



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL

ON THIS DAY OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, 'THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS ESPOUSED THE DAUGHTER OF THE SHADOWS' (SYRIAN LITURGY).

Lo, dawn is breaking at the end of the dark night, and Christ illumines all creation, the beauty of which had been overshadowed by the darkness of our transgressions. As, in their time, the shepherds in Bethlehem rejoiced, so we today rejoice hearing the angels announce to us also that 'unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given'! This Son, this Child, is God, come to visit us and in order to do this, taking our flesh.

Through the appearance on earth of the Beloved of the Father, we are no longer alone in the chill of this world 'where those who have no bread want to live, and those who have bread no longer know how to live' (Liturgical Homelies of Jean Corbon).

Yes, our world is cold! It seeks to warm itself with futile and useless warmth. It wants to live in artifice, the sad vanity of which it has discovered so late, and falls asleep curled up on itself, forgetting the hope that is knocking at the door of its heart! But this world is our world, in which we live out all the days that God gives; where men hate and kill, where he who has everything passes by him who has nothing without the slightest concern or compassion; where brother plunders his brother for the 'glory' of being rich, consisting of a handful of old stones, of which, at the end of time, nothing will remain.

'Peace on earth, goodwill among men!' As Christians, what do we make of these tidings proclaimed by the angels? The Nativity of Christ is the time to awaken our hearts, to step out of our routines, pious though they may be. It is the time to re-awaken hope, to share it in bringing life to our brethren: like the shepherds, we must proclaim to all, with eagerness, that, with God, all can change, all can be saved!

This hope, and the joy that follows, must shine through us. If everyone were to give a true sign, the true Peace that the world cannot give... If everyone were to show a face alight with love to his brother who is hungry for it... if everyone were to place his cool hand on the feverish forehead of the oppressed... if the love that is in us could flow like clear water, bathing all wounds... if forgiveness could rise up above the anger and hatred aroused by those who should be called 'brother'...

We must be aware of our responsibility for God's gift at this feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is taking place once more: we are ontologically linked with our brethren and sisters on Earth, for the Lord created us 'in His image and likeness', whoever we are. There still remains something of the primal beauty that God has bestowed on us.

Christmas is the wonder that Christ arouses in the shepherds and the magi. Christmas is the dazzled wonder

before the icon of the Nativity. Christmas is the joy of children, and of fathers and mothers. But Christmas is also the sadness of being abandoned and forgotten... It is also a cold and hunger that overwhelm the body... It is disfigured humanity that no longer knows how to love... But Christmas is, above all, the Father giving us His beloved Son. And this Son, the Word of God, become Man that man may become God (St Athanasius of Alexandria). And, to do this, He begins to become like us, except without the sin of which He will, however, bear all the consequences till His death on the Cross, to deliver us from sin and death.



So, how should we live Christmas? Let us simply be fully ready to welcome the Love of God! Let us, at the same time, be fully capable of opening our eyes wide to see those who often suffer in innocence... Let us, quite simply, love fully!

The cave of Bethlehem gives hope to us all: 'Hope in God! Take heart and take courage! Hope in God!' (Ps. 26:14). It is with great love that I wish you, dear brothers and sisters, a joyful Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth in the flesh we celebrate today, be the joy of each one of us, and may He send down on us the grace of salvation! Amen.

*Paris, the Cathedral of St Alexander Newsky, Christmas 2011
+ Archbishop Gabriel of Comana, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch*

NEW YEAR WISHES



ON THE 8TH OF JANUARY 2012, THE TRADITIONAL RECEPTION BY THE ARCHDIOCESE ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEASTS OF THE NATIVITY, OF THEOPHANY AND OF THE NEW YEAR WAS MARKED BY THE ABSENCE OF ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL, HOSPITALISED ON THE 7TH JANUARY IN THE EVENING FOR 48 HOURS (see communiqué below) . THE YEAR, ONLY THE CLERGY OF THE PARISIAN REGION AND THE MEMBERS OF ARCHDIOCESAN AND THE CATHEDRAL COUNCILS WERE INVITED. THE SERMON (see below) WAS READ BY THE SECRETARY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE. ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL HAD ALSO ASKED MICHAEL SOLLOGOUB TO GIVE TWO CHARTERS OF THANKS (“GRAMOTA”) TO NICHOLAS SPASSKY AND ANDRE KORLIAKOFF FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE EXHIBITION “SOUS LES BULBES DE PARIS” (Under the Domes of Paris) ORGANISED BY THE CATHEDRAL ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 150TH ANNIVERSARY.

Dear Friends,

I am happy to welcome you to this reception which has now become traditional but which this year takes a different format because today I have only invited the members of the council and the members of the clergy of the Paris region and their spouses. The feast of the Nativity gives us the courage to look and the joy to consider that which we can do in the service of the Church there where God has placed us. A reception at the beginning of the year at the occasion of the feast of the Nativity is the occasion to take stock of the past year and to project ourselves towards the future. During the past year there has been on one hand: the pilgrimage to the Holy Land; the pastoral assembly; the 150 years of the cathedral; the appearance of the Feuillet (News Letter) in English; the visit of Archbishop Hilarion, primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia; the continuation of the writing of the catechism book; the opening of our administration all week with the support of Denise and Fr Athanasius; the number of ordinations (8 deacons and 2 priests (in GB)); the opening of communities (in France the community in Lourdes), and the cycle of support for new arrivals from Russia in the French language and in catechism.

On the other hand there has been the loss of the cathedral of St Nicholas in Nice which our community has been obliged to leave under painful and canonically incorrect conditions. We must give very special homage and express particular gratitude to the parish of St Nicholas in Nice, and notably to Fr Jean Gueit, to Fr Michael Philippenko and to Fr Igor Koretskiy as well as to all the members of the Parish Council, for all that they have had to live through and bear during the past year: the unfavourable judgement at the Court of Appeal in Aix, the necessity in which it was found necessary to leave the cathedral under the double pressure of the authorities of the Russian Federation and of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

I hope that this year 2012 will be put to the benefit of reflexion and praying to God that he will enlighten us and guide our Church in the years to come.

The coming years promise to be very difficult; I will not hide it from you: the fact that the intentions of absorption which have been advertised for a long time and brought about for good by the Patriarchate of Moscow on the subject of our Archdiocese, the Nice episode has painfully reminded us, and because of the passivity of the Œcumenical Patriarch. On this occasion, I invite you to close ranks around our Archdiocese so that we may formulate and state the uniqueness of its situation and of its message. The year 2011 also saw the publication of a book dedicated to Holy Mother Mary of Paris which contains many reflections about our Archdiocese which seem to me to echo exactly our present situation. The book is called “Le jour du Saint-Esprit” (The Day of the Holy Spirit) published by Cerf with a preface by your servant. There is in fact a special position of our Archdiocese in the Orthodox world at the moment: on one hand, the issue of Russian immigration which has known how to discover and to carry the

ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL’S HEALTH

Archbishop Gabriel was victim to a small brain haemorrhage at the end of last week, after the celebration of the feast of the Nativity according to the Julian calendar. According to the doctors, this haemorrhage is a sequela of the chemotherapy treatment which he had received during 2011. He went into Bichat Hospital on the evening of Saturday 7th January, and he was discharged on Monday 9th January. He feels well, but following the advice of the doctors he left immediately to rest. He has cancelled all his appointments for the month of January. He thanks all who support him by their prayers.

universality of the Orthodox faith: this is not linked to any nation, neither to any particular culture but is addressed to all men and to all women who find themselves in God as a unique and singular person, bearing his own history and culture, and is loved and saved as such by God, creator of all things in his loving kindness for each one.

And on the other hand, our Church, as St Mary says referring to the Church of the emigration, is a small rest who found herself in a situation that the Church has never known in this world: a situation of freedom from persecution as from the donations of the State. This autonomy and this liberty compared to every form of dependence is without doubt the best and the most precious thing which we must guard jealously. The Church of Christ has as a unique vocation to help us entre with him into a relationship in order that He becomes the centre of our life, and that, in fact, we are able to focus ourselves on the love that we bring to our brothers.

The enrooting of Orthodox witness in Western Europe to which we are called must take flesh in a local church which constitutes itself on the base of all Orthodox that history has united in the same land and which are attached to the witness of our faith, not as members of a Diaspora, but as people completely integrated or coming from our countries of Western Europe, taking into account, according to the special formula, the situation “here and now”. Contributing as much as we can to establishing this local church is the task to which we must consecrate our efforts in the period which is beginning. The diversity itself of our Archdiocese which reunites, in the one Church, people of different origins, nationalities and sensibilities is a richness which must incite us to go forward in this path.

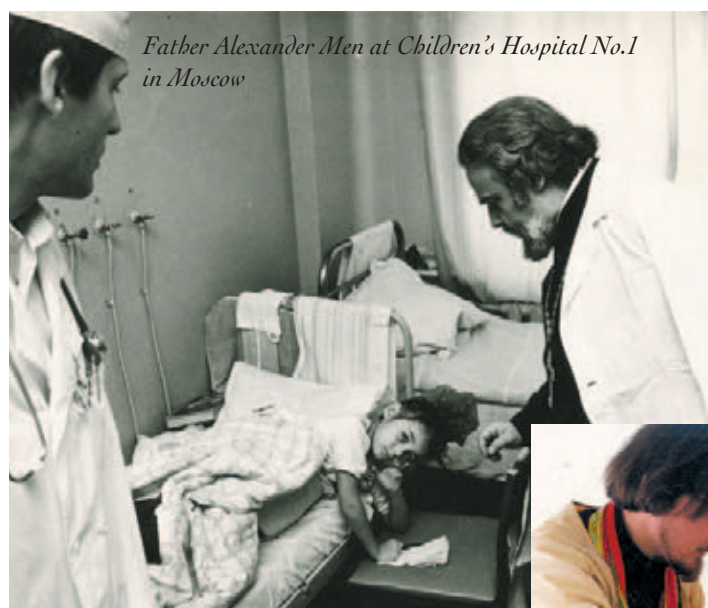
Holy Mother Mary also said to us “We are free, that is to say that we are personally responsible for our failures or even of our inertia. (...) If things go badly for us, it is because we ourselves are failing.” It is up to us therefore to be equal to the task and over the course of this year to advance the awareness that we have of our church life.



50th anniversary of ACER-RUSSIE

In 1961, fifty years ago, through the will to help Christians persecuted by the Soviet regime, prisoners of conscious, ACER-RUSSIA was born. Tens of thousands of religious books banned by the Soviet regime were circulated in secret, and campaigns in support of jailed dissidents and believers were organized. The headquarters of the association at 91, rue Olivier de Serres in Paris, France became a meeting point for all those who refused to consider the Berlin Wall as an unbridgeable gap between people. Born of a spirit of solidarity and faith, ACER-RUSSIA has perpetuated its action in adapting to the historic upheavals of recent decades.

Today we are far from the terrible images of social distress of the years of perestroika. At that time, ACER-RUSSIA was alongside all those who refused fate and decided to act to his neighbour from death or despair. Many churches opened their doors to more fragile, organized groups and fraternities who visited hospitals, prisons, orphanages and institutions for disabled children.



Father Alexander Men at Children's Hospital No.1 in Moscow

Deep friendships and fruitful collaborations date from this chaotic and terrible period. Priests such as Fr. Alexander Stepanov in St. Petersburg and Fr. Lev Bolshakov in Kondopoga, as well as lay such as Lina Saltykov and Dimitri Ostrovski continue their work in the service of the poor and set up assistance programs supported by the ACER-RUSSIA. Today, poverty, injustice and despair continue



Young children in penitentiary Kolpino

to wreak havoc in Russia. Associations and parishes are often the only open door to hope for thousands of people.

Few Western associations continue to provide assistance to Russia. Yet requests for support and calls for help are still likely to be received. The ACER-RUSSIA now supports about twenty-five assistance programs in large cities and in the provinces in central Russia and the Caucasus.

The ACER-RUSSIA is now 50 years old. Such an occasion is meaningful only in sharing, and in restoring hope to children who have their lives before them, to homeless people or families in distress.

Each of us can do much in his parish in his city. All forms of support are welcome. Contact us to distribute our newsletter or our calls, organize collections, and remember to put our cards, storybooks and notebooks on sale at your events.

This winter at Kondopoga in Karelia, Fr. Lev Bolshakov opened his parish home to those who were cold and in need of hot soup and a change of clothes. His parish houses street children, the homeless, and families in need throughout the year, but in winter their fragility is even more glaring and unjust. The parishioners of Father Lev are doing their best, but Kondopoga is not a rich city, and finances are lacking. Join us now to meet these urgent needs that cannot leave us indifferent!

*Alexandre Eltchaninoff,
president ACER-Russie*



*Father George Chistyakov
Pediatric Hospital No. 1 in Moscow*

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50th anniversary of ACER-RUSSIE



Children in the parish of Father Lev Bolshakov to Kondopoga

THE YEAR 2011 WAS MARKED BY THE CELEBRATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ACER RUSSIE, ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE DEPARTMENTS OF ACER-MJO (CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF RUSSIAN STUDENTS – ORTHODOX YOUTH MOVEMENT), FOUNDED IN 1961 AT THE INITIATIVE OF CYRILLE ELTCHANINOFF (1923-2001). THE HISTORY OF THIS DEPARTMENT, SINCE ITS BIRTH UP TO ITS PRESENT WORK ILLUSTRATES PERFECTLY THE MISSION IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH TO WHICH THE MOVEMENT OF ACER IS DEDICATED.



*1987 Delivery of the petition in favor of Alexander Ogorodnikov embassy of the URSS
Cyrille Eltchaninoff, Olivier Clément, Robert Masson (France-catholique)*

Cyrille Eltchaninoff, who was then responsible for the youth section of ACER, teacher of the Institute of Saint-Serge and parishioner of the Church of the Presentation of the Mother of God in the Temple (15th arrondissement of Paris), decided after returning from a trip to the USSR to put together all his talent and creative force to help persecuted believers in that country. Created out of nothing, brought to life by a man, Cyrille Eltchaninoff, supported and carried by ACER, the parish and in a wider sense the whole diocese, the department of Aide aux Croyants de l'URSS (Help for Believers in the USSR) developed, expanded and diversified its actions, bore fruits of the service to the Church, in the image of the talents of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit multiplied an hundredfold. It is in fact Christ and the Church that the department serves directly by putting itself at the service, yesterday of those oppressed by the Soviet regime, (believers, dissidents

ORDINATIONS

► Monseigneur l'Archevêque Gabriel was :

- ordained **deacon** the servant of God **Philippe Herbillon** before was tonsured reader and subdeacon, 4th december to the community of St Jean de Cassien (F-Strasbourg).
- ordained **deacon** the reader **James Burns** before was tonsured subdeacon, 10th december to the community of St Anne (G.B. - Northampton).

► The Community of St. Herman of Alaska in Kristiansand (Norway) has been recognized as a parish of the Archdiocese



*Arrest of believers
60-70 years in the USSR*

and political prisoners), and today the destitute (the homeless, children on the street, the ill or the elderly): all that you did for the least of My brothers, you did it unto Me, the Lord told us.

Three special and very different events have punctuated this jubilee year. At the end of June ACER-Russie received, in the jolly setting of the big top Des Turbulents (porte de Champerret, Paris), a show of exceptional artistic quality, by the troupe Upsala-Tsirk. The Upsala-Tsirk Association from St Petersburg is a non-governmental organisation, created in 2000 which offers children on the street the chance to learn the skills of the circus. At the moment, this association is one of only two organisations in Russia which use the discipline of the circus as an innovative method of social development for children and teenagers coming from groups said to be at risk (those from big families, the poor or those suffering from alcohol or drug addiction). Each child, to a level beyond his needs, is considered personally in terms of his own interests and talents, then the perspectives for social insertion are developed accordingly. During a warm and friendly meal shared under the big top, we met the children, the trainers and those responsible for Upsala-Tsirk, invited to France by ACER-Russie to meet and share their experience with French professionals.

In a completely different style, the event on the 25th of September

which took place in the house of ACER-MJO, started with a *mollen* to thank the Lord for all that has been accomplished and to ask Him to give His strength to be able to continue to serve Him. Many accounts were given by friends of and people working for ACER-Russie, amongst whom some had come directly from Russia, about the different aspects of the work of the department. These accounts have permitted us in particular to discover what role the department had in the revival of religious thought during the Soviet era, the job of education in the years following the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the social and humanitarian action of today. An exhibition of photos of the history of the 50 past years, retraced in a lively manner in the collection "Aider Autrement" (Helping in a different way) published on the occasion of the jubilee, prolonged the event, which ended with a reception reuniting nearly 100 people, given in the courtyard of the house.

Finally, we must mention a conference held in Paris on the 25th and 26th November on the theme "civil society and charitable work in Russia today", the fruit of a partnership that ACER-Russie established with two research centres in social science and politics, bringing together renowned researchers and specialists in contemporary Russia. The reason for this event is the desire on the part of ACER-Russie to understand Russian society better, in

order to be able to serve it better. By bringing together researchers and charitable workers, the conference wanted to take a both practical and academic look at charitable and civil action, as well as the political and social stakes. The high attendance of the two days (between 100 and 150 participants) shows that there is a lot of interest in the subjects covered by the conference.



Church destroyed in the USSR 1985

This jubilee has been the occasion to look back over the work that has been accomplished as well as to think about the direction to take over the years to come. If we have the conviction that the service rendered by ACER-Russie today is necessary, to continue we need material and spiritual help from the parishes of the diocese, we cannot be left indifferent to the fate of believers in the USSR as of the poor in Russia.

Cyrille Sollogoub, president ACER