



LENTEN HOMILY OF ARCHBISHOP JOHN

To the clergy, monks, nuns and the faithful of the Exarchate of the Orthodox parishes of Russian tradition in Western Europe.

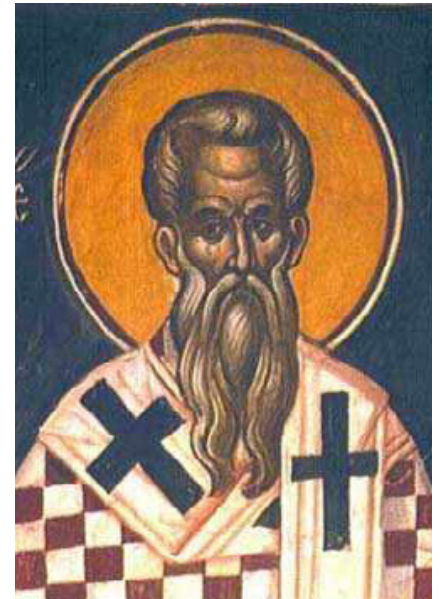
Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, beloved in Christ,

As we now enter the Lenten period our spiritual life demands of us that we have a change of heart according to the Gospel. In order for the Christian life to take root in us we must gradually remove all obstacles related to “**me**”. Asceticism appears to be the surest way to fight all forms of death connected in our existence. It challenges us in all our dark recesses and allows the light of the resurrection to invade our being, to heal our wounds and to cure us from all ills connected to our selfishness. Asceticism, as we too often tend to believe, is not a search for merit or adherence to a code of conduct. No, asceticism has only one goal: to enable a personal encounter with Christ, to make man an authentic participant in the life of the Risen Christ. True Christian asceticism is found in the Beatitudes which our Fathers called the “commandments of Christ”. Asceticism brings us face to face with the idols, with the passions that overshadow our true life, it gives us grace to restore our real human nature in Christ.

Our nature of flesh and spirit is at the same time human and non-human as it was created “in the image and likeness” of God. It is both what we are and what we should be. The nature of man, the flesh, is imbued with the energy of the Person related to the image. But if it is left on its own without the help of these energies it can become “contrary to nature” and becomes an end in itself, heading towards nothingness. Asceticism allows us to fight this ‘autonomy’ of the flesh so that energies can blossom into their true destiny: union with the divine energies in union with Christ, perfect icon of the divine humanity, defined by ‘the great divine Council’ as St Maxim the Confessor says. In this light, asceticism

is not a vulgar, voluntary and moral struggle, because any law or rule is secondary. Asceticism, as our Fathers described it, is an effort of our whole being, to receive grace, which is man’s real goal and law. The flesh and the spirit must be quickened in order to be filled with light. The aim of asceticism is to motivate our existence so that it is, bit by bit, filled with this light. By grace human effort will be brought to bear and God himself will convey his energies to the man who is receptive and willing.

The Lenten season makes us aware of the physical aspect of asceticism. The true knowledge of God, in the image of the wedding of the Song of Songs, brings body and soul into play. Asceticism is the bridal realisation in the humility of this meeting of the Bridegroom and bride. All our Lenten liturgy stresses fasting as a way to master desire to make us aware of our relationship with God. Fasting allows us to approach the problem not as a predatory beast, but as a Eucharistic man whose life has become perpetual Thanksgiving. As Saint Romanos the Melodist of Constantinople tells us the first deviance was eating, consuming the world without giving thanks, in other words, taking for ourselves rather than recognising and thus transforming what is offered. Fasting also means **waiting** for the Bridegroom. He who fasts enters into Christ’s humility in order to put on the risen Christ, that he will meet in the Easter joy, and Whom he sees in each Eucharistic encounter. As Saint Andrew of Crete says, Lent is a “bright feast” because above all man is nourished “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”. True fasting will change the relationship we have with God, our neighbour, the world and even



ourselves. Everything will be seen vertically, in other words, in its truth, in its immediate relationship with the divine energies that are reflected in all things, to the extent that we have increased our own understanding. By fasting, man must release the divine wisdom present in all things.

Abstinence from flesh and blood reminds us of our true vocation which is to give and encourage life. “Don’t feed your sensuality, put an end to those murders and suicides which inevitably follow from the search for the pleasures of the flesh; purify and regenerate your body to prepare for the transfiguration of the universal body” wrote V. Soloviev in the *Spiritual Foundations of Life*. This means that the fast tends to restore our relationships with the outside world and give us a true balance of life.

However, just fasting with food means nothing, the fast must be accompanied by what gives it its full strength: the spiritual fast. This fast forces us to abandon all that is evil in our relationship with creation, our neighbour and ourselves. We also have to extend the fast to the passions that inhabit us, and the sin that haunts us, also to a sense of power by finding a sense of service again and to a feeling of glory by exercising humility. And the Fathers also tell us to



extend it to our intelligence, so as not to fall into fruitless speculation that in the end exalts our pride in knowledge.

All this is summarised in the Prayer of Saint Ephrem which is for us the surest guide in this time of Lent. Every day

we have to impose it on our hearts and engrave it on our bodies through the accompanying prostrations. This prayer, alms to the poor, careful attention to the services: all this, if we live it intensely, will allow us to host “the Bridegroom who comes in the middle of the night” as the troparion of Great Monday reminds us. Then, in the image of the wise virgins, we will enter the bridal chamber and we will participate in the bright feast of the wedding of the Lamb, while contemplating His Resurrection.

“Let us joyfully begin the all-hallowed season of abstinence; and let us shine with the bright radiance of the holy commandments of Christ Our God, with the brightness of love and the splendour of prayer, with the purity of holiness and the strength of good courage. So, clothed in raiment of light, let us hasten to the holy resurrection on the third day, that shines upon the world with the glory of eternal life.”

(The Monday of the first week of Lent, 5th kathisma Matins)

Brothers and sisters, I wish you all a good and true Great Lent, I humbly ask all of you forgiveness for anything that might have offended you in my behaviour and ask of each of you your fervent prayer.

*†John, Archbishop of Charioupolis,
Patriarchal Exarch of Orthodox
parishes of Russian tradition
in Western Europe
Paris, 26 February 2017*



Deacons

A number of questions arise in any study of the diaconate both in the early church and then in the Orthodox churches. The first reference to deacons in the new testament is in St Paul's letters to the Philippians and to Timothy. The description in the Acts of the Apostles does not refer to deacons as such, even though by tradition the 'seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom', upon whom the apostles laid their hands are considered the first deacons, they are only referred to as those who would 'serve *διακονεῖν* tables' and allow the apostles to give themselves 'continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word'.

Using even the most extreme laws of Darwinism it is not at all clear how this servant of the tables could have evolved into the more familiar figure bellowing out litanies like some parade ground drill sergeant in some of the larger cathedrals of mother Russia.

Most will have experienced the presence of a deacon in his liturgical function, an assistant to the priest in the celebration of services, and such today is the role of the deacon in all orthodox churches. He is not essential in liturgical celebration, the priest can celebrate perfectly well without him, and most parishes do not actually have a deacon. The majority of deacons are those who have been ordained to the lowest of the three ranks of clergy in preparation for their ordination to the priesthood. It is only occasionally that we encounter a deacon for life, and in the Russian tradition these are mostly attached to a cathedral.

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Protodeacon Peter Scorer will soon be 75 years old. He is one of the most senior members of the clergy in our archdiocese. He is the grandson of the well-known religious philosopher Simon Frank. He taught Russian literature in the UK, and became a deacon in our Exeter parish many years ago. He is involved in the Saint Gregory's Foundation – a charity of our archdiocese in the UK, and has close links with ACER-MJO. He faithfully assisted Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. He has taken an active part in maintaining his legacy in various relevant organisations. Together with Fr Alexander Fostiropoulos, he is involved in the yearly summer camp of the English deanery. He and Fr Serge Hackel formed the group of old-timers of our English deanery, maintaining the connection between the past and the present.

He is married, has three children, and grandchildren.



So how do we explain the transition from the earliest tradition, where the deacons looked after the widows, served the tables, to the present somewhat limited liturgical function? And we should ask ourselves: what elements of the diaconate in its earliest forms are still relevant today?

Information on the role of deacons in the pre-Constantinian period are few. From the fourth century the main, if not exclusive function was in the administration of the Church's charity.

The first and original function of the deacons, to serve at the tables, developed in the Eastern church into a massive charitable structure. According to Fr Lev Gillet:

St John Chrysostom urges his hearers to give alms to the beggars who gathered at the church doors. The Law of 321, which made the Church a legal person, had led to the multiplication of charitable gifts and legacies. The church of Antioch supported 3000 poor people out of the revenues of a single bequest, without taking into account what was daily distributed to prisoners, the sick, and foreigners. St John the Almoner, Patriarch of Alexandria – whose church owned a small merchant fleet – fed as many as 7,500 people daily. Hospitals and refuges abounded in Constantinople. The deacons were in charge of all this.

With such a growth in the charitable function of the church, the deacons increasingly became administrators, and gradually the function of what we might call social welfare was taken over by the state. The deacons, now experienced in the task of administration began more and more to take on a role in church government. This was the second historical function of the diaconate. The more enterprising among the deacons became private secretaries to the local bishop, were given special duties and at times rose to positions of great power and authority.

But it was the liturgical aspect of the diaconal ministry that was eventually to replace both these other functions. The deacon assisted the priest or bishop in the celebration of the sacraments, in Baptism (deaconesses assisted in the baptism of women), Chrismation, Marriage, Unction and Ordination. It is possible that he too heard confessions. At one time the deacon himself gave Communion in both kinds, and would take Communion to the sick.

With time many of these functions ceased to be within the remit of the deacon. He became exclusively the servant, with no right to perform any rite on his own. Not even a bishop, let alone a

priest, could allow or bless the deacon to take services on his own. The deacon may not and must not begin, nor independently perform, any general church service without the participation of the priest. The Deacon is the servant, and not the performer of the Divine Services; he has no right without the blessing and the participation of the priest to vest himself with the sticharion, to cense, to recite the litanies. (*Bulgakov Handbook for Clergy*)

It should also be remembered that there is no special funeral service for deacons. They are buried as laymen. It could also be said, that the deacon's presence at the Eucharist not only can be, but generally is dispensable. The deacon adds nothing to the celebration of the sacrament. In most parishes, apart from cathedrals and larger city churches there are no deacons. They are sometimes regarded as an unnecessary luxury, and get in the way of the direct communication between priest and congregation. I know priests who did not like celebrating with deacons. Both Fr Alexander Schmemman and Metr. Anthony of Sourozh were not too keen on them, and regarded them as an encumbrance.

So it would appear that the deacon no longer deals with the charitable work of the Church, he is rarely to be found as senior administrator, and his liturgical function is surplus to requirements. Sack all deacons!

But I do have to justify my existence and defend the status of my fellow deacons. And in so doing I would like to raise a number of points.

The deacon is buried as a layman, but at the same time he is in his liturgical role continuously moving between the space occupied by the laity – the narthex – and the space occupied by the senior clergy – the sanctuary. He moves between the fallen world and the Kingdom of God. On behalf of the people he gives the instruction to the priest at the start of the Liturgy, 'It is time for the Lord to act, Father, give the Blessing'. He leads the people in prayer in the litanies, telling them what to pray for. He draws their attention to those important moments in the Liturgy with his commands of 'Stand', 'Attend'. At the small entrance he carries the book of the Gospels out of the sanctuary to the people, and it is the deacon who proclaims the Word of God. He brings the elements for the Eucharist from the people to the priest, who in turn offers them to God, and it is the deacon who brings the Holy Gifts from the Holy Table to the people.

The stole which the deacon wears is of course one of the variants of the stole as used to denote various ranks in the Byzantine hierarchy. But at the same time it has also been interpreted as the wings of the angel. Traditionally iconography on the Iconostasis depicts on the side doors, North and South, either angels, or deacons. They are known as the deacons doors. An angel is a messenger, God's herald, who brings messages from God to this world. So it is symbolically in the service of the deacon, who is a go-between, bringing the petitions of the people into the Holy of Holies, and bringing the word of God from the Kingdom of heaven into the fallen world.

The deacon is a servant at the Table of our Lord. The elements which he places on the table are bread and wine, and it is this

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transfigured bread which he brings to the people. It is no accident that the ministry to the poor and hungry is here transformed into a ministry for those hungry for the Word of God, thirsting for the water of Life.

At the same time, it is precisely this ministry, this service at the table of God which must find expression in true charity, in love for those in need. In a mysterious way the deacon represents a eucharistic concept of charity, and is an icon of Christ as the suffering servant. There is a reminder of this in the ordination of the deacon, when the bishop prays: *'Vouchsafe unto him the grace which Thou didst grant unto Stephen, Thy First Martyr'*.

Our beloved Metr. Anthony of Sourozh preached a sermon on the theme of the diaconate on the day of my ordination over forty years ago.

" The first deacons were appointed to express the compassionate love of the Church. The Church is charity, the Church is love, and nothing more. And if it becomes something else, it ceases to be the Church in all its fullness. And this love must be acute, it must be deep, it must be personal, concrete. Already in the first centuries of Christian life, when the Church was all acquiver with love, it chose people with a deep heart, a living heart, men of prayer, and to make them its instruments of love amongst those who were poor, who had been touched by misfortune, cast down by grief.

..... This love, which is the task of the deacon, was later applied by the Church in a special way: it joined the

deacon to the celebration of its sacraments. In this role he protects the prayer of the priest and at the same leads the faithful in prayer. It is he who give you the subject of your prayer. In response to the petitions he pronounces you repeat 'Lord, Have mercy', or put yourselves in the hands of God saying 'To Thee, O Lord'. Or in confessing the truth of the Church, you respond with 'Amen'. This is a great love, step by step the deacons leads us into the mystery of the liturgy, he draws us into its depths, depths which you could not reach alone in your spiritual lives.

But the deacon has another task: he must protect the prayer of the priest. The priest during the service must become prayer itself. He must forget everything, in order to stand as a living flame before God. All the concerns about the service, even the leading of the service is entrusted to the deacon, so that the priest may unreservedly dedicate himself to prayer. Let us wish that our new deacon may pray with such spiritual depth, which will draw you too into the depths of the liturgical mystery. And may he be a man with a peaceful heart and a peaceful body, capable of defending the prayer of the priest, so that the priest may stand undivided before God.

And finally the third thing I want to remind you of, is that the deacon proclaims the Gospel; he is not called upon to preach his word, the act which according to an ancient saying, makes of every priest a fifth Evangelist. His task is simply to proclaim the word. But to be proclaimed with power, with authority, it will reach the hearts and minds with a living conviction only if it is comprehended by the deacon himself, only if it is proclaimed from the depth of his heart and from a true Christian life, as the Word of the Teacher which he has understood and to which he is obedient in all. Therefore he must read the Gospel attentively, he must live the Gospel as fully as he only can, so that when he proclaims it, he does not announce his own condemnation".

Deacon Peter Scorer



ON THE DIACONATE OF WOMEN IN ORTHODOXY

Today, the problem of ordaining women to a formal Church ministry is entirely relevant for Orthodoxy: the active feminist movements in the USA, the ordination of women as priests, pastors or bishops in Scandinavia and the UK, repeatedly put this question on our agenda – that of us, Orthodox women, even if we do not participate beyond attending local congresses. One of the ways to avoiding the question is to divert it towards the diaconate.

My advice is to dodge the question! This is what I mean: if we say that the priesthood of women is the institution or a restoration of the equality of women with men insofar as rights and powers are concerned, then, of course, Orthodoxy is a bit slow to act!

We ought to go back to the ancestral practices of married bishops and women-priests (or bishops where this would prove to be necessary)! And if we understand the problem this way, we ought to go back to the practice of having women deacons, which would be a first stage along this road towards an equality of rights and powers, therefore of privileges. The other aspect of equality, perceived as an elevation to the level of men-priests, is the danger that the latter might say to themselves: "Women will leave us alone if we give in on this diaconate question: after all, it is an ordination, a service at the altar...", etc. And then the diaconate may be interpreted as a sweetie full of promise that men-the-superiors are generously offering to these inferior beings!

I do not think that such an interpretation of the diaconate (even if it is not openly stated) is truly Orthodox!

Fortunately, the diaconate of women has existed in the history of the undivided Church. Its existence is documented as early as the IVth century at least, as a service carried out alongside the priesthood, particularly in assisting the newly baptised. When one baptises an adult woman, one must clothe her in something to cover her nakedness: this service must be rendered by a woman! But one won't bring the diaconate down to the level of a cloakroom problem!

In fact, we need not return to situations of ancient times. The problem of women's ordination has interested and concerned some Orthodox in our own times as well. The book by Elisabeth Behr-Sigel and Bishop Kallistos Ware was published in 1998, but the Orthodox review *Contact* devoted a significant place to this subject at a much earlier date (since 1988: NN° 143 ;159; 174 ;195; 201...) Many of us gratefully remember Elisabeth Behr-Sigel running regular meetings of women groups devoted to this subject, while numerous congresses of the Western Orthodox Fraternité set it as a theme for compulsory working sessions.

Even though the Great Council of Crete (Pentecost 2016) did not raise this question, at the moment there is in existence (in the USA, founded after 1956) The St. Phoebe Center is



dedicated to the theme of women's diaconate. Saint Phoebe herself, mentioned by St Paul (Romans 16, 1-2), is henceforth considered the patron Saint of deaconesses, just as St Stephen is the patron Saint of deacons. Her function has been discovered and she is being discussed – possibly under the influence of the Roman church which celebrates her memory on 3 September. Slav calendars have included her as well.

Another event in this development has happened even more recently: the Synod of the Alexandria Patriarchate, meeting in November 2016, took the decision "to restore the institution of deaconesses" and to establish a commission of bishops "to carry out an examination in depth of this question". "The members of the Synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria wanted to stress that the different problems in the Church's life are not for us deviations from Orthodox truths: they represent adaptations to African reality" (Agency Fides Alexandrie in Egypt). Let us add that a pan-Orthodox conference devoted to the renewal of male and female diaconate is planned for next October in California (USA). The bibliography proposed by this centre shows that the subject of women's diaconate remains very topical.

I personally think that numerous women are already deaconesses without having been ordained – this is a question of charisma. But this – let us face it – is something very different from charitable deeds, or providing baptismal garments, or visiting the sick for heart-to-heart conversations, or indeed for bringing them Communion!

Véronique Lossky





NEWSWORTHY MEETING

HERE IS THE INTERVIEW BY THE YOUNG READER DIMITRI SOLLOGOUB, 18, OF DEACON NIKOLA TRIFUNOVIC OF THE PARISH OF ST. SERGIUS IN PARIS, WHO WAS ORDAINED IN OCTOBER 2016.

Dimitri: Hello, Deacon Nikola. Could you please introduce yourself in a few words, as I do not know you: give some personal data (laughter) before we get to business.

Deacon Nikola: I am Deacon Nikola Trifunovic. I am of Serbian descent, born in Paris from Serbian economic migrants. My parents were non-believers, so I did not grow in a believing Orthodox environment. I have been teaching French, History and Geography in a vocational school for 9 years. I am married, have two children, soon three (since then his daughter Marina was born).

Dimitri: As you said, your family did not believe. Could you please tell us how you came to Orthodoxy?

Deacon Nikola: My parents did not believe, however my father had been baptized; my mother asked to be baptized rather late. They lived in Montenegro and in Serbia during the Communist era.

Churches and monasteries were considered as cultural places, but they were present. I discovered Orthodoxy during the Serbian revival, and the history of Byzantium thanks to my history studies. I was baptised in 1994; but no pastoral work followed, so I attended church at Christmas, Easter, essentials...

Dimitri: Baptism for the sake of history?

Deacon Nikola: Perhaps for the sake of history, but certainly for the sake of an identity. Then there was a personal evolution, fasting, discussing with a priest. I attended a catechetical course for adults at the Serb parish of St. Sava in Paris. Two of my friends started altar service; I began to sing in a choir. It meant Church every Sunday, and Saturday...

Dimitri: How did you become a deacon?

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1976 – 2016

The Maastricht Church celebrates 40 years!

Before it was a shop selling billiard tables – now it is a church which regularly welcomes about twenty worshippers. On November 19th Mother Martha told us about this spiritual journey during the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the parish, which took place in the presence of Mgr. John of Charioupolis, Patriarchal Exarch of the Ecumenical Throne for the Orthodox Parishes of Russian Tradition in Western Europe. «Our church is small but it belongs to us and Mgr. John's presence gives it a new dimension» (Mother Martha).

It was in the seventies, when there was a big missionary effort throughout the Netherlands, that the project to build a local church using the vernacular took shape. This was possible in large part thanks to the work of the late Archimandrite Adrien of Saint John the Forerunner Monastery in The Hague. Thanks to him, the most important liturgical books were translated and we were able to consider celebrating the liturgical circle. Especially, as in 1976 Father Guido - future Archbishop Gabriel - was ordained deacon and priest by Mgr. George (Tarassov) in Paris and sent to Maastricht, to the small community of St John Chrysostom and Saint Servais, which had been received into the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric.

To enable us to start our liturgical activity, the Ursuline sisters put a room in their convent at our disposal without any financial compensation. It was very large and not accessible from the street, so very soon we started looking for a more suitable place for the future of our parish. You cannot say that our ancient and Christian city which produced seven bishops in the first seven centuries who were made saints, had a lack of chapels or churches, but they were all either too expensive, too big or not available for worship. There was only one possibility left: to buy a shop or a rather large old house and turn it into a place of worship, with the possibility of accommodation. Having received the blessing of Archbishop George (Tarassov) and with the help of God, we found a shop, ideally located between the market and the train station, with a bus stop almost in front of the door where nearly all buses stop. The house, built in late 19th century, was abandoned, and the work could begin.

To the flea market

Every Saturday I went to the flea market to sell small souvenirs, most of which Vladyka George (Wagner) had acquired on his travels. There were matriochkas, a small bust of Lenin with a calendar on his chest, or a small model of Tolstoy's samovar, etc. During the year we were able to collect the goodly sum of 20 thousand guilders (just under €10,000 tr)! Father Guido was employed full time, 36 hours a week instructing religion in a college specialising in economics. Me, as I was unemployed, I was able to learn new skills and I've always liked the work of plasterer. One day, as I was taking off the monstrous wallpaper from the ceiling, a small kid from the local Sunday school came in and asked me: 'Is Baby Jesus going to live here?' And the boy offered to fetch his mother's vacuum cleaner to tidy up a bit. Sweet and touching memories.

It took until September 1985 to get the Church ready for the celebrations and Vladyka George (Wagner) came for the consecration. 200 people were present for the celebrations.

The parish grew also thanks to good contacts with Catholics who had been attracted by the richness of our Divine Liturgy. Some

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Deacon Nikola: I have been in the Institute Saint-Serge for 13 years. I have known several churchwardens, several rectors, I had time to see, listen and understand; finally, Fr Rector Vladislav (Trembovelski) asked me to become a deacon. I said yes with great joy. I like to communicate, to give; besides we had no deacon. The path was laid out, and it made me happy...

Dimitri: A continuity of the action?

Deacon Nikola: yes, exactly, even if I also could have refused for many reasons. But answering the church's appeal means answering God's appeal, and this is above all. Sometimes, I feel that I run out of time, I would like to have more time for myself, to be with my children and my friends. But I am also aware of my new duties, and ultimately it is a pleasure for me to fulfil them, even if sometimes I feel that I leave everything else aside. I have accepted to become a deacon: when you believe, you know that it does not happen by pure chance. So...

Dimitri: Between needs and duties, your feelings are mixed?

Deacon Nikola: Yes, they are. When I told my wife what I wanted to do, she was very happy for me, and she never had any grudge for all the absences they mean. Actually, I already attended church very regularly, almost all the time: for the Vigil, the Divine Liturgy, but also for the Great Feasts, and during the week when available. Also, for me to become a deacon is the culmination of everything else, of the singing. A deacon does not set the tone, but he brings a dynamic, he sets the tone of the

prayer we say for the others but also for ourselves. It is a responsibility, an honour and a pleasure. To be in harmony with the others, with the spirit of the community of St. Sergius, means also to be in unison spiritually. Fortunately, I am very well supported and surrounded by Fr Vladislav, the members of the choir, Antoine Nivière who is so accurate and knows the ordo so well, Fr Alexis (Pecheff), etc. I made some research, I received explanations, I asked questions, took notes, I have a few books. I am still at the very beginning, and the Great Lent is soon, I must do as best as I can.

Dimitri: The moment of truth! (laughter)

Deacon Nikola: Yes, it is true. But I am carried by the liturgical spirit of St. Sergius, and sustained by my faith. To be a member of the clergy is very important; it changes a lot of things, it gives a very different view of the rites and of the work to do at the altar. For a long time, we had no deacon; but to look at the serving clergy is one thing, to be part of the clergy and to serve is something else. We strive to do as best as possible, for the others and for ourselves. The responsibility is much heavier than one can think, because if I make a mistake, it will break the harmony and the beauty of the celebration, and distract the people during their prayer. I am very lucky, because Fr Vladislav has soon asked me to say homilies. Fr Vladislav says a homily in Russian just after the Gospel, and Fr Alexis talks in French at the end of the Liturgy. But lately Fr Alexis has often been travelling to



have been received into Orthodoxy, others have remained good friends. Among the former I want to mention a group of 5 students from the higher Institute of theology (Roman Catholic) in Heerlen. Two of them have become priests, Father Lambert and Father Joseph, now priest at Breda.

Missionaries

The parish was completely Dutch at that time. The consecration of the Church was the beginning of a period full of momentum and missionary activity. After his work, Father Guido also served the community of Frise, five hours' drive by car from Maastricht. He served in Deventer, before Father Theodore's arrival, and in Breda before Father Martin's. Maastricht was growing. It was only in the «nineties» that the first immigrants from Eastern Europe arrived: Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian. But holding services in the Dutch language was an impediment.

In 1993 Father Lambert was ordained priest by Vladyka George and appointed Rector of the parish, since Vladyka George had asked Father Gabriel, who had since become a monk and archimandrite, to serve the parish in Liège, after the departure of Father Nicolas Koschinsky.

The beginning of a difficult century

The beginning of the 21st century was catastrophic for Orthodoxy in the Netherlands because the number of priests went from 6 to 1. Vladyka Gabriel left for Cork, Father Lambert for Nantes, Father Martin - deceased, Father Pachom, a diabetic, had both legs amputated and moved to a nursing home, and Father Seraphim left the priesthood from overwork. We only had Father Theodore left. For a few months an American priest, an Orthodox 'Padre' from a NATO base, came to celebrate with us.

At that time, the city of Maastricht went through some important sociological developments. Initially the University, which was established in 1981, only had a medical school with 100 students, all Dutch speaking. Then with an unprecedented influx of foreign students, mainly from Southern and Eastern Europe the university grew. After the signing of the «Maastricht Treaty» (1992), it was granted the right to award European degrees. Other disciplines followed: such as economics, trade, hospital management, tourism, the Institute of translators and interpreters, and of course fine arts, which were already taught in higher education and were upgraded to university status: Theatre, Music and the Visual Arts. But the biggest change was that the language of instruction was

celebrate in other parishes, so I started to say homilies. I try to be concise, to concentrate on one idea, one thing, one aspect, so that people remember it.

I was ordained by our Archbishop John on the Feast day of Saint Sergius. When we spoke of the ordination, I was impressed by his kindness; all was done with a great simplicity.

Dimitri: You have always celebrated in the church of St. Sergius. Will it be different now?

Deacon Nikola: A parish is not a place where faithful come and go, it is a community. However, Archbishop John has warned me that we are in great need of priests and of members of the clergy; therefore I may have to go where I shall be needed. Still, I hope that I shall be able to be often in the parish of my family; If I have to take them all with me every time, it will simply be impossible to manage.

Dimitri: One last question. You have been a deacon for not so long, but is it a step to go further as a member of the clergy...

Deacon Nikola: This is one of the first questions parishioners ask me, even a statement – “soon a priest” – on the very day of my ordination. (laughter)

Dimitri: Well, we have not enough priests, so...

Deacon Nikola: Really, I do not think of it at all. The social and human sides of the work of a deacon make me happy. I think that the diaconate is not developed as it should be; a deacon is not here only as an ornament. In my mind, we need to develop the social duty, to help organize things; the deacon should be here to help. He should be the hand to reach out. It may mean social or pastoral work, or catechisation. Just imagine that a member of the clergy visits a sick person; imagine what it means for this person, for old ones, for lonely or lost ones; the deacon can help with a word, a talk, if the priest has no time. Of course, you need time for this, a little sacrifice in a society too much in a hurry and too individualistic.

Dimitri: The deacon has a specific social role with people.

Deacon Nikola: Social ... Well, it is more socio-spiritual, if I may say so.

Dimitri: Yes, a small talk to cheer up one's life, to steer people nearer to Christ.

Deacon Nikola: Yes, exactly; This should be our aim.

Dimitri: Thank you very much for this discussion, Deacon Nikola.

Deacon Nikola: Thank you, Dimitri.

English. Now 15% of the inhabitants of Maastricht are students and half are foreigners.

A second University, this time Japanese, has also been set up.

And now

And in 2003 Vladyka, newly elected Archbishop, was leaving for Paris. And I followed him. Our parish was without a priest and remained closed until 2005. Once Father Deacon Athanasius went to Paris, and became Vladyka's assistant, I was able to return to Maastricht, where I found another three people. But soon new parishioners came: Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, Cypriots, Scots, Georgians, Albanians... at one time the parish had 16 nationalities. But: no Dutch-speaking priests, or Dutch-speaking singers. And little by little the language of the services became Slavonic, with some English, and we obstinately kept a bit of Dutch. Vladyka Gabriel sent a priest twice a month from Paris: in general one of the students of the Saint Serge Institute. This facility was removed after his death, so that I had to go to Poland to seek assistance from Metropolitan Sawa, hoping he might send a student wishing to study in Louvain. In return we asked him to celebrate twice a month.

Hope is reborn with the help of God and under the auspices of our new Archbishop Msgr. John, who came to preside over this beautiful 40-year celebration of our parish. Its structure is already in place. Our President is the Dean, Father Theodore (van der Voort). The serving priest is Hieromonk Pawel, a young student from Poland who began his PhD in Theology in Louvain, Belgium, also in English. We also have a few young women with their small children; about 25 worshippers regularly attend our Church.

I would like to conclude this presentation by warmly thanking Father Philippe, superior of the monastery of Chevetogne which opened its doors for the last months of Vladyka Gabriel's life. Assisted by Father Christophe and the Deacon Athanasius and in the presence of Father Philippe - at that time superior of the monastery - Vladyka was able to tonsure Michel (Evelson) monk. Vladyka so wished to remain in the monastery until the end of his life, but the state of his health was already too serious. I can't express my gratitude enough for this huge benedictine generosity that sweetened the last months of Vladyka Gabriel's life.

Give thanks to God for everything!

Mother Martha
www.destem-maastricht.nl



ORDINATION FOR ARCHBISHOP JEAN

the Deacon **Lazarus Christensen** was ordained **priest** for the church of the Gudsmøders Beskyttelse in Copenhagen (Denemark)

the Deacon **Weniamin Zervos** was ordained **priest** for the Community Heiliger Martin von Tours in Balingen (Germany)

Bartholomeos Cobben was ordained **subdeacon** for the St. John-Chrysostom and St. Servais Church (Maastricht – Pays-Bas)

the Reader **Jean-Paul Bleré** was ordained **subdeacon** for the Church Sainte -Trinité (Paris – Fr)

the Subdeacon **Ernsts Serafims Dregvalds** was ordained **deacon** for the Church Notre-Dame-du-Signe (Paris – Fr)

M. **Matthieu Jurconi** was ordained **reader** for the Church Sainte -Trinité (Paris – Fr)

the Deacon **Christos Kapinga** was ordained **priest** for the church Sainte -Trinité (Paris – Fr)

the reader **Ivan Birr** was ordained **subdeacon** end **deacon** for the Church Sainte -Trinité (Paris – Fr)

the Deacon **Oleg Turcan** was ordained **priest** for the church of la Nativité-du-Christ (Florence – Italy)

M. **Pierre Benic** was ordained **reader** for the Church St-Séraphin (Paris – Fr)

M. **Nicolas Vodé** was ordained **reader** for the Church e St-Séraphin (Paris – Fr)

M. **Renaud Presty** was ordained **reader** for the Church St-Séraphin (Paris – Fr)

the Reader **Renaud Presty** was ordained **subdeacon** end **deacon** for the Church St-Séraphin (Paris – Fr)

the Reader **Nicolas Petit** was ordained **subdeacon** end **deacon** for the Church Trinité et Saint-Hilaire-de-Poitiers (Poitiers – Fr)

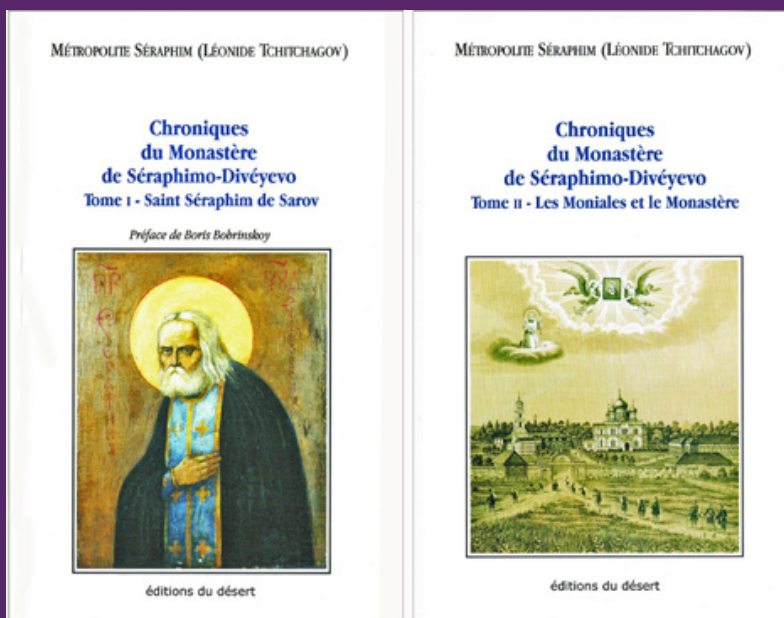
M. **Sylvain Baron** was ordained **reader** for la chapelle du Saint-Esprit du Sépulcre à Plérin pour la communauté Saint-Brieuc (Fr)

M. **Theophile Vitalis** was ordained **reader** for la chapelle de la Dormition de la Mère de Dieu à Plumaudan pour la communauté Saint-Brieuc (Fr)

Les Chroniques du monastère de Séraphimo-Divéyevo

Le monastère Notre-Dame-de-Toute-Protection vient de faire paraître, avec les Éditions du Désert, les Chroniques du monastère de Séraphimo-Divéyevo, ouvrage de référence sur la vie, la personnalité et l'enseignement de saint Séraphin de Sarov (tome 1 – 560 pages) et sur l'histoire riche en événements et en figures spirituelles du couvent de Divéyevo (tome 2 – 450 pages) que saint Séraphin a fondé et dirigé de loin.

Pour commander :
Monastère Notre-Dame-de-Toute-Protection, 11 rue de la Forêt,
89400 Bussy-en-Othe, France
monastere.bussy@wanadoo.fr
Prix : 27€ tome I – 23 € tome II
frais de port en sus



Ces Chroniques ont été composées à partir de 1891 par le futur métropolite et saint nouveau-martyr Séraphin Tchitchagov (1856-1937) à partir des archives du monastère de Divéyevo et des souvenirs des moniales dont certaines avaient personnellement connu saint Séraphin. Travail colossal réalisé avec une grande rigueur historique dans la recherche, la vérification et le traitement des sources, les Chroniques sont avant tout une œuvre spirituelle qui dessine le portrait le plus complet de saint Séraphin, relate directement ou indirectement ses enseignements – elles sont la source de tous les livres qui ont été écrits sur le saint –, mais présente aussi les riches figures de ses disciples (comme Mantourov ou Motovilov) et des saintes hégoumènes, moniales et folles-en-Christ qui ont illustré ce monastère.

Père Boris Bobrinskoy, qui a participé aux travaux de publication, a écrit la préface de cet ouvrage.