

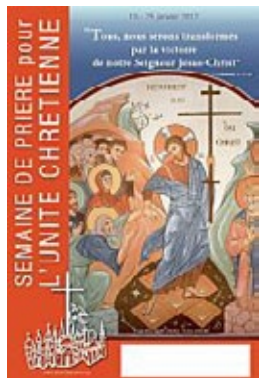


2012 : WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

"We will all be changed by the Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Co 15,51-58)

WE ARE REMINDED THAT THIS WEEK OF PRAYER, WHICH TRADITIONALLY TAKES PLACE EVERY YEAR FROM THE 18TH TO THE 25TH JANUARY, WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1908. AFTER HAVING PARTICIPATED IN THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION "FAITH AND CONSTITUTION", AT THE END OF THE 1902S, FROM WHICH WAS BORN THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, ARCHBISHOP EULOGHE, IN HIS TIME, PROMOTED THE CELEBRATION OF THIS WEEK AMONGST HIS FAITHFUL. SINCE THEN, IT HAS REGULARLY BEEN CELEBRATED BY MOST OF OUR PARISHES.

Below are two accounts of the celebration of the week of Christian Unity, one at the Church of Saint-Serge, Paris, and the other in London, in our community of Clapham..



INTERVIEW WITH FR. ALEXANDER FOSTIROPOULOS

(Paroisse des Sts-Pierre-et-Paul-Londres et membre du conseil de l'archevêché)

- Michel Sollogoub : Do you have a week of unity in England?

- Father Alexander Fostiropoulos : There is a week. It is always the last week of January

- M. Sollogoub : Oh yes and in France too

- Father Alexander : Well typically in Britain for a number of years there has been what used to be the British Council of Churches now it is the Churches Together in England, Churches Together in Wales, Churches Together in Scotland. There is also the Churches Together of the British Isles. So for instance in our parish that has been very good in more ways than one now there is what is called the Churches together in Clapham. We are about thirteen parishes we are the only Orthodox There are about six Anglican, Roman Catholic, Baptist, United Reform Church, Methodist. We have two types of meetings:

- The ministers of these churches meet about four or five times a year, and it is a little bit like a clergy meeting of our own, where there are pastoral concerns, we have common pastoral concerns for instance at the moment we are trying to discuss in the ministers group issues like how to look after an aging population in a parish; how to look after a transient situation in a big city where people come for a year and then move on; how to look pastorally after people who are married with families across denominations: a Roman Catholic and an Orthodox, an Orthodox and an Anglican and so on or with someone who doesn't go to church. And these are common pastoral

concerns you know, we have exactly the same problems you know, so these are issues we can discuss and we can help one another.

- That is one level of meeting and then representatives of all the parishes meet three times a year in a forum an assembly: laymen and ministers. It is very good; we get to know about the work of one another. In our own case of course it has been extremely helpful because we arrived in Clapham with no connections, we knew nobody. And one of those ministers helped us, found us the church where we are, we were looked after, we were accepted, we were understood so it has been really.... I know that it is the case with many Orthodox parishes around the country that in fact in practical terms if it wasn't for the hospitality shown by people of other communities, Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics and so on most Orthodox parishes in Britain, if not all Orthodox parishes would not exist. We use buildings that belong to them. There has been a very good history of that. History will tell you that Metropolitan Antony was a key person in the 1960's and 70's in building up this understanding. But it is interesting how it built up a picture where by how now at a local level everybody understands one another and the Orthodox are now known and no longer considered as strangers and it is also an opportunity for us to meet with other Christians outside our "ethnic" circle. It is a very enriching experience for us in Great Britain.

For the Sunday of the Week of Unity there will be a special meeting.

ST. SERGIUS HILL AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

On St. Sergius Hill, in the Buttes Chaumont neighbourhood of the 19th arrondissement of Paris, the Institute of Orthodox Theology and St. Sergius Parish are one. Both sides of the same entity, each has its own unique features.

The I.O.T has an international vocation: to teach students from around the world; to train theologians from all backgrounds- lay people, priests, bishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs; to multiply seminars and symposia at the national and international level, and to be a witness of Orthodoxy after a virtual absence of dialogue for a thousand years. Through various historical events, or indeed, thanks to Providence, teachers from the first Russian emigration¹ have largely contributed to the cultural debt that Russia had contracted with old Europe since the time of Peter the Great ...

Since its création in 1924, the parish of St. Sergius of Radonège has cultivated a daily liturgical life, following the monastic tradition. Unlike the «Russian Compound» of the 15th arrondissement, where local ecumenical meetings took place in the 1970s², most of the faithful are dispersed geographically while remaining deeply committed to the «Holy Hill», some coming regularly from very far away. Only a core of its parishioners live in the district, which partly explains the relative isolation of this parish compared to other communities in the borough.

A Lutheran priest newly arrived in the neighbourhood in the 1960s³, after attending St. Sergius, concluded: «They are in heaven, and already living in the Kingdom!» Precise contacts developed between the parishes were formed: concerts in Slavonic and the liturgical chants of «Znameny» or the Synodal School of Moscow were given in the warm ambience of St. Peter's Lutheran church, appearing exotic to some viewers. Occasional homilies by our priests were also given in neighbouring Catholic parishes. The alternative, however, was "not yet possible," according to St. Sergius' then rector⁴. Nevertheless, cooperation between various communities of the district in the medical-social and charitable domains of the 19th arrondissement was developed: a well-established Orthodox doctor in the neighbourhood with his Catholic spouse, also a doctor, along with parishioners of St. Claire, St. Francis of Assisi and the Catholic Relief Service were behind the creation of a branch of

the food bank. He was actively involved in its operation, sometimes with the help of a student, notably Jacques Rehbinder as well as Fr. Romul Joanta, (later archbishop of the Romanian Church of Berlin) for table service to the homeless and needy of the neighborhood. The "mixed couple" of doctors⁵ (5) ensured the health of students at the I.O.T; they worked with the Franciscans of the rue de Crimée (Crimea street), the Little Sisters of the Assumption as well as with street educators to help and to care for homeless youth.

Another Orthodox doctor, Dr. Marie Semenoff (+), a deeply spiritual and charismatic person equally well established at St. Sergius and living in the neighbourhood, formed a reflection group on sickness and faith. In addition, a group of «mixed couples»⁶ began an ecumenical dialogue on various subjects, with the moderators Fr. Elie Melia (+) and Fr. Boz (Catholic). Meetings ceased after three years, however, as they regularly led to the critical question of Eucharistic hospitality, which remained unanswered.

A real network was thus gradually established in the 19th arrondissement of Paris, forging bonds of trust and friendship among the faithful for fruitful ecumenical encounters. Already for several years during the «Week of Prayer for Unity», Fr. Boris Bobrinskoy and eventually Fr. Nicolas Ozoline along with various parishioners visited their neighbouring Catholic and Protestant churches, representing the St. Sergius Orthodox Church in the service of Prayer for Christian Unity. During the «Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2001», under the chairmanship of the rector of Bishop Michel Claudiopolis and with the participation of Fr. Nicolas and Fr Jacques Legrand (+); an ecumenical meeting followed by Orthodox vespers was finally organized in the parish of St. Serge. Among the guests of honour were theologian Elisabeth Behr Siegel (+), Fr. Jean Mariot (future Catholic Bishop), brother Henry Namur, "porter" of the Franciscans, and the honourable pastor Marie-France Robert, then Inspector of the Lutheran Church and pastor of the parish of St. Peter (19th arrondissement), about twenty Orthodox parishioners of St. Sergius were received for the first time (?), and one hundred people from the neighborhood, most of whom had never before entered the church.

In 2004, a delegation from the parish of St. Serge headed by Archimandrite Job Getcha and accompanied by its cantors, gave an icon of St. George striking down the dragon to the church of St. Georges de la Villette. Fr. Hubert Blin, the choir and the parishes' many faithful, received the icon. The ceremony in two distinct parts was marked by a profound solemnity, and the speeches deeply cordial. From this encounter the two communities went on to establish the "Ecumenical Group of the 19th Arrondissement of Paris." Quarterly meetings alongside the annual meeting of prayer have since followed: first with the team formed by Archimandrite Job, Catholic Father Frédéric Roder and Pastor Risto Jukko alternately in each of the three parishes, and Fr. Vladislav, new rector of the Church of St Sergius and Fr. Henri de l'Éprevier, pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption, gathering together 40 to 60 participants⁷.

In January 2012, Archbishop Gabriel gave his blessing for the celebration of an Orthodox prayer for Christian unity at St. Sergius, at which he would preside.



1 A certain number among this intellectual élite of theologians, philosophers, writers and Russian thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries, had been deported by Lenin, on the last ship to leave St. Petersburg in 1922.

2 Notably with: Fathers Alexandre Turincev, Léonid Moguilevsky, Igor Vernik, Nathalie Hvostov (Mother Serge), Zénaïde Liamine and Mr. Chahoff, priest of the Church of St. Lambert.

3 Father Lockmann

4 Father Alexei Kniazieff.

5 Doctors Jean and Louise Liamine.

6 M.M. Aslanoff- Lossky, Jeanlin , Liamine-Vrinat, Monsaingeon, and others

7 More than 100 people at the screening of films "Rublev" and «The Island with debates, by Fr. Frederick Roder, pastor at St. George, specialist of the diocese of Paris for a religious film

PARISH OF SAINT SERGE PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

On Friday 20th January, with the blessing of Archbishop Gabriel of Comane, Exarque of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, a service of prayer for Christian Unity was celebrated in the Orthodox Parish of Saint Serge of Radonezh (Paris), in the presence of Bishop Renauld de Dinechin, auxiliary bishop of Paris. The service was celebrated by Archpriest Vladislav Trembovelsky, rector of the church of St Serge, representing Archbishop Gabriel, who is ill; he was assisted by hierodeacon Athanasius Buk, the Archbishop's deacon. Many representatives, clergy and lay people (about 150) of the Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic parishes responded to the invitation. Present were the curates of the Roman Catholic parishes of the 19th district of Paris: Fr. Frederic Roder (parish of St George de la Villette), Fr. Henri de l'Eprevier (N.D. de l' Assomption des Buttes Chaumont), Fr. Xavier Lei (Sainte Colette), Fr. de Raucourt (Sainte Claire), Fr. Bernard Strub (vicar of St François d' Assise), as well as a delegation of representatives of the parishes of St Jacques-St Christophe, St Jean-Baptiste de Belleville et N.D. des Foyers. The Evangelical Methodist Church was represented by the pastor Jean-Philippe Waechter. Frederic Chaval, the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St Pierre de la Villette sent his apologies but was represented by 5 members of the parish council.

First of all, at the foot of the hill at St Serge, Bishop Renauld was welcomed on his arrival by Fr. Vladislav, Deacon Athanasius, Fr. Serge Sollogoub (archpriest responsible for ecumenism), Professor Michael Sollogoub (secretary of the archdiocese), many students of the Institute of St. Serge, and Drs. Jean and Louise Liamine, organizers of this ecumenical evening. Next, during the entry into the church Fr Vladislav invited Dr. Liamine to give a word of welcome to Bishop Renauld and to the whole assembly: in the name of Archbishop Gabriel Dr. Liamine said with emotion, "This particular week, where throughout the world, a prayer is given up for the unity of Christians" joy is experienced by the Orthodox



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St. Serge in the 19th district of Paris, known and loved by the Orthodox for nearly 90 years".

In the illuminated church the celebration started, sung in French, by the choir under the direction of Vladimir Reh binder, with the help of singer Anne Lecarvèse-Lossky and of the reader Patrick Lecarvèse. There were a few particularly fervent and intense liturgical moments: the whole assembly of the faithful joined in with the Our Father, sung by the choir in the melody of Rimsky-Korsakoff which is known by everyone; before the reading of the Gospel according to St. John (12, 23-26), everybody lit the candle that they were holding from their neighbour's candle; Fr Vladislav, following Fr Deacon Athanasius carrying a large candle, went around the church censing the icons and the faithful, according to the living ritual of the church, which is so beautiful and moving; and finally the singing filled with light and joy of the Polyeleos, of the Glorification of God.



Père Serge Sollogoub et Mgr de Dinechin

In a welcoming atmosphere, the sermon was given by Bishop Renauld de Dinechin: He underlined with force that "only faith in Jesus Christ, by overcoming walls of separation, drives Christians along the path back towards unity"; and he reminded us of the personal journey of Bishop Lustiger.

Upon leaving the church some people's faces were radiant. The service of prayer for Christian Unity was followed by a friendly and joyful meal, where conversations, dialogues and theological discussions continued late into the evening.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ! Glory to thee o Lord! !
To see the photo album : <http://stgeorgesdlv.canalblog.com>



Père Vladislav entouré du dr Liamine, Mgr de Dinechin et pasteur Waechter

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THE INSTITUTE OF ST. SERGE AND LEARNING

The Institute of St. Serge is offering two courses for those who wish to receive theological training by distance learning: Theological Learning by Distance (l'Enseignement théologique à distance) (ETD) and Theological Training by Correspondence (la Formation théologique par correspondance) (FTC).

The ETD is one of the academic courses offered by our institute. It is spread over 3 levels, each with 12 subjects. Each subject which has a booklet and a bibliography to aid learning is assessed by the submission of a written paper and an oral examination. The degree of Bachelor of Orthodox Theology is awarded on completion of all three degrees of this distance learning.

The FTC is principally aimed at giving training in all the theological disciplines. It is for those who want a Christian education, with respect to the personal and ecclesial interest of each individual. Once the course has been successfully completed the student can go on to do a Diploma of Theological Training by Correspondence (Diplôme de la Formation Théologique par Correspondence). For more information visit www.saint-serge.net.

To the three questions that Laurent Koble, student in the third year of the ETD, was asked, he gave the following replies.

Why this choice? After my chrismation, it seemed important to me to have a better understanding of my faith. My priest had spoken to me about the Institute of St. Serge and I went taking advantage of the system of taking the exam without having been to the course, "to see". Convinced by the quality of certain text books, I decided, with the agreement of my wife to launch myself into the degree.

What does studying theology represent? The possibility of putting the world into perspective.

The theological prism allows one to think in a new, creative, original and different way. This undoubtedly makes one stronger.

Why continue every year? Like the piano, it is necessary to enjoy it otherwise it becomes a form of torture because the work load is so heavy. But if you like reading theological texts it is a real pleasure. Everything is not equally fascinating but the richness acquired every year whets the appetite for the next year.

A Catholic point of view

As a youth, I felt the need to study theology. The milieu in which I lived at that time did not lend itself to theological understanding. As a student of public education, I observed a blind faith that barely evolved during my studies in literature. Working life followed, which gives no attention to God. Called to the cabinet of a Christian democrat minister, I discovered that rather than social doctrine, it was more a question of ensuring the permanence of the party in office.

I went to church every Sunday. The teachings I heard from the pulpit went in one ear and out the other- I made little spiritual progress. I lived a kind of schizophrenia. I felt an absence of God in the public space and His presence was further dimmed by my lack of religious culture. I could no longer stand the significant gap between accessory and essential knowledge transmitted through the Bac+n and Bac-n (basic and more advanced) degrees. I needed to study theology.

But why Orthodoxy? As a good Catholic, I applied to the Catholic University, however I was shown the door. I came across the Institute of Saint Serge on the Internet. The courses by correspondence seemed to be what I was looking for. I made an appointment with Fr. Nicolas Lossky. After a brief interview, he declared: «Dominique wants to study theology at St. Sergius. Welcome Dominique!»

For a radically Parisian Catholic, the sweetness of this place, unthinkable in

the middle of the 19th arrondissement, is violent. Violent sweetness: a very Christological idea, violence of the confrontation with the at once all-Other and the all-Same.

The all-Other: the small Hexagon feels as a minority in an oasis hit with the charisma of the glossolalia, which he understands he has not benefitted from. And what of his stiffness in church? He doesn't know how to venerate the icons with his hands and lips, nor can he cross himself backwards. He feels clumsy, and exhausted from standing. Beyond the surface, things aren't any better. Accustomed to services in Latin, the Gospel is read rather in Greek. After all, Father Congar and Vladimir Lossky said, "We have the same God, but we are different men before him and we cannot agree on the nature of our relationship with Him."

Yet nothing is more familiar. The language is the same in the crypt of the Cathedral Alexander Nevsky as in the neighboring Catholic parishes: similar diaspora and same idiom. At second glance it is not difference that is striking, but unity. Every Sunday, we say the same prayer to the Father. We proclaim almost the same Creed (minus the filioque), «I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church».

The Latin student feels a sense of strangeness when he has to learn Byzantine canon law or is tested on Chronicles. Other materials, however, bring the bliss of spiritual discovery. He discovers the East, the desert, the Empire. He is personally attacked by Arius, or Nestorius Eutichès, and called by Anthony, Pachomius or John Climacus. He discovers Eastern mysticism and pneumatology. He is surprised to learn that the term philocalie evokes nothing among his brethren, even among its clergy. What overwhelming spiritual loss!

Among other great men, St. Serge is noted for his spiritual and intellectual influence. That a community as small and oppressed as the Russian emigration has produced thinkers of the calibre of Fathers Serge Bulgakov, John Meyendorff, and Alexander Schmemmann, as well as lay Vladimir Lossky and Olivier Clement among others, is a miracle. And there remain exceptional minds that, in complete selflessness, provide an education of extreme value.

You do not need to attend St. Sergius to deeply love it. Yes, love, without ulterior motive, without daydreaming about ecumenism. Unity will not happen tomorrow. And the Catholic student who has completed his degree can go happy, having received treasures, as well as unhappy, as the separation, which he now feels as a personal injury, continues.