



Quarterly Bulletin of Saint John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church

Diocese of the West - Orthodox Church in America

1900 Essex Street, Berkeley, CA 94703

510-845-2944

www.stjohnthebaptistberkeley.com

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His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West

Statement on the War in Ukraine

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Diocese of the West:

I have avoided making too many official statements about the war in Ukraine, asking instead that all the parishes and monasteries of our diocese pray for those who have suffered loss, been injured or perished as a result of the invasion by the Russian Federation. This is not to say that I do not have my own personal opinions or views as to who is or is not accountable before God for the insane fratricide that has been reported daily. However, I would like to comment on two sermons that were given on Sunday, as was reported by Peter Anderson, a personal friend and observer of things Orthodox, one in Moscow by Patriarch Kirill and the other in Kyiv by Metropolitan Onuphry, Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The Patriarch of Moscow said the following:

“We know that today many are dying in the fields of internecine warfare. The Church prays that this warfare will end as soon as possible, that as few brothers as possible kill each other in this fratricidal war. And at the same time, the Church is aware that if someone, driven by a sense of duty, the need to fulfill an oath, remains true to his calling and dies in the line of military duty, then he undoubtedly

commits an act that is tantamount to a sacrifice. He sacrifices himself for others. And therefore we believe that this sacrifice washes away all the sins that a person has committed.”

The first two sentences of this excerpt are without question true. Many are dying, soldiers from both side and, tragically, Ukrainian civilians who have been reportedly deliberately targeted, their homes and livelihoods destroyed and, in some cases, who have been found to be tortured. And, indeed, the Church “prays that this warfare will end as soon as possible.” We have asked and continue to ask that you pray that peace will be restored to Ukraine. It is what follows that is troubling. It would appear Patriarch Kirill is saying that, no matter what crimes a soldier commits while fulfilling his military duty, should he die in the line of duty, he is somehow magically absolved and freed from all accountability before God for his actions. Can it be true that the Patriarch is saying that, for example, a soldier who in this present fratricide rapes a woman or murders a civilian in cold blood, and is later killed in combat and unrepentant, is absolved of those sins and crimes simply because he died in battle? Is he saying, to use another example, Nazi soldiers who arrested and killed Jews or even Russians during WWII, while doing their duty, are likewise considered to be absolved of their sins? I hope not. To my knowledge, this is a novel idea that has no justification in our theology and should be condemned. Christian martyrs, those who have suffered and died in and for Christ, are witnesses (martyrs) to His love for the world and participate, in a sense, in Christ’s own passion. There are other “martyrs” who are witnesses to evil. I am thinking about those who have, for example, committed suicide by strapping explosives to themselves and detonating those explosives in a public place, purposefully killing others with themselves. It seems to me a soldier who commits a war crime and does not repent, has more in common with the latter than the Christian martyrs, some of whom were indeed soldiers like St. George and St. Theodore the Recruit.

Metropolitan Onuphry of Kyiv’s sermon was a far more Christian one. He said:

“We pray that the Lord will fill the hearts of all people with love, and especially those who today kill our people, destroy our cities, villages, so that they remember that God did not put us on earth to kill each other, to take away from each other something that we desire, but that we live in peace, in love for God and for each other.”

There are no novel doctrines in it, being in perfect harmony with the Gospel. It requires no explanation or commentary. How many times do we pray for peace in the Liturgy? I ask you all to continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and an end to the aggression against it and its people. I also ask you to pray for Metropolitan Onuphry who has the difficult task of keeping his flock together during this tragic war. Asking God’s blessing and a speedy end to the war, I am,

+Benjamin

Archbishop of San Francisco and the Diocese of the West



photo: Archbishop Benjamin, Metropolitan Onuphry, and Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk

Namesdays, Birthdays, and Anniversaries

November 1- Birthday of Mariana Katich

November 15- Wedding Anniversary of Santiago and Claudia Drexler

November 20- Namesday of Valeriy Okulov

November 27- Birthday of Michael Temerin and Sofia Katich

December 5- Namesday of Michael Temerin

December 8- Birthday of Joseph Katich

December 13- Namesday of Andrew Fulgham

December 17- Namesday of Barbara Roquemore

December 19- Namesday of Nikolay Lukoyankov and Nicholas Timokhin

January 6- Birthday of Arseny (Arnold) Kloian

January 25- Namesday of Tatyana Lukoyanova

January 27- Namesday of Nina Kloian

If you would like your namesday, birthday, and/or anniversary included in the future, please contact Fr. Edward at revedwardhenderson@gmail.com.

Schedule of Services

Sundays: Divine Liturgy at 10:00am

Saturdays: Vigil *or* Great Vespers at 5:00pm

November, December, January services

Saturday, December 3		Vigil	5:00pm
Sunday, December 4	Entrance of the Theotokos	Liturgy	10:00am
Sunday, December 18		Great Vespers	6:00pm
Monday, December 19	Saint Nicholas	Liturgy	7:00am
Friday, January 6	Christmas Eve	Vesperal Liturgy Vigil	10:00am 6:00pm
Saturday, January 7	Nativity of Christ (Christmas)	Liturgy	10:00am
Friday, January 13		Great Vespers	7:00pm
Saturday, January 14	Circumcision of the Lord Saint Basil the Great	Liturgy	10:00am
Wednesday, January 18		Vigil	7:00pm
Thursday, January 19	Theophany	Liturgy Blessing of Waters	10:00am

More detailed service schedules are available on the parish website and at the candle desk.

Confession is available after Vigil/Vespers, before Liturgy, and as arranged with Fr. Edward.

Choir rehearsal is on Thursday at 7:00pm in the parish hall and 30 minutes prior to Vigil/Vespers and Liturgy. For further information about the parish choir, please contact Anastasia Klimko at anastasia.d.klimko@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events: November 6: Daylight Saving Time Ends

November 28: Nativity Fast Begins