



FATHER ALEXIS KNIAZEFF



On February 8, 1991, Alexis Kniazeff, rector of St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute and the parish of St. Serge of Radonezh in Paris, fell asleep in the Lord due to heart failure after a surgical procedure. Priest and preacher, rooted in prayer and liturgical celebration, specialist theologian of The Old Testament and Mariology, Father Alexis carried out his ministry and instruction until the last days before his hospitalization.

Born in 1913 in Bakou, Russia, Fr. Alexis Kniazeff emigrated to France in 1923. He studied in Nice at the lycée Pasteur in Neuilly-sur-Seine, the faculty of law in Paris and at St. Sergius Institute. Follower of Fr. Serge Boulgakov, dean of the institute, he replaced his teacher in

1943, becoming chair of dogmatic theology, before dedicating himself in 1946 to exegesis of the Old Testament and Biblical theology. He completed his thesis on "Aristeas' Letter to Philocrates and the Prehistory of the Septuagint Translation." Following this, he taught Canon Law, Mariology, Hagiology and Homiletics. After Archbishop Cassien's death in 1965, Father Kniazeff succeeded him as rector of the Institute, a responsibility that he would continue to fulfill until his own death. Despite being deeply attached to his Russian origins, he guided the Institute towards teaching in French, and directed the renovation and expansion of the school premises in the beginning of the 1970s.

Father Alexis Kniazeff never dissociated theology from pastoral work. Ordained as priest in 1947 by Metropolitan Vladimir at the Cathedral of Saint Alexander Nevsky, he served as chaplain for numerous years at the ACER (Christian Action of Russian Students) summer camp. He also served as parish priest, at St. Nicolas parish in Montmorency from 1953, and then as rector of St. Serge's parish in Paris from 1964 until his death. Member of the Council of the Archdiocese from the end of the 1960s, he was elected vice-president cleric of all the Diocesan Assemblies held between 1966 and 1990, always ensuring with rigor and competence that debates went smoothly.

Married, father of four children and grandfather, Father Alexis Kniazeff also had numerous spiritual children who esteemed him as a man of passionate faith, of great temperament and convictions. He was a remarkable preacher, and as confessor he was always mindful to give confidence and hope to each person who confessed to him.

A panikhida in his memory was celebrated after the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. Serge, on Sunday February 6th, in the presence of numerous parishioners.

Another panikhida was also celebrated in his memory on February 8th, at the Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky. Memory Eternal!

FATHER ALEXIS KNIAZEFF: MAN OF FAITH, ACTION AND FIDELITY

Father Alexis intensely knew and lived Orthodox liturgical texts and did not understand how some could come to church reluctantly. His reading of the Passion from the gospels made the event so real that it was impossible to doubt a cosmic drama occurred. His declaration of Christ's Resurrection was so convincing that even non-believers were stirred.

During his rectory, St. Sergius Institute opened itself up to students from other continents, notably Black Africa. The full course of study was no longer reserved for young men, but for young women as well. The institute, warm and very human, cultivated a demanding method of instruction, encouraging free and controversial discussions, without which numerous theologians from St. Sergius would not have become what they are today.

A serious exegete, at times very systematic (on the Pentateuch, for example), he gave his full potential as a teacher during the course of his final year devoted to the prophets. It was worth the wait! His listeners had the impression that he himself was becoming a prophet; all he said was accented with truth from the beyond the earthly realm. He seemed to be a prophet, not who told the future, but who discerned the truth of the Revelation for each moment in history, each moment in the life of the Church and the personal life of each individual.

To his students and through them to the whole Church, his first message was always that of loyalty: "Be loyal in everything," he insisted. As all the prophets before him, he himself remained steadfast to always finding the correct words to express the truths of his time in all time. Wary of the "overly spiritual" or "mystics," he considered theological research as above all the infinite quest of that which the Lord expects of us hic et nunc. At every moment, he lived the tangible reality of the revelation given by God to His Church in its catholicity. Memory Eternal! *here and now*

*Michel Milkovitch,
Former student of St. Sergius Institute*



Bishop Gabriel with fr John Marks and deacon Peter



*Fr Nikanor
Exeter*

The founder of our parish, Archimandrite Barnabas, was born Ian Burton in 1915 in mid-Wales. Drawn from an early age to faith that centred on sacramental mystery, he joined the Anglican order of the Cowley Fathers in 1932, and after a period studying theology at Lampeter he was ordained an Anglican priest in 1939. After several years of inner struggle as to the canonical authenticity of Anglicanism, he became a Roman Catholic in 1949. However he found the authoritarianism of the Roman Church difficult to come to terms with, and he became increasingly drawn to Orthodoxy.

He was received in Paris in 1960 and ordained later in the same year, taking the monastic name of Barnabas. He spent some years immersed in Orthodox monastic practice under Archbishop Nicholas (Eremin), Exarch in Paris of the Moscow Patriarchate, returning to England in 1965 to look for a suitable site to establish a monastery. Eventually he learnt of a property at Willand in the south-west of England, where he moved on 31st July 1967 to found the monastery of the Holy Prophet Elias, under the aegis of Bishop

later to be Metropolitan - Anthony of Sourozh (Moscow Patriarchate) in London. From the first he was helped by a young local convert, Norman Wilkins, who had found the property. Norman was soon ordained deacon, taking the name of Nikanor, and was in due course to become assistant priest of the Devon parish. Other key figures in the growing community were John Marks, a drama teacher from North Devon who was received in 1971 and ordained priest on Thomas Sunday 1974, and Peter Scorer, who as the child of an émigré mother had known Bishop Anthony virtually all his life, and had recently returned from three years' study at St Vladimir's Seminary near New York to take up a teaching post at Exeter University. Peter was ordained Deacon in 1973.

Father Barnabas' lifelong wish was to establish an Orthodox monastic tradition in Britain. What in fact happened at Willand was not a flowering of monasticism, but the gradual emergence of a scattered but committed Orthodox community throughout Devon. People from an Orthodox background joined with English converts and those on the road to conversion, most travelling long distances to take part in Orthodox worship. By the time Fr Barnabas left in 1975 to return to his native Wales, still in the hope of founding a monastery, there was a small but active parish in North



Devon, worshipping at the house of Father John Marks in Combe Martin, and a eucharistic community in Exeter, both fruits of the Willand parish, and both continuing to attract new members. In 1987 Metropolitan Anthony decided that the two communities would be better combined: from Easter 1987 they have functioned as one parish drawing members from throughout Devon and beyond. Worship takes place in two churches – the Church of St Simeon and the Prophetess Anna at Father John's house, and St Anne's Church in Exeter, a mediaeval chapel of ease which we are fortunate to be able to rent on a long-term basis.

From the beginning Fr Barnabas, and later Fr John, insisted that the Orthodoxy nurtured in Willand should not be straightjacketed by ethnicities, but should be the local expression of the universal church. The local aspect included and continues to include a particular reverence for the saints of the early British church, so many of whom preached the gospel of Christ in the South-West. The community in North Devon remains predominantly made up of English converts to Orthodoxy (plus their children and more recently their grandchildren.) In Exeter the presence of the University has always provided a steady trickle of visitors from Russia, Greece and Cyprus; more recently the accession of Bulgaria, Romania and the Baltic states to the EU has brought us a wider ethnic mix of people who nonetheless quickly assimilate into our community.

The insistence that we were not the Russian Orthodox



Exeter

Church Combe Martin

Church in Devon but simply the Orthodox Church became an issue in our relations with the Diocese of Sourozh after the death of Metropolitan Anthony in 2003. For some years large numbers of people had been moving from Russia to England, particularly to London. Following Metropolitan Anthony's death, it became clear that the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate saw the primary task of the Diocese of Sourozh as being to minister to the spiritual and cultural needs of these newcomers as their Russian Church. In 2006 Bishop Basil of Sergievo, who was Metropolitan Anthony's chosen successor but was seen by Moscow only as a temporary ruling administrator, felt that his position had become untenable and asked to be accepted into the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the Exarchate of Archbishop Gabriel. About half of the parishes of the Diocese of Sourozh elected to follow him, of which the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias was one.

Following the resignation of Bishop Basil in 2009, the parishes of the Exarchate in Britain were reorganised as a Deanery, of which Fr John Marks is currently Dean. Today the parish of the Holy Prophet Elias has two places of worship, a house church in North Devon, where Fr John lives, and a larger church in Exeter. A full cycle of services is held throughout the year with Vespers celebrated in both



churches every Wednesday and Saturday, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated once a month in Combe Martin and every Sunday in Exeter. During the past two years the number of parishioners has grown to about fifty or sixty every Sunday. The parish is multi-ethnic, and apart from the local English congregation there are Russians, Rumanians, Bulgarians and others. Services are conducted mostly in English, with some Slavonic and Greek.

Details of services can be found on our parish web site: <http://www.orthodoxdevon.org/>



COMMUNIQUÉ ON ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL'S HEALTH

On January 27 Archbishop Gabriel underwent a surgical operation which had been planned for some time. He was released from hospital on 2 February and after a short convalescence resumed his duties at the headquarters of the Archdiocese on February 22. The operation went well, a lung tumour was removed, postoperative test results are satisfactory and doctors say they are confident.

To prevent a further recurrence, they suggested a course of chemotherapy. During this period, the diary of Bishop Gabriel will be reduced in order to avoid any increase in fatigue and to enable a full recovery. Furthermore, Bishop Gabriel wished to thank all the clergy and faithful of the Archdiocese who supported him in this difficult time and continue to support him by their prayers and affection.

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND FROM THE 21ST TO 31ST OF OCTOBER 2011

Terre Sainte



Pèlerinage orthodoxe 21 au 31 octobre 2011

Sous la direction de l'archevêque Gabriel de Comane

*ARCHEVÊCHÉ DES ÉGLISES ORTHODOXES RUSSES EN EUROPE
OCCIDENTALE*

EXARCHAT DU PATRIARCAT ŒCUMÉNIQUE DE CONSTANTINOPLE

The organisation of pilgrimages to the Holy Land in our Archdiocese is an old tradition. Set in motion by Bishop Méthode during the 1950s, and carried on by Bishop Romain, pilgrimages to the Holy Land have always been greatly appreciated in our diocese as an annual event in which many of the faithful are happy to participate. The physical contact with the Land where our Lord lived; visits to places where His mission was accomplished and the warm welcome of local Christians with whom deep, brotherly ties are woven, all contribute to making this journey a spiritual voyage of the highest order. In taking over the responsibility of these pilgrimages, His Eminence Gabriel offers everyone in the Church able to participate, the chance to deepen their faith and experience a joyous Encounter that Christ said would not be taken from us (John 16 :22).

The pilgrimage to the Holy Land is actively being prepared. Specific information will be announced in the month of March. A definitive version of the programme is currently in the works: the dates are more or less fixed as well as the price (around 1300€). In principle, the pilgrimage will take place from the 21st to the 31st of October 2011 with a rich programme: visits to the main holy places in Jerusalem and thereabouts near where participants will be staying during most of the trip (Jacob's Well, Lake Tiberius, Bethlehem, Bethany and Jordan). They will also stay in Nazareth for two nights to visit Galilee and climb Mount Tabor. Meetings with the leaders of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem as well as monastery visits are also on the agenda.

All inquiries should be sent directly to the Father Yannick :
Père Yannick Provost 3 rue Docteur-Chauvel F-29000 Quimper Tél : 0033 298959379 Portable : 0033 608547296
Mèl : yannick.provost@gmail.com

The price for this trip is of 1290 euros. A payment of 250 euros is requested upon registration