



ВОСТОЧНО-АМЕРИКАНСКАЯ ЕПАРХІЯ

Русская Православная Церковь Заграницей

EASTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE

Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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Holy Myrrhbearer Mary Magdalene

To the Clergy of the Eastern American Diocese

The festal period of the Transfiguration will mark the 150th anniversary of the births of the Most Blessed Metropolitan Anastassy (Gribanovsky) and Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko). Metropolitan Anastassy was born on the feast of the Transfiguration in 1873, while Archbishop Vitaly was born two days later. In connection with this, I call on the rectors of the parishes and monasteries of the Eastern American Diocese to commemorate them at Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 7/20, followed by a litia for the departed, the latter being preceded by a short word regarding these great archpastors.

Both hierarchs were born, educated, and began their service in Tsarist Russia, and lived through the Russian troubles: revolution, civil and both world wars, persecution, and exile.

Metropolitan Anastassy's hierarchal consecration took place in Holy Dormition Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin on the feast of the Holy Preeminent Apostles Peter and Paul in 1906 (our older parishioners in the U.S. who personally knew the Metropolitan still remember how he loved to relate the festivities held for his consecration, and to talk about Church life in Moscow and those who were active in it, some of whom were later glorified for their martyric struggles). As Bishop of Serpukhov, vicar of the future Hieromartyr Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky), Vladyka Anastassy became well known among the pious folk for his eloquent and deeply felt sermons and his frequent officiating of the divine services. It was also in Moscow that he became acquainted and close with the Venerable Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, whose life and memory he would memorialize with a word of praise.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko) was renowned for his missionary and pastoral labors among the Orthodox Christians of Volhynia. He not only oversaw the printshop of Holy Dormition Pochaev Lavra, but was also actively engaged in the local community, becoming one of the founders of the "Pochaev People's Bank," the goal of which was to secure loans for peasants to purchase land and farming equipment. Taking advantage of his significant personal authority, he upheld order among the local population during the revolutionary events of 1905. In the summer of 1919, Archimandrite Vitaly, only just released from imprisonment, was again arrested by Polish troops in Volhynia. It was reported that he, awaiting execution and not having an antimention, celebrated Divine Liturgy on his own chest. Glory to God, after some time he was freed, thanks to the petitions of Metropolitans Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and Varnava (Rosić), future Patriarch of Serbia, with the help of the French government. Finding himself in the Diaspora in 1922, Archimandrite Vitaly actively continued the work of the Brotherhood Printshop of Holy Dormition Pochaev Lavra, doing print work first in Serbia, and later at the monastery in Ladomirová, Slovakia. When he became a bishop, Vladyka Vitaly resumed the work of the brotherhood of Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, publishing service books and spiritual, patristic, and spiritually edifying literature for distribution among the Russian Diaspora and their suffering countrymen in the USSR.

The nourishment offered by these two hierarchs to their scattered flock in the midst of the tumultuous sea of historic events is not only a tremendous accomplishment, but also a colossal spiritual feat, worthy of our respect and every recognition. Here were made manifest their faith, wisdom, and love. They were helped likewise by the power of their spiritual authority, of which His Beatitude, Metropolitan Anthony, and the Holy Hierarch John, Archbishop of Shanghai & Wonderworker of San Francisco, both spoke. Therefore, the upcoming anniversary, along with the forthcoming jubilee of Holy Trinity Seminary, must cause us once more to take an interest in the history of our Church and her legacy, because everything that we have in this diocese was created on the solid foundation of their labors, hopes, and prayers.

As is well known, both of these hierarchs were men of elevated Church culture.

As such, I endeavor to remind all of the clergy that the outward appearance of the clergyman must be in accordance with his spiritual calling: a cassock (black or colored) and black riassa, head covering (skufia, kamilavka, or klobuk), and vestments must be kept neat and tidy, shoes must be of a dark color and appropriate, and carefully polished. Pants must also be of a dark color (bright slacks or jeans under the cassock do not correspond with the high calling of a clergyman). Clothing, according to the thinking of the Priest Pavel Florensky, not only covers the body, but certainly reflects to an even greater degree than the body the most important thing in a man: his spiritual essence, and therefore has great significance.

The *Instructional Information* tells us that, “for serving the Divine Liturgy,” clergymen “must be clean in body as well as soul, i.e., they must have a clean body and clean clothes in good repair upon themselves.”

“First of all, the celebrant must have, even though they be poor, clean priestly vestments which have a good appearance; other than this he must have combed hair, washed face and lips, trimmed fingernails – all of this out of respect for the Divine Mysteries as well as so that people who look at him and kiss his hand might in no way be unpleasantly impressed.” Along with this, beholding decent propriety in the clergyman, they themselves will also learn to be present at the celebration of the Liturgy worthily and decently, unto the glory of God. In general, the pastor’s personal hygiene, neatness, and cleanliness must be an inseparable part of his life, as Archpriest Alexis Ostapov writes in his *Pastoral Aesthetics*, with which I recommend everyone acquaint themselves. The clergyman is likewise obligated to keep his vestments in proper cleanliness. “If his [vestments] are very dirty or torn [or generally do not correspond to their purpose] and the priest dare to service in them, he sins mortally.” Therefore, the clergy must in all ways strive to wear vestments, even if humble, which is always clean and in good order. Finally, if any priest or deacon has a bushy mustache, this must always be neatly trimmed, so that upon receiving Communion it is not soaked with Christ’s Blood and, in this way, the sacred is not profaned. The Rite of Holy Communion must be carried out with piety, without any rush, consumed with reverence, not slurping from the chalice, but receiving the Blood of Christ with trembling.

With love in Christ,

+ *Nicholas*

Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad

