

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Parish Newsletter

R E S T O N

New Parish Center: 20937 Ashburn Rd., #110, Ashburn, VA December 2019

THE WEEKS OF LUKE BRING US TO THE FEASTS OF LIGHT—ΤΑ ΦΩΤΑ

DECEMBER—DAY 10 HOURS, NIGHT 14

- 1 Sun^{24•VII•Lk11} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Zieg**
- 6 Fri ↓ *St. Nicolas, Bishop of Myra, Wonderworker*
- 7 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
- 8 Sun^{25•VIII•Lk12} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Adams**
- 13 Fri *36th Anniversary of the death of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (+1983)*
- 14 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
- 15 Sun^{26•I•Lk13} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Belinsky**
- 21 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers

BECAUSE WE ALL FALL SHORT IN MANY WAYS, as St. James says in his epistle (3.2), it seems fitting for a parish to welcome the Feasts of Light with evangelical spirit, driving home to ourselves—despite any evidence to the contrary—that we are in fact disciples of the Lord Jesus who breaks in on our world—which comes into being through him—like the sun with warm healing rays; that we are a people responsible, resourceful, and resilient... and accountable. So plan on taking part in the **Common Confession Rite on the 22nd**. Come on time. Come in the right frame of mind. As the Apostle says, "Let us encourage one another" with our presence. Remember, children are welcome, but none under 10.

- 22 Sun^{27•II•Lk14} 10:00 a.m. **Common Confession Rite** (in conjunction with the penitential season and the dawn of the Feasts of Light)
~10:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Busenberg**

ΤΑ ΦΩΤΑ * THE FEASTS OF LIGHT * 26 DECEMBER, 6 JANUARY, 2 FEBRUARY

- 24 Tue 4:00 p.m. Vespers with the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil
- 25 Wed **NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (LUKE 2.1+)**
- 28 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
- 29 Sun^{28•III•Lk15} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Bobrovsky**

JANUARY—DAY 11 HOURS, NIGHT 13

- 4 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers and Great Blessing of Water
- 5 Sun^{29•IV•Lk16} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Ellmore**
- 6 Mon ↑ **THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (MARK 1.9+)**

9 November 2019

QUO VADIS, RUE DARU?

by Alexandra de Moffarts

[In France the Russian Émigré Church that gave us Fathers Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff has—sadly—come a cropper.—Ed.]

For the background to the present essay—Orthodoxy in Dialogue—see the articles listed under Archdiocese

of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe (AROCWE) in our Archives, as well as Antoine Arjakovsky's A Way Out of the Orthodox Church's Present Crisis and Victor Alexandrov's The Choice Facing the Archdiocese of Russian Churches in Western Europe.

On November 2 and 3, the Russian

A parish priest should spare no effort urging his parishioners to cleanse their conscience through the Mystery of Holy Repentance frequently by confessing their sins at least in the four holy fasts during the course of the year....

—Metropolitan Peter Movila, *Evchologion* (Kiev, 1646 A.D.), pg. 339

The penitential seasons of the Church ... are the proper times and the proper seasons for sacramental Penance....

—Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent* (SVS Press, 1974), pg. 133

news and many church media showed what they have called the reunification ceremony of the Archdiocese of Russian Churches in Western Europe with the Patriarchate of Moscow. Patriarch Kirill has called it "irreversible" and "the closing of a long parenthesis." Much splendor and pomp were displayed, speeches made, and honors given. Archbishop John (Renneteau) of Dubna (formerly of Charioupolis) spoke of "joy" and "return." For some, it seemed a triumph; for others, humiliating. I won't make a secret of the fact that I belong to the latter group.

A chapter seems to be over, the chapter of the politically independent, poor but free, multi-ethnic, conciliarly organized Archdiocese of rue Daru. The path which lead our former archbishop and those who followed him to this "return" is strewn with dissimulation, confusion, manipulation, fear, and mediocrity. I will try to outline it here. It will be from a subjective angle, but I shall try to be as impartial as possible where the facts are concerned.

Decision of the Synod in Constantinople and What Followed

On November 27, 2018 the Synod in Constantinople suddenly announced that they had decided to reorganise the status of the Archdiocese by revoking the charter (tomos) by which a large autonomy was given, and ordered that its parishes merge with the local Greek metropolises.

The Archdiocesan Council—an

organ composed of six clerics and six laypersons, elected by an Assembly of clergy and laity from the entire Archdiocese and headed by the Archbishop—immediately published a communiqué in which they explained that this decision was not valid till it has not been approved by the Church to which it was given. The Council called for an Extraordinary Assembly for the end of February to discuss and vote on the implementation of Constantinople’s decision. A committee was organized to negotiate with the Ecumenical Patriarchate or look for other possible solutions in order to allow the Archdiocese to continue to exist, possibly under a different jurisdiction.

Very briefly afterwards, in December 2018, a pastoral assembly (a consultative organ, not a decision-making body) was convoked in order to exchange views on the following options: trying to persuade the Synod to reconsider the situation in the light of pastoral factors; declaring the independence of the Archdiocese (as it happened in 1965 in quite similar circumstances); or joining another Church—Moscow, ROCOR, and Bucharest were mentioned as having shown interest. Moscow did not seem to have any majority support then. Those who argued for Moscow were the same ones who had been arguing for it for the past 15 years.

However, unknown by most, on December 7 Archbishop John wrote a letter to Patriarch Kirill to ask what would be the conditions for a reunion with the Moscow Patriarchate. This letter was leaked on the internet on the same day that it was received in Moscow, but was disavowed by the Moscow Patriarchate and Archbishop John at that time.

From the point of view of Moscow, it was highly necessary to conceal the negotiations with Archbishop John, as the Moscow Patriarchate had constantly and vigorously tried to destabilise the Archdiocese since the 1920s. The election of Archimandrite John (Renneteau) as archbishop represented a unique opportunity for the Moscow Patriarchate, since he had been serving for 40 years in another diocese (in Switzerland) and had no real knowledge of the outrages committed by Moscow against the free Russian communities of Western Europe.

The more time passed after the December 2018 pastoral assembly, the more the other possibilities were shut down, or the persons in favor of them became discouraged, and pursuing them became more and more difficult, with an Archbishop so convinced of only one option: Moscow.

The Archbishop, together with some members of the council, met with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate behind the backs of the appointed committee. More and more was said in favor of this option and in opposition to the others. The narrative of “no other realistic opportunity,” together with the logic of “fear of division” and desire for immediate “safety and peace,” convinced

more and more people of the Moscow option.

For Bucharest, Metropolitan Joseph of Western and Southern Europe was willing to accept the Archdiocese, but his condition was that Archbishop John must request a canonical release from Constantinople.

Which the Archbishop never did, as no such release was needed for Moscow.

And independence, supported by some, seemed very dangerous, with only one bishop who so very much feared the “vacuum.”

Much was said, by very different people, about the dangers of the Moscow option. People who had experienced the expansionist politics and the anti-European, anti-conciliar, and authoritarian ways of the Russian Church wrote letters, signed petitions, and warned the Archbishop. [See, for instance, the anonymous *Do Not Trust the Moscow Patriarchate: A Russian Priest’s Testimony from Russia.*] They argued that the Archdiocese had become, during these last 90 years, much more than a Russian émigré church. It had a local vocation. It was multi-ethnic and had a way of functioning based on the 1917–18 Council of Moscow, which the Church of Moscow herself was not following. They reminded the Archbishop of the strong link between the Russian Church and the authoritarian Russian state.

But the Archbishop would not listen. He only said that he would negotiate such conditions with the Moscow Patriarchate so that our freedom would not be touched. His followers argued that churches have the same defects everywhere nowadays. They shut down every objection by stating repeatedly “there is no other way to stay alive und united” and “it is the natural way for the Russian Archdiocese to go back to the Russian Church.”

Two Assemblies

At the Extraordinary Assembly in February 2019, 93% of the participants voted to reject the dismantling of the Archdiocese. In spite of pressure to force the Assembly to have an election for the choice of a future jurisdiction, i.e. for Moscow, no specific choice was then made, as negotiations were still taking place. Archbishop John ended the Assembly with an emotional speech stating that our situation was now uncanonical and, if he was sanctioned, he would go with Moscow. He invited those who wanted to “save the Archdiocese” to follow him.

Nevertheless, perhaps because the Archdiocese is organized as a free legal entity under French law, or for other reasons, Constantinople had to accept this decision for the time being. The Ecumenical Patriarchate did not sanction Archbishop John. Soon afterwards, the possibility of a thaw arose. A delegation of the Archdiocesan Council was sent to Constantinople to deliver the General Assembly’s official answer to the synodical decision of November 2018. This delegation reopened the dialogue with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Some hope began to



Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Archbishop John Rennebeau

grow again that the Synod of Constantinople might be open to negotiating a new status for the former Exarchate.

In summer, a reexamination of the question was decided, and Patriarch Bartholomew met with Archbishop John. We don't really know what was said during this meeting, but shortly afterwards Constantinople announced that their decision of November 2018 remained unchanged. Archbishop John was provided with a canonical release in order to join the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Archbishop refused publicly to accept this canonical release, saying that he had not asked for it, although his own letters requesting to join the Moscow Patriarchate were circulating on the internet.

An Assembly was held one week later, on September 7, 2019. Archbishop John assured the delegates that, having refused to consider the canonical release which he claimed not to have requested, he was still a canonical bishop of Constantinople, and therefore a legitimate chairman of the church assembly. This Assembly was marked by several irregularities, but some free expression of opinion was allowed. Many arguments were given in favor of and against joining Moscow, but without the possibility

of discussion. A formal voting procedure—for yes or no on the proposed reunification with Moscow, which had not been officially on the agenda—was imposed on the participants.

In order to make a valid decision, the statutes of the Archdiocese require a 2/3 majority. Only 58% was reached. However, Archbishop John declared that he would nevertheless join Moscow himself in order to avoid a canonical void. He then affirmed that he had been canonically released by Constantinople. As many protested against such a flagrant inconsistency and non-compliance with the vote, a definitive decision was postponed.

The Split

One week after the Assembly, the Archbishop announced that he had—in spite of the results of the vote—made the “pastoral decision” to transfer the Archdiocese to Moscow. He himself was received the same day within the Moscow Patriarchate and elected as Archbishop of Dubna.

However, as the Archdiocese is recognized as a Religious Legal Entity under French law, the breaking of laws and rules cannot be called pastoral care without consequence. Seven of the twelve elected members

of the Archdiocesan Council (later joined by an eighth one) contested this decision as far as it concerned the Archdiocese. They stated that it was the Archbishop who had left his post by making himself disqualified to rule the Archdiocese—the statutes explicitly require that the ruling archbishop be a hierarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate—and the Archdiocese remained without a head, still attached to Constantinople administratively. Archbishop John, now of Dubna, protested in another communiqué that the statutes should not be read “in a literal way” and that bishops stand above the law as bearers of the pastoral care of their flocks. He claimed that a “large majority” had agreed to join the Moscow Patriarchate.

Dueling communiqués ensued, with each side contesting the position of the other and declaring the other as totally invalid. The communiqués still published on the official website constructed a full-fledged narrative of the “Newspeak” kind in order to justify the decision to move the entire Archdiocese to Moscow.

Two Parallel Realities

From here on, we move in a kind of surreal split, where it is difficult for many to discern who is in and who is out, and where and what the Archdiocese really is. This situation can also be compared with alternative realities: in each reality, the other is presented as a form of fiction, somewhat like in Philip Dicks’s novel, *The Man in the High Castle*.

It is nevertheless simple if one adheres to the rules that the Archdiocese had adopted in its statutes to protect itself from arbitrary actions.

In the alternative universe of Archbishop John and some of his followers (as conveyed on the official archdiocesan website), he is the head of the Archdiocese which now is under the Moscow Patriarchate. The council members who did not follow have excluded themselves automatically, as they commemorate



St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Rue Daru, Paris

other bishops. Last but not least, it is this alternative association which is the owner of the “St. Serge Hill” (and all other archdiocesan properties), this mythic place where the renowned St. Sergius Institute was established, and where the theology of the 20th century in Europe and the U.S. was revived by such great theologians as Bulgakov, Schmemmann, Meyendorff, and so many others.

In reality #1, however—the true one—the Archdiocese still exists as a legal structure (association) and has a *locum tenens* as a temporary president, Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, appointed to this function by the Synod of Constantinople. The council is still active and can make decisions because the required quorum of more than half of its members is attained. This is so because the result

of the voting was not sufficient to permit the shift, despite all that had been done to influence the main opinion, and because the statutes—which were not changed by any assembly—assert that the archbishop must belong to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Archbishop John of Dubna is now a member hierarch of a church which has broken communion with his former Patriarchate.

In fact, the two Patriarchates together seem to have placed the Archdiocese in an intricate mess. This remaining Archdiocese is like an impossible hybrid animal, existing as a legally constituted association across several European countries, but not existing as a continent-wide archdiocese because Metropolitan Emmanuel's jurisdiction within the Ecumenical Patriarchate is limited to France.

Things being as they are, the property of the Archdiocese must still be decided upon in the courts. The supporters of the alternative reality claim archdiocesan property as theirs by right. Metropolitan Emmanuel, in collaboration with the Council, has therefore sent Archbishop John a summons asking him to cease claiming to be the head of the Archdiocese and of the association, interfering in St. Sergius Institute, and to using the official archdiocesan website. Archbishop John has not yet complied with these requests and continues to adhere to his alternative version.

This is what we have come to: fighting over our affairs in court—with, perhaps, no real chance to win against Moscow. People are tired and disappointed. Moscow has much more money, influence, help from the state, and people to hire, and they don't refrain from using very unfair methods, as the experience of the parish in Nice shows.

What is perhaps more dramatic, almost each parish is split and divided, parishes are split from one another, and members of the same families have found themselves in churches which are not in eucharistic communion. This is where Constantinople's unwise decision—followed by a carefully conducted campaign from Moscow, together

with mediocrity, fear, and lack of creativity in a crisis on our side—has led us.

Nevertheless, even if much was said about the virtue of “staying together” and about “unity” in the “Moscow or death” narrative, what has in fact been achieved is more division, with eucharistic division on the top of it. But unity is not the supreme virtue, if the price is renouncing all the values for which we stood in the past. If unity kills the Spirit, then, a formal division is perhaps a saner answer.

What's next?

The Archdiocese is dead in its body. Those who think they had saved it have killed its spirit, too. But the crisis is not over, and the agony is still ongoing. The bottom is by far not yet reached. We don't have good things to hope for out of this acceptance of Moscow's protection, on the one hand, and of an uncertain future in different Greek dioceses, on the other. It is not the end, and it is not happy.

This sounds bitter and depressing. But even an unhappy non-end may bear some hope in the Church. There has been more reflexion about essential matters, more discussion, more questioning of our identity this last year than during the previous ten years. All this may become the soil for something new.

After death, resurrection may come—if the spirit is alive.

The Archdiocese is dead, long live the Archdiocese—perhaps. In the Spirit.

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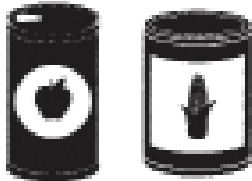


LOUDOUN HUNGER RELIEF

Food for today. Hope for tomorrow.

FOOD PANTRY MOST NEEDED ITEMS

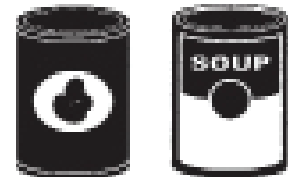
Canned Fruits & Veggies



Canned Meat



Canned Beans & Soup



Cereal



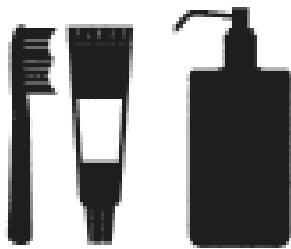
Whole Grain Pasta & Rice



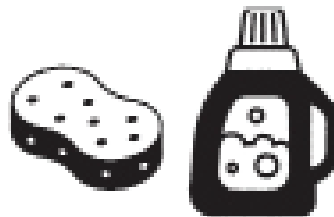
Peanut Butter



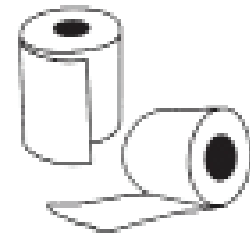
Hygiene Items



Household Items



Paper Products



Cooking Oil



Fresh Fruits & Vegetables



Other

Diapers Fruit Cups
Wipes Granola Bars
Formula Popcorn
Infant Cereal
Nutritional Shakes
and Drinks

PopTop Cans and Microwavable Cups Preferred
Low Sodium • Low Trans Fat • Sugar Free

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