



Today we celebrate the memory of the **Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.**

Since ancient times, the Christian Church has been strengthened by examples of its martyrs' unshakable faith. These examples, passed down through generations of Christians, have nurtured and strengthened the Holy Church. From the times of the apostles, Christians have gathered around the holy relics of martyrs, celebrating their memory and looking up to their standing in faith despite torture and persecution as a source of strength and inspiration in their own spiritual lives.

Undoubtedly, the New Martyrs and Confessors recalled the holy examples of the ancient martyrs as they themselves were tortured, persecuted, and exiled by the Communist regime. Countless faithful of the 20th century—members of the Royal Family and peasants, professors and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, clergy and lay people, men, women, and children—united around the memory of Christian martyrs, and through their intercession were able to defeat the torturers through unwavering standing in their faith in Christ.

Let us always have the holy example of the new martyrs before our eyes as we live our lives. Let us find the source of their strength and drink of this fountain of immortality. As we go about our lives, sometimes giving to God five or ten minutes of our day, sometimes a couple of hours from our week, sometimes even less, let us remember those who gave all, their whole lives and their earthly end to God. Let us ask that God, through the prayers of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, grant us strength to live our lives the way they lived theirs—in an unshakable faith in Christ and in service to His Holy Church.

Fr Sergii Sveshnikov, Church of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, Mulino, Oregon

Sunday, February 5

*Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee
New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia*

Divine Liturgy 9:30 A.M.

Beginning of Fast-free Week

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Wednesday, February 8

Moleben 5:30 P.M.

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Sunday, February 12

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Divine Liturgy 9:30 A.M.

Synaxis of the Universal Teachers and Holy Hierarchs: Basil the Great,
Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom

Holy Water: Who Needs Experiments on Holy Things?

By Vladimir Gurbolikov. Reprinted from *The Road to Emmaus*



Not long ago, I became involved in a discussion about holy water. It began with an article published on an Orthodox internet site on the exploration of the physical and chemical properties of holy water. I could not help commenting on the site. Why do people do these experiments? And why should such things be published in Orthodox forums? The editor of the site responded by

saying that the experiments like this are viewed positively by some well-educated clergy. Such investigations, he says, “may be a new testimony to the truth of the Gospels and Orthodoxy in our age of doubt and lack of faith. “ Here I, a layman, should have kept silent, but I responded with a new comment, and whether due to this or to some other circumstance, the ill-fated article was removed from the site that very day.

Is it acceptable to investigate things that are holy for Christians by means of traditional science? May holy water be subject to physical and chemical experiments in order to reveal its difference from ordinary water? If it may be done with water, then why may people not do it with myrrh from wonder-working icons, or incorrupt relics of saints? And finally, with Holy Communion? In my opinion, such experiments are either conscious blasphemy, deeply masked disbelief, or more often, a serious misunderstanding of the very foundations of our faith.

The Church has sacraments and rites. In them we pray that God give us grace, and this grace in some mysterious way influences man through the physical matter over which sacred actions have been served. Does this mean that blessed matter must have different chemical and physical properties?

When we speak of physical and chemical properties of this or that substance we mean those properties can be studied by scientific means. The properties have to be reproducible and cannot depend on the personality of the investigator or on anyone’s will. But there can be no such objectivity when we are speaking about God’s grace. There is grace in blessed matter, that is, God’s direct action, His energy. But we cannot decide for God in what exact way His grace will reveal itself. He can heal someone who drinks holy water with faith and prayer, but instead of healing, He may send the person peace of mind and soul. Or He may choose not to manifest Himself externally in any way because, under the circumstances, this might not be good for the person.

There is a difference between magic and Christian consciousness: magic doesn’t accept freedom. It proceeds from the assumption that matter and spirit can be manipulated to achieve the desired effect. Press a button, the lamp will switch on. Turn the left-hand handle, cold water flows; turn the right handle, here is hot water. Or rub a lamp and an obedient genie will build you a palace. Christianity is altogether different.

So, let’s return to the question: do the properties of water change after it has been blessed? Or should we conclude from our words about freedom that from the point of view of natural science holy water does not differ from ordinary water? That its optical density is *always* the same, that it *always* freezes at the same temperature, that the time it remains fresh is *always* the same as ordinary water? ‘Always’ seems to be the key word here; if we remove it, then we have some room for freedom. Although we don’t know how God’s grace acts in holy water, we have the right to assume that in some cases grace can manifest as changes in physical and chemical properties, but to predict when and for whom? This we cannot know.

So when a scientist takes a test-tube with holy water and studies it in his laboratory, what will his experiment show? Will it reveal any extraordinary properties? The answer is obvious: yes, it will, if God allows it. Perhaps, unknown to us, this scientist needs an impulse towards faith, and God sees that a difference in optical density may completely change his soul. But if this does happen, it will be an episode in those unique circumstances. By no means can we speak of this event as being reproducible, which is a criterion of scientific validity. God is not obliged to change the optical density in every separate vessel with holy water.

Where does the opinion come from that such experiments can become a “new testimony to the truth of the Gospels and Orthodoxy in our time of doubt and shallow belief?” I will risk an answer—from materialism and a worship of science that are deeply ingrained in our souls. This is the result of cultural stagnation, of a belief that if science confirms something, this ‘something’ is

good and correct. In many people's minds, scientific approval still automatically raises the status of religion, and this is why so many believers have welcomed the slightest confirmation of every little thing. This is very sad and naïve because Christianity does not need any scientific, artistic or political crutches. The Church does not deny these elements, but can easily do without them. Real testimony to the faith lies in the real Christian life of people.

..... News From All The Ends Of The Earth



Fr Christopher on C-130 flight to Afghanistan

Kabul, Afghanistan: During the Nativity season that just passed, Fr. Christopher Allen, a priest of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America who is also a Lieutenant in the Navy Chaplain Corps currently serving with the Marines on Okinawa, traveled to Afghanistan to provide the Holy Mysteries to US and Coalition Orthodox military and civilian personnel. He traveled with his assistant, Religious Program Specialist 2nd Class, Jimmy Todd. "RP's," as they are called, are the sailors who act as assistants and bodyguards to the military chaplains. When Fr. Christopher arrived in Afghanistan, Fr. Jerome Cwiklinski, a Navy Captain and the senior Orthodox priest in the Navy Chaplain Corps, was just finishing several weeks there.



Fr Christopher and Fr Jerome

He and Fr. Christopher con-celebrated Divine Liturgy on the Sunday when their time overlapped. In addition to providing specifically for the needs of Orthodox troops, Fr. Christopher also assisted the long-term chaplain staff by visiting the wounded, taking the watch as the Duty Chaplain, and providing a general ministry of counseling and presence. He also served a Moleben of Thanksgiving with special petitions for healing and protection for the assembled Coalition Forces Chaplains (US,

British and Danish) at their weekly meeting. For many, it was their first experience of any form of Orthodox worship. Others told the priest it brought back warm and joyful memories of attending Orthodox services back home while they were visiting close Orthodox friends.



Liturgy at Camp Leatherneck

Throughout his month-long tour there, Fr. Christopher continually met members of the Coalition Forces who had a great interest in Holy Orthodoxy. He is grateful for the Lord's merciful protection of himself, his assistant and all his colleagues.

Amsterdam, Holland: Court proceedings lasted seven years between Klaas Brune, a Dutch retiree, and the government of the Netherlands. The retiree is determines that the government has to compensate his expenses for his trips to brothels. Before he retired, the man had worked for the government. The Dutch laws stipulate that the government is to pay for the health bills of its employees. It is worth noting that the Netherlands are among the world leaders when it comes to indulging the human vices.

Belgrade, Serbia: Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has expressed concerns about the situation of Christians Kosovo and Metohija. "Serbs living in Kosovo and Metohija have found themselves pawns of a big geopolitical game. Many countries are indifferent to them and they have to live in closed enclaves in daily fear of their hostile environment," the Patriarch said in an interview with the Serb newspaper *Vechernije Novosti*. "Our brothers in faith have great courage not to leave their long-suffering land and their holy places. They live like prisoners of a concentration camp, who have been denied even their basic right to life," he said. Patriarch Kirill accused politicians of "glaring injustice, double standards and lies, and declaration of their adherence of ideals of humanism and human rights while turning a blind eye to the hell created by extremists with support from their foreign sponsors." "Brothers, the Russian Church, the Orthodox Russian people will never abandon you," the Patriarch said, adding that the Russian Church plans to take specific measures to support Kosovo monasteries.

Damascus, Syria: On January 29, 2012, following the murder of hieromonk Bassileus (Nasser), another act of aggression against a holy site of the Antiochian Patriarchate was perpetrated. The monastery of the Nativity of the Mother of God in the town of Sadnaya, where a wonderworking icon of the Mother of God has been kept for many centuries, was fired upon. According to tradition, the miraculous Sadnaya Mother of God icon was painted by Apostle Luke. On Sunday, while many pilgrims and worshippers were present in the monastery, a shell was fired at its walls. By God's Providence the shell did not explode when it hit the wall.

Bangkok, Thailand: The Law of God by archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy, the fundamental book containing 890 pages of the basic truths of the Orthodox Christian Faith, the work which has been the main catechetical book throughout the Orthodox world for several decades, has been published



in Thailand in the Thai language. The translation and publication of the book began with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. He, at the time a metropolitan, visited Thailand in 2001 and noted the absence of fundamental catechetical materials in Thai. It was not only necessary to translate the text in order to adequately explain Orthodox teaching, but find equivalents, since the Thai language lacks many religious and philosophical notions. The translation was made by Rev. Danai (Daniel) Vanna, the first Thai Orthodox priest, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Theological seminary, and by, among others, Ms Napatra Aphichaphong, a former official translator of English at the Parliament of Thailand who now studies at the St. Petersburg Theological seminary. In consideration of the work done for the benefit of the Church, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia awarded Archpriest Danai Vanna with a golden pectoral cross and Ms Napatra Aphichaphong with a medal of St. Euphrosynia, Grand Princess of Moscow.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. February bulletin cover sponsors are Polomchak family — Wedding Anniversary.
2. Last week, the saga of the parking lot light was ended. The work on repairing it started about two months ago, when Don Anthony and Michael Petyo first tried to fix it. At last, the dusk-to-dawn light in our parking lot is repaired by our parish board president. We are grateful to Michael for his untiring labors for the church.
3. Please, continue to look, when grocery shopping, for the ingredients needed for our major fund-raising products. We need margarine, flour, nuts, sugar, sour cream and sour kraut. Thank you for your continuous support!
4. Next Sunday, February 12, a collection will be taken at the end of the Divine Liturgy for our Mission Fund.
5. There is not fasting this week — the week of the Publican and Pharisee, neither Wednesday nor Friday.
5. **ATTENTION:** THE PRICE FOR THE VOTIVE 7-DAY GLASS CANDLES GOES UP FROM \$4.00 TO \$5.00, DUE TO THE INCREASE IN COST OF THE CANDLES.