



**ROCOR CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD**  
**57 Harvard Road, London W4 4ED**

**The Russian Orthodox Church**

The Russian Orthodox Church is by far the largest of the Local Orthodox Churches and 164 million people are baptised in it, that is, 75% of all Orthodox worldwide. Some 85% of ethnic Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians identify themselves as Russian Orthodox. Furthermore, representatives of 50 other nationalities in 62 other countries, including representatives of the native peoples of these islands, belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Church is expanding and at present has over 29,000 parishes, 217 bishops, 805 monasteries and 87 theological schools in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other countries, including a seminary in Paris.

## **The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR)**

Most Russian Orthodox parishes, monasteries and convents outside Russia belong, as one would expect, to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). With Her roots going back to the seventeenth century, when Russian Churches first opened in Western Europe and elsewhere, this part of the Russian Church expanded greatly following the revolutionary turmoil in Russia after 1917, which had been spread there by foreign forces. Then, the Church inside Russia came under the most terrible atheist persecution the world has ever seen. So far over 30,000 new martyrs and confessors have been canonised by Her, and it was ROCOR which led the way in these canonisations.

Today, as a self-governing Metropolia of the Russian Orthodox Church, ROCOR is led by Metropolitan Hilarion of New York and Eastern America. The ROCOR Synod of Bishops takes part in the decision-making of the Church inside Russia, together with His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill and the Holy Synod in Moscow. ROCOR enjoys excellent relations not only with the rest of the Russian Orthodox Church and with Her other self-governing Metropolias in the Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Latvia etc, but also with the Serbian Church, the Georgian Church, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the other Local Orthodox Churches.



**Metropolitan Hilarion of New York and Eastern America in St John's Orthodox Church in Colchester, the largest Russian Orthodox church in England. He stands in front of the icon of St John of Shanghai, Archbishop in London between 1951 and 1962**

## **The ROCOR Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland**

Our Diocesan Bishop is the Very Reverend Archbishop Mark, who is pictured beneath.



A list of clergy and other parishes belonging to the ROCOR Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland is given below:

### **Birkenhead**

The Church of St Elisabeth the New Martyr

Priest Paul Elliott, 58 Shrewsbury Road, Oxton, Wirral, Merseyside L43 2HY

Tel: 44 (151) 653 77 68

E-mail: [frpaulelliott@aol.com](mailto:frpaulelliott@aol.com)

Website: [www.newmartyr.org.uk](http://www.newmartyr.org.uk)

### **Colchester**

St John's Orthodox Church, Military Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 2AN

The Church has a chapel which has the unique dedication of All the Saints Who Have Shone Forth in these Isles.

Archpriest Andrew Phillips, 12, Garfield Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7PU

Tel: 01394 273820

E-Mail: [frandrew\\_anglorus@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:frandrew_anglorus@yahoo.co.uk)

Website: [www.orthodoxengland.org.uk](http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk)

Igumen Sergei (Armstone), 70 Jaywick Lane, Clacton-on-Sea CO16 8BB

Tel: [01255 473926](tel:01255473926)

## **London**

Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God

Priest Vladimir Vilgerts, 57 Harvard Road, London W4 4ED  
Tel: 0208 742 3493

Archpriest Thomas Hardy, 8 Dorchester Close, Headington, Oxford OX3 8SS  
Tel: 44 (1865) 742050  
E-Mail: [hardythomas@btinternet.com](mailto:hardythomas@btinternet.com)

Archpriest Peter Baulk, 15, Suffolk Close, Boreham Wood, Herts WD6 2SY  
Tel: 020 8953 5764  
E-Mail: [pbaulk@aol.com](mailto:pbaulk@aol.com)

## **Mettingham, Suffolk**

Chapel of the Icon of the Joy of All Who Sorrow

Priest Elias Jones, Ilex House, 54c The Lane, Briston, Melton Constable, Norfolk NR24 2AD  
Tel: 01263 860724 / 075022428344  
E-Mail: [lifegivingfount@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lifegivingfount@yahoo.co.uk)

Priest Antony Bardsley, 22 Upper Olland Street, Bungay, Suffolk. NR35 1BH  
Tel: 01986 892 077

Deacon Andrew Bond, The White House, Mettingham, Suffolk NR35 1TP  
Tel: 01986 895176  
E-Mail: [StGeorgeOIS@aol.com](mailto:StGeorgeOIS@aol.com)

## **Stradbally (Ireland)**

Chapel of Saint Colman of Oughaval

Location: The Abbeyleix Road, 1km from Stradbally, Co. Laois

Contact Archpriest Peter Baulk

Website: St Colman's Orthodox Church, Stradbally

It should be noted that the Russian Orthodox Church in these islands is also represented by the much larger Diocese of Sourozh, which is directly under the Patriarchate in Moscow. ROCOR enjoys excellent relations with this sister-diocese and the two dioceses work hand in hand. Their website is: [www.sourozh.org](http://www.sourozh.org).

## **The History of the London Parish**

The London parish is one of our oldest in Western Europe, dating back to the end of the 17th century, when Peter the Great visited England in January 1698. The church established then was called the 'Greek-Russian Church'. It is no longer possible to find the location of this first church, because London has grown so much since then.

The church was attached to the Russian Embassy and most of the church items were provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the nineteenth century, and right up till the 1920s, the Russian church was located at 31 Welbeck Street on a long-term lease. The Russian colony had been small and a house chapel suited their needs. But during World War I, in connection with the establishment in England of various Russian offices relating to the provision of equipment for the Russian Army, the Russian colony in England began to grow. By the end of the war and with the onset of the Revolution, a stream of refugees from all over Russia began arriving. The defeat of the White Army, beginning with the Northern Front, meant that this stream became significant. The house church under these circumstances could not accommodate the masses of worshippers. The lease for the space was coming to an end, and the house which had been used as a church was destined for demolition.

The Church of England was contacted and provided the parish with the temporary use of a large, historic church. But the location of the church, in a commercial area of London, restricted attendance. The use of this church continued until the Church of England provided another church, built by the Duke of Westminster on his own property and given to the people of England. This church was very large, situated in the centre of London, and could easily be adapted to Orthodox needs. It had originally been dedicated to St Philip, but it was rededicated by the Russian Orthodox Church to the Dormition of the Mother of God, as had all earlier Russian churches in London.

In 1927, the unity of the Russian colony in London was shattered by the Paris schism of Metropolitan Eulogius and his departure from the unity of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. As a result of this division, the London parish almost split in half. An agreement was reached on the further use of the church and services were celebrated by the groups on alternate weeks. As a result, in 1928, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia assigned the 38-year-old Archimandrite Nicholas (Karpov) to London. The fifth volume of *The Life of Metropolitan Antony of Kiev, the First Hierarch of ROCOR*, by Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky, + 1976), contains the following account of this momentous event:

‘Archimandrite Nicholas was at that time 38 years old. He had graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy in 1915 and had taught in theological schools in Russia and preached in a monastery in Oboyan, in the Kursk Diocese in Russia. In Serbia he had served in Serbian parishes and then taught at Bitol Theological Seminary, where he enjoyed the greatest respect of the staff and student body. He was appointed rector of the London parish, which had been torn apart by church strife. Archimandrite Nicholas managed this difficult task and with his piety won over the sympathies of the parishioners, and reintroduced peace into parish life’.

Fr Nicholas was ebullient, energetic and gregarious, he always served with genuine prayerfulness and piety. It is remarkable that, despite his liveliness, upon entering the

church, he seemed to undergo a transformation. His reading of the Gospel was moving. Unforgettable were his celebration of the Easter service and reading of the Gospel in four languages. The midnight Easter service drew many people, not only Orthodox Christians but also Non-Orthodox and others who did not wish to miss it and the joyful mood it created. Many English people would ask to have the date and time of the Easter service published in the press in advance. Most of the parishioners remained until the end of Divine Liturgy, when many would partake of the Holy Mysteries. Chartered buses then took the worshippers to various points in London. 'To Archimandrite Nicholas', continues the book on Metropolitan Anthony, 'fell the honour of being the first Orthodox bishop of London since the eleventh century. Taking into consideration the political importance of London, the ecclesiastical troubles among the people of England and the tendency within the Church of England to draw nearer to Orthodoxy, this Russian Orthodox bishop's see was especially important'.

On All Saints Sunday, 30 June 1929, Archimandrite Nicholas was consecrated as the first Orthodox Bishop of London since the Schism of 1054. Metropolitan Anthony of blessed memory came from Serbia for the consecration, as did Archbishop Seraphim of Western Europe, Archbishop Theophan of Kursk and Oboyan, Bishop Tikhon of Berlin and Germany, Hieromonk Theodosius, the cell-attendant of the First Hierarch, the Mitred Prot priest Vasily Vinogradov from Brussels, Prot priest V. Timofeev from Paris and Hierodeacon Joannicus from Bulgaria. Archbishop Theophan brought with him the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God. The solemn service of the gathered bishops before the miracle-working icon, and the relatively rare event - the consecration of a bishop - drew a great number of Orthodox faithful, as well as clergymen from the Church of England and others. The large Cathedral was filled to capacity. Reading on the choir was a psalm-reader from Imperial Russia, Foka Feodorovich Volkovsky. Present was Grand Duchess Ksenia Aleksandrovna, the sister of the martyred Tsar Nicholas II.

On presenting the episcopal staff to Bishop Nicholas, Metropolitan Antony said: 'The instructions are given to you from above on this day of your consecration that you must in this life be not only an Orthodox servant of God, but a servant of Russia, sharing the highest sympathies with our Russian people, her pious love for the saints, something Protestants do not understand, saying that Russians, by venerating saints, diminish thereby the glory of Christ. For Christ Himself gave this firm foundation for this, saying, 'And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them' (Jn. 17, 22). Yet being a Christian and a Russian patriot, you are of course far from that sinful chauvinism committed by all nations who now call themselves Christian, even, alas, Orthodox peoples. We can boldly state that only the Russian people, in their finest individuals, can accommodate universal love with patriotism and looks upon these two lofty concepts as not being mutually exclusive, but mutually infused in each other.

'...The Lord has destined you to begin your archpastoral service in the country of a people who have many educated sons among them, who possess heartfelt love for our

people and our faith. I have become convinced of the latter, having spent several days in the newly-established Anglican Abbey with a Russian name 'Nashdom', 'Our House'. There I was consoled to see the profound and fervent piety of young monks and became persuaded that for them, prayer is not simply an assumed ceremony, but a burning cry of the soul, fervently striving for God and spiritual cleansing. We are also convinced of this by the establishment in recent years of Anglican monasteries while in other countries, even Orthodox ones, the number of monasteries is swiftly diminishing. And so, you must show special pastoral attention to those souls, especially the young souls in the Anglican Church who might wish to become more closely acquainted with the Orthodox faith and the Orthodox Church. Fit them into your archpastoral heart and pray to God for their salvation and for that of your own Russian people, and for those English people who are approaching the Orthodox Church, so that you can say that to the degree God granted, you were 'all things to all men'.

'In this holy deed may the holy saints of God strengthen you, those who are glorified in the entire universe, and piously venerated by you, as a true Russian and a truly believing Orthodox pastor, and also the new saint, John of Tobolsk, in whose canonisation you were fortunate to participate'. (From the Life of Metropolitan Antony).

Sadly, Bishop Nicholas lived only for another three years and died of appendicitis on 28 September/11 October 1932. His last words were: 'I want to go to heaven'. He left a brief testament to his flock in London, signing himself: 'Nicholas, Orthodox Bishop of London'. However, the prayers of Bishop Nicholas and the words of Metropolitan Antony have borne fruit, for today many clergy and members of the ROCOR flock are English.

After the Second World War, more Russians came to live in England, fleeing persecution. From 1951 to 1962 the Archbishop in charge of the Diocese was the now canonised Archbishop John (Maximovich, + 1966), a descendant of St John of Tobolsk, in whose canonisation Bishop Nicholas (Karpov) had taken part. St John had also followed Bishop Nicholas as a teacher at the Serbian seminary in Bitol. Known today as St John of Shanghai (his first see), he was a remarkable man of prayer and the ROCOR church in Colchester is dedicated to him.

In the late 1950s it was decided that the church used by the White Russians, St Philip's, was to be demolished to make way for the Victoria Bus Station. In 1958, after many travails and difficulties, Russian Orthodox in London learned that a more suitable church would become available for rent. The new church, which had belonged to Scottish Presbyterians, had closed for services and been used as a furniture warehouse. Its owner, an Anglican parish, rented the church out to a firm. Through the joint effort of the parishioners, work was done to bring the church into what proved to be a magnificent shape. At the beginning of 1959, the Church was solemnly consecrated by Archbishop John (Maximovich), together with his vicar, Bishop Nikodim of Preston, and the rector of the London parish, along with representatives of all the Orthodox Churches in England.

When Archbishop John left England in 1962 for San Francisco, he entrusted the Diocese to St Alban, the First-Martyr of the Isles. The new Diocesan Bishops were Bishop (later Archbishop) Nikodim of Richmond (+ 1976), then the elderly Bishop Constantine and, since 1985, the non-resident Archbishop Mark.

Unfortunately, the lease on the church used in London ran out and it was only in the 1990s, having purchased a house with a large garden in Chiswick in the west of London, that the parish began to build its own church. This is now complete and will soon be consecrated to the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God. The lower church has already been dedicated to the Holy Passion-bearers, the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas and His August Family.