

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

DIOCESE OF SOUROZH

CATHEDRAL OF THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

67 ENNISMORE GARDENS, LONDON SW7 1NH



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*“Mission and Martyrdom” –
Annual Conference of the Diocese of Sourozh
(8-10 June 2018)*



Bishop Matthew meeting the relic of St Seraphim of Sarov

In this issue:

DIOCESAN NEWS.....3

CATHEDRAL NEWS.....7

“Mission and Martyrdom”
– Annual Conference of the
Diocese of Sourozh9

A letter from the Archbishop
of Canterbury to His Holiness
Patriarch Kirill.....14

The Cross of the Romanovs
on the Isle of White15

BRITISH AND IRISH SAINTS
Saint Alban of Verulamium,
Protomartyr of Britain.....23

A Joyful Marriage27

HOLY PLACES IN ENGLAND
Hereford Cathedral,
Herefordshire.....28

“Vladimir’s Princess” – Gytha
of Wessex32

Neighbourhood groups meet for
prayer and conversation34

Dear Readers!
The editorial team of ‘Sourozh Messenger’ would like to apologise to the readers and subscribers for the gap in publication over the summer due to various operational and resource issues. We hope that, with God’s help, our journal will again be appearing on a regular basis in the near future.

Sourozh Messenger was prepared by:
Archpriest Joseph Skinner, Yana Reznik, Maria Afitsinskaya-Lvova, Julia Phiauksta,
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Diocesan News

THE RIGHT REVEREND MATTHEW, BISHOP OF SOUROZH, IS APPOINTED INTERIM ADMINISTRATOR OF THE PATRIARCHAL PARISHES IN CANADA

On July 14, 2018, at a meeting of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, taking place in the city of Ekaterinburg, His Grace Bishop Matthew of Sourozh was entrusted with the temporary administration of the Patriarchal Parishes in Canada.



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HEARD:

Announcement of His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia on dioceses and parishes abroad.

IT WAS RESOLVED:

Patriarchal parishes in Canada

- 1. According to the submitted petition, to release His Grace Bishop Job of Kashira from the administration of the Patriarchal Parishes in Canada and to bless him to continue his archpastoral ministry within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church at the discretion of the Synod of the latter.*
- 2. To express deep gratitude to His Grace Bishop Job for many years of his archpastoral work on Canadian soil.*
- 3. To entrust the provisional administration of the Patriarchal Parishes in Canada to the Right Reverend Bishop Matthew of Sourozh.*



THE RIGHT REVEREND MATHEW, BISHOP OF SOUROZH PARTICIPATED IN THE ASSEMBLY OF ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The Episcopal Assembly was held on 28 May, the Day of the Holy Spirit, at the Dormition Cathedral, London. Attendees at the meeting were: Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain (Patriarchate of Constantinople), Metropolitan Silouan of the British Isles and Ireland (Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East), Bishop Mathew of Sourozh (Patriarchate of Moscow and all Russia), and Bishop Athanasios of Tropaeou (Patriarchate of Constantinople). Also present were the members of the Secretariat of the Assembly, Archpriest Samir Gholam, Archpriest Joseph Skinner and Priest Stavros Solomou, and Priest Dmitry Nedostupenko, Acting Secretary of the Diocese of Sourozh.

The Assembly began with a joint

Liturgy, concelebrated by the three hierarchs as well as priests and deacons from the different Local Churches. The service was conducted in Greek, Arabic, Church Slavonic, and English. During the meeting itself the records of previous meetings were approved and the archpastors discussed current issues concerning the life of Orthodox Christians living in Great Britain and Ireland.

THE RIGHT REVEREND MATHEW, BISHOP OF SOUROZH MET WITH JONATHAN GOODALL, BISHOP OF EBBSFLEET

On 30 May, a meeting was held at the Dormition Cathedral between Bishop Mathew of Sourozh and Jonathan Goodall, Bishop of Ebbsfleet (Church of England).



The meeting was also attended by Priest Dmitry Nedostupenko, Diocesan Secretary. Discussions covered a wide range of issues concerning the relationship and further cooperation between the two Churches. Following the meeting, a lunch was held in honour of the distinguished visitor.



BISHOP MATTHEW OF SOUROZH AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE DIOCESAN CONFERENCE MADE A PILGRIMAGE TO ST ALBANS

On June 10, 2018, after the Annual Conference of the Diocese of Sourozh, the Right Reverend Bishop Matthew of Sourozh and participants of the conference made a pilgrimage to the St Alban's Abbey

Vladyka Matthew led a prayer service at the tomb and relics of the holy protomartyr of Britain, Alban (+304). After the moleben, the pilgrims made a tour of the cathedral and the territory

of the Abbey. The tour was led by the rector of St Nicholas Church in Oxford, Archpriest Stephen Platt, Secretary General of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius.

BISHOP PANTELEIMON OF OREKHOVO-ZUEVO AND BISHOP MATHEW OF SOUROZH MET WITH CHAPLAINS OF LONDON HOSPITALS

On June 28, 2018, His Grace Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevo, Vicar of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Service and His Grace Bishop Matthew, Ruling Bishop of the Diocese of Sourozh, visited the Marie Curie Hospice and the Royal Free Hospital in the London borough of Hampstead.





The Most Reverend Archpastors were accompanied by Priest Dmitry Nedostupenko, Secretary of the Diocese of Sourozh, Subdeacon Anton Zakharov, Head of the Social Department of the Sourozh Diocese,

Vadim Nesterenko and members of the delegation of Bishop Panteleimon.

During the visit, meetings were held with Robert James Wickham, Bishop of Edmonton (Anglican Church), Anglican chaplains Tony Kyriakidis, Tasha Critchlow and Claire Carson.

During the meeting, the parties shared their experience of social work in Russia and the UK, discussed general aspects of church ministry in hospitals and hospices, and noted the need for church chaplains to participate in life of society.

ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD OF DEACON IOANN KAZADOEV

On August 28, 2018, the day of the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, the patronal festival of the Cathedral, His Grace Bishop Matthew of Sourozh led the Divine Liturgy at the Dormition Cathedral in the city of London.

During the Liturgy, the Most Reverend Vladyka ordained Deacon Ioann Kazadoyev to the rank of presbyter. Fr Ioann will carry out his pastoral ministry in the parishes of the Diocesan District of the Republic of Ireland.



Cathedral News

A PARISH MEETING WAS HELD AT THE DORMITION CATHEDRAL IN LONDON

On June 17, 2018 a parish meeting was held at the Dormition Cathedral in London under the chairmanship of His Grace Bishop Matthew of Sourozh.



After the main report by Vladyka Matthew, reports on the current life of the church were made by the acting churchwarden T.Yu. Nosova and treasurer A.V. Motlokhov. During the meeting, Vladyka and members of the parish council answered questions and concerns of the parishioners.

The meeting unanimously elected T. Yu. Nosova as Assistant to the rector - Churchwarden. According to the Statute of the Cathedral, a churchwarden is elected for a term of 3 years.

The next parish meeting will be held on December 16, 2018.

A FESTAL CONCERT WAS PERFORMED AT THE LONDON CATHEDRAL PARISH SCHOOL

On June 30, 2018, on the day of the completion of the academic year at the Dormition Cathedral's parish school in London, Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevo and the Bishop Matthew of Sourozh met with teachers and parents of the school pupils. Priest Dmitry Nedostupenko, Secretary of the Diocese of Sourozh, took part in the meeting.

After the address by Vladyka Panteleimon to the people gathered for the feast, the pupils of the school performed a festive concert. There were musical performances by young talents, as well as a separate program by the children's choir under the direction of M.V. Bezmenova.



At the end of the feast, a special warm thanks was paid to the pedagogical staff of the school, headed by the director E.N. Poplavskaya. The Archpastors presented commemorative gifts to parents who took an active part in the life of the school during the past academic year.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE 104TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF METROPOLITAN ANTHONY CELEBRATED IN THE LONDON CATHEDRAL



On June 19, 2018, on the 104th anniversary of the birth of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), His Grace Bishop Mathew of Sourozh served a memorial service for the founder of the Diocese of Sourozh at the Dormition Cathedral in London. His Grace was assisted by clergy of the church - Archpriest Maxim Nikolsky and Protodeacon Vadim Santsevich.

At the end of the panikhida, Vladyka Matthew addressed the parishioners with a sermon, especially noting the invaluable contribution of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Anthony to the development of Orthodoxy in the British Isles for more than 50 years of his pastoral and archpastoral activities in the UK.

VISIT OF BISHOP PANTELEIMON OF OREKHOVO-ZUYEVO TO THE DORMITION CATHEDRAL

On 8 June 2018, His Grace Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuyevo visited the Dormition Cathedral in London. Bishop Panteleimon is a Vicar bishop of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, and also the chairman of the Synodal Department for Charity and Social Ministry.

Vladyko Panteleimon met with His Grace Bishop Mathew of Sourozh and the Diocesan Secretary, Priest Dmitry Nedostupenko. Following a tour of the Cathedral, a lunch was held in honour of the distinguished guest.



**“MISSION AND MARTYRDOM” –
ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUROZH
(8-10 JUNE 2018)**



*Conference participants
(Photo - www.sourozh.org)*

Martyrdom and mission – these two words can often be heard in church sermons but are usually poorly understood by modern-day Christians and are even less applicable to our everyday life. What martyrdom? We live in a free world where democracy and personal freedom are cornerstones of our society. And what is the mission of a Christian in our day and age? It often seems that these two concepts have lost their meaning and are very far from modern reality. This made it all the more interesting to visit the annual diocesan conference, “Martyrdom and Mission”, and to hear talks of researchers, clergy and academics who have made an effort to investigate the topic of the theology and history of martyrdom in Orthodoxy and of the mission of martyrs.

After the registration of delegates on Friday evening, a moleben was served

to mark the arrival of the relics of St Seraphim of Sarov, one of the most beloved saints of the Russian Orthodox Church. St Seraphim was invisibly present throughout the entire duration of the conference. After the opening speech by Bishop Matthew of Sourozh, Archpriest Maxim Nikolsky and Jeanne Knights presented their book, “Chronicles of Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery”, which is the most substantial book in English on the life of St Seraphim and the monastery he founded. This book tells stories of ordinary people who encountered St Seraphim, this spiritual giant who came from a remote corner of provincial Russia and attracted thousands of people who came to him seeking both wise council and supportive prayer. After the presentation of the book all delegates had a chance to venerate the relics whilst joining the chant of

the “Magnification” by the choir.

Early on Saturday morning, a moleben was served at the relics of St Seraphim and “Memory Eternal” was sung for Metropolitan Anthony and Archpriest Sergei Ovsyannikov. Many of the delegates knew both of them personally. Vladyka Anthony spoke many times at past diocesan conferences and the presentation of Fr Sergei at the conference three years ago left deep and fond memories in the hearts of the members of the audience. It is sad not to see them at the conference this year but we continue to pray for their repose and for a worthy continuation of the work that they started.

At the plenary session, the first speaker was Alexei Beglov from Moscow. Alexei is a religious historian and a researcher of the post-revolutionary period in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, the period of mass persecution when the first New Martyrs for the Faith of Christ shone forth.

Two further presentations, “Theology of Martyrdom” (by Archpriest Andrew Louth) and “Veneration and Glorification of the New Martyrs and their Significance for the Restoration of the Unity of the Russian Church” (by Archpriest Paul Elliot) were given in English. Fr Andrew discussed the Christian understanding of martyrdom in the history of the Church and in the life of first Christians. The idea that it is better to die in Christ than to rule even

the entire universe was very apparent to the Christians of the early Church. The idea of remaining unperturbed in the days of violent persecutions and even physical torture, of retaining inner peace and love in one’s heart is something that never existed in any religion before Christianity. This is neither the asceticism of Oriental teachings, nor is this similar to the self-sacrifice of Japanese kamikaze pilots for the sake of victory. This is not a strict adherence to Kosher rules but joy in Christ and expectation of the second, spiritual birth that is given by our Mother, the Church - initially in Baptism and subsequently after death at the Dread Judgment when we will meet our Creator. Christ turns everything upside down. Pain becomes joy, death becomes new birth, poverty becomes prosperity, indignity becomes glory in God.

Fr Paul touched on a topic which,



*Bishop Matthew and Archpriest
Joseph Skinner*

until recently, was considered very painful to discuss and even bring up, which is the subject of the parallel existence of two parts of the Russian Church and of the role of New Martyrs of Russia in the restoration of their unity. In ROCOR, the New Martyrs were venerated very soon after their martyrdom. For example, Archbishop Ioann (Maksimovich) never referred to the Tsar's family without using the work "Martyrs", even before their official canonisation. Sts Grand Duchess Elisabeth and Nun Varvara were also widely venerated long before they were officially canonised in Russia. During the Soviet time, the Patriarchate of Moscow did not bring up the topic of canonisation of those who suffered from the red terror and Stalin's repression. Outside the USSR, there was a complete lack of understanding of what went on in the Church in the Soviet Union. This lack of understanding resulted in a condemnation of the position of the Moscow Patriarchate as well as a lack of desire to establish any dialogue. Moreover, the absence of direct and meaningful communication lead to the faithful who lived in USSR being called "apostates" and "conformists".



The Conference choir

Nevertheless, after his visit to Belarus in the early 2000's, Fr Paul saw that in a country that had survived stringent persecution, prohibition of religion and destruction in war, so many of the people were incredibly warm, kind-hearted and radiant with the Love of Christ. At the same time, in the West, where no-one had to suffer for the sake of Christ in recent years, the voice of the Saviour is not heard and people are losing their faith. In the Soviet Union, the martyrs knew who their enemy was. In Britain, people do not know their enemy, which is why he has easy access to schools, mass media, etc.

A detailed account of the sufferings of those who perished in the fearsome machine of Soviet repressions was given by Archpriest Kirill Kaleda. It is worth noting that his presentation, "The Significance of the Witness of the New Martyrs for the Church Today", made a lasting impression

on the delegates. It was supported by numerous photographs and archive documents from the time of persecutions. An interesting fact mentioned in Fr Kirill's presentation related to the visit to Moscow in 2004 by a delegation of ROCOR led by Metropolitan Lavr (Shkurla). The visit coincided with a planned service by the Patriarch of Moscow at the Butovo shooting range. This is the exact site where more than 20,000 people were put in front of the firing squad over a period of 18 months in years 1937-38. During the visit, a church was founded at the shooting range and Metropolitan Lavr participated in its foundation. Following this, negotiations about the re-unification commenced and lasted two and a half years. As a result, the final document confirming the re-unification of Churches was signed on the birthday of the Royal Martyr Nicholas II. There is no doubt that the prayers of the New Martyrs for the Holy Orthodox Church and for us personally were of great help in this process. Of those killed in Butovo, 322 have been canonised as New Martyrs. The memorial site in Butovo contains a 300 metre row of granite slabs, two metres in height, engraved in small letters with the names of those who were killed at the shooting range. There are also 13 mass graves on the site. They contain the remains of thousands of people of various faiths, as well as atheists, of criminals and innocent victims, of clergy and

dissidents. Those who are currently looking to find justification of Stalin's persecution and repressions will do well to visit the Butovo site and to familiarise themselves with the documents which were de-classified by the KGB after the fall of the Soviet Union. The same goes for those who are trying to distribute in cyberspace the claim that Butovo is a pet project of the Russian Orthodox Church and that in reality nothing scary took place there. The first batch of documents listing the names of those executed was given to the grand-daughter of Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov) who was executed at the site in 1937. Following this, thousands of archived case documents were resurrected which shed light on the atrocities that took place in Butovo. The research work was undertaken by volunteers and by the relatives and descendants of the victims of execution. For them, this research work became part of the martyrdom. The modern world offers many ways of confessing one's faith. This includes researching archives and creating informative materials and films about the New Martyrs.

However, martyrdom and confession of faith must not be taken only in a historical context. They must also be prominent in our modern-day life. In a society that terms itself 'post-Christian' this is becoming ever more difficult. Fr Paul asked for special prayers for teachers, educators, doctors and workers in the justice system who

would be glad to have an opportunity to deliver the message of God's love towards mankind in their line of work. However, they are prevented from doing so in a "tolerant" society which equalises all religions, philosophical teachings and atheism and prohibits one from talking about the Saviour in one's workplace. The memory of over 1,760 canonised New Martyrs of the Russian Orthodox Church is an important pillar of support for us, the faithful of the 21st century.

The continuation of the topic was a presentation by Fr Mikhail Dudko who in a lively and heartfelt manner told the delegates about his experience meeting some of the modern-day elders of the Russian Church, including Fr Ioann Krestyankin and Fr Nikolai Guryanov as well as his own father, Fr Dmitry Dudko. There were some vivid stories from the lives of the elders who, in the years of militant atheism, suffered persecution for their faith but remained loyal to Christ and conveyed something of the warmth of His Love to those who came to them. They tended the faithful flock in those difficult times when people were forced to keep their faith secret. This is also a form of martyrdom – not having

the possibility to confess one's faith in Christ openly, always being mindful of the possibility of losing one's job and sometimes being in danger of imprisonment and criminal prosecution.

The conference ended with a closing summary by Vladyka Matthew and Fr Joseph Skinner. The official programme was followed by a trip to the cathedral in the city of St Albans which houses the relics of St Alban the Protomartyr of Britain. Fr Stephen Platt gave an engaging talk on the life of St Alban and the story of the discovery of the saint's relics. At the end, a moleben was served at the relics of the saint which were specially taken from the reliquary and uncovered for the visitors to venerate.

Julia Pliauksta

Photos - www.sourozh.org



Vladyka Matthew with parishioners from Nottingham

**ARCHBISHOP OF
CANTERBURY JUSTIN
WELBY SENT A LETTER TO
HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH
KIRILL ON THE CENTENARY
OF MARTYRDOM OF THE
VENERABLE MARTYR
ELIZABETH**



On 18 July 2018, the centenary of the martyrdom in Alapayevsk of the Venerable Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the head of the Anglican Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, sent a letter to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. The message reads, in particular: “A grand-daughter of Queen Victoria and kinswoman of the blessed martyrs Nicholas, Alexandra and their family, St Elizabeth was a model of Christian charity, service and fortitude.”

As the Archbishop of Canterbury noted in his letter, there is a statue of the Venerable Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth on the west front of Westminster Abbey, among other martyrs of the twentieth century.

The head of the Anglican Communion mentioned that during his visit to Moscow in 2017 he had visited Ss Martha and Mary Convent founded by Grand Duchess Elizabeth. “My party was greeted with true hospitality and I was moved by the devotion of the sisters in their ministry with orphans and disabled children,” the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote in his letter.

“Your Holiness, today we commemorate St Elizabeth and, yesterday, the Russian Imperial Family. As I recall them and their witness in my prayers I pray also for you, for your ministry, for the strengthening of the relationship between our churches,” Archbishop Justin Welby wrote in conclusion, addressing the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

DECRC Communication Service



THE CROSS OF THE ROMANOVS ON THE ISLE OF WHITE

***“God, save the Tsar! Strong,
sovereign, reign for glory, for our
glory! Reign to make foes fear,
Orthodox Tsar! God, save the
Tsar, God save the Tsar!”***

On the hot summer day of the 7th July 2018 the national anthems of the Russian Empire and Great Britain were played on the Isle of Wight during the grand unveiling of the Romanov memorial. The memorial marks the 100th anniversary of the murders of the Tsar and his family.

The Cross of the Romanovs is made of light stone with repoussé images of the Imperial Royal Martyrs and the Venerable Martyr the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna Romanova in the centre. It was sculptured by Elena Bezborodova, the honoured Russian artist and member of the Union of Russian Artists.

So, why is the Cross being erected on the Isle of Wight? The Russian Royal Family visited the Isle of Wight in 1909 and stayed at Barton Manor, which was part of Osborn House, the summer home and one of the favourite rural retreats of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. One of their daughters, Princess Alice, used to bring her children here, her children included Princess Ella, the future Grand Duchess Elizabeth

Feodorovna and Princess Alix, the future Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna.

The Tsar’s family stayed on the Isle of Wight from the 2nd to the 6th August 1909. They received a royal welcome. Alexander Spiridovich, Chief of Palace Security, describes the arrival of the Russian Emperor on the yacht “Standard” in his book “Les Dernières Années de la Cour de Tzarskoïé Selo” (Vol. 1, ch. 16, 1919):

“The yacht advanced slowly, and that which unfolded before our eyes was extremely powerful and handsome, we



*The Cross of the Romanovs
Isle of White
(Photo - www.twitter.com)*



*Barton Manor, 4th of August 1909
(Photo - www.traditio.wiki)*

could not tear ourselves away from the tableau which was unfolding. We had before us the entire Northern squadron of the English fleet. Three lines of huge combat ships and many lines of smaller ones were arranged in parallel in the harbour of Spithead, and out towards Cowes. One hundred and fifty-three of them without counting the destroyers and the smaller ships, commanded by 28 admirals, saluting their crowned Admiral, the Emperor of Russia.”

The 1909 visit to the Isle of Wight was not the first for the Russian Emperor Nicholas II. He had been a couple of times before, for example in 1894, during his engagement to ‘Alicky’ (Alix), Princess of Hesse. For the 1909 visit, the entire Imperial Family accompanied the Tsar to the Isle of Wight. This was their first and, as it

turned out, their only visit to the island: the British monarchs would never see



*Towel of St Elizabeth Fyodorovna
(Photo - Y. Chisholm)*

their relatives again. Nine years later the Tsar's family would face martyrdom in the basement of the Ipatiev house.

A hundred years later in sunny Cowes, dignitaries, clergy, descendants of the Romanov family, as well as members of the public who cherish the memory of the last visit of the Russian royal family to Great Britain, attended the unveiling of the monument.

To coincide with the three-day commemoration, an exhibition called "The Cross of the Romanovs" was organised, reflecting the milestones in the history of Russia and the Tsar's family. The exhibition included photographs related to the celebration of the Romanov Tercentenary, WWI, the abdication of the monarch, revolution, imprisonment, and murder. Without any doubt the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Romanov Society in the UK made exceptional efforts to finance this project, to prepare the exhibition and the three-day commemoration program.

Some of the personal belongings of the Romanovs and Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna put on display were from private collections. Items were sourced from all over the world, including the Historic Russian Palestinian Society, the Fund of A.K. Glazunov, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in Melbourne (Australia), the Martha and Mary



*A wool rug knitted by the Grand Duchesses for the Tsarevich and found in the Ipatiev house.
(Photo - Y. Chisholm)*

Convent of St. Elizabeth (Moscow). Abbess Maria, together with nuns of the Convent of Holy Grand Duchess Elizabeth in Buchendorf, Bavaria, Germany, brought relics of the saint belonging to the Convent.

These exhibits took us back in time linking our reality with the historic events and people to whom they belonged. Here are some of the most noteworthy artefacts.

A blanket made by the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia. There is an interesting story connected to this rug. A few days after the murder of the Tsar's family, on 26 July 1918, General M. K. Dieterikhs of the Siberian Army seized Ekaterinburg. He

had a chance to enter the Ipatiev house and to discover what had actually happened to the Tsar. He found some personal belongings the Bolsheviks had had left behind. Following the advice of Charles Gibbe's, who was an English tutor for the Tsar's children, General Dietrichs sent them to Grand Duchess Ksenia Alexandrovna of Russia, the sister of the Russian Emperor. In 1919 she and the Tsar's mother, Maria Feodorovna, Empress Dowager, were exiled to Denmark. Among the items found in the Ipatiev house there was a crochet blanket made by the Grand Duchesses for their brother, Tsarevich Alexei. The Tsarevich, who suffered from the genetic disease haemophilia, was sometimes unable to move, and the blanket helped to keep him warm. This blanket is now in Melbourne (Australia) and Archpriest Michael Protopopov treasures it as a sacred relic.

Another sacred item displayed at the exhibition was an ordinary small metal pendant-icon with the image of the Mother of God on one side and Great Martyr St George on the other. This pendant was also discovered in the Ipatiev House. It is astonishing to think that this pendant had silently witnessed the execution of the Russian Tsar, his family and servants. General Dieterikhs, one of the very first people to have access to the 'House of



*A piece of a comb found in 1991 at the presumed burial place of the Royal Martyrs at Ganina Yama.
(Photo - Y. Chisholm)*

Special Purpose', concluded: "It was a planned, deliberate and aforethought extermination of the members of the House of Romanov and those spiritually connected to them. The direct line of the Romanov dynasty has ended: it had originated in Ipatiev Monastery of the Kostroma region and came to its end in the Ipatiev House of Ekaterinburg."

A piece of a comb in a small glass container was another of the artefacts. Surprisingly, it was found in 1991 around the area called Ganina Yama, during the search for the bodies of the Royal Family. Father Michael Protopopov explains: "At first the Bolsheviks stripped the dead of their clothing and dropped then into the mineshaft No7 of the Chetyrehbratsky mine near the village of Koptyaki. Shortly after they realised that the grave would be easily discovered as consequently happened with the

bodies of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, nun Barbara and the Grand Dukes near Alapayevsk. Then one of the killers, Yakov Yurovsky, the Head of the House of Special Purpose, together with his accomplices, decided to douse the bodies with the sulphuric acid, burn and bury them in a clay pit. Due to the delay in finding petrol and sulphuric acid and to a broken-down truck, this plan was changed. The truck went back to Ekaterinburg on the Old Koptyakovsky Road. En route, the truck became stuck in the mud in one of the hollows. They burnt the cadavers and poured more acid over the remains. By 7 am the Imperial family had been buried in a shallow grave covered with soil and dry twigs. To cover up the fresh grave, railway sleepers were placed on top and the truck driven across it a couple of times. This piece of the comb with ingrained clay was found at this very place.”

There were two items on display



*Gospel, Moscow 1896,
(Photo - Y Chisholm)*

connected with the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna. A Gospel in red velvet binding with metal plates (Moscow, 1896) which was used by Igumen Seraphim (Kuznetsov), who transported the bodies of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth and nun Barbara to Jerusalem via Berlin. He read the Gospel every day over the martyrs' coffins. The journey was a long one. Overall, it took two and a half years. This Gospel was laying on top of the Grand Duchess's coffin and it was used during the services. The author of the book "Elizabeth Feodorovna", Dmitry Grishin, describes the journey of Elizabeth Feodorovna and nun Barbara to their final resting place.

“On 11 October the body of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna was lifted from the mineshaft together with the bodies of the other Alapaevsk martyrs. On the instruction of Admiral Kolchak, their remains were buried in the crypt of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Alapaevsk.

In July 1919, the Red Army again advanced to Alapaevsk, General M. K. Dieterikhs did not want the royal remains to be profaned and ordered their evacuation. Igumen Seraphim (Kuznetsov) was chosen to fulfil this sad mission.... On 14th July Father Seraphim left Alapaevsk with eight coffins in a wagon. The following day the Red Army entered the town.

The sad procession continued its slow journey. In six weeks it had reached Chita, often making stops in the scorching heat, risking capture by the Bolsheviks. The White Army continued to retreat. Leaving Siberia, some elements of the White Army crossed the border into China taking the Alapaevsk martyrs' remains with them. In April 1920, the eight coffins arrived in the Chinese capital via Harbin and Mugden. They were buried with full solemnities in the cemetery of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, located two kilometres from Beijing.... A crypt was specially arranged in in the church of St Seraphim of Sarov. but this was still not the final resting place for Elizabeth Feodorovna. Her sister Victoria ... did not consider the cemetery on the outskirts of Beijing appropriate for the grave of the Grand Duchess. Taking into consideration that executing Elizabeth's will to be buried in her Martha and Mary Convent in Moscow



*Princess Alice of Battenberg,
of Greece and Denmark (1885-1969)
(Photo - www.en.wikipedia.org)*

was out of question, ... Victoria found a perfect solution – Jerusalem.... In the aftermath of the war, Jerusalem was governed by Britain and it minimised political complications.”

On 30th November 1920 the coffins of Elizabeth Feodorovna and nun Barbara started the voyage from Beijing to Port Said. “Two months later this sorrowful cargo was received by Princess Victoria and her husband Louis Alexander Mountbatten...” (grandmother and grandfather of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and husband of Queen Elizabeth II – auth.). On the 30th



*Igumen Seraphim (Kuznetsov),
(Photo - www.rusdm.ru)*

January 1921 the 3rd and final burial of the venerable martyrs took place. Elizabeth Feodorovna died on the namesday of her beloved husband, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich Romanov, and was placed to rest in a church built in the Holy Land by her husband, who was Head of the Russian Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society at the time of its construction.

The second artefact related to the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna was a white towel. She used it in the Napolnaya school in Alapaevsk while imprisoned by the Bolsheviks.

The Abbess of the Martha and Mary Convent which was founded by Grand Duchess Elizabeth in 1909 on Bolshaya Ordynka in Moscow brought Grand Duchess Elizabeth's cuffs. The cuffs are kept in the Convent. In 1928 the Convent was closed but in 1992 by God's mercy it was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church. St Elizabeth's legacy continues today. The nuns are involved in community and social work such as helping sick and disabled children and orphans. The convent has a special centre to deal with children suffering from cerebral palsy, a medical centre "Mercy", a



*August 1909, Cowes; Dinner on board of Imperial Yacht "Standart",
Photo - www.alumni.mgimo.ru*

respite service for seriously ill children and many other projects.

In conclusion, it is hoped that the moleben in front of the Cross of the Romanovs and the floral tribute marking the day of the martyrdom of the Imperial family and the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna will become an annual event on the Isle of Wight and will serve to unite the British and Russian nations.

It is a well-known fact that the mother of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Alice of Battenberg, was a cousin of the Romanovs, Elizabeth Feodorovna and Alexandra Feodorovna. She is buried in the same convent of Saint Mary Magdalene

on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where the relics of the Venerable Martyr Elizabeth Feodorovna rest.

While commemorating the 100th anniversary of the killing of the Russian Royal family and the Alapaevsk Martyrs, we reflect on the events which were a turning point of Russian history. General Diterikh's closing remarks to the 1922 Zemsky Sobor of the Amur region are still relevant today: "I believe Russia will return to being the Russia of Christ, the Russia of The Lord's Anointed. We were unworthy of the mercy of the Almighty Creator."

For reflection

The saints are like the Lord, but so are all people who keep the commandments of Christ; but those who live according to their own passions and do not repent are like the devil. I think that if this mystery were revealed to the world, then they would stop serving the devil, and every one would strive to serve the Lord with all his strength, and to be like Him.

(St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, XII.9)

British and Irish Saints

Saint Alban of Verulamium, Protomartyr of Britain

***Commemorated:
22nd June/5th July***

On 9th March, 2017, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church added the names of fifteen saints who lived in the Western lands before the schism of 1054 to the Church calendar. Among them are Sts Alban of Britain and Patrick of Ireland.

284 years after the incarnation of Christ a pagan named Diocletian became Roman Emperor. For twenty years he ruled as a ruthless tyrant and ordered to kill Christians everywhere. The persecutions were at their most savage in 303-305. The first martyr who laid down his life for Christ in Britain was St Alban. By 305 the bloody Diocletian persecutions had reached Britain and the murderers with frenzied brutality seized Christians throughout the island. One priest managed to flee from the persecutors. On his way he saw a house where a man called Alban lived. He knocked on the door, seeking shelter. Though Alban was still unbaptised, he let the priest in and gave him refuge. Of the life of Alban before his martyrdom we only know that he was a soldier and most likely a Romano-Briton, though some researchers argue that he was



Icon of St Alban

a Roman (his name is derived from the Latin word 'albus' which means 'white').

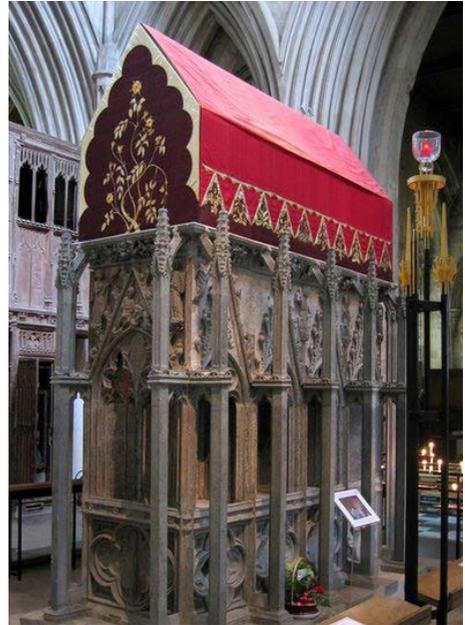
The priest daily read services, sang Church hymns, prayed day and night and kept strict fast. He instructed Alban in the true faith and told him about God until the saint, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, came to believe in Christ,

was baptised by him and became a faithful Christian. Soon the ruler of that region heard that a Christian priest had found refuge in Alban's house. Furious, he ordered his men to go and bring him the cleric and execute him. As soon as the envoys approached his house Alban exchanged clothes with the priest in order not to betray him and went out to meet them as if he were the clergyman. Alban was tied up and led to the magistrate who at that moment was offering sacrifices to his 'gods', that is, demons.

Seeing the brave martyr, the magistrate flew into a rage as he understood that their fellow-countryman had hidden a fugitive priest in his house. He ordered that Alban be brought to the idols and warned him that he would be severely punished in the priest's place if he did not renounce his new faith and bow down before the idols immediately. However, the martyr, strengthened by the divine grace, did not fear these threats. He replied that he would neither carry out the judge's orders nor venerate the lifeless images.

The judge asked: 'What family are you from and what is your social status?' Alban answered: 'It's none of your business what family I come from! I am a Christian and I will serve Christ alone – the only true God'. 'Tell me your name!' the magistrate demanded. The fearless soldier of Christ said: 'My name is Alban, and I believe in Christ

the Saviour – the true God Who created the world and all things. It is He Whom I will worship and pray to forever!' The judge responded: 'If you want to enjoy the bliss of eternal life, then make a sacrifice to our great gods right away!' Alban then answered: 'Your sacrifices are offered not to gods, but to demons, and they will never help you. But as an eternal punishment for idol-worship you will be cast into hellfire.' Enraged, the judge demanded that the saint be flogged, thinking that physical suffering would weaken him, making him lose heart and turn to paganism. But the martyr, strengthened by the Lord, bore the blows with patience, as if it were happening not to him, and



St Alban's shrine at St Albans Cathedral

thanked God for being vouchsafed to suffer for Him. The judge realised that he wouldn't be able to force Alban to renounce Christ and ordered him to be executed.

The pagans led the saint to the site of execution. But as they were crossing a bridge over the river they had to stop because a great multitude of people came to look at the glorious martyr and crowded the bridge. Wishing to die for Christ sooner, Alban came down to the river and began to pray, looking above to heaven. According to tradition, suddenly the waters of the river parted, exposing the bottom, and a path to the opposite bank appeared. The swordsman who was to execute Alban was so struck by the miracle that he threw his sword down. He ran after Alban and, when they both crossed the river, he fell before his feet and admitted that now he wanted to die with him, not to behead him.

There was a gently sloping hill nearby with flowers growing on it. Alban ascended it and in prayer asked God to send water to this hill. At once a spring gushed forth at the saint's feet and ran downhill, so the people understood that a miracle had been performed by God through Alban's prayers. The spring existed for many centuries and had healing properties. Alban was beheaded on the hill and was granted a martyr's crown in Paradise. But the swordsman who executed him never



The Cathedral of St Alban in St Albans, Hertfordshire (photo by Irina Lapa)

saw Alban's dead body: his eyes fell out of their sockets to the ground at the same moment. Ever since this scene has been depicted by artists. Then the executioner who refused to kill the martyr was put to death as well.

When the persecutions stopped, Christians came out of the woods and other hiding-places. They began to live among people and gradually revived Christianity. On the site of Alban's martyrdom a splendid church worthy of the glorious saint was built. Alban was martyred in the Roman city of Verulamium. It bore this name until about 948 when it was renamed St Albans – after the saint. It is called St Albans to this day. St Albans is just to the north of London, in the west of Hertfordshire.

From the earliest times the town also had a monastery in honour of Alban. It is known that King Offa of Mercia (757-796) revived the monastery here. St Alban's Monastery was among the

greatest and wealthiest in the country. After the Norman Conquest the popularity of the abbey and the shrine with the saint's relics remained the same. Only after the sixteenth-century Reformation was the monastery closed, the shrine smashed to pieces, and the former abbey church has been used as an Anglican cathedral since 1877. Soon after the Reformation St Alban's relics were moved to Germany.

The beautiful shrine was carefully restored by 1993 and by the mercy of God in 2002 a portion of Alban's relics (a shoulder bone) was returned to the town from Cologne (Germany) and solemnly enshrined. Today St Albans Cathedral is a popular pilgrimage destination. The chapel which contains the shrine and an icon of St Alban hosts regular Orthodox services. The town also has the Museum of Verulamium, the Verulamium Park and a partly surviving holy well.

St Alban has been venerated in England and many other countries since time immemorial. Dozens of



St Alban (stained window detail)

churches, several cathedrals and monasteries are dedicated to him in England, Denmark, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Canada, the USA, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and even Japan.

Dmitry Lapa

For reflection

The humble soul is blessed. The Lord loves her. The Mother of God is higher than all in humility, and therefore all races bless her on earth, while the heavenly powers serve her. And the Lord has given us this blessed Mother of His as a defender and helper.

(St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings III.14)

A JOYFUL MARRIAGE

- When my father was 17 years old, he saw a girl at a local fair. A fourteen-year-old girl in a blue dress with a blue ribbon. He fell in love! He waited for her to turn eighteen, asked for her hand in marriage and got the permission. He loved her deeply ever since...

My parents were poor farmers. My mother milked cows and did all the housework, but they lived happily and treated every day of their life as a gift, until the very end. It was so heartfelt and beautiful!

I saw other families where otherwise nice people would fight over who should put the kettle on. In our house, it was exactly the opposite – everyone wanted to be the one to put the kettle on. Each wanted to take the duty upon himself. When your partner wants to take on a bigger share, to pull more weight, you want to do even more than that... This is an interesting phenomenon I observed. The less your partner wants to do, the less you want to do and vice versa. It works like a feedback mechanism. Any my parents worked hard trying to relieve one another of household chores and any difficult and mundane tasks – each of them one wanted to do for the other...

I remember one morning my father was shaving and singing at the same time. My mom told him: 'Stop singing! I cannot concentrate!'. At the time my mom worked for a nursery-schools

authority and was always busy writing reports. And dad replied (strange how one still remembers these things) saying: 'I will stop singing and one day you will think: what a pity, he no longer sings, it would be so nice if he would sing again'. I remember this, I remember this exact phrase: 'it would be so nice if he would sing again».

Their marriage was a happy and joyful one, a union of souls with common goals in life. I have never seen another marriage like that; a marriage that is deep and meaningful but at the same time full of uninterrupted happiness and joy... And every morning started with father's prayer – he blessed and thanked God for sending him this wonderful wife and this miracle of love and shared feelings. And so we grew up in the shadow of this love and adoration...

Then I asked: -

What about your mom? - Mom died ten years ago.

I said: - O Lord! And dad?

- Dad is still alive.

- How did he cope with the death of your mother? It must have been unbearable for him?

- On the contrary! He thanks God every day that the burden of separation was his to bear and not hers...

Lilianna Lungina

Source: kulturologia.ru

Holy places in England



Hereford Cathedral (Photo - <http://ohil.org.uk>)

HEREFORD CATHEDRAL, HEREFORDSHIRE

Herefordshire – one of the greenest, most rural and sparsely populated of English counties – lies in the west of the country near the Welsh border. Numerous hills and rivers, hundreds of orchards, bountiful arable land, tiny villages and distinctive black-and-white half-timbered houses are scattered all over Herefordshire. In ancient times Herefordshire was part of Wales and later its territory belonged to the early English kingdom of Mercia. The county has many ancient shrines. The capital city of Herefordshire is Hereford, and its pride is the magnificent 1000-year-old cathedral, standing in an idyllic position on the bank of the River Wye.

The first cathedral appeared here in 676. The building of the present

Romanesque edifice in honour of the Virgin Mary and St Ethelbert commenced in 1079 and was completed several decades later. Today it retains features of several architectural styles. For many centuries the relics of St Ethelbert the Martyr, King of East Anglia, were kept here. In 794, the pious fifteen-year-old Ethelbert travelled to the court of King Offa of Mercia to ask for the hand of his daughter St Alfreda, but Offa, believing the rumours that Ethelbert was coming with the hostile intent to invade the kingdom, ordered to behead the innocent king. In the Middle Ages countless pilgrims flocked to St Ethelbert's relics for healing and consolation and his veneration was so strong that Hereford was second only to Canterbury in the national popularity of shrines! Although the saint's relics were destroyed, he is commemorated at the



St Ethelbert's shrine-column inside Hereford Cathedral, Herefordshire (photo kindly provided by the Dean of Hereford)

cathedral to this day. Several years ago an attractive memorial-column (often referred to as 'St Ethelbert's shrine') with twelve beautiful panels vividly relating the story of Ethelbert's life, martyrdom, veneration and miracles was installed at the entrance to the Lady Chapel. It stands on the site of his original shrine, and the place is filled with the atmosphere of holiness.

Additionally, within the cathedral St Ethelbert is commemorated in a medieval statue on the right of the High Altar, a unique fourteenth-century stained glass, a medieval brass, among the sculptures of the choir and on a Victorian tile.

Besides the Mother of God and St Ethelbert, the cathedral has the following patrons: St John the Baptist; the thirteenth-century Catholic Bishop Thomas Cantilupe of Hereford (his restored shrine in the north transept attracts numerous pilgrims); and the priest, ascetic, religious writer and metaphysical poet Thomas Traherne (1636-1674), author of *The Centuries of Meditations*, who in spirit was close to the Orthodox world-view. A set of splendid modern stained glass windows in the Audley Chapel inside the Lady Chapel commemorate Traherne.

One of the greatest treasures of Hereford Cathedral is the *Mappa Mundi* – the largest and oldest surviving map of the world. One of the best-known early English documents,



The Mappa Mundi inside Hereford Cathedral, Herefordshire (photo kindly provided by the Dean of Hereford)

it dates from 1300 and measures 158 x 133 cm. The map is a mini-guide to the holy places of the globe and is spiritually accurate rather than geographically so. The main purpose of this map was to reflect the Christian view of the Creation. For example, Jerusalem is shown in the centre of the globe. Another gem of the cathedral is its seventeenth-century Chained Library (the largest in the world of this kind), which has a permanently updated collection of rare manuscripts, books, documents and archaeological finds. All of its chains, rods and locks are in perfect condition. The system enables you to take a book from the shelf and read it at the desk, but not to remove it from the bookcase. One of its precious manuscripts is the eighth-century Early English illuminated 'Hereford Gospels' with Celtic elements.

The spaciousness of the cathedral reminds us of God's glory. Its magnificent fourteenth-century tower was created with the generous donations



Bishop Thomas Cantilupe's shrine inside Hereford Cathedral, Herefordshire (photo kindly provided by the Dean of Hereford)

of pilgrims. The cathedral consists of the chancel, the nave, the choir, numerous transepts and chapels dating back to various periods. The majestic silver-gild corona (candelabrum) hangs over the High Altar. There is an exquisite painting of the Crucifixion there. The south transept is adorned with a sixteenth-century triptych depicting the Adoration of the Magi.

The Cathedral boasts a crypt, the beautiful thirteenth-century Lady Chapel above it with a warm atmosphere, elegant carvings of stone and wood, tombs and monuments to many church figures revered here over the past 1,200 years, tapestries, stained glass, icons, the 'Chapter Gardens', ruins of the medieval ten-sided chapter-house and rich ancient Cathedral archives. Not far from the cathedral visitors can find the ninth-century holy well dedicated to St Ethelbert whose water once healed many people from eye sores and ulcers.



The Chained Library interior of Hereford Cathedral, Herefordshire (photo kindly provided by the Dean of Hereford)

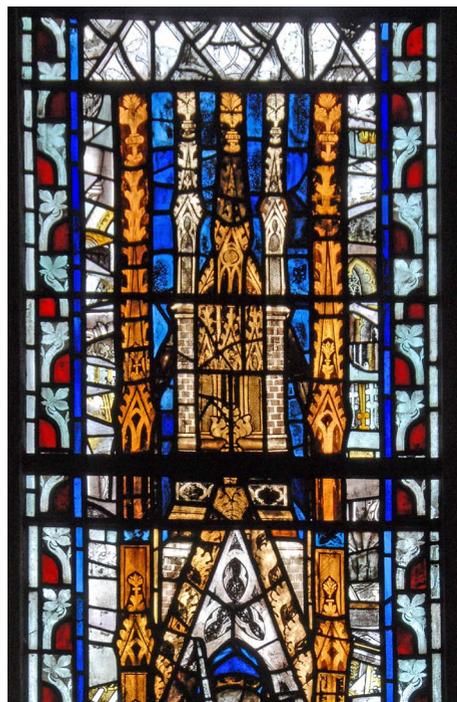
One of the most mysterious attractions of the cathedral is 'King Stephen's Chair' – a temporary throne that was made for this monarch on his visit to Hereford in the 1130s. Queen Elizabeth II used it on two of her visits to the Cathedral too!

Hereford Cathedral has been famous for its scholarly and music traditions. Hereford is one of three English cities along with Worcester and Gloucester that initiated the famous 'Three Choirs Festival' (the festival of Church music organised alternately every year since 1724, by choirs of these cities' Cathedrals). The See of Hereford is one of the oldest English dioceses; God has been worshipped here continuously for over 1,300 years.

Hereford Cathedral has kept some very curious traditions dating back to ancient times. Thus, it appoints a 'Boy Bishop' each year. He is chosen from among the recently retired choristers and is in office from the Second Sunday in Advent (near to the Feast of St Nicholas on 6 December) until the Feast of Holy Innocents on 28 December. On the Second Sunday in Advent, he is installed by the diocesan bishop and occupies the episcopal throne during the Magnificat. At the service he preaches a sermon, seated on King Stephen's Chair. The 'Boy Bishop' stands beside the diocesan bishop and reads a prayer before the blessing during Cathedral carol Services before Christmas.

Services are celebrated at Hereford Cathedral every day. In addition to daily services, prayers are regularly offered up at St Ethelbert's monument and Thomas Cantilupe's shrine.

By Dmitry Lapa



Medieval stained glass of St Ethelbert at Hereford Cathedral, Herefordshire (kindly provided by the Dean of Hereford)

"VLADIMIR'S PRINCESS " – GYTHA OF WESSEX

(a historical note)

Princess Gytha was born in 1052, i.e. two years before the appearance (or the falling away) of the Western branch of Christianity. She is therefore considered to have been baptised Orthodox. For this reason, her marriage to Vladimir Monomakh (then Prince of Smolensk) was not only possible but was also desirable and was expected to be conducive to the strengthening of economic and cultural relations between Rus' (Russia) and England, which is exactly what followed.



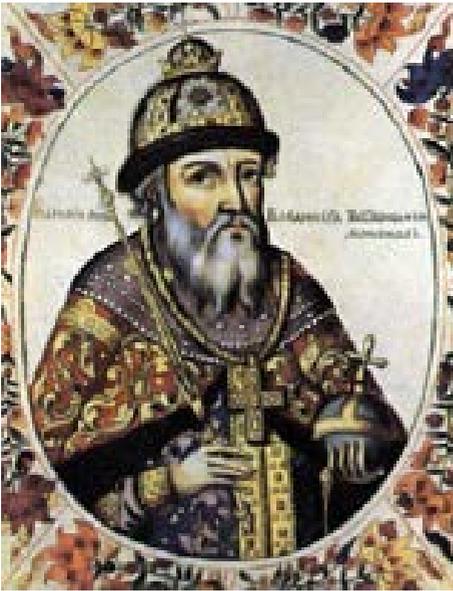
"Vladimir's Princess" - Gytha of Wessex
(Photo - <http://www.naslednick.ru>)

However, in the year 1066, England came under the authority of the Roman Church. According to some sources, Gytha was born in 1066. However, Russian historians of the 18th century knew of the above, earlier date, which is the date quoted by Prince Mikhail Scherbatov in a chronological table shown in his book "History of Russia from the Earliest Times", vol. II.

M. M. Scherbatov can be considered a trustworthy source as one who made a significant correction in the history of marriages of Polish royals. He was the first historian to point out a significant inconsistency in the dates of birth of persons who were previously assumed to be spouses.

After the death of her father, King Harold of Wessex, in the Battle of Hastings in 1066, Gytha escaped to Flanders. After that, according to the Saxo Grammaticus, Gytha and her two brothers settled with their uncle, Sven Estridsen, the King of Denmark. The King gave her hand in marriage to Vladimir Monomakh who was the Prince of Smolensk at the time. The marriage took place in 1074.

About the same time, or slightly later, the Popes of Rome attempted "...to bring Russia under their dominion. The ruling Pope, Urbanus II, sent his bishop, Theodore (of Greek origin), to Russia with many gifts of holy relics. The exact details of the mission entrusted to Theodore are unknown to me but my conjecture is that he was



Vladimir Monomakh
(Image - www.biografia.ru)

sent with the aim of bringing Russia under the spiritual authority of Rome.”

It is not known what Princess Gytha’s Russian name was. She was the mother of the first five children of Vladimir Monomakh:

Mstislav Vladimirovich the Great;

Izyaslav Vladimirovich, Prince of Kursk;

Svyatoslav Vladimirovich, Prince of Smolensk and Pereyaslav;

Yaropolk II Vladimirovich of Kiev;
and

Viacheslav I Vladimirovich of Kiev.

These five children gave origin to a number of noble families commonly known as Rurikids, including ancient

Russian dynasties such as Scherbatov, Baryatinsky, Lobanov-Rostovsky, Shahovsky, Dolgorukov, Khovansky, Obolensky.

The eldest son of Vladimir Monomakh and Gytha, Mstislav the Great, is known in Western sources as Harold, after his grandfather. According to the testimony of Prince Dmitry Mikhailovich Shakhovsky, Professor of Russian Church history in the Theological Institute of St Sergius (Paris), the DNA of Mstislav the Great mainly contains Scandinavian genes.

There is some evidence to suggest that Gytha was a benefactor of St Panteleimon monastery in Cologne and that she participated in the first crusade together with Godfrey of Bouillon. It is possible that she may have died in Palestine. Her date of death is thought to be around 1098 since, according to some sources, Vladimir Monomakh re-married the following year.

In the “Praise of St Panteleimon” by Rupert, a German theologian of the early XII century, it is reported that Gytha’s veneration of the Saint began after her son Mstislav was nearly killed whilst hunting but was miraculously healed after Gytha’s prayer. A bear savaged Mstislav’s stomach so that his intestines were falling out. When he was brought home, his mother began to pray to St Panteleimon. That night, Mstislav saw in his dream a young man who promised to heal him. In the morning, a young man looking very

much like the Saint came to Mstislav with medicinal remedies and indeed healed him. After that event, Gytha donated a large sum of money to the monastery in Cologne and vowed to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

According to a different account, Gytha died in Smolensk in 1107. We consider this account to be true since M.M. Scherbатов does not quote 1098 as the year of death, whilst the death of the Princess in 1107 is described as a significant event: "The death Vladimir's Princess in 1107. The beginning of that year was marked by a terrible event for Prince Vladimir, the death of his Princess on the 7th day of May. However, the threat of a Cuman invasion made the Prince wipe away his tears and join forces with other Russian princes in order to oppose it."

It is notable that during the reign of

Vladimir Monomakh the Rurikids began to contract dynastic marriages. For instance, Yaroslav Svyatopolchich and Vsevolod Olegovich (Prince of Chernigov from 1127) were married to the daughters of Mstislav the Great (i.e. Monomakh's grand-daughters). Agatha, the daughter of Monomakh was married to Vsevolod of Gorodno. Monomakh's son from the second marriage, Roman, was married to the daughter of Volodar Rostyslavich, Prince of Peremyshl.

The stability of Rus' was guaranteed by the personal authority of Vladimir Monomakh, which was cemented by the success of his military defence against the Cumans (Polovtsy) and by the concentration of power under his authority as the Grand Prince of Kievan Rus'.

Neonilla Pasichnik

NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Elisey, continuing a tradition which dates back to the time of Metropolitan Anthony, the first meeting of a new Orthodox neighbourhood group took place in November 2016, bringing together families that live in and around Hammersmith, West London. One of the main aims of the meeting was to bring together parishioners from the Dormition Cathedral and from the Chiswick Church. We met together for

the first time in order to get to know one another, to help our children find Orthodox friends and to participate as a group in prayer, reading of the Gospel and good deeds.

Under the watchful pastoral eye of Fr Joseph, eight meetings have since taken place where many interesting and relevant topics were discussed, including: prayer and fasting, reading of the Gospel with children, "my vocation", Royal Priesthood, repentance as metanoia or "a change of mind", ancestral virtues and sins,

Christianity and challenges posed by modernity. All meetings took place either in our home (in winter) or outdoors (in summer). We must note that the English weather was especially kind to us for our outdoor gatherings. On Sundays by 6pm our house was filled with guests and children's laughter. The presence of Fr Joseph made the atmosphere truly special, and helped all of us feel a certain new depth of mutual understanding and openness.

Taking the momentum further, with the blessing of Father Joseph, two parishioners of the Dormition Cathedral, Dmitri and Irina, initiated a gathering of a similar neighbourhood group in Kingston, Surrey. The first meeting of the Kingston neighbourhood group brought together five local families including their children! It took place on Sunday, August 12th with the intention of strengthening us all before the Dormition Fast. The topic of the

meeting was "Being Orthodox in a post-Christian society". We discussed the challenges of raising Orthodox children in today's world as well as the difficulties associated with maintaining an Orthodox Christian ethos in our working lives and our dealings with everyday situations. Many good points were raised and we also heard some encouraging and heart-warming examples of hidden pockets of Christian faith and practice in modern Britain.

We were welcomed by our hosts with warmth and sincerity. The evening started with the blessing of their house and then we had a rare opportunity to get to know each other better and take time to listen to one another. We find it hard to listen attentively in the Cathedral as we are often in a rush with our numerous family arrangements. We even dared to share our spiritual experience and our everyday struggles that we all face as Orthodox Christians living in the UK.



*Fr Joseph with the Hammersmith Neighbourhood Group
(Photo - Yana Reznik)*

The reading of the Gospel, prayers, discussions, the shared Sunday supper and the friendly atmosphere created a feeling of partaking in something bigger, something timeless.

The common prayer miraculously guides us all; it led us from Ennismore Gardens to Hammersmith, from

Hammersmith to Kingston and who knows where it will take us next? It should be noted that meetings are open not only to local residents but also to those willing and able to commute from further away.

Yana Reznik



*Meeting of the Hammersmith Neighbourhood Group at Margravine cemetery
(Photo - Yana Reznik)*

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