Tsar Nicholas abdicated in 1917, Fr. Victorin was serving in a church on Petrovsky Island in St. Petersburg. He especially honoured the Derzhavnaya icon of the Mother of God. Every Friday evening in the house-chapel where he served, he used to serve a moleben and an akathist to the icon.

On September 25, 1918 the Cheka arrested Fr. Victorin and detained him for a month in the Peter and Paul fortress. On being released without being charged, he took on extra work in various Soviet institutions to feed his family. In 1918-19 he served on an audit commission, and in 1921-22 - in a repair workshop.

On February 25, 1919 Fr. Victorin was appointed priest of the Nikolsky church attached to the home for elderly stage workers on Petrovsky Island. One of the worshippers there was Anatoly Yevgrafovich Molchanov, the husband of the famous Russian actress Maria Gavrilovna Savinaya, who founded the home and did much for the church, being buried under the altar. Molchanov was president of the parish council until his death in May, 1921. He was buried next to his wife in under the altar.

Soon a community consisting of about 20 people formed round the young and zealous priest. Most of them were from the intelligentsia: the laypeople Tatyana Tarasova, Anna Pavlova, Maria Bok, Nadezhda Vasilyeva, Olga Mitskevich, Olga Grigoryevna, Ivan Meyer, Basil Lvov, Victor Barabanov and Alexis Morozov, and the nuns Vera Roshkina, Olga Grum-Grzhimailo, Seraphima Sinichkina and Martha Bogdanova. The chekists were alarmed because they "arranged pilgrimages to the churches in the suburbs and villages, where they spread counter-revolutionary brochures and leaflets in defence of True Orthodoxy." The investigator remarked that "a large quantity of anti-semitic literature of a pogrom character has been discovered.. together with various pre-revolutionary publications with a counter-revolutionary content."

Fr. Victorin's parish "was small, but his spiritual children were scattered throughout the city. He was very attentive to each soul. He saved many of his children from perishing."

One of his parishioners recounts: "Protopriest Victorin was an exceptional spiritual father... His thinking was purely Orthodox. His fame as a spiritual father spread a long way... During the abdication of the Russian tsar and the revolution Protopriest Victorin was serving in Petersburg. Batyushka greatly venerated the "Reigning" icon of the Mother of God. He attached great importance to the appearance of this icon at such a difficult time for Russia. Through this appearance the Mother of God comforted the faithful and as it were said that with the removal of 'him who restrains' she herself would accept the sceptre and orb. Every Friday evening in the church where he served... there was a moleben with an akathist before the Reigning icon of the Mother of God. In the house of Fr. Victorin there was a greatly venerated icon of the Kozelschanskaya Mother of God. On the day of the feast of this icon it was brought into the church, and an all-night vigil was carried out."

The authorities made many attempts to close the Nikolsky church, and on February 15, 1922 they succeeded, and the church was sealed. However, Fr. Victorin and the parishioners did not give up, and on March 4 the inter-departmental commission of the Petrograd executive committee reviewed the matter for the third time, and declared the church open - a unique instance of the reversal of a governmental decision in favour of the Church. The Nikolsky church remained open until the beginning of the 1930s.

In April, 1922 the members of the commission for the requisitioning of church valuables came to draw up a list of silver utensils marked for requisitioning. However, the parishioners answered Fr. Victorin's appeal and contributed 12.5 pounds of silver, and on May 4 bought back the church valuables.

When the renovationist heresy reared its head, the Nikolsky parish fought against it, and in August, 1922 entered the so-called Petrograd autocephaly. After its destruction by the GPU at the beginning of 1923, the parish still managed to hold out in conditions of severe persecution until the release of Patriarch Tikhon from prison. It was one of only about ten parishes in Petrograd that remained faithful to the patriarch.

In the autumn of 1923 the Ioannovsky monastery on Karpovka where St. John of Kronstadt was buried was closed. Fr. Victorin delivered a thunderous sermon on the subject, after which many sisters of the convent became his spiritual children. One of these was **Nun Ioanna** (in the world Anna Yakovlevna Lezhoeva), the treasurer of the convent and one of the closest spiritual children of St. John, on whose money the church and burial place of the saint had been built. She was born in 1869 in St. Petersburg into a lower-middle-class family, and went to the Patriotic Christmas, being one of the closest spiritual daughters of St. John of Kronstadt. In 1903 she entered the Ioannovsky monastery. She was first in charge of the candles, and then, in 1904, became treasurer. From December 17, 1907 she was made a novice, and contributed money to the building of a memorial chapel to St. John of Kronstadt in the monastery. On November 19, 1911 she was tonsured by the future Hieromartyr Benjamin of Petrograd. The monastery was closed in 1923, and she settled in a small monastic community in the city looked after by Protopriest Victorin Dobronravov. She became Fr. Victorin's spiritual daughter on the recommendation of Bishop Demetrius



of Gdov, and stayed with him until her arrest in 1930. In 1927 she joined the Josephites, and was a parishioner in the Nikolsky church, and then in the church of St. Panteleimon on Piskarevka. On October 17, 1933 she was arrested for being "a participant in an illegal church-monarchist group of monastics". On November 23 she was released after promising not to leave the city. On December 23 she was convicted of "taking up 'wandering' round the Josephite churches of Leningrad", of "keeping church literature" and of "conducting anti-Soviet propaganda". During her investigation she testified: "The church literature and utensils found in my flat belong to me for distribution to believers. In this way we glorify our dear batyushka, John of Kronstadt". In accordance with articles 58-10 part 1 and 58-11 she was sentenced to three years' imprisonment conditionally, taking into account her advanced age. Hers was part of the group case, "The Case of Priest P.I. Gaidaj, A.A. Kolesov and others, participants in a secret church community, 'The True Orthodox Church', Leningrad, 1933". Nothing more is known about her.

The Nikolsky church was visited by the members of the Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Seraphim, which gathered in the nearby flat of its founder, Ivan Mikhailovich Andreyev. When the Brotherhood was founded in January, 1927, Deacon Cyril Ivanov, Fr. Victorin's assistant, took part in the moleben, while a year later the moleben on the feast of St. Seraphim was served by Fr. Victorin himself. One of the members of the Brotherhood, Edward Rozenberg, had converted from Lutheranism to Orthodoxy. Most of the brothers were opponents of Metropolitan Sergius and received various terms in the camps in the autumn of 1928.

In 1924 Fr. Victorin was raised to the rank of protopriest, and on September 16, 1925, contrary to the instructions of the Soviet authorities, he was included in the parish council. On April 3, 1927, at a general meeting of the parish, it was unanimously decided "to express sincere gratitude to our dear batyushka and rector, Fr. Victorin Dobronravov for his untiring labours and care for his flock and for his skilled education of his spiritual children."

Fr. Victorin was also the spiritual father of some of the best known priests in the Petrograd diocese, such as Protopriest Ioann Smolin, who reposed on January 25, 1927.

Nun Victorina (Korneeva) tells how Fr. Victorin changed the life of her and her sister, the future Schemanun Athenagora (Korneeva): "We lived like the majority of people at that time. We were taught everything, including the Law of God, but we did not live as Orthodox Christians, did not observe the fasts, did not go to church, and prepared for communion once a year, in Holy Week. When Fr. Victorin came to our house and looked at our life, he changed everything. I was then 22. When we came to him, he immediately decreed that without his blessing we should do nothing. He gave us a prayer rule and, as a follower of Fr. John of Kronstadt, ordered us to receive communion every Sunday, and for that reason not to eat meat and to go to church as often as possible. Batyushka acquainted us with Matushka Ioanna, and we were close to her all our life. She was like a spiritual mother. Fr. Victorin decreed for us the monastic life. He served a special moleben for us in our house. There was only batyushka, Mother Ioann and my sister and I."

When Metropolitan Sergius issued his notorious declaration in July, 1927, Fr. Victorin immediately joined his opponents, for he was "unhappy not only with the political position of the declaration, but also with Metropolitan Sergius' canonical transgressions in his formation of the Synod". Fr. Victorin said that "Metropolitan Sergius issued the declaration on the demand of Soviet power, under Tuchkov's dictation, and in this way sinned against the Church... Metropolitan Sergius... did not write that in the land of the Soviets the teaching of the Law of God is forbidden, theological courses are closed and there is no possibility of preparing pastors. Monasteries are being closed and all their inhabitants expelled. In general, Metropolitan Sergius, before writing his declaration calling on people to be loyal to Soviet power, should have demanded the rights of the Church from the power. This he has not done to the present time. Being in communion with Metropolitan Sergius means selling out to Soviet power." And again: "Before writing his declaration calling for a loyal attitude to Soviet power, Metropolitan Sergius should have demanded rights for the Church from this power."

Bishop Demetrius of Gdov greatly valued Fr. Victorin as a good worker and propagandist and parish organizer. And on December 12, 1927, Fr. Victorin was part of the Petrograd delegation headed by Bishop Demetrius that went to Moscow to try and persuade Metropolitan Sergius to renounce his declaration. During the interview, Sergius said that the majority of Church people were with him. Fr. Victorin replied:

"Truth is not always where the majority is; otherwise the Saviour would not have spoken of the 'little flock'. And the head of a Church has not always turned out to be on the side of Truth. It is sufficient to recall the time of St. Maximus the Confessor."

"By my new Church policy I am saving the Church," Metropolitan Sergius replied.

"What are you saying, Vladyka!" all the members of the delegation exclaimed with one voice.

"The Church does not need salvation," added Fr. Victorin; "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. You yourself, Vladyka, need salvation through the Church."

"I meant that in a different sense," replied Metropolitan Sergius, somewhat disconcerted.

Soon after the return of the delegation to Petrograd, on December 26, 1927, in the cathedral church of the Resurrection of Christ there was read out an act of separation from Metropolitan Sergius signed by two bishops and five eminent protopriests, including Fr. Victorin.

In February, 1928, Fr. Victorin was present at a meeting of the Josephite clergy of Petrograd with the participation of Bishop Demetrius (Lyubimov) and Professor M. Novoselov, at which it was announced that Metropolitan Joseph had allowed the priests banned by Metropolitan Sergius to serve. In the spring of 1928 Fr. Victorin was one of the five protopriests that constituted a kind of collegial governing organ of the

Josephites under Vladyka Demetrius. He, together with Fr. Nicholas Prozorov, was given the task of testing priests who wished to come over to the Josephites.

In May, 1929 Fr. Victorin took part in the very well-attended funeral of his friend, **Protopriest Theodore Andreyev** at the Nikolsky cemetery of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. After the death of his friend he to some degree took his place.

Fr. Victorin kept up contacts with True Orthodox clergy in other dioceses; in particular he gave hospitality of **Hieromonk Photius (Solodov)** from Tver. Through him batyushka drew up a canonical analysis of the reasons for separating from Metropolitan Sergius to the priest Laskeev from Tver diocese, but did not succeed in persuading him.

According to the witness of Protopriest Basil Beryuzhsky, rector of the cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, Bishop Demetrius greatly venerated Fr. Victorin.

In 1928-1929 Fr. Victorin led his parishioners in frequent pilgrimages to the Kikerinsky monastery, the St. Macarius the Roman monastery, the churches in Krasnoye Selo and Ratchino, and especially to the Fyodorovsky cathedral in Tsarskoye Selo. According to OGPU agency accounts, during these pilgrimages the parishioners would hand out brochures and leaflets in defence of True Orthodoxy. After services the spiritual children of Fr. Victorin would assemble in his flat for tea. There "they would chant verses, have conversations, and Ivan Meyer would declaim his verses." This activity was later used as part of the OGPU's accusations against Fr. Victorin.

At the end of 1929 massive repressions against the Josephites began. On November 29, Archbishop Demetrius was arrested, and 40 clergy and laity with him. Fr. Victorin's parishioners feared for his life. Every parishioner used to read Psalm 90 at the same time, at eleven o'clock every evening.

Fr. Victorin was against the registration of parishes, considering it "criminal and sinful". He went to see Metropolitan Joseph about this question together with the superior of the Panteleimon church, Fr. Nicholas Ushakov and Protopriest Alexis Voznesensky from Posolodino.

However, Metropolitan Joseph did not take such a radical position, and the parish was registered without the qualifications demanded by the priests. So from April, 1930 Fr. Victorin stopped going to the church on Piskarevka and served only in flats. Together with the above-mentioned priests, and supported to some extent by Fr. Michael Rozhdestvensky from Strelna, he formed a group which desired "the speedy destruction of the Bolsheviks", which rejected Soviet registration and even reproached Bishop Sergius of Narva for compromising too much with the Bolsheviks. Under the influence of this group Metropolitan Joseph sent Bishop Sergius some "commandments" which to some extent limited his rights.

During the last summer that Fr. Victorin was free, in 1930, he went by himself to Sarov and Diveyevo. When he left he was sick with gangrene in his foot, but was

healed at the spring of St. Seraphim, and he came back from Sarov in good health. He used to tell his spiritual children:

"Visit the monasteries while we still have them. Fill yourselves with the prayerful spirit of the monastery."

Thus his spiritual children used to spend their summer vacation in monasteries.

Fr. Victorin felt that his days were numbered. The closure of the Nikolsky church on February 26, 1930 was a heavy blow for him. Until the end of April he served in another Josephite church, that of St. Panteleimon on Pisarevka. But then he served only in the flats of his spiritual children.

His former parishioners remembered that time: "Although the church was not in the centre of the city, we began to fear for batyushka more and more, and with his blessing decided to intensify our prayer. Every parishioner had to read "He who dwells in the help of the Most High" (Psalm 90) at the same time, 11 in the evening, every day. Moreover, Mother Ioanna went for prayer to the Shamordino Schemanun Antonia, who at that time was already mortally ill with cancer. She calmed her and said that batyushka was not under threat in the sense of being shot. She said what a remarkable spiritual father batyushka was, and she said he had 'the humility of wisdom'... In 1930 the church in which Fr. Victorin was serving was closed. But he still managed to celebrate the liturgy and bless water, which we then kept for a long time. Even in 1940, when there were no more churches any more, and especially Josephite ones, this water was given to those dying in Murom as a consolation. After the closure of his church Fr. Victorin said: 'My song has been sung. Serving in houses cannot continue for long.'

"During the last summer that Fr. Victorin was at liberty, he did not succeed in organizing the usual pilgrimage, and decided to serve a night service with a liturgy. During that summer he himself went alone to Sarov and Diveyevo. He went there a sick man, but returned healed at the spring of St. Seraphim. He said to his spiritual children: "Go to the monasteries while they still exist, gather up the monastic spirit of prayer." And so his spiritual children spent their summer vacations in monasteries... Before his arrest Fr. Victorin decided to give his antimins and the holy vessels to faithful people. He considered it safer that they should keep them. He gave a small chalice to Matushka Antonina, a large one to the treasurer, and the antimins to two sisters, and told them how to hide them. He ordered a plank to be made somewhat deeper, like a pencil box, so that the lid could be moved. The antimins was to be put in there, the lid closed and then sealed with putty. And the icon of the Saviour with the golden hair was to be written on it so that nobody would know about it. By the mercy of God everything was preserved until Murom... After this Fr. Victorin asked that a breast cross be made for him out of cypress wood. This he was preparing for himself for prison, since he had been given a cross of pure gold by his parishioners which he always wore and which could be seen from a long distance during pilgrimages... His premonitions were realised."

Anna and Maria, the daughters of Hieromartyr Theodore Andreyev, witness: "We remember Fr. Victorin Dobronravov well. He was very well known. Tall, with dark chestnut hair and an inspired face, he was very handsome. In spite of his youth (33 years), he acted like a middle-aged man. Fr. Victorin openly adopted an extremely critical attitude towards the Church politics of Metropolitan Sergius. For several years he was the rector of the church of St. Nicholas... Here he lived in the church house with his family. His parishioners loved and deeply venerated their batyushka, and when, after the closure of the church, Fr. Victorin was transferred to Rzhevka, many of them began to go there."

In the second half of 1930 a new wave of persecutions fell upon the Petrograd Josephites. The arrests continued from August 22, 1930 to April 22, 1931, with the peak coming at the end of December. One of the first to be arrested, on September 19, was Fr. Victorin, who had recently returned from Sarov and Diveyevo. The secret police came for him and twenty other parishioners, all of whom had been betrayed, according to one source (but denied by another), by the reader Marfusha Bogdanova. They were all arrested in connection with the so-called "counter-revolutionary monarchist organization of the True Orthodox". Besides his parishioners who were summoned for interrogation, **Deacon Cyril Ivanov** spent several months in prison.

All of those arrested were held in the House of preliminary detention of Voykova street (now Shpalernaya). Fr. Victorin was interrogated seven times between September 19 and May 12. He behaved worthily, replied shortly and crisply, and did not recognize his guilt. At the same time batyushka did not hide his convictions and boldly spoke about his negative attitude to the anti-ecclesiastical politics of Soviet power and the position of Metropolitan Sergius. But his replies to the concrete questions of the interrogator were, as rule, evasive. "I don't remember that I met Novoselov, but cannot deny that I met him"; "I cannot remember what precisely I received from Yegunov, that is, what documents he handed over to me", etc. Only at the "additional" interrogation of April 2, 1931 did Fr. Victorin admit that he kept his documents at the house of a parishioner, the former novice of the Ioannovsky monastery, Olga Grum-Grzhimailo. However, this had no effect on her fate. She was not condemned, and served as a reader during the war in Leningrad.

After a very long investigation lasting over a year, Fr. Victorin was sentenced on October 8, 1931 to ten years in the camps together with Fr. Nicephorus Strelnikov.

At this time he was allowed to see his matushka. A year later, his daughter Irene died from tuberculosis. Thus his prediction that Irene would be a bride of Christ was fulfilled.

At first Fr. Victorin was sent to Siberia, to the Mari camp, where he was put on general work. In the summer of 1932 he was sent to the White Sea canal, where he at first worked on the construction of the canal, but then, after completing a course, as a medical assistant. This may have saved his life. He was in prison in all for six years and three months.

On December 7, 1936 he was released early, and on December 24 arrived at Oksochi station, Okulovsky region, Borovichi district, Petrograd (now Novgorod) province, where his family was living. In this place he had spent two summers with his family in 1925-26, renting a dacha at the "Gnezdysenko" farm from its owner, the former novice Olga Mikhailovna Poliektova. He and his family had also been there in the summer of 1930, just before his arrest. There, in a pine forest, was the regional home for mentally ill children, where I.M. Andreyevsky, who had completed his term on Solovki, was the chief doctor from 1930.

**Ivan Mikhailovich Andreyevsky** was born on March 14, 1894, in St. Petersburg, where he completed the gymnasium. Afterwards, he graduated in philosophy from the Sorbonne in Paris, and returned to his native city, where he entered the Bekhterev Institute. His reason for this decision was intense interest in the works of Dostoevsky, the depths of whose creativity he wished to examine with the aid of modern psychiatry. After completing his studies at the Institute, he studied philology at the University of St. Petersburg, while serving as a doctor in the Nikolaevsky Military Hospital during the civil war. In 1922, Ivan Mikhailovich accepted the post of professor at the university, but after his initial lectures, which proved to be inconsistent with official communist ideology, he was dismissed from the university, but forthwith obtained a position as instructor of literature in one of the Petrograd high schools.

Being a courageous man, Ivan Mikhailovich, concurrent with his teaching of literature, attended the underground theological courses and religio-philosophical circles which existed in Petrograd in the 1920s, in particular the circle of St. Seraphim of Sarov, in which he made the acquaintance of Sergius Alexeyevich Askoldov, the professor of philosophy.

Following the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius on July 29, 1927, Ivan Mikhailovich travelled to Moscow as a spokesman for the Petrograd laity in the deputation sent to Metropolitan Sergius. Soon after this journey, all the members of the deputation were arrested and sent to Solovki.

In the spring of 1935 Ivan Mikhailovich invited the wife of Fr. Victorin, Anna Konstantinovna, who had been exiled to 101 kilometres from Leningrad, and gave her work as a medical sister. The hospitable Olga Mikhailovna also settled Anna Konstantinovna's daughters Seraphima and Zoya, and her sister Vera Konstantinovna Voronova, on her farm.

On the recommendation of I.M. Andreyevsky, on January 1, 1937 Fr. Victorin was given work at the boarding house in the name of Ushinsky as a medical assistant. Olga Mikhailovna also worked there as a medical sister and doctor. For seven and a half months the protopriest worked at liberty among relatives and people who were close to him. His wife took very close care of him. She would not let even those who were close to him see him, she was afraid they would betray him. However, according to the witness of I.M. Andreyevsky, batyushka conducted secret services at which members of his family and some of his spiritual children from Leningrad were present.

Fr. Victorin was arrested for the second time on August 6, 1937. He was accused of being “an active participant in a counter-revolutionary Fascist group of churchmen, systematically conducting counter-revolutionary agitation in the population aimed at the overthrow of Soviet power”. At his arrest personal letters, documents, a Gospel and a “photograph” of St. Seraphim of Sarov were found on him, and were destroyed.

Only on August 15 was a witness found to testify against him – the priest of the village of Visleny, A. Ostrov, who, probably under threat of arrest, had written a declaration to the effect that on the territory of the Okulovsky region among the clergy there was supposedly a counter-revolutionary organisation consisting of twelve people. He asked that they be interrogated. On August 22 this witness gave detailed information about the anti-Soviet activities of all the priests of the region, and in particular about Fr. Victorin, saying: “Victorin Mikhailovich Dobronravov, a participant in the counter-revolutionary group of clergy, was the leader of the counter-revolutionary organisation ‘the True Orthodox Church’, for which he was condemned to ten years’ deprivation of liberty. On returning from the concentration camp, Victorin arrived at Oksochi station and immediately established counter-revolutionary links with the participants of the counter-revolutionary group: Theodore Kurzhenkov, Ivan Filitsyn and Joseph Inomistov. Besides, Dobronravov, while working in the children’s home in the name of Ushinsky, often expressed counter-revolutionary views, saying that ‘now life is becoming impossible, but don’t expect a better life under these authorities’.”

On the basis of these witnesses, in September-October, 1937, the workers of the regional section of the NKVD arrested all the clergy known to them (except Fr. A.), as well as church activists. 31 people were imprisoned in Borovichi prison. Then they began to “beat out” confessions of anti-Soviet activity from them. Fr. Victorin was interrogated four times, more than anyone else, but they failed to break him. At the first interrogation, on August 7, besides short biographical information, he only replied that he had ‘no links with any counter-revolutionary work’. On August 12, in reply to question how often he met the priest Theodore Kurzhenkov of the Oskochki church, he said that he had met him three times in the last seven months and had never had any counter-revolutionary conversations with him. The third interrogation took place on September 15. According to the protocol, Fr. Victorin was four times asked about his counter-revolutionary activity and agitation and each time gave the same laconic reply: “I have not conducted counter-revolutionary work”. The protopriest also categorically denied the possibility of his having had any counter-revolutionary conversations with I. Andreevsky, saying that he had known the latter since 1929 as a person who visited his church in Leningrad (although already in December, 1927 he went with Ivan Mikhailovich in the delegation to Metropolitan Sergius). By August, 1937 Andreyevsky had already been sacked from his post as chief doctor of the pension, ‘as not having documents’, and had moved to Novgorod. Fr. Victorin’s firmness under interrogation probably saved his life.

Understanding that they would not be able to break him, the investigatory organs tried to get evidence from witnesses and the other accused. The church at Oksochi station, like all the others in the region, was in the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Sergius

(Stragorodsky), its priests did not serve together with Fr. Victorin, although they had known him since 1926-1927 and their personal relations were good. Fathers Theodore Kurzhenkov and Joseph Inomistov did not admit any guilt during interrogations and did not say anything about Fr. Victorin. Only Fr. John Filitsyn was "broken". On October 12, 1937 he said: "I know that besides the people I have indicated as belonging to our counter-revolutionary group, Victorin Mikhailovich Dobronravov also belonged to our group. He is a former priest, and was condemned for counter-revolutionary activity. On returning from the camps at the beginning of 1937, Dobronravov joined our counter-revolutionary group. Moreover, Dobronravov had direct links with the member of our counter-revolutionary group Theodore Kurzhenkov, who frequently visited Dobronravov." However, Filitsyn could not describe any counter-revolutionary activity of Fr. Victorin "amidst the population".

From August 12 to October 30, the investigators interrogated five workers at the boarding house in the name of Ushinsky: two medical sisters, the person in charge of the educational section, a medical orderly and the person in charge of study. The first four gave no evidence concerning the "counter-revolutionary activity" of Fr. Victorin, and only said that the priest Theodore Kurzhenkov had gone to Fr. Victorin for books, and the latter had "very warmly welcomed him" during their meetings. Only the person in charge of study, A. O-v, witnessed on October 30 that four priests and a church warden had supposedly formed a counter-revolutionary group in Oksochki village. Moreover, Kurzhenkov together with Dobronravov had "worked over the workers of the children's home in an anti-Soviet religious spirit", as a result of which several of those serving there had been drawn into a church choir. Dobronravov had "in a very cautious form conducted counter-revolutionary agitation", and had once declared "that life had become difficult, everything had collapsed, and no improvements in life were noticeable", etc. Having received these two "proofs", the organs presented them to Fr. Victorin at his last interrogation on November 15, but again they gained nothing. To the witness of Felitsyn, batyushka replied: "Although I met Theodore Kurzhenkov, I, Dobronravov, did not enter a counter-revolutionary group", and in relation to the assertions of the chief of studies he said: "I personally know Alexis O-v, and had a conversation with him about work, but I never expressed any counter-revolutionary views to O-v". The investigators were not able to obtain anything more from him.

Out of the 31 people arrested in this case, one died during investigation, 24 confessed their guilt, while six, including Fr. Victorin, categorically denied it. Finally, on December 4 the prosecution's conclusions were drawn up in Leningrad, and confirmed on December 7. In it was written the following: "It has been established by the investigation into this case that on the territory of Okulovsky region in Leningrad province there existed a counter-revolutionary organisation into which clergy and church activists with counter-revolutionary inclinations entered. The leaders of the counter-revolutionary organisation were: the dean M.A. Vasiliev, the priests A.A. Orlov, A.A. Steklov, N.N. Iyumov and A.K. Kulman. The counter-revolutionary organisation set before itself the following tasks: 1. to work over the population in a counter-revolutionary spirit with the aim of preparing it to overthrow Soviet power; 2. the overthrow of Soviet power and the establishment of a capitalist order..." Fr. Victorin was personally accused "that at the beginning of 1937 he was drawn by Pope



Kurzhenkov into the counter-revolutionary organisation existing in the Okulovsky region, Leningrad province. He conducted anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation among the workers of the children's home in the name of Ushinsky. He spread provocative inventions." On December 15, 1937 a Special Troika of the Administration of the NKVD for Leningrad province condemned Fr. Victorin and 24 other people to the death penalty, and five of the accused to ten years in the camps. Two weeks later, on December 28, Fr. Victorin and the others who were condemned were shot in the prison of the town of Borovichi.

The relatives of Fr. Victorin were told in the same month that he had been condemned to ten years in the camps with no right of correspondence. Because of this there arose the legend that batyushka had been devoured by a wolf in a camp in Komi, and had died like Hieromartyr Ignatius the Godbearer on the day of his birth. However, now it is known that Fr. Victorin was shot on the night of December 28. Some of his spiritual children were still alive in St. Petersburg in the 1990s. They kept his memory alive and longed for his glorification on earth.

After his arrest Fr. Victorin's family moved to Novgorod, where I.M. Andreyevsky had also been transferred. There Anna Constantinovna lived with her daughter Zoya until the retreat of the Germans. Then, under the protection of Andreyevsky, and together with S.A. Askoldov, they were evacuated to Germany, and from there, in 1950, to the U.S.A. In America Andreyevsky became a teacher in the Holy Trinity Monastery seminary in Jordanville, and eventually married Anna Constantinovna and adopted Zoya. He died on December 30, 1976.

**50. HOLY HIEROMARTYR SERAPHIM, ARCHBISHOP OF UGLICH**  
**(+1937)**

**And those with him**

Archbishop Seraphim, in the world Semyon Nikolayevich Samoilovich, was born on July 19, 1880 in Mirgorod, Poltava province in the family of a Ukrainian church reader. In 1896 he finished his studies at Lubensk theological school, and in 1902 – at Poltava theological seminary. On August 1, 1902 he was appointed to be a teacher in the Unalaska school in Alaska. On July 1, 1905 he was transferred to the same post in Sitka. He was tonsured into the mantia on September 25, 1905 with the name Seraphim. On October 2 he was ordained to the diaconate and made a member of the Sitka hierarchical house, and on March 25 was ordained to the priesthood. On August 1, 1906 he was appointed superior of the Nucheka spiritual mission. On March 25, 1908 he was appointed a teacher of Holy Scripture and basic theology in the Sitka theological seminary. During this period he was a fellow-labourer of Bishop Tikhon, the future patriarch, who highly valued him. He united personal asceticism and an intelligent approach both to the half-wild Aleut flock and to the American government in Alaska.

On October 4, 1908 his request to return to his homeland for reasons of health was granted, and on May (March) 25, 1909 he was appointed assistant to the Vladikavkaz diocesan missionary. On September 1, 1909 he was appointed spiritual father of the Alexandrovsky theological seminary in Ardon, and on October 10 – acting inspector of the seminary. On April 13, he was appointed prior of the Mogilev Bratsk monastery, and on June 23 – of the Tolga Yaroslavl monastery. On May 11, 1912 he was raised to the rank of igumen of the monastery.

Fr. Seraphim wrote a serious historical work, A History of the Tolga Monastery, 1314-1915, in preparation for the celebration of the six-hundredth anniversary of the monastery in August, 1914. For the benefit of the monastery and the surrounding flock, in 1913 he built and opened, a mile from the monastery at the edge of a splendid forest, a school of bee-keeping for the orphan children the monastery looked after. Three weeks before the six-hundredth anniversary of the monastery, however, the First World War broke out. The abbot, in the very first days of the war, built hospital wards and actively helped Archbishop Agathangelus in the governing of the during the years of war and revolution.

On September 5, 1915 he was appointed superior of the Alexeyevsky monastery in Uglich, and on June 29, 1916 was raised to the rank of archimandrite. His courage and presence of mind saved the monastery from destruction in the summer of 1918, when the communist chekists ran riot in the days of the "Yaroslavl Uprising", rushing into the cells, basements and grave vaults of the monastery cemetery in search of "rebels". 350 innocent citizens of Yaroslavl were executed by firing squad in revenge for the assassination of the military governor, Commissar Nahimson, and the Economic Commissar Zakheim.

On February 15, 1920 Fr. Seraphim was consecrated Bishop of Uglich, a vicariate of the Yaroslavl diocese, by Patriarch Tikhon. In July, 1922 he was arrested and sentenced to three years' imprisonment in accordance with article 58-10 for distributing the epistles of Patriarch Tikhon and for resisting the requisitioning of church valuables. He was cast into Yaroslavl prison, but on October 2, 1923 he was released on amnesty.

In 1924 Patriarch Tikhon raised him to the rank of archbishop and on January 15, 1924 appointed him temporary administrator of the Yaroslavl diocese. On May 18, 1924 he was again arrested, but was soon released. On April 12, 1925 he signed the act giving the highest spiritual power to Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky). At the beginning of 1926 he actively supported Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) in his struggle with the Gregorians. In December, 1926 he was arrested, but released three days later.

From December 29, 1926 to April 7, 1927 he was deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens, when the first deputy, Metropolitan Sergius, was in prison.

Archbishop Seraphim categorically refused to obey the Soviet authorities in issuing a declaration of collaboration with them, considering himself to be "unauthorized to decide basic questions of principle without the hierarchs who are in prison".

On December 29, 1926, he addressed the episcopate of the Russian Church with this message: "I implore my colleagues, the bishops, to help me to bear the heavy and responsible cross of the administration of the Russian Church. I beg you to cut your correspondence and relations with me to the minimum, leaving all except matters of principle and those affecting the whole Church (as, for example, the selection and consecration of bishops) to be decided locally."

The authorities offered Archbishop Seraphim the possibility of forming a Synod, and indicated who should be its members. Seraphim refused, and put forward his own list of names, which included Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan.

"But he's in prison," they said.

"Then free him," said the archbishop.

Later, when Metropolitan Sergius came to form his Synod, it was composed of the same bishops as the GPU had suggested to Archbishop Seraphim.

In March, 1927 Archbishop Seraphim was summoned to Moscow by Tuchkov and in the inner prison of the OGPU was presented with the terms presented by Soviet power for the legalization of the Church. The archbishop refused. Moreover, he refused to appoint a deputy. So the OGPU asked him:

"Who will be the head of the Church if we do not free you?"

"The Lord Jesus Christ Himself," he replied.

The interrogator looked at him in amazement and said:

"All of you bishops have left behind deputies, as did Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Peter."

"Well, I have left the Church in the hands of the Lord God."

Another account of this dialogue was given by Archbishop Seraphim's senior subdeacon, Michael Nikolaevich Yaroslavsky: "For 100 days Vladyka Seraphim happened to rule the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church. This was in 1926. Metropolitan Sergius was in prison, everybody was in prison..."

"And so, as he had been put in charge, Vladyka told me that at that time the authorities offered him, as the Primate of the Church, a Synod of bishops. He did not agree and immediately received three years in Solovki camp. He did not betray the Church, but... declared the autocephaly of each diocese, since the Primate of the Church was another candidate for prison... Soon after, Metropolitan Sergius was released. He created the Synod out of all those members whom the authorities suggested to Vladyka Seraphim."

According to the same source, Vladyka Seraphim mentioned Metropolitan Cyril. "But he is behind bars," Tuchkov said. "He is behind *your* bars, and you must release him," said Seraphim.

According to a letter written by Archbishop Seraphim a few days after his Lubyanka interview, Tuchkov said to him "at parting": "We don't harbour evil thoughts; we are releasing you and assign to you Uglich as your place of residence; you can officiate wherever you want, but under no circumstances can you govern. You should neither appoint, nor transfer, nor dismiss, nor reward." "But what about enquiries from the dioceses, current affairs," asked Archbishop Seraphim. "You cannot stop life, it will claim its own." "Well, you can make purely formal replies. After all, you have declared autonomy. So what do you want? You have left no deputies. So you should act accordingly: you must not send around any papers on the new government system. You can write to the dioceses that 'since I have refused to govern, you should manage on your own in your localities.' But it comes into your head to write something, send it to me with a trusted man, I'll look through it and give you my opinion... As for now, goodbye. We'll buy you a ticket and see you to the railway station. Go back to Uglich and sit there quietly."

And so Archbishop Seraphim was sent back to Uglich. It was in the same month that the authorities released Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) from the same prison to take his place...

On April 12 Archbishop Seraphim transferred his rights as deputy back to Metropolitan Sergius.

In July, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius issued his notorious "declaration", which placed the Church in more or less complete submission to the militant atheists. On February 6, 1928, Archbishop Seraphim, together with Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl,

Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, Archbishop Barlaam of Perm and Bishop Eugene of Rostov, wrote an epistle rejecting the declaration. On the same day Archbishop Seraphim personally wrote to Sergius: "Previously we suffered and endured in silence, knowing we were suffering for the truth, and that the power of God was with us and could not be conquered by any sufferings. This power is what strengthened us and inspired us with hope that at a time known to God alone the truth of Orthodoxy would be triumphant, for to it alone is promised unfailingly that whenever needful the almighty help of God will be given to it.

"By your Declaration and the church policy founded upon it, you are trying to lead us into a sphere where we will now be deprived of this hope, for you are leading us away from the service of truth; and God does not help lies...

"Dear Vladyka: I can imagine how you must suffer! But why do you, experiencing these sufferings yourself, not desire to lighten them for those who at one time trusted you? With what joy I gave over to you my own rights as deputy of the Locum Tenens, believing that your wisdom and experience would cooperate with you in the administration of the Church.

"But what happened? Can this fatal act really not be corrected? Will you really not find the courage to acknowledge your error, your fatal mistake, the issuance by you of the Declaration of July 16/29, 1927? You wrote to me and sincerely believed that the path you have chosen will bring peace to the Church. And what do you hear and see now? A frightful groan is carried up from all the ends of Russia. You promised to pull out two or three sufferers here and there and return them to the society of the faithful; but look how many new sufferers have appeared, whose sufferings are made yet deeper by the awareness that they are the result of your new church policy. Does this groan of the sufferers from the shores of the Oba and Yenisei rivers, from the far-off islands of the White Sea, from the deserts beyond the Caspian Sea, from the mountain ridges of Turkestan - does this groan not reach to your heart?

"How could you, by your Declaration, place upon them and upon many the stigma of opponents of the present civil order, when they and we in our spiritual nature have always been foreign to politics, guarding strictly, with self-sacrifice, the purity of Orthodoxy?

"Is it for me, who am younger, to write these lines to you? Is it for me to teach an experienced and learned Hierarchy of the Russian Church? Still, the voice of my conscience compels me again and again to disturb your spacious and good heart. Show courage; acknowledge your fatal mistake, and if it is impossible for you to issue a new declaration, then for the good of the Church, give over the authority and the rights of the deputy of the Locum Tenens to someone else.

"I have the right to write you these lines and make this offer, for many now reproach me, saying that I handed over these rights of the deputy to you hastily and without reservation..."

Archbishop Seraphim was arrested on February 17 (or 15), 1928 and exiled for three years to the Bujnichesky monastery of the Holy Spirit near Mogilev. From there he wrote a letter to Metropolitan Sergius accusing him of "drawing our fainthearted and weak brothers into neo-renovationism."

He also wrote (although these words may belong to Archbishop Seraphim (Zvezdinsky)): "Metropolitan Sergius has fallen away from the Church, that is, by his actions he has transgressed the Church canons. Metropolitan Sergius no longer remains in the bosom of the Orthodox Church. The Church which has recognized righteousness in communism is not a Church... An organization bought at the price of bowing down to the Antichrist is unworthy of the Church."

On April 11, 1928 he was deprived of his see and on May 30 was placed under ban by Metropolitan Sergius. In May he joined himself to the "conciliatory" letter to Metropolitan Sergius of Metropolitan Agathangelus and the Yaroslavl archpastors, in which the hierarchs said that they were not breaking communion in prayer with Sergius, but retained the right to refuse to obey any of his decrees which went against the canons and their conscience. However, Vladyka Seraphim soon corrected himself.

According to one (dubious) source, in 1928 Archbishop Seraphim, through his representative Hieromonk Alexis, expressed his agreement with the decisions of the so-called "Nomadic Council" of the Catacomb Church, but refused to sign them.

On December 31, 1928 Archbishop Seraphim noted in his diary (it was the last entry): "Our holy Church is suffering. One year has passed and sunk into eternity – a heavy year, a big year, we have all had to suffer and feel much, but to me personally it has brought many sorrows and offences and at the same time a lofty spiritual mood. I have passed through a great crucible of sufferings and temptations. Only towards the feast of the Nativity of Christ did I receive complete spiritual pacification, our work is being levelled out and is becoming more definite, both the politics of Metropolitan Sergius and our opposition to this neo-renovationist. It seems to me that it is time already to say one's word and separate from Metropolitan Sergius, for through his name we disturb the weak and infirm, while we give those whose conscience is seared an excuse to talk about the strength of their politics and the unshakeness of their position."

On January 7 (20), 1929 Archbishop Seraphim continued to criticise Metropolitan Sergius in an "Epistle to the Whole Church". And he called on the hierarchs to rule their dioceses independently, referring in case of extreme need to Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd.

On March 2, 1929 Archbishop Seraphim was arrested, and on May 17 was sentenced to three years in the camps in accordance with article 58-10 for "distributing anti-Soviet documents". He was sent to Solovki. In autumn of 1931 he was transferred to the mainland on invalid work.

Once when dragging bricks in the construction of a two-storey building, he fell from a ladder and broke a rib, which healed poorly and made him an invalid. But no kind of persecution could break his powerful will.

"I myself," writes S. Grotov, "saw him for the first time after his arrival with the convoy of prisoners from Solovki in the autumn of 1930 [autumn, 1931, according to other sources] at the assignment point called 'New Birzha', near the northern semaphore station 'Mai-Gub', on the Murmansk railroad.

"Later I was able to have a closer acquaintance with him. Having gone on invalid status, he often was in the ambulatory section, and we, the physicians' helpers, tried to help him; he was suffering from chronic pleuritis as well as a decompensated miocarditis and general arteriosclerosis.

"Once, at the end of October on a damp, inclement day, passing by the disinfection cabin, where things were disinfected behind a hermetically-sealed door, with a prisoner-invalid for a watchman outside the room to keep robbers out, I heard myself called by name. Going up, I saw Archbishop Seraphim, numb with cold, standing watch.

"They put us invalids at this post for two hours at a time, but I have been standing here from twelve noon and they haven't sent anyone to replace me.' (It was then about 6 p.m.)

"I ran to the invalid barracks.

"Where is the chief?"

"He went to the cinema,' replied the clerk.

"Tell him that I am going to make a report to the Head of the Sanitary Division, that he is keeping prisoner Samoilovich at an outdoor post for six hours instead of two.'

"The clerk roused himself and ran to the cinema. Ten minutes later he ran back.

"The chief has ordered him to be replaced, and asks you not to make a report.'

"Good, but in ten minutes I will check.'

"And in fact, he woke up a decrepit colonel who was dozing on a board-bed and sent him running to replace Vladyka. The old man ran to the disinfection room. Half an hour later I again went into the barracks. The numb archbishop with satisfaction was drinking some hot tea from a cup, and I wished him a good rest.

"He was considered a 'prohibited one' - that is, he had no right to go out of the camp into the administrative buildings outside the barbed-wire fence.

"Once he asked me to call Archimandrite Gurias Yegorov, who worked in the Financial Division and was a fierce supporter of Metropolitan Sergius; later he was freed from exile, having finished his five-year term in concentration camp in 1934, and

in 1946 was ordained Bishop. From that time on he was head of the 'patriarchal' church in Central Asia, with the title of Bishop of Tashkent and Central Asia.

"Archimandrite Gurias frowned.

"After all, the archbishop is not 'ours', and it's not fitting for me even to talk with him. I have no right to receive a blessing from him.'

"No one is asking this of you, Father Gurias. But after all, he is a prohibited one, and you and I have passes. If, knowing who you are, he has asked you to come to him in camp,' I protested, 'can we, ourselves prisoners, refuse to visit a prisoner in the camp, even if he is a heretic? A physicians' helper shouldn't have to teach an archimandrite.'

"He was upset and came with me. I accompanied him to the ambulatory section and left him together with the archbishop, whom I had summoned there.

"The handsome forty-year-old archimandrite-bookkeeper, bending his head, spoke with the bent-over, decrepit archbishop. What they talked about, I don't know.

"[On January 19], 1932, Vladyka was freed before the end of his term, counting (in accordance with the decree of 1931) five days of labour equal to six. This was arranged for him by the pious prisoners of the bookkeeping division, who counted the working days in such a way as to reduce the term. In 1934 this 'liberal' decree was revoked..."

Vladyka was assigned to live in Kozmodemyansk, Gornariisky region, Mari republic. On December 29 he was arrested again in a group case, and cast into prison in Kozmodemyansk. On June 8, 1933 he was sentenced to three years' exile in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11, and was sent to Arkhangelsk.

There, probably in the flat of Fr. Nicholas Piskanovsky, there was a secret council of Catacomb bishops and clergy on December 4/17, 1933, at which Archbishop Seraphim put forward the project of an "Act" in which he witnessed to the destructive activity of Metropolitan Sergius, which had shaken the foundations of Orthodoxy. Sergius, he said, had "usurped power, caused a schism, fallen into heresy and fallen away from confessing Orthodoxy".

Sergius' usurpation of power, according to Archbishop Seraphim, took place in his organization of an unlawful Synod and in his publishing of the declaration of July 16/29, 1927 without the blessing of the Patriarchal locum tenens, Metropolitan Peter. He had fallen into schism by insisting on his own opinion, knowing beforehand that not all would accept his declaration. His heresy consisted in distorting the teaching on salvation, insofar as he found "salvation only in the visible organization of the Church, thereby rejecting the inner power of the Grace of God by which the Church can exist even in the desert". His "falling away flows from the heretical teaching of Metropolitan Sergius on salvation and on the Church as an earthly institution, in whose existence it is possible to make any concessions by which the very summons of Christ to confession is distorted". Archbishop Seraphim continues: "Have renounced



the summons of Christ to confession, Metropolitan Sergius has blasphemed against the Church, both in the persons of Her confessors, and also in dispersing the Church and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit”.

“Without entering into an investigation of the remaining actions of Metropolitan Sergius in this period of time, We, by the Grace given to us from our Lord Jesus Christ, declare Metropolitan Sergius to be deprived of communion in prayer with us and with all the Orthodox bishops of the Russian Church. We commit him to ecclesiastical trial and ban him from serving. The bishops who think like Metropolitan Sergius are accepted by us into canonical and prayerful communion in accordance with the rite of reception from renovationism, and those who occupy widowed sees remain in their places.

“We carry out the present act in the strict consciousness of our archpastoral duty to stand in obedience to the Church of Christ in subjection to the ecclesiastical rules of the Local Councils and the Council of the Russian Church of 1917-1918, headed by our Patriarchal Locum Tenens Peter, Metropolitan of Krutitsa.

“Since it is impossible to address the first-hierarch and Locum Tenens Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, the administration of the Russian Church passes, until his return to his work, to the Eldest Hierarch of the Russian Church, being led in this matter by the order of the Council of the Russian Church of 1917-18 and by the acts of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Agathangelus of Yaroslavl on the autonomous administration by the bishops in their localities in their dioceses.”

Since the hierarchs were unable to communicate with Metropolitan Peter, it was decided to offer the locum tenancy of the Patriarchal Throne to Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan. However, Vladyka Cyril refused to accept this post, about which he wrote to Archbishop Seraphim or one of those close to him in January, 1934. Archbishop Victor (Ostrovidov) was in communication with the exiled clergy in Arkhangelsk, and issued a very similar declaration.

Grotov writes: "Archbishop Seraphim... grew weaker in body, but was firm in spirit. He thought that *in an epoch of persecutions there should be no centralized Church government*. A bishop should govern his diocese independently. In exile he should be the head of the secret Church wherever he is; he should ordain secret priests and perform secret monastic tonsures."

More information about Archbishop Seraphim is provided by the responses of Archbishop Macarius (Karmazin) during his interrogation by the NKVD in the autumn of 1934 - although, as with all NKVD records, these cannot be assumed to be completely accurate. Archbishop Macarius is reported as saying that Archbishop Seraphim still considered himself to be the patriarchal locum tenens although he was in exile in Arkhangelsk, and that through his secretary, Fr. Nicholas Piskanovsky, he offered Archbishop Macarius the administration of his former diocese of Dnepropetrovsk and gave him other duties. "... In the summer of 1934 Archbishop Seraphim... sent a special epistle which confirmed the practice of implanting illegal churches and poured an enlivening stream into our activity...."

On May 21, 1934 Archbishop Seraphim was arrested in Archangelsk and accused of being “a leader of the church-monarchist counter-revolutionary organization, the True Orthodox Church”. On June 1 he was sentenced to five years in the camps, and was sent to Bamlag (Suslovo station near Mariinsk).

On September 15 (October 28), 1937 Archbishop Seraphim was arrested in Sibltag, and on October 28 (November 4) was sentenced to death in accordance with articles 58-10 and 58-11 for “organizing and heading a counter-revolutionary group in the camp” and for “conducting systematic counter-revolutionary agitation”. He pleaded not guilty. On November 4 (9) he was shot.