

The Patriarch and the Apocalypse:
The New Martyrs and Confessors have bought the whole world extra time to repent



A Patriarch of Destiny?

Gathered together at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow on Tuesday 1 February, the members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and other bishops and clergy served the Divine Liturgy on the second anniversary of the enthronement of Patriarch Kyrill. Thousands of laity attended. Thanking those present for their prayers and kind words, His Holiness said that the day of his enthronement was not a personal celebration, but a feast of the whole Church, because ‘no-one has the power within himself to carry out this ministry, but the power of prayer, the vitality of brotherly support and the strength of conciliar good sense strengthens the First Hierarchy of the Church’.

His Holiness said that ‘the time in which we live is difficult, although there has never been an easy time’. But today is different from all previous times because there is a kind of apocalyptic tension, as the power of sin has never so dominated the human race as it does today. And we know that where sin triumphs, the devil appears. And we know that if sin triumphs throughout the human race, then Antichrist appears. And so the Church cannot help but react to this proliferation of evil. This bewilders some...they ask why the Church intervenes in areas not within its mandate. I would respond by saying that it is the Church’s task to keep marriages together, reduce the scale of abortion and teach people to dress modestly so that carnal lust does not prevail in human life. We know that we shall be contested in the future, but we are ready for

this, because the Church has no other words than ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand’ (Matt. 3, 2). And today these words should resound especially strongly’.

His Holiness also spoke of how the Church used all modern methods of communication to express the Gospel truths. He spoke of how the Church wanted to influence the post-Soviet public who ‘had been separated from the Gospel for decades by atheism or the domination of pagan and idolatrous ideologies. He thanked God for the changes in Church-State relations in all the countries where the Church was present in large numbers and commented that ‘these changes for the better have occurred through the prayers of the New Martyrs and Confessors’. He thanked the authorities and society for supporting the Church and giving it the freedom to carry out her ministry unhindered. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the Lord will give the Church the time it needs to ‘tell people what they need to hear and understand for their salvation’.

Even the few who opposed Patriarch Kyrill two years ago should by now have noticed the many changes. Enemies of the Church once criticised him for what they saw as a political approach and personal ambition. Surely, looking at photographs of His Holiness today, any can see that this Patriarch stands at the helm of a Church not out of some personal or political ambition, but as the one representative of all Her many peoples. Grace changes people. ‘Man proposes, but God disposes’.

Just as the Church opposed the atheism of the past and canonised the New Martyrs and Confessors who withstood torture and massacre, the Russian Orthodox Church has taken a clear stance against the tide of liberal secularism, sweeping in from the Western world and creating the ‘apocalyptic tension’ of which he spoke. Depravity leading to abortion, Alcoholism and mafia-type Corruption are the names of the three-headed demon haunting post-Soviet Russia. The Patriarch is clearly aware that the time we have is short and precious, having been bought for the Orthodox Evangelisation of the whole world by the sacrifices of the New Martyrs and Confessors.

Once more, we will say what we have always thought – that Metropolitan Philaret of New York, he who started the process of the canonisation of the New Martyrs and Confessors, will also one day be canonised together with them. In June 1988, in an article entitled ‘Who is Rebuilding Russia’, we wrote:

‘Our hope cannot come from the Western countries, because the once full-hearted Faith of the West has been whittled away by centuries of man-worship. Our hope is from Russia, because our hope is in Christ and He is confessed there, not only in words, but also in deeds. Our hope is from Russia, but not from the Russia of Communist bureaucrats and their servants, nor from the Russia of intellectuals who wish to set up a Western-style democracy there, just as the tragically mistaken idealists before 1917, who thus paved the way to the Bolshevik terror. No, our hope is from the living and suffering faithful on Earth and in Heaven, the Martyrs and Confessors of Christ, the One Lord and Saviour.

Is then the seventy-year Babylonian captivity of the Russian Church now coming to an end? As yet we cannot know for sure. We shall be certain only when all those many Martyrs and Confessors are venerated without exception, openly, officially and universally in the Russian land, when the work begun in New York is brought to its fullness in Moscow; this will be the 'True Pascha' of which St. Seraphim prophetically spoke.

Who is rebuilding Russia? It is the Russian New Martyrs and Confessors who are rebuilding Russia by their prayers, for their prayers have at last been asked for and accepted on Earth. The glorification and canonisation of the New Martyrs and Confessors is a gift of God made through the Church for the spiritual enrichment of the whole Orthodox Church, of all the Orthodox Christian peoples.

The true and only real 'perestroika' in Russia and everywhere is not firstly the rebuilding of an economic or political system, but the rebuilding of souls. And when souls are rebuilt, they and all things shall truly become transparent'.

There are those who are made by history, but there are others who make history and so change its course and change the world.

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St Euthymius the Great