



St John's Church News No 42: December 2012

**ЦЕРКОВЬ СВТ. ИОАННА ШАНХАЙСКОГО
ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Military Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 2AN**

His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias
Most Rev. Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of ROCOR
Very Rev. Mark, Archbp of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain

For this newsletter in electronic form: www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/zchurchnews.htm

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Расписание богослужений / Services in December

Saturday 1 December

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 2 December

10.00 am: Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Monday 3 December

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение праздника Введения во храм Пресвятой Богородицы.

Tuesday 4 December

10.00 am: Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия праздника Введения во храм Пресвятой Богородицы.

Saturday 8 December

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 9 December

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 15 December

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 16 December

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 22 December

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 23 December

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 29 December

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 30 December: Sunday of the Holy Ancestors / Св. Праотцов

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Dates for Your Diary / Важные Даты на Следующий Год

Christmas: Monday 7 January

Рождество Христово: Понедельник 7 января

Easter: Sunday 5 May / Пасха: Воскресенье 5 мая

Patronal Feast: Saturday 29 June

Престольный праздник: Суббота 29 июня

The Dante Affair

Olga Sedakova

The British Government has supported the right of an employer to dismiss an employee for openly wearing a cross in her workplace. Moreover, it is sticking to this position in two other cases which have been taken to court by Christians who are defending their right to wear a cross.

Below, Olga Sedakova, poet, writer, philologist, ethnographer and the holder of a Ph D in theology from the European University of the Humanities, reflects on the battles for the cross.

The fight to wear a cross in Britain is merely an episode in a whole battlefield of cases concerning 'religious symbolism' in the 'post-Christian' world. I am a direct witness to another episode in the struggle.

Two years ago the Council of Europe demanded that crucifixes be removed from State schools in Italy. Schoolchildren and teachers alike were having none of this and they took to the streets. The argument behind the European decision was that it defended those whom such a symbol might offend – Non-Christians or simply atheists.

Among others, schoolchildren held up posters saying 'The majority also have their rights'. It was not that all these Italian children and teachers were zealous believers: for many of them (perhaps for most of them) the decision was simply a mockery of an ancient tradition. And they were not having it.

Yesterday I read in «Corriere della Sera» of the outbreak of another battle in this great war: The Commission of European Experts, headed by an Italian Valentina Sereni, has been examining Dante from a legal perspective and concluded that his 'Divine Comedy' must be banned from school curricula because it contains 'elements of racism', for which criminal liability has now been established. At the very least the text must be censored.

I have studied Dante for many years and was so struck by this diagnosis (racism!) that I read the article to the end.

The Divine Comedy has once before been prohibited reading, but for a different reason. This was because Dante spoke of a number of popes of his age and the right of the pontiffs to wield secular power in such a way that it could only be termed heresy. Dante was one of the first to defend the concept of 'the division of powers' into spiritual and secular, in other words, he was one of the fathers of secularism.

This idea, which was implemented in Europe only much later, after the Enlightenment, presupposed that social life is regulated not by theocratic laws, but by universal laws of reason and morality which are presumed to be the same for all people and are contained in human nature itself.

The accusation of heresy was long ago dropped from the Divine Comedy. The papal coat of arms contains two keys - one representing secular power, the other spiritual power – but nobody for a long time has mentioned the secular power of the Church. John Paul II was a personal patron of the Dante Society. Today's demand to prohibit Dante comes precisely from secularism, at least the form which it has taken today.

So Dante stands accused of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and homophobia.

The first accusation is based on his portrayals of Judas (!), Caiaphas, the high priest Anna, the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees. But Dante invented nothing here; he simply followed the New Testament story. However, that does not redeem him, because the Gospels themselves have been shown to be 'sources of anti-Semitism'.

His Islamophobia is shown by his portrayal of Mohammed who is imprisoned in hell with the creators of schism, suffering terrible and humiliating torments.

There are also homosexuals in Dante's inferno. These he calls sodomites and terms their sin as 'sin against nature'. Dante meets his old friend Brunetto Latini there. Conclusion: homophobia.

Do interpretations of this sort not remind us of the Soviet period, when all works of art from all over world were interpreted from the viewpoint of 'the class struggle' and there were debates about, say, Pindar or Shakespeare? (By the way Shakespeare is now also suspected of anti-Semitism for his 'Merchant of Venice').

But there is a difference. Communist doctrine was never, in any way, a form of secularism, as many of us think. We never had secularism. The Soviet system was an 'ideocracy', that is, a quasi- or para-religion.

Universal, 'neutral' reason was never recognised in Soviet Russia as a criterion, unlike 'the all-conquering teaching'. 'Faith' and 'a total commitment to the cause of the Party' was what was demanded of loyal citizens. They were also required to be 'militant atheists'. This was the world of national rituals (often copied from Church rituals and reinterpreted) and 'shrines': the portraits of leaders played the role of icons, without which it was unthinkable to leave any official premises unadorned. This para-religion had its own 'martyrs' and 'prophets'. Here there was no secularism, that is, no space for the reason devoid of any mythology

Now such 'shrines' and icons' are being defined as 'neo-pagan'. Then they were considered to be just 'neo', very, very 'neo'. An ideocracy is a special spiritual education, a 'transformed' religiosity. In it, pagan symbols are also at the disposition of very different ideas, different idols, untrusted by morality or reason.

Communist doctrine worked through a 'majority' – any minority was viewed as something to be eradicated. Secularism – our starting point – defends minorities and calls on the majority to give way to those against whom it traditionally discriminated.

However, as a result, it turns out that Dante is unacceptable to both secularism and Communism. The Communists tried to censor him in their own way – they liked his hellish Inferno, but his 'Paradise' was another matter.

I think that when we hear of events like 'the Dante affair', or the removal of crucifixes or the prohibition to wear a cross, we can say that secularism is becoming a new ideology, that is, a new para-religion, which categorically rejects the use of the reason.

Reason alone should have been enough for the experts to understand that Dante, 'a 13th century Christian', as he called himself, could not relate to other religions in any other way. And that much later concepts of 'anti-Semitism' and 'Islamophobia' are not relevant here. And that Dante could not doubt in the Church's and the Bible's teaching about sin.

An ideology – unlike secularism, as it was originally conceived – puts forward certain eternal positions, true for all people and for all time. It cannot help distorting the facts so that they fit its interpretation. It has to hush up or falsify reality, both contemporary and historical. We are witnesses to the 'ideologisation' of secularism, and that, as we know, will only leave burned earth behind it.

Moreover, the most important characteristic of ideologies is that they do not in any way respect humanity, they all want to decide every detail for us. Paradoxically, secularism, which defends human dignity and the freedom of the conscience, now looks at human beings as those who will read of the torments of Mohammed in Dante's 'Inferno' and at once become Islamophobes. You must not imagine that someone will think about what he has read and draw his own conclusions. You must simply censor the dangerous part.

And here is another conclusion from 'the Dante affair' (after which may well follow 'the Shakespeare Affair' or 'the Pushkin Affair'): We can see just to what extent the European (and Russian) classics were fundamentally Christian. We have no other classics. So, if we do not want to offend anyone, we shall just have to have nothing at all.

Дело Данте

Правительство Великобритании поддержало право работодателя увольнять сотрудника за открытое ношение креста на работе. Этой позиции правительство Британии будет придерживаться в деле по искам двух христианок, которые в суде отстаивают свое право носить крест.

Поэт, прозаик, филолог, этнограф, почетный доктор богословия Европейского гуманитарного университета [Ольга Седакова](#) размышляет о битвах за крест...

Британская борьба с ношением креста – только эпизод в широкой панораме битвы с «религиозной символикой», развернувшейся в «постхристианском» мире. Мне пришлось быть непосредственным свидетелем другого эпизода этой битвы.

Два года назад Совет Европы потребовал, чтобы [в Италии из школьных помещений были удалены Распятия](#). Школьники и преподаватели не дали этого сделать. Они вышли на улицы. Аргументом для европейского решения была защита тех, кого такой символ может обижать: иноверных или просто атеистов.

Школьники, среди других, несли и такой плакат: «Большинство тоже имеет свои права!» Не то чтобы все эти итальянские дети и учителя были ревностными верующими: для многих из них (может быть, для большинства) этот акт был просто издевательством над их многовековой традицией. И они его не допустили.

Вчера я прочла в «Corriere della sera» о начале нового сражения в этой большой войне: комиссия европейских экспертов, возглавляемая итальянкой Валентиной Серени, изучив Данте в правовой перспективе, заключила, что «Божественная Комедия» должна быть исключена из школьных программ, поскольку содержит в себе «элементы расизма», за который в наше время установлена криминальная ответственность. По меньшей мере, текст ее должен быть подвергнут цензуре.

Многие годы занимаясь Данте, я была так поражена этим диагнозом (расизм!), что прочла статью целиком.

«Комедия» уже входила некогда в список запрещенных книг, но по другому поводу: ее автор высказывался о современных ему Папах и вообще о праве Понтифика на светскую власть таким образом, что иначе как еретичеством это не могло быть названо. Данте был одним из первых, защищавших идею «разделения властей», духовной и светской: иначе говоря – одним из отцов [секуляризма](#).

Этот проект, осуществившийся в Европе много позже, после Просвещения, предполагает, что общественная жизнь управляется не теократическими законами, а универсальными законами разума и морали, общими, как предполагалось, для всех людей и заключенными в самой человеческой природе.

Обвинение в еретичестве давным-давно снято с «Комедии». Два ключа – мирской и духовной власти – сохраняются в гербах Пап, но о мирской власти церкви речь уже давно не идет. Иоанн-Павел II лично покровительствовал Дантовскому обществу. Теперешнее требование запретить Данте исходит как раз от секуляризма в той его форме, которую он принял к нашим дням.

Итак, Данте обвиняется в антисемитизме, исламофобии и гомофобии.

Первый пункт обвинения аргументируется тем, как представлен у него Иуда (!), Каиафа, первосвященник Анна, Синедрион и [фарисеи](#). Надо сказать, что Данте совершенно ничего нового здесь не придумал: он полностью следует евангельскому повествованию. Однако это не спасает его текст, поскольку сами Евангелия объявляются «источником антисемитизма».

Исламофобия Данте выражается в его изображении Магомета, который заточен в Аду среди сеятелей раскола, где терпит страшные и унижительные мучения.

В Аду у Данте мучатся также и [гомосексуалисты](#), которых он именует содомитами и классифицирует их грех как «бунт против природы». Там Данте встречает своего дорогого учителя Брунетто Латини. Вывод: гомофобия.

Не правда ли, герменевтика такого рода напоминает нам советские времена, когда все мировые создания оценивались с точки зрения «классовой борьбы» и велись дебаты о том, прогрессивен ли был, скажем, Пиндар или Шекспир (Шекспир, кстати, теперь также подвергается подозрению в антисемитизме из-за «Венецианского купца»).

Но разницу нельзя не отметить. Коммунистическая доктрина отнюдь не была разновидностью секуляризма, как многие у нас считают. Секуляризма у нас никогда не было. Советская система была идеократией, то есть квази- или парарелигией.

Не универсальный «нейтральный» разум признавался здесь точкой отсчета, а «всепобеждающее учение». От лояльного гражданина требовалась «вера» и «безграничная преданность делу партии». От него требовался также «воинствующий атеизм». Это был мир всенародных ритуалов (часто «списанных» с церковных и переосмысленных) и «святынь»: портреты вождей исполняли роль «икон», без которых было немислимо любое казенное помещение. У этой парарелигии были свои «мученики» и «пророки». Никаким секуляризмом (то есть, прозрачным от всякой мифологии пространством разума) здесь не пахнет.

Теперь эти «святыни» и «иконы» пытаются определить как неоязычество. Тогда очень, очень НЕО. Идеократия – особое духовное образование, «превращенная» религиозность. Языческие символы здесь также поставлены на службу совсем другим идеям, другим идолам, не поверяемым ни моралью, ни разумом.

Коммунистическая доктрина оперировала «большинством», считая все меньшинства явлением, подлежащим искоренению. Секуляризм – с чего мы начали – защищает меньшинства, призывая «большинство» чем-то поступиться ради тех, кого традиционно дискриминировали.

Однако получается так, что в результате и того, и другого Данте оказывается неприемлемым (коммунисты пытались по-своему цензуровать его, но «Ад» им скорее нравился: вот «Рай» — другое дело).

Я думаю, знакомясь с такими событиями, как «дело Данте», «вынос Распятый», запрет носить крест, мы можем констатировать, что секуляризм становится новой идеологией, то есть новой парарелигией, которая решительно отказывается от употребления разума.

Простой разум должен был бы подсказать экспертам, что Данте, «христианин 13 века», как он себя называл, просто не мог относиться к другим религиям иначе. Что позднейшие понятия «антисемитизма» или «исламофобии» здесь не могут действовать. Что Данте не мог подвергать сомнению церковное и библейское учения о грехе.

Идеология – в отличие от секуляризма, как его замыслили, – предлагает некие вечные постулаты, для всех и на все времена. Она неизбежно должна извращать факты, чтобы они укладывались в ее интерпретации. Она должна замалчивать или фальсифицировать реальность – и современную, и историческую. Мы присутствуем при превращении секуляризма в идеологию, после которой остается, как мы знаем, выжженная земля.

И важнейшая черта идеологий: они совершенно не уважают человека, они все до мелочи хотят решить за него. Парадоксальным образом секуляризм, отстаивавший достоинство человека и свободу совести, смотрит на него теперь так же: читатель, прочитавший о муках Магомета в дантовском «Аду», непременно станет исламофобом. Предположить, что человек может обдумать прочитанное и сделать свои выводы, уже нельзя. Нужно просто изъять этот опасный фрагмент.

И еще один вывод из «дела Данте» (за которым вполне могут последовать «дело Шекспира», «дело Пушкина» и т.д.): мы видим, в какой мере христианской в своих основах была европейская (и русская) классика. Другой классики у нас нет. Таким образом, чтобы никого не обижать, нам придется остаться совершенно ни с чем.

Metropolitan Daniel: “A Christian is an eternal optimist, for he knows that the Lord rules over us”

Metropolitan Daniel of Archangelsk and Kholmogorsk spoke to us about the proper relationship between Church and society, about what to say in response to

criticism/condemnation of priests, about the Church's mission today, about patience, and about what to do to put an end to excessive drinking in the villages.

Metropolitan Daniel gave me such detailed direction—turn right upon exiting the last car, then another right, then left at the passageway—that the thought kept running through my mind throughout the journey: Does the Metropolitan of Archangelsk and Kholmogorsk actually travel about Moscow by Metro? As instructed, on arriving at the designated house, I once again telephoned the Metropolitan. Over the phone, a voice joyously exclaimed, “I can see you!” I look up and see, framed by a lighted window, a tall person dressed in black, who is waving enthusiastically.

When you talk to him—even over the phone—it is as if you have finally located a very close relative, from whom for some reason you have been separated for years. People say of Metropolitan Daniel that he is a man without affectations, that at any given moment, any priest of his enormous metropolia can meet with him, that he is quick off the mark, traveling about his diocese and meeting with the people. Still, I asked him about the Metro. While pouring enormous cups of tea, the hierarch answered “In Moscow you have such traffic jams, that I sometimes ride the Metro, and even enjoy doing so. Today, in his recently-formed Metropolia, church life is in full swing, possibly more active than anywhere else.



— Your Grace, today many Orthodox people feel the need to become involved with what is happening all around us. First of all, how should we become involved? Through prayer, or through public expression?

— Both. We must both pray and express ourselves when it concerns our faith, our activities in life, the upbringing of the next generation—when it affects the morality of our people. After all, today we have access to the mass media, the internet. And of course, we should express our activism.

Often you get the impression that the internet has been taken over by people who have no more than a sixth grade education, who have learned nothing, have dropped out of school, but nonetheless have begun to live on forums and internet mass media sites. But when someone piles abuse upon everyone, I have no interest in what he has to say, because he does not have God living in his soul. Another point: There are optimists, there are pessimists, and there are also whining complainers who pour out abuse upon the faith, upon our ecclesiastical authorities, and upon the entire country—for them everything is bad. If you read your fill of such things you will lose the desire to live any longer.

Of course, a Christian will talk about problems but his talk will be combined with hope for change. What we say is different from what non-believers say. Let us suppose that both they and we face some hopeless situation. We have the hope that if we ask, if we appeal to the Lord, He can help us. The non-believer has no one to turn to.

There exists an opinion that we have reached some “point of no return,” and that it is impossible for Russia to find its way out of a dead end. From the Soviet point of view, that really is the case, because it is impossible to save ourselves by our own efforts alone.

Do you remember the place in Divine Scripture when the Apostles were horrified to hear the Lord say: *A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Mt. 19:23)? Elsewhere in Scripture we read: *how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* (Mark 10:24).



And here is something that it is very important to understand. In Old Testament times, it was thought that if you had everything in abundance, if the Lord granted you *all good things*, it meant that you were pleasing to Him. Yet suddenly it turns out that for rich people, for those who apparently are pleasing to God, it is hard to enter into the Heavenly Kingdom. Naturally, the Apostles pose the question: who then can be saved?!

And the Lord answers: with *men, this is impossible*. By one's own efforts, it is impossible. But *with God, all things are possible*.

That is why a Christian is an eternal optimist. Always. Because he knows that the Lord rules over us.

However, everything we do on this earth must be done in peace. Take for example our hieromartyrs in the land of Archangelsk, where I now live. They departed in peace; in their last moments of life, they did not try to strangle their torturers....

The same applies to speaking one's mind. It should not be done foaming at the mouth with anger. We should instead state our position eloquently and with dignity, presenting a concise argument. And we must state our position.

— **Your Grace, how can one help people come to the Church? And how can we help those who come to church only “to light a candle,” to take the next step?**

— My sister, a physician, told me of her and her colleague’s standard time limitations for seeing a patient: each one is allotted fifteen minutes. Within that brief span, the physician needs to listen to the complaint of grandmother complaint who has come to be examined, make a diagnosis and write a prescription, and then the patient must have time to leave the office. But in fact, by the time the patient has settled in, focused her thoughts, and set aside her crutch, fifteen minutes have already passed.

This is all because we have a critical shortage of doctors, and that is why our population is not very healthy.

But the situation in the religious sphere is even worse. There is a catastrophic shortage of clergy for such an enormous number of the faithful.

Of course, one would like to have clergy like those on the remarkable island of Sakhalin [*From November 2001 to December 1012, Metropolitan Daniel was bishop of South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands—Ed.*] In that diocese, the church communities are small. Parishioners who have moved from the island to the mainland say, “We feel very uncomfortable in the churches of these big cities. The churches are older and the icon screens date from before the Revolution, but there are too many people, and it is impossible to get a chance to talk with the priest.”

The priest is like a doctor. He comes and serves a *Moleben* [supplicatory prayer service], but that is not enough. He should sit down and spend an hour or so with the people, have a cup of tea, talk and have fellowship with them. That is what they need. There are Divine Services, but there are not enough clergy to allow for a simple heart-to-heart talk. Yet often, just one such talk is enough to bring someone into the church.

It is also good to have fellowship with people outside the church grounds. It is easier to talk with people who have already come to church, but it is much more difficult to talk with people who have not yet starting coming. However, the fact that they have not yet come does not at all mean that they are opposed to the Church. You meet people somewhere, talk to them a bit, and after a while they begin to ask, “When do you serve? Can we come to see you?” At that point, ties are already being established.

That is how things should be. You simply have to battle for human souls—for each and every soul. This means that there have to be more priests, so that they might be able to freely have fellowship with the flock. We currently have a shortage of clergy, active laypeople, and missionaries, and we acutely feel that shortage.



During a visit to the Pinezhsk deanery.

—But how can priests have fellowship outside the grounds of the church? Where in particular?

— That is quite simple. If a clergyman goes about the streets in his clerical garb—wearing a cassock and not “civilian” attire, he attracts people's attention. You are walking along the street, you are flying in an airplane, riding in a train, taking public transport, or fueling your car, and people can see you. They approach you and begin to ask questions. A conversation begins, and there you have an encounter... People like to say that it is a “chance” encounter. However, in fact nothing in life happens by chance.

I remember coming home on leave from my service in the army. I still had six months to serve, and I could not then have imagined that I would go to seminary. Such a thought had never entered my mind. However, my mother said to me, “You know, I have made the acquaintance of a remarkable priest. I told him about you, and he wants you to come visit. Let's go visit him!” “What, just go and visit him?” “Yes, let's simply go see him.”

That is to say, we did not meet in church. It was in the home of a clergyman that I had that encounter. We sat and talked. He made and served us tea. I don't remember how long I was with him, but it was a long time. I had taken up a lot of his time—something I realized only later—but he gave no indication that I was taking up his time. I decided that I wanted to be like that person.

You know how one of our hieromartyrs, the future Metropolitan Nestor (Anisimov) encountered St. John of Kronstadt? He met with him to ask him to pray for his sick mother. John of Kronstadt

came to their home, healed his mother, and from that moment on the child wanted to become a clergyman. Later he became a priest, a bishop, and then a metropolitan. Finally he received a martyr's crown. That encounter with St. John of Kronstadt also took place not in church, but in a house.

Thus, for us, the whole world is a field for missionary activity.

— **People in today's society like to criticize priests. How do you suggest we respond when we hear such criticism?**

— Sometimes, a person who expresses himself with hostility responds differently when he is answered peacefully. In my experience, there have been many such instances.

When it was my obedience to serve in Sakhalin, there was a woman occupying a rather important position there who constantly made unpleasant, heckling, mocking remarks. However, I understood that this was a defensive reaction: she was striving to somehow justify her not being in the Church. Up to that point, she had never entered God's temple. Why? Well, because she found a host of imperfections in us.

But after all, we are living people—a living community. The Church is a community of people who suffer from the same sicknesses that everyone else does. If the flu is rampant, it strikes everyone around. But if we see a doctor sniffing and taking pills do we say, “Ooooh! He himself is sick. I won't go to him...”? Of course not.

That is basically how I explained the situation to her. I said, “Why are you surprised? Open the Gospels and you will see that even among the twelve Apostles there was a Judas. And at the most critical moment, even Peter turned away from his Teacher and betrayed Him.

Not everyone would be prepared to forgive such a thing. Suppose a man betrays his wife, or a wife betrays her husband. Quite often, that causes the family to fall apart. “You betrayed me, you were unfaithful to me, and everyone knows all about it?! That's it; that is unforgiveable.”

Yet Peter publicly renounced the Lord, and the Lord forgave him! And He did not express His forgiveness by saying, “Well, alright, go with God and get out of My sight.” No, He restored Peter to the dignity of the apostolate. He returned everything to him. To read that passage is something amazing. And what about the thief on the Cross?

Just think how many people entreated God with the words “Lord, strike down that awful person! He is a monster! After all, he kills people, robs children of their fathers, of their mothers, or even of a crust of bread! That man is drenched in human blood! Yet God does not heed those prayers, and the evildoer continues to prosper! Some might even turn away from God, saying, “I will no longer appeal to You, Lord, for You are unjust in this life.”

But God has His own plans. He led the thief to the Cross so that he might encounter God. That encounter did not take place in church, but at the site of execution. And that base evildoer, a man

with no conscience left, was suddenly changed in a brief moment. He supported Christ at the very moment when there was no one else nearby; he publicly spoke words of support.



[Metropolitan Daniel celebrating Divine Service at the St. Nicholas Church in the village of Sura, homeland of Righteous St. John of Kronstadt. July 2012.](#)

The Myrrh-bearing Women stood below, but nothing was heard from them. But here, a thief, speaking from his Cross as if from a podium, announced that *this Man hath done nothing amiss*.

We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss (Lk. 23:41), he said. The thief publicly confessed that in their midst was a Man without sin.

And when he confessed that he was a sinner, and that Christ was without sin, his heart was fully opened. Grace touched him, and before all, he proclaimed Christ God, and said *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom* (Lk. 23:40–42). What could be greater than that?

Often we do not know why the Lord does not heed us. We say, “Lord, strike this one or that!” In the *Diaries* of St. John of Kronstadt, we see him exclaiming, “O Lord, strike that man down! He is doing so much evil against our country!” St. John of Kronstadt was an ardent person. Yet the Lord was patient. One must be long-suffering. .

However, people often associate long-suffering with indolence. As a certain archbishop once said, people often take kindness for weakness, and patience for inaction.

Long-suffering, patience is when one prays for another person and tries to correct some inadequacy, but does not cross the line into personal condemnation and enmity. He does not pour criticism out on the other, for this would not bring him to his senses or edify him.

— **Your Grace, you spoke about how important it is for someone outside the Church to encounter a priest. But there are places where such meetings are impossible—for example, isolated villages that do not have single church within a hundred kilometers; villages to which stores on wheels provide “home delivery” of vodka to people three times per week, and where there is a terrible problem of alcoholism.**

— Wherever there are churches, a certain battle is going on: One man drinks while another does not; yet another man drinks but reproaches himself with his drinking. In a village with a church, people become attached to that church and life begins. Where there is no church whatsoever, utter hopelessness rules. People do not have the strength to do battle with sin. That is what I have observed across the North.

I have given this some thought. There needs to be missionary trips made by groups that include active laypeople—for local clergy cannot encompass every need. For example, a group of several people, including a clergyman and a doctor (after all, both body and soul are suffering) should go to the villages to talk with the people and help them. I think that it is both possible and necessary to do this with the help of the government. This is something that goes beyond a church project—its scale is too great, and so it should be a joint project.

— **What can you say about the project entitled “Our Common Work: Restoration of the wooden churches of the North?”**

— It is a very good project. We often live next to a thing of beauty, but fail to notice it. And suddenly, people come to the village and say to its residents: “You have such a priceless pearl here! This is where your fathers, your grandfathers, your great-grandfathers prayed!” The realization begins to penetrate into them. They help restore the church, they take part in that work, and where they take part, life becomes more orderly; life becomes better.

After all, the Church has everything needed to effect the healing of a person's soul. When you are at war, you need to draw the enemy out of himself, to put him off balance. That is what is now happening. Man is losing his balance, and he can acquire peace in only one place—there is no other. “Peace be unto you!” said Christ when he appeared to his disciples.

It is that peace, given by Christ, that is capable of stopping the raging of passions. The Church was established in order to treat, to heal, to restore, and to quench those passions. They are so numerous that we are simply being torn apart—something one is often unwilling to admit to himself. He does not understand what his happening to him. Often, he is simply a plaything in the devil's hands.

If a person struggles, makes an effort, prays, and strives to be a good citizen of his native land, a good father or mother to his or her family, a friend, everything falls into place for that person. The process of setting things right does not begin with the government, but with one's own soul, with oneself, with one's family, with one's children. The main thing is to realize that fact.

When I served in Sakhalin, some remarkable people would visit the island once a year. They were physicians, including highly trained specialists—a medical strike force. How many people they saved from death! While they did not have with them all of the necessary equipment, they possessed a treasure trove of experience and good, open, hearts, and would see patients from morning to night. Based on their findings, they would explain to those they had examined: should such and such symptoms appear, drop everything and quickly go to the mainland and see a doctor.

A disease can be stopped if you turn to a specialist in time. Conversely, the disease can be allowed to get to a point when nothing will be able to help.

We observe something analogous in the spiritual life. People need to be told what is happening to them; they need a missionary strike force to be sent to them. Perhaps in the village they will not heed us the first year, or the next. By the fifth year, or the tenth, they will listen.

A person who has lived his entire life doing what he should might easily say, “I have lived my life. I can see that what I have prayed for is not according to God's will, and so I will no longer pray for it.” However, they continue to pray, to the very end. But we want to have everything immediately. After all, we live in a consumer society where we can “learn a foreign language in only fifteen lessons.” That will not work. Everything we formerly had was shattered and destroyed over many decades. The restoration work has gone on for only twenty years.

It only takes a fraction of a second for a person to have an automobile accident. Yet it can take months, even years, to restore the body to health. We need both time and patience.