



HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Parish Newsletter

RESTON

New Parish Center: 20937 Ashburn Rd., #110, Ashburn, VA November 2015

NOVEMBER—DAY 10 HOURS, NIGHT 14

- 14 Sat *Apostle Philip*—5:00 p.m. Vespers
 15 Sun^{24•VII•Lk8} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Busenberg**
Begins the Nativity Penitential Season/Christoúgenna/Filipóvka.
 21 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 22 Sun^{25•VII•Lk9} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Doyle**
 28 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 29 Sun^{26•VIII•Lk10} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Ellmore**

DECEMBER—DAY 9 HOURS, NIGHT 15

- 5 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 6 Sun^{27•I•Lk11} *St. Nicolas, Bishop of Myra, Wonderworker*
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Honshul**
 12 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 13 Sun^{28•II•Lk12} **SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY**
32nd Anniversary of the death of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann
 10:00 a.m. Common Confession Rite (*in conjunction with the penitential season*)
 ~10:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Krisa**
 19 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 20 Sun^{29•III•Lk13} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Lynch**

* THE WEEKS OF LUKE BRING US TO THE FEASTS OF LIGHT—TA ΦΩΤΑ *

The Church celebrates and ponders
 the Divine Manifestations [TA ΦΩΤΑ] of our Lord Jesus Christ:
 Life from God (December 25) • Life with God (January 6)
 Encountered in the Sacramental Life of the Church (February 2)

- 24 Thu **CHRISTMAS EVE**—4:00 p.m. Vespers with the Divine Liturgy
 25 Fri **NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**
NOTE: Between Christmas and Theophany—what was long ago called by some the Dodekaïmeron or Twelve Days—there is no Wednesday/Friday abstinence.
 26 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 27 Sun^{30•IV•Lk14} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Matyuf**

JANUARY—DAY 10 HOURS, NIGHT 14

- 2 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 3 Sun^{31•V•Lk15} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Miller**
 5 Wed **THEOPHANY EVE**—4:00 p.m. Vespers with the Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water
 6 Thu **THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

In Greek and Slavonic books it is not uncommon to find the name of this feast in the plural: *Ta phōta*, The Lights, *Ta theophaneia*, The Divine Manifestations, in Slavonic, *Prázdnik svjatých bohojavlénij*, Feast of the Holy Theophanies. What are these theophanies? Well, in addition to the divine manifestation central to this feast, namely of Jesus's divinity in the Jordan, the Fathers had the following in mind: (2) The theophany in the flesh: the Nativity (the Incarnation); (3) The theophany to Israel, represented by the shepherds; (4) The theophany to the gentiles, represented by the magi; (5) The theophany at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. 2,3 and 4 have been drawn to Christmas. The fifth seems to have been eclipsed. And let us not overlook the theophany within the Mystery of Baptism, to those men and women who were baptized on this Feast (of which the Great Blessing of Water is a remnant).

Timothy, my son, I entrust this charge to you, in accordance with the words once spoken over you by the prophets. Through them may you fight a good fight by having faith and a good conscience. Some, by rejecting conscience, have made a shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander [the coppersmith], whom I have handed over to Satan to teach them not to be blasphemous.

1 Timothy 1.18–20

Alexander the coppersmith has done me a lot of harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. *Psalm 27/28.4*
Be on guard against him yourself, because he has been bitterly contesting everything we say. *2 Timothy 4.14,15*

Thanksgiving dinner donations for Loudoun County's Needy—**Pamela Wayland's offer.**

Let's do this.

Pam writes: I can collect contributions for Thanksgiving dinners at church, and set out a box under the coffee table for this purpose. Loudoun Interfaith is looking for the following:
 \$10 grocery store cards (for the meat)
 Instant potatoes
 Gravy
 Stuffing mix
 Canned vegetables
 Cornbread or biscuit mix
 Boxed deserts
 Cranberry sauce
 [Cereal, juice, and canned fruit, canned soups, tuna, mac and cheese, etc., are always welcome.]

Loudoun Interfaith has seen a 13% increase in residents seeking its services this past year, so they are preparing for 2,000 families and need community support, according to a Purcellville Gazette article.

I have to go into the Parks and Recreation office once a week in the morning, and could drop the items off during the week.

Loudoun Interfaith would like to have donations by November 16, and has this to say:

In Loudoun County, one of the most affluent counties in the country,

hunger is closer than anyone can imagine. Many of the people that need food assistance in our community are families—maybe your neighbor or a classmate of one of your children, the elderly on a fixed budget, people who may never be able to work who have mental or physical disabilities, people going through a temporary crisis such as a sickness, the homeless and the working poor. The weakened economy, increased unemployment rate, and high costs of living in such an affluent community have made it difficult for many to afford their basic needs.

There are many people in our community who must make choices everyday between having enough to eat

and buying the medicine they need or gas for their car to even get to work. Others find they must choose between paying utility bills or grocery bills.

In June 2013, 19% of the children attending Loudoun County Public Schools qualified for a free or reduced priced lunch. This is a true indication of the poverty that exists in our community.

Each month, there are thousands of people in Loudoun County relying on Loudoun Interfaith Relief for emergency food assistance to put food on the table for their families.

For struggling families, hunger is a harsh reality they face every day.



No Looking Back.

Just over a year ago—October 1 to be precise—we signed a lease for the Ashburn space we now occupy. Earlier that Summer of 2014 our community decided to explore what was available to us real-estate-wise in Fairfax and Loudoun. What the Glade Room had to offer us was wearing thin. All those years opening those closets, and setting everything up for the divine service. All those years taking everything down when we were done. And stuffing it methodically into those two tiny cubicles. [And let's not forget Pascha.] Carlos Marino and Nick Nobbe. Week after week. Year after year. For too many years. But what was the alternative? Gregory Honshul pitching in was a help. But Team Holy Trinity was running out of steam. So we had to do something. And we did.

When we signed the lease we thought we might be in our new space just after Thanksgiving. Then by Christmas. But as things worked out, we were able to hold our first Divine Liturgy in Ashburn on January 18, 2015. (With glory to God, we can mark that anniversary come January 20 next year.) Now when Nick Nobbe comes into church he has a smile on his face. Carlos too, after his fashion. And Gregory.

We should give some thought to what we

can do with our new 24/7 church space. We can show movies—like *Babette's Feast*, or *Joseph*. We could have Saturday school, or night school. Anyone want to learn to read notes? Or take a romp through one of our two books? *Liturgy* or *Confession*? How about a group of parishioners reading a book and coming together to discuss it? Would anyone be interested in Orthodoxy 101, or the history of the Church? Or looking into the big issues of faith and church polity.

There are lots of possibilities. And we have the resources to realize them. Let's talk.



International Orthodox Christian Charities Relief Efforts Easing Hardship For Syrian Refugees And Greek Hosts Alike

by Gregory Pappas on October 22, 2015 *Greek World News*.

In spite of worsening weather on land and sea, the number of refugees from Syria and other war torn countries landing on the Greek isles this year has surpassed 500,000. Greece remains the busiest entry point for new sea arrivals in the Mediterranean. Overwhelmed Greek island authorities lack the resources to continue feeding refugees as the country struggles to address the needs of its own people affected by the economic crisis now in its sixth year.

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), and its partner, Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece, are responding to the most urgent needs of vulnerable refugees with food assistance and helping ease some of the strain on Greece's refugee relief efforts. IOCC is providing up to 1,000 hot meals and water daily to refugees landing on the small Greek island of Chios, and up to 1,000 meals and water daily for refugees on the island of Samos. All food sourced by IOCC for the refugees is being prepared by local restaurants to help support the local economy on these small islands.

Photo: International Orthodox Christian Charities

The influx of Syrian refugees arriving at Chios island's outdated immigration reception center also have access to shower and sanitation facilities upgraded by IOCC so that they can take care of their personal hygiene in privacy. In addition, IOCC has distributed sleeping mats, sleeping bags, personal hygiene kits, infant supplies, and school kits to refugees and school-aged refugee children arriving at the center.

Even as Greece continues to receive refugees to its shores, IOCC continues to address the needs of Greeks facing their own food insecurity as a result of the prolonged economic crisis. Since 2012, IOCC is supporting the distribution of dry food parcels, prepaid grocery cards, and hot meals at church-run soup kitchens in Athens.

IOCC, an ACT Alliance member, is providing immediate and ongoing humanitarian assistance to families in need who have endured four years of Syria's brutal civil war. More than 3.2 million Syrian people displaced in their own country, or living as refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Armenia, Greece, and Serbia have received assistance from IOCC.

IOCC is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered \$534 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries. IOCC is a member of the ACT Alliance, a

global coalition of more than 140 churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy, and a member of InterAction, the largest alliance of U.S.-based secular and faith-based organizations working to improve the lives of the world's most poor and vulnerable populations.



A Case of Successfully Balancing Religion and Politics in the Holy Land: the Patriarchate of Jerusalem

By Anna Koulouris

This article is published in the Palestine-Israel Journal October 2015 issue, entitled "Religion and the Conflict."

Given the state of world affairs, it's hard to imagine that one of the oldest and most successful examples of a religious institution thriving peacefully amid political turmoil lies in the heart of the world's most notorious conflict, especially when that institution is part and parcel to the very land in question.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest continuous and only local religious institution in the Holy Land. Autocephalous (self-governing) in administration, it does not orient itself toward an outside authority in the way that the Catholic presence in Jerusalem refers to the Vatican, for example. The Orthodox Church's Patriarch, who as a bishop is the direct successor of the Apostle James, is recognized by the local governmental authorities of its

jurisdiction, and represents all Christians of the Holy Land. Even the ecclesiastical courts are recognized by both Jordanian and Israeli law.

Finding Equilibrium in the Political Realm.

The approach of the Church of Jerusalem to remain an apolitical entity, an idea which is rooted in theology but applied at every practical level, has contributed to its own long-lasting survival and growth in the Holy Land throughout ages of invasion, war, and entry into modernity. Herein lie some important lessons for the various religions, governments and social spheres that constitute the region. One of the biggest questions facing all of them is to what extent and how exactly religion fits at once with politics into the Holy Land, which by definition invites both a religious and political atmosphere.

What makes the case of the Patriarchate such an intriguing one for any person or entity seeking to strike the right balance between religion and politics, free speech and respect of beliefs, is that it is based in a city that is primarily important because of its significance to religious groups yet politically crucial to most of the world. If the delicate dance between religion and politics can work here, in this diverse, tense place where religion is the *raison d'être*, it can work anywhere.

After the State of Israel, the Patriarchate is the nation's largest landholder, even owning the land upon which the Knesset building stands today. Many local Palestinian Christians speak or are familiar with the Greek language, which is a remnant of Palestine's Byzantine past, and almost every clergyman speaks Arabic.

While, over time, other groups came to stake their claims on the Holy Land, the influence of the Greek Orthodox (or more accurately, the Rum Orthodox, referring to the Christianized and Hellenized Roman Empire), did not diminish. Even amid destruction and loss of life, including the Persian invasion, centuries of Arab-Muslim rule, and the brutal Crusader period, among others, the Church endured and maintained a high status by the governing authorities of the time.

For example, the acknowledgment of the Patriarchate's authority through its classification as a "millet" (a separate legal court for a confessional community) by the Ottomans, allowed it to continue to actually own all its public properties, maintaining the Patriarch as the titleholder and administrator of all lands registered in his name as well as under the name of the Orthodox community. This explains the Patriarchate's control of the Orthodox communities' public properties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and also its ability to register lands as waqf to this day. The Status Quo law, implemented during Ottoman times is still followed, continuing to guarantee the rightful authority of the Greek Orthodox Church over most of the Christian holy places, as well as protecting other rights

involving property ownership and its legal status

Historical Ties with Muslim-Majority Nations.

Until today, the Patriarchate actually gives legitimacy to the historical claims that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian Authority have over the Muslim holy places—claims which stem from the Covenant of Omar. This covenant was the agreement made between Patriarch Sophronios and Caliph Omar ibn al Khattab during the Muslim invasion of Jerusalem in 637 A.D. Their agreement has been the foundation upon which legal agreements between the Patriarchate and the governments of its jurisdictional authority have been made since.

The legal jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem includes lands today that are within the borders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Gulf State of Qatar; all majority Muslim regions. While bordering countries are also Muslim majority and are unequivocally experiencing Christian and other minority persecution, the Patriarchate enjoys a great respect from the local and regional civil authorities, and indeed maintains a very special relationship with the Islamic world, including Arab, Ottoman and other Muslim cultures.

Although Qatar and the Arabian Gulf share a history with Christianity (histories of local saints and ancient Christian mosaics are until today being uncovered in their desert regions) it wasn't until 1997 that Archimandrite Theophilos (now Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem) had traveled to Qatar in order to fulfill the pastoral needs of the country's Christian expatriates. Due to his diplomatic relations with the former emir Sheikh Hamad ibn Al Thani, and the help of the former American ambassador to Qatar, an agreement was made for a plot of land upon which the construction of a church building was permitted. Saint Isaac and Saint George's Church is the first modern-day Church in Qatar, and one of the only in the entire Gulf region. According to Archbishop Makarios, who has been leading the Christian flock in Qatar for two decades, it is an example of how to be united as Christians and have symbiosis between Christians and Muslims in that part of the world. He performs Divine Liturgy in Arabic, Greek, Serbian, Russian and English for a cultural mosaic of believers.

As a result of the pastoral concern of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and its respectful, ever-strengthening relationship with the authorities of Qatar, five other Christian denominations were also given the approval to build houses of worship. The area of Abu Hamour, where the designated land for church buildings is located, has transformed from an empty stretch of desert into a bustling, well-known area of Doha that serves as a beacon of tolerance and respect, and has helped catapult Qatar into a league of its own in the Islamic world.

These are a few examples of success stories for the Church in terms of religion finding its equilibrium with the political realm and with other religions, including religions that do not make a distinction between religious and civil law. Interestingly, while the Church maintains a role that is purely spiritual in its mission, it is precisely the significance of the millennia-old spiritual establishment that makes it a political heavyweight in Jerusalem.

Fearing the “Other” is Regressive and Fruitless.

An examination of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem could also provide some important answers for societies who fear the “other,” proving that banning of religious symbols in France, outlawing minarets in Switzerland, executing Muslims who convert to Christianity in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic nations, are all regressive and fruitless approaches.

According to the Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, there are two reasons why the Patriarchate has thrived here through the ages. The first, and theological answer, he says, is based on the words of Jesus Christ, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it,” (Matthew 16.18).

The second, according to his own experience as a member of the monastic order of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, is the fact that the Patriarchate has never deviated from its purely spiritual mission of guarding the holy places as places of active worship, open to all people regardless of race or creed. In one of the Holy Land’s most powerful examples, Jews, Muslims and people from various other religions and ethnic backgrounds can be found at any given time visiting the Church of Holy Sepulcher.

This example can be applied to the world’s comparable disputes about common space: there is room for everyone. It is the sanctity of the holy places over which Orthodox Christians have claims because it is their sanctity that gives them value. More important than asserting physical claims of exclusivity is knowledge of one’s own identity, and consequently one’s own values. Upon achieving this, keeping out “the other” is a waste of time.

In a world so often at war over territory, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem offers an enlightened view. For example, one persistent subject of concern regarding the conflict here is the political status of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city that’s most important attribute is being a place of sacredness to millions of people who align with one of the Abrahamic faiths. By definition that means that one particular piece of land often carries significant meaning for more than one religion. It is for this reason that the Church values people’s claims to the sacredness of the holy places, as opposed to exclusive land claims. According to the Church, the holiness of a particular place is not at all dependent

upon our presence there, so anyone should be allowed to share in its sanctity.

But not every individual in a diverse city like Jerusalem respects the sacred sites of other religions, or their respective followers. The Patriarchate has experienced numerous and increasing incidents of violence against their Brotherhood or vandalism of holy shrines.

Its official position points again to the words of Jesus Christ, expressed by Saint John the Evangelist, that God is love, and “anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and anyone who is a murderer has no eternal life abiding in him,” (1 John 3.15). In terms of taking legal or punitive action against perpetrators, the Church leaves the full responsibility to police and other public safety officials.

Cultural Evolution of Mankind Founded on Theocracy.

In a time when blasphemous content can spark acts of vengeance, such as the violent January 2015 incident in Paris where writers at the Charlie Hebdo magazine were shot in retaliation for an offensive expression of the prophet Muhammad, the Church offers a powerful example from a religious institution. It recognizes its spiritual role exclusively, consciously declines political involvement of any kind (not including humanitarian aid), and condemns all forms of violence. This is what helped the institution and the Christian presence in the Holy Land maintain itself through the ages. Today this approach is largely responsible for the Patriarchate’s remarkable good relations with all the governing authorities of its jurisdiction, which have historically been at war with each other.

While separating religion and politics is at the heart of the Patriarchate’s mission, one particular piece of advice from Patriarch Theophilos is that no metaphoric wall should be erected when separating “church” (*i.e.*, religion) and state. He urges all leaders of nations not to disregard the role of religion in any national context or framework because of the fact that religion has determined, shaped and formed cultural identity over the course of human history. While the idea of separating church and state seems a very logical one, and has been a successful standard for most modern-day democracies, implementing such separation is not a “black or white” process.

In the words of Patriarch Theophilos, it is important to understand that the cultural evolution and development of mankind has its fountain in theocracy. The breakthrough person—the one who actually challenged this theocratic history and human inclination—is Jesus Christ, who famously said to those who provoked him on the subject, render unto Caesar what is due to Caesar, and to God what is due unto God. That idea is what the Patriarchate of Jerusalem credits itself as doing. Without rejecting or renouncing religion, keeping at the forefront of our collective consciousness the idea of respecting the other seems

to be the key to thriving in a place like the Holy Land and in conflict. Patriarch Theophilos admits that every real stumbling block of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation in the region has been religious fundamentalism.

Education Combats Fundamentalism and Develops Respect.

One of the most effective ways to combat fundamentalist ideology and to manifest mutual respect is through education. The Patriarchal schools, which are the oldest schools in the Holy Land and were the only schools in the Ottoman Empire, are extremely valuable in surviving and even surmounting the challenges facing the region. Their number-one objective is to provide young people with knowledge of their identity. More than 8,500 Muslim and Christian students are enrolled, and 800 employed (with a special emphasis on providing dignified employment for women in traditional society) in the 18 schools throughout the Patriarchate's jurisdiction. Classes focus on general education, not including religion, due to the fact that the majority of students are Muslim. Currently, the Patriarchal schools rank second and third place among all schools in Jordan. The hope is that through comprehensive education, a generation of well-informed, critically thinking, confident individuals who have learned to grow together, will be prepared for the world that awaits them.

While globalized society, especially in the Middle East, continues to face dilemmas that are being articulated in the form of a choice between secular or religious rule, it's important to remember that there need not be a choice at all. In one of the most conflicted and diverse regions of the world, a shining example of how to maneuver between religion and politics, seems to lie in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. As a longtime survivor of conflict and promoter of peace, its lesson is to make respect for the other a priority and keep the focus on one's own mission.



A baptism in Russia's Far East.

A Church Of Empire—Why the Russian Church Chose to Bless Empire.

By Sergei Chapnin, published in *First Things*, November 2015

I joined the Russian Church [*meaning he was baptized*] late in 1989, becoming actively involved in its life soon thereafter. This was two years before the fall of the Soviet Union, and times were hard—inflation, recession, and empty shelves. Our parish community in Klin, some fifty miles outside Moscow, was given the ruins of an old church at the town center. We raked rubble from this deserted building, the first in the Moscow Region to be returned to the Church. It seemed to us a symbol of the new era.

This was the time of the so-called “Church Revival” in Russia—part of the broader cultural transition that was epitomized by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian state underwent an identity crisis in the 1990s, with a choice either to democratize or to become a new empire. Its initial decision, in the early Yeltsin years, was in favor of democracy. A similar trend characterized reforms in the Russian Church. Once a Soviet-controlled system, now church life became open to new movements and lay involvement. By the decade's close, however, these changes in Church and state were proving ephemeral. Today, the Russian Church Revival is complete—and the Church that has been revived is not the one we intended when we rebuilt the ruined church in Klin. In the young parish community I joined in Klin, it was clear that the spiritual renewal of Russia would require *de-Sovietization*. This meant overcoming a complacent mentality that settled for the status quo and did not value individual initiative. We were in need of metanoia: penitence and conversion. This is a difficult task for an individual, more so for a culture. But we were high school and university students, and we had hope.

Beyond our parish, too, the Church Revival was taking anti-Soviet forms, corresponding to the democratic character of the early post-Soviet state. Lay movements arose, among them the Union of Orthodox Fellowships, which brought together grassroots Christian initiatives from all over Russia in the fields of mission, charity, and youth work. In the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, dioceses became autonomous churches within the Moscow patriarchate. New martyrs and confessors, the victims of Soviet persecution, were glorified. This was an important instance of the new openness, for the mere mention of these martyrs and confessors had entailed serious risk a few years before.

Under Soviet rule, priests had been able to celebrate traditional liturgical services—and nothing more. A sermon that irritated local communist authorities could lead to the transfer of the priest to a distant village. Having tea with a priest after Sunday service was a dangerous

proposition. Feasts and festivals were illegal. Komsomol (Young Communist League) activists would take the names of participants in Paschal processions and report the participants to their bosses. Komsomol controlled baptisms, weddings, and funeral services.

But in the early 1990s, all of these restrictions were lifted. In many places, parish life was revitalized, and parishes became dynamically developing communities. It was a period of optimism and democratic experimentation.

This early phase of the Church Revival may be called “Church Revival 1.0.” In these years, the Church was esteemed, protected, and accorded public significance as an anti-Soviet force. Most Russian citizens were attracted by what the Church had preserved: a culture that was Russian and traditional, but non-Soviet. This was true even for those who had no interest in church doctrines or worship. They wanted to take part in this culture, without quite knowing how. Their instinct, arising from decades of Soviet conformism, was to trust and respect the Orthodox clergy. In this way, supporting Church Revival 1.0 became an important cultural dimension of de-Sovietization, even while most of its advocates understood little about the Church they proposed reviving.

During Church Revival 1.0, relations with the government were complex. No legal mechanisms existed for cooperation between Church and state. There were no settled procedures for transferring church property to ecclesiastical control, and church educational endeavors were in an unofficial limbo. The government provided money to the Church only on an *ad hoc* basis. The process of establishing the needed mechanisms was slow and contested. Most state authorities in the 1990s were the same people who had held power during the Soviet era. They were in important ways still pro-Soviet, though in deference to public sentiment, they accommodated the Church. They allowed the Church to establish new seminaries, reopen monasteries, ordain young candidates to the priesthood, develop publishing and media activities free of censorship, and organize pilgrimages within Russia and to the Holy Land, Egypt, and Europe.

The early trends were auspicious. But the process of reform proved slow, incomplete—and reversible. Already by the mid-1990s, ominous signs were coming from the church hierarchy. During the Soviet era, the church leadership had mostly been loyal to the state, incorporated into the Soviet establishment. Bishops participated in public ceremonies and enjoyed the same special access to medical treatment and other perquisites as state and Communist Party leaders. One of the few who had stood aloof was Metropolitan Alexis Ridiger. In 1990 he became Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, the first patriarch since the revolution to be chosen without government pressure. Alexy had been born in independent Estonia

and remembered its brutal occupation by the Soviets. The personal distance he maintained from the Soviet regime was largely responsible for what independence, or apparent independence, the Orthodox hierarchy maintained in the 1990s.

Meanwhile, no bishop in the Russian Church appreciated the importance of lay movements to Church Revival 1.0. The post-Soviet Church suffered from a shortage of clergy. Moscow in 1989 was a city of ten million, served by only one hundred priests. The revitalization of parish life thus required the organized efforts of laypeople. The episcopate, however, resisted any vision that accorded a greater role to the laity, and feared the laypeople who sought to articulate such a vision. Perhaps the bishops, still Soviets at heart, regarded the lay movements as dangerously democratic, a threat to top-down control of church institutions.

Nonetheless, some lay movements emerged. In October 1990, for instance, the Brotherhood of the All-Merciful Savior received official state recognition. This fellowship united several Moscow-based parishes, their dozen priests, and hundreds of laypeople. Its projects included youth summer camps, gymnasiums, the first pro-life center in Russia, an orphanage, a center for traditional Christian culture, and a publishing house. Its greatest achievement was the catechetical courses that later became St. Tikhon’s Orthodox University, today the largest theological school in the former Soviet space.

But in the mid-1990s, the bishops moved to restrict the new lay organizations, subordinating them to parish rectors. Many fellowships closed down. In a move sadly typical of ideologues, searches for enemies began. The first group to be persecuted was the community of Fr. George Kochetkov, which focused on parish building and catechesis. Fr. Kochetkov’s critics accused his movement of being “anti-church.” The community escaped condemnation by church authorities. But this incident inaugurated the open division of the Church into “liberal” and “conservative” camps.

During the Soviet era, the persecuted Church had valued unity above all things. Church leaders maintained informal, often friendly, contacts with religious dissidents. By the mid-1990s, the situation changed. Conflict between liberals and conservatives became a defining feature of church life.

In the Communist Party, mainstream ideas were known as the “general line.” By demanding conformity with the general line, the Soviets suppressed dissent and maintained unity. Now, as the Church became a respected part of post-Soviet culture, many members turned their attention to managing and manipulating her influence. If the Church intended to set the spiritual and ideological agenda for the nation, these members thought, then she

could not do without a general line. The “conservatives” were those who took it upon themselves to formulate this general line and determine who was in accord with it and who was not.

Thus the two camps solidified. The conservatives’ task, as they saw it, was to reestablish the social and political power of the Church. In liturgy and catechesis, they defended received practices. The “liberals,” by contrast, were those like Fr. Kochetkov, concerned with improving catechesis and promoting the role of liturgy in community life. To a degree that would have been unthinkable during the Soviet era, the two camps became mutually hostile. Church members who disagreed on theological or practical issues were now calling each other “enemies of the Church.” Designating themselves “defenders of the faith,” the conservatives ventured to criticize not only the laity and lower clergy, but the bishops themselves, charging them with “departures from Orthodoxy” and even, on occasion, heresy. Church Revival 1.0 fizzled.

After 2000, almost imperceptibly at first, but then more and more overtly, the Russian state abandoned the democratic model for an imperial one. It did so out of a desire to play a larger role in international politics and to overcome, in the eyes of Russians, the humiliation it had suffered with the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the state became imperial, so did the Church. As a result, ideas of what it meant to advance the Church changed radically.

This phase, which we may call “Church Revival 2.0,” continues to this day. Pastoral care has been deemphasized in favor of attention to what the Church can do in partnership with the state. The Church now focuses on the construction and restoration of property, and on the acquisition of state funds for this purpose. In the early 2000s, the Church lobbied successfully for a law returning church property that had been confiscated by the Soviet state. More and more money has been allocated for restoring old properties and constructing new churches and diocesan offices. In 2015, that allocation was about one billion rubles, enough to merit its own line in the state budget. Another ambitious plan has been to build two hundred new churches in Moscow, with the support of the government in Moscow. Meanwhile, the bureaucratization of the Church has gained momentum, with the establishment of new church agencies and an increase in paperwork and in the numbers of officials and staff. Undertaking to shape Russian national identity, the Church promotes patriotism and traditional values in coordination with government propaganda.

The Church has taken on a complex ideological significance over the last decade, not least because of the rise of the concept of *Russkiy Mir*, or “Russian World.” This way of speaking presumes a fraternal coexistence of the Slavic peoples—Russian, Ukrainian, Belarussian—in a

single “Orthodox Civilization.” It is a powerful archetype. It is an image of unity that appeals to Russians, because it gives them a sense of a larger destiny and supports the imperial vision that increasingly characterizes Russian politics. The currency of “Russian World” within the Church today indicates that Orthodoxy is becoming a political religion.

That the Church has come to mirror the state in its rhetoric and animating vision is hardly surprising. The imperial state needs religion to provide moral legitimacy for its rule. State leaders have concluded that the democratic legitimacy arising from elections is insufficient. This is partly because it is difficult to view recent elections as truly democratic, and partly because Russia does not have a civic tradition that regards the will of the people as a convincing mandate.

In these cultural circumstances, people in high places in both the government and Church see that, with an imperial outlook of her own, Orthodoxy might be able to fill the vacuum left by the defunct Communist Party in the system of post-Soviet administration. This potential has been clear even to those functionaries who keep their distance from the Church. The need for a political religion was formulated by state authorities around 2010—something that coincided with the election of Kirill, a Russian World enthusiast, to the Patriarchal See of Moscow.

It is in one sense natural that church leaders such as Kirill would wish to promote a Russian World that transcends the political boundaries of present-day Russia. Orthodox believers are united theologically even if they live in different countries, and many are formally united under the authority of the Patriarch of Moscow. Church leaders are certainly right to further this unity, expanding and deepening our friendship in Christ across geographical borders.

But as critics point out, speaking of a Russian World serves the state more than it serves the Church. It mobilizes religion, especially the esteem of the Slavic peoples for the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, for political purposes. Its primary effect will surely be not church unity, but rather the strengthening of Russian influence in Ukraine and Belarus.

In this 2.0 phase, the Church is circling back to Sovietism, promoting conformity and dreaming of imperial expansion. In one sense, these sympathies should be understood pragmatically, as a means of currying favor with state authorities. Nonetheless, there are genuine pro-Soviet sentiments within the Russian Church. Their presence is easily explained.

In its 1.0 phase, Church Revival failed to address its top priority: “churching” those who were attracted to Orthodoxy, which meant catechizing Russians and incorporating them into the Church. The mass baptisms of the 1990s

left the newly baptized unprepared for life in the Church. The Church had welcomed the uncatechized, counting on a “natural” churching to take place later, as if Christian identity would come automatically. Bishop Panteleimon of Smolensk and Vyazma describes the result:

“At the beginning of the 1990s, we saw a surge of people coming to the Church. . . . Not just coming, but swarming into it. Alas, not many stayed inside. The period of active attention to the life of the Church and so-called ‘churching’ ended very quickly. . . . In my estimation, people who go to church every Sunday amount to one percent of the country’s population, or even less.”

In most cases, the newly baptized Soviet people had no interest in *metánoia*, no desire to change. Of course, change did arrive. It was the new post-Soviet culture (which only too soon became neo-Soviet) that changed the Church, rather than the other way around. The result is a Sovietized Christianity.

Over the last generation, the appeal of the Church to individuals and society has come down to tradition—the need to preserve it, the danger of neglecting it. These are legitimate concerns. But the newly baptized ex-Soviets of the last two decades have a rigid and impoverished understanding of “tradition,” which they understand as a set of rules and regulations: when to pray and what set of prayers to read, what not to eat and what else not to do during the Great Fast, what to wear to church, and so on. For them, tradition is not a living tradition, and an understanding of tradition as a common and personal experience of life in Christ comes under suspicion as too “liberal.”

Beyond liturgy and piety, other traditions were revived: respect for the family, opposition to abortion, the banning of homosexual practice and propaganda. These measures are seen as asserting traditional Russian mores in opposition to the decadence of the West. They seem to add up to a healthy Christian conservatism. But this is rhetoric, not living tradition. The actual statistics in Russia are disastrous: 640,000 divorces to 1.2 million marriages in 2010; sixty-three abortions per hundred live births in 2011. The supposed revival of Russian morality is propaganda, not a genuine effort of social renewal. It is a way of elevating Russia over the allegedly more corrupt cultures of Western Europe and North America—a way of talking once again about East *versus* West, us *versus* them. The West is constructed as not just a political and economic enemy, but a spiritual one as well. This sort of thinking is the general line.

In today’s Russia, pre-revolution traditions are difficult to recover. Too much time has passed since 1917. Too many generations have been born and died, too many institutions and repositories of tradition have been eradicated. Thus, to invoke the Russian Church’s traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries requires us to

engage in historical reconstruction rather than to nurture beliefs and practices that are ongoing. The pre-revolution Christian traditions are dead, and they will not be revived.

In the current patrimony of Russia—whether cultural, historical, social, philosophical, or religious—there is only one tradition that is being passed on to the next generation. It is the Soviet tradition. Hence the appeal of everything Soviet, not just for the elderly but for the young. The return of this tradition in recent years, perhaps best described as neo-Soviet, is the best proof that little else is left alive in Russia.

And so the Church Revival, which in its 1.0 phase sought to revive pre-revolution Christianity, has become Church Revival 2.0, a post-Soviet civil religion providing ideological support for the Russian state. The Russian Church has become a Church of Empire, with ecclesiastical practices and institutions shaped accordingly. We seem to be at the dawn of a new epoch in Russian Orthodox history, one that in all likelihood will be known as “neo-imperial.”

Sergei Chapnin is a Russian journalist, editor, and publisher.



Baptizing soldiers in a Russian lake.

Moscow, November 5, Interfax—Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia urges sober evaluation of the Soviet period in the Russian history.

“There would not be modern Russia, if not for the heroism of the preceding generations, who in the 20s and the 30s not only turned up the soil, though it is also important, but founded industry, science and defense power of the country,” Patriarch Kirill said on Wednesday at Moscow Manege at the opening of the 14th forum-exhibition Orthodox Russia. My History. The 20th century. 1914–1945. From great perturbations to the Great Victory.

According to him, we should not doubt successes of certain state leaders, who stood at the commences of such revival, modernization of the country, even if these leaders committed crimes.

“Where there was will, strength, intellect, political decisiveness, we call it doubtless success as in case with the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, and where there was blood, injustice, and sufferings, we say that it is unacceptable for us, people of the 21st century,” the primate said.

“We do not identify ourselves with these bloody pages, we give these historical personages to God’s judgment, but these negative things should not give right to exclude all positive things that were done, at the same time, all positive things done by certain people should not exclude critical attitude to crimes committed by them,” he said.

The patriarch expressed hope that current exhibition would “help realize the beauty of our people’s heroism in the 20s, 30s and 40s, to see the hard pages and understand: in order to love our Motherland, we should not exclude any historical period from the historical memory, but we should take it with common sense and clear moral perception and then truth will be separated from lies, and the good from the evil.”

**A Post Script by Alexei Bayer
from his November 8 piece in the *Kyiv Post*
entitled, “Is God Laughing at Russia.”**

Take last week’s speech by Kirill, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus’ and the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, in which he warned against casting doubt on Stalin’s accomplishments, especially praising his government’s achievements during the 1920s and the 1930s. It would have been delightfully ironic if it weren’t so utterly despicable. Stalin was up to his neck in the blood of clerics and ordinary believers of all creeds, confessions and denominations. Moreover, Stalin’s persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church was especially murderous starting in the late 1920s. It went on throughout the 1930s, ending only in June 1941, when Stalin made a cynical appeal to the religious feelings of the Russian people to help defend him from Hitler’s tanks.

In fact, while it has become customary to date Stalin’s Terror from the early 1930s, it actually started with the anti-religious campaign in 1928, right around the dictator’s 50th birthday. Of course, 1937 saw the peak of bloodletting, when some 85,000 priests were executed, but the relentless campaign against religion went on throughout the period the Moscow Patriarch decided to glorify. More than 90 percent of all Orthodox priests—whose ranks had already been decimated during the revolution and the Civil War—had been killed or sent to the Gulag by the start of the Great Patriotic War. Less than two percent of Russian Orthodox Churches remained open by then, the rest having been blown up or turned into warehouses. Some of the

most valuable artistic and historic monuments in Russia had been barbarically destroyed.

Patriarch Kirill rising to Stalin’s defense is not the sickest joke yet. There have been proposals, advanced for example by writer and political activist Alexander Prokhanov, to canonize Stalin. Google images under the heading “Saint Stalin” and you’ll come up with a bunch of his icons, on which Stalin is depicted in a full generalissimo regalia, wearing his Order of Lenin trinkets and Hero of the Soviet Union stars.

Alexei Bayer, a New York-based economist and writer, is the author of two detective novels set in Moscow in the early 1960s, *Latchkey Murders* and *Murder at the Dacha*.

A Word of Thanks from North Carolina

Last month we received a thank you note from a priest in North Carolina. Marsha Morrow went there during her August vacation and brought with her a small gift of money and a copy of our Liturgy Book. The note is written in a beautiful hand, European 1’s and 7’s, on a note card featuring dark blue griffins flanking an urn from which vines grow. Lovely. He writes: “Christ is in our midst! Dear Father Paul, belated thanks from St. George’s in Edenton, NC, for the generous gift from Holy Trinity Church. It is encouraging to us to know that you think of us, pray for us, & support us. In Christ, Fr. Benedict Churchill.

And Father Paul is thinking, Churchill, Churchill.... Where did I hear that name before? So he looks up an old email from January 2013. Father Churchill, it turns out, was running St. Vladimir Seminary Press at the time. Father Paul had sent the new Liturgy Book in digital form—“unsolicited,” as they say—to see if SVS Press would be interested in publishing it.

Father Churchill took a look and saw it as a “music book,” a genre SVS Press was not interested in, and sent it back. Father Paul fully expected the rejection, but found Father Churchill’s take on the book curious. The book has music. But it is not a music book. (It’s sort of like talking with Sheldon Cooper.)

Father Meyendorff thought it was “a very useful book.” And Father Paul has, somewhere in his papers, an angry hand-written letter from Father Meyendorff, rebuking him for “doing his own thing” (self-publishing it) and not giving it to SVS Press to publish. Father Paul was a tad surprised. So he sent the new edition to the Press—fully expecting a rejection—only so that he would not be tormented by Father Meyendorff’s specter for not doing so.

But this business is illustrative of a problem we deal with. One gives a parish money. It says thank you. Spends it. And it is gone. But our Liturgy Book, on the other hand, offers a start-up parish the wherewithal to become the real thing—with food that lasts—but perception is wanting. One doesn’t know what one doesn’t know. Even a PhD.