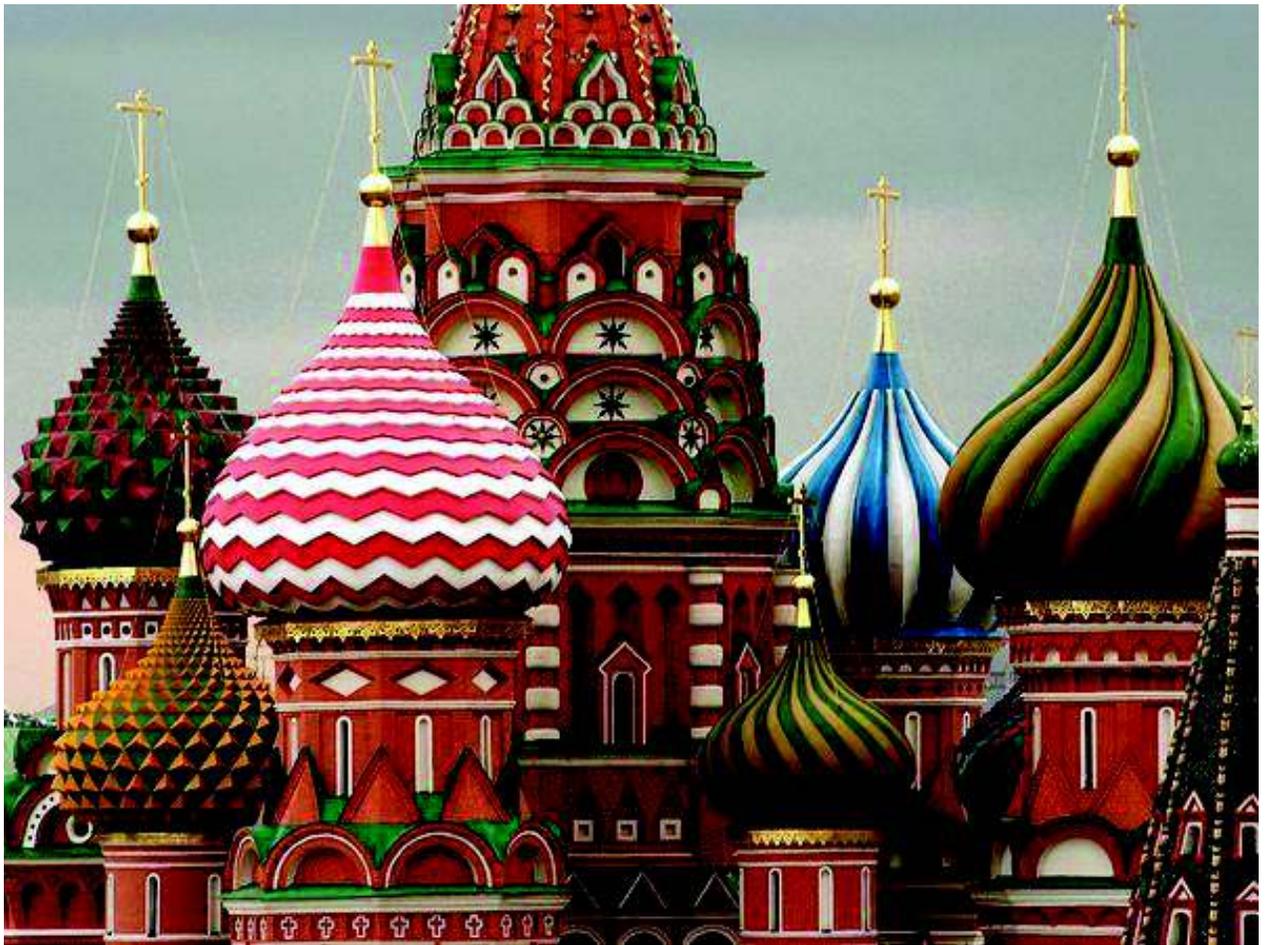


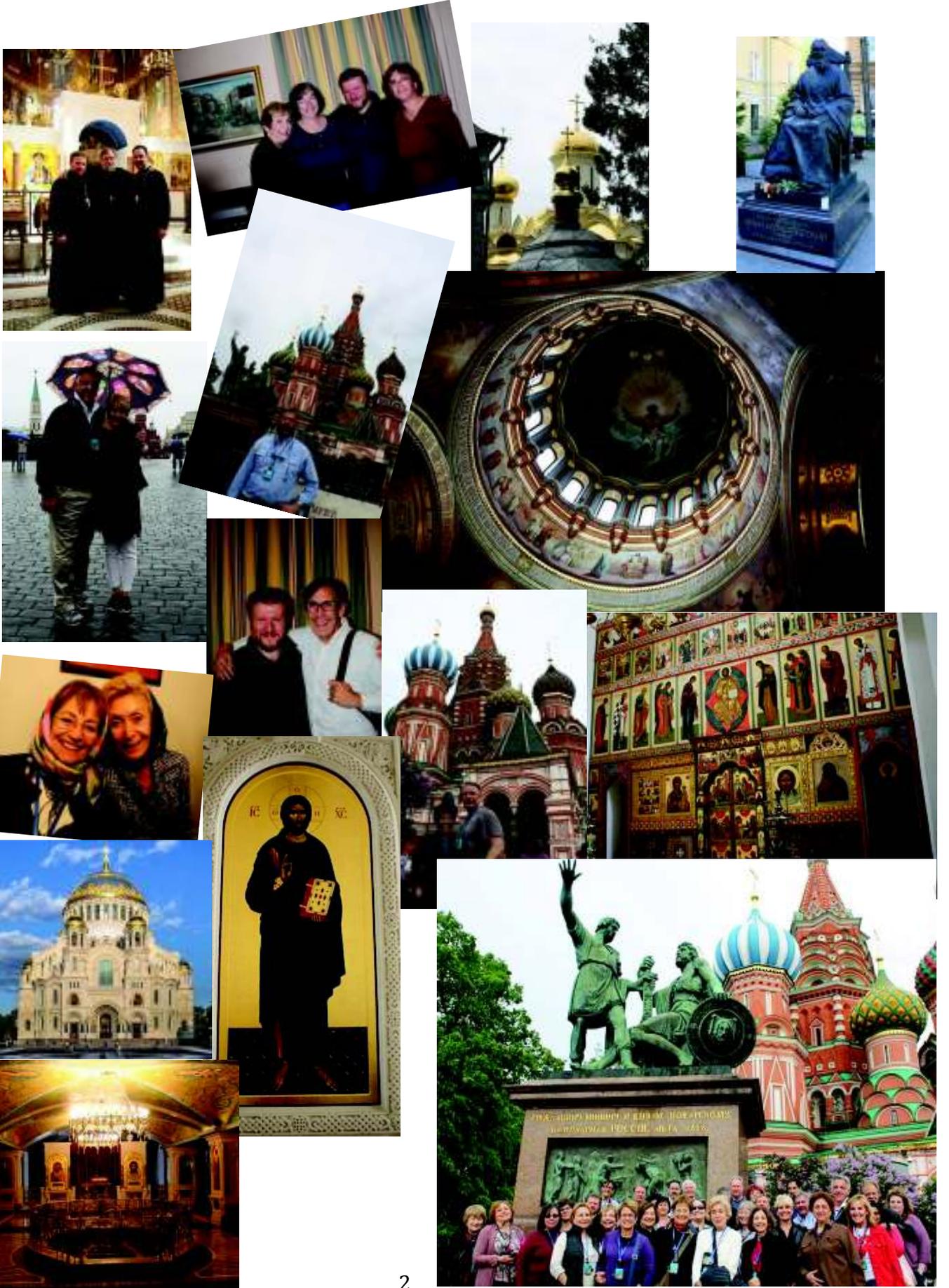
# *St. Paul's Pilgrimage to Russia*

*St. Petersburg and Moscow*



*May 22 – June 3, 2017*

*Day by Day*



## *Monday, May 22nd - Day 1*

For those of us traveling together, we depart LAX on Lufthansa flight #457 to Frankfurt, Germany at 3:20PM, gaining a day as we travel, and arrive in Frankfurt at 11:20AM the next morning.

## *Tuesday, May 23rd - Day 2*

After a relatively short layover in Frankfurt, we depart for St. Petersburg on Lufthansa flight #1436 at 1:15PM, arriving in St. Petersburg at 4:55PM.

We will transfer to the hotel *Angleterre* (or hotel England) across from St. Isaac's Cathedral, built in the 19th century and one of the largest Orthodox Churches in the world; named for St. Isaac the Confessor, the 4th century monk of Constantinople, it can accommodate as many as 14,000 people for the celebration of Liturgy.

The first hotel on the site of today's Angleterre was built in 1840 and the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the author of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, was a frequent guest. That hotel closed in 1985. In 1987, during Gorbachev's *perestroika* or re-structuring, city authorities decided to demolish the aging hotel and replace it with a modern building - with a facade copying the original. Members of the public gathered on St. Isaac's Square to protest the plan. **This was the first major public protest in the history of the Soviet Union to be left unpunished by the Soviet authorities.** The hotel was ultimately demolished in 1987 and the current hotel opened in 1991.

We'll have some time to set up our rooms, rest and then have dinner, followed by a brief orientation.

### *St. Petersburg*

A young city by European and Russian standards, St. Petersburg was for nearly two centuries - from 1713-1728 and 1732-1918 - the capital of Romanov Russia. Built by Peter the Great at the beginning of the 18th century to be the capital of his Empire and a window to the west - meant to open Russia to the European Enlightenment - today it is considered Russia's cultural but not political capital. Sometimes called "the Venice of the North" it is a city built on 42 islands connected by 432 pedestrian, car and rail bridges. After Moscow, it is Russia's second largest city, with an estimated population of close to 6 million people. It is also the most

northern city in the world with a population of over 1 million. Situated on the Baltic Sea at 60 degrees north, it is on the same latitude as Alaska, the tip of Greenland and Oslo, Norway.



*Peter the Great considering building of St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea  
A painting by the Russian painter Alexander Benois (1870-1960)*

Originally built on the site of a swamp where the Neva River and the Baltic Sea meet, historians estimate that tens of thousands of Russian serfs and Swedish prisoners of war lost their lives to exposure, disease and accidents laying the foundations of Peter's new capital. Many of their bodies were simply dumped into the early construction sites, giving Peter's city the nickname of "the city built on bones." Being enthralled with all things Dutch he named it Sankt PETERS BURKH after his patron saint, Peter the Apostle, but using the Dutch pronunciation. When WWI began in 1914, anti-German sentiment in Russia convinced Tsar Nicholas II to change the city's name to the more Russian sounding Petrograd. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, the city was re-named once again, in 1924, this time in honor of Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, and called Leningrad. In 1991, following a vote of those living in the city at that time, it was re-named St. Petersburg – and so it has remained to the present.

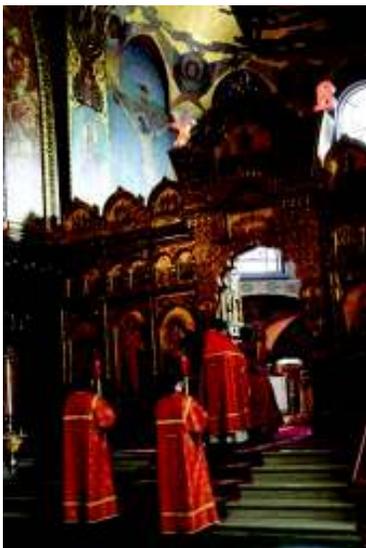
As the residence of the Russian imperial family from the early 18th century until the beginning of the 20th century, St. Petersburg was home to some of the greatest names in the arts, music and literature in all of history. Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), the poet and writer considered by many to be the father of modern Russian literature was both intoxicated by St. Petersburg's beauty and sensitive to the underlying climate of political suspicion and intrigue of the capital. Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852) was a tortured soul and one of world literature's most unique voices - a playwright and the author of short stories like *The Diary of a Madman* and novels like *Dead Souls*. Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) set his novel *Crime and Punishment* in the city's slums. The story of the murder of an old moneylender was based on a real crime and the novel's publication in 1866 was blamed for a series of copycat killings. More than 30 of Dostoevsky's short stories and novels are situated in St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg has also been home to names like the modernist painter Marc Chagall (1887-1985); composers Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) and Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975); and ballet greats like Rudolph Nureyev (1938-1993) and Mikhail Baryshnikov (1948-present) both of whom began their careers at the Mariinsky Ballet.

The city and its inhabitants suffered immensely during the 20th century, with the murderous atrocities of Lenin's "Red Terror" (1917-1922) and then Stalin's "Great Purge" (1936-1938). In 1918, for security reasons, Lenin moved the capital of Russia from St. Petersburg to the more defensible Moscow. Between 1917 and 1930 some 2 million people fled St. Petersburg including most of the surviving aristocracy and intellectuals, many entering exile in Western Europe and America. But most devastating of all was the "Siege of Leningrad" during WWII - what Russians call "The Great Patriotic War" - when, for nearly 900 days, from September 1941 until January, 1944, Nazi troops laid siege to the city, resulting in the deaths of more than a million people, one-third of the population of the city at that time, most from starvation. During the winter of 1941-1942 - November thru February - the only food available was 125 grams of bread per person per day, of which 60% consisted of sawdust and other inedible materials. Historians agree that it is the most lethal siege of a city in the history of the world. The city never surrendered. As a monument to this atrocity, nearly a half million people are buried in the *Piskariovskoye* Memorial Cemetery in 186 mass graves. It is only after WWII that St. Petersburg begins its recovery from the devastation of its violent history, and becomes the UNESCO World Heritage site of today.

*Who was Peter the Great?* Every so often an individual comes along who revolutionizes an entire nation. Russia has had more than its fair share of such historic figures – Lenin and Stalin, in their ideological brutality, immediately come to mind – but arguably few men have shaped the history of Russia more than Peter the Great (1672-1725). A giant among



his generation – literally so, as he stood nearly 7 feet tall – he is the founder of modern, westernized Russia and St. Petersburg, as his capital, was to reflect that vision. During the four decades that he ruled Russia he transformed his country into a major European power. The first tsar to travel to Western Europe, he refashioned Russia's army along western lines and founded the Russian navy. He reduced the Church to a department of the state along European Protestant lines and implemented a law that no Russian male could enter a monastery before the age of 50. He encouraged western customs, forcing men who wore beards to pay a tax (Peter preferred the moustache); he established the School of Mathematics and Navigation, the first such institution in Russian history; he started the first newspaper in Russia and edited its first issue; he introduced the potato, which then became a staple of the Russian diet, as well as coffee and tobacco. In short, he led a cultural revolution that turned Russia towards the West, and made Russia into an Empire not to be trifled with.



### *Wednesday, May 24th – Day 3*

This morning, on our way to the Smolensk Cemetery to begin our exploration of St. Petersburg by visiting the grave and venerating the relics of St. Xenia, the patron saint of St. Petersburg and a "fool for Christ" who, for more than 40 years, wandered the streets of the city among the poor, we stopped by the Church of the Dormition (or Assumption) of the *Theotokos*, that is today a *metochion* or monastic daughter house of the *Optina Pustyn* Monastery some 600 miles south of St. Petersburg. In the 19th century *Optina Pustyn* was one of the most important and



influential monasteries in all of Russia, known for its *startsi* or wise monastic elders. Visitors to *Optina Pustyn* seeking advice and spiritual counsel included the famous Russian writers Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. St. Ambrose of Optina (1812-1891) is thought by some scholars to have been the prototype, together with St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, for Father Zosima in Dostoevsky's novel, *The*

*Brothers Karamazov*. When we entered the Church there was a Liturgy going on as it is the last day for our celebration of Pascha before celebrating the Ascension of Christ into Heaven tomorrow; we had arrived just before the Entrance with the Gospels. We stayed briefly for part of the service as this was an unscheduled stop and then left for the Smolensk Cemetery and the relics of St. Xenia.

*What does it mean to be a fool for Christ?* The term "fool for Christ" comes from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians where he describes himself and the other apostles as "fools for Christ's sake" (1 Corinthians 4:10) because the preaching of "the message of the Cross" - the crucified and risen Lord Jesus - "is foolishness" to most people; but for believers, for those of us "being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). In these passages and others, he contrasts the wisdom and values of this fallen world - greed, the accumulation of possessions, the desire for power and fame - with the foolishness of the Good News of Christ and life demanded by the Gospel - a life of compassion, mercy, humility and simplicity. Fools for Christ are "crazy for God" as one scholar has written and often employ unconventional and even shocking behavior to convey the message God is seeking to convey through them.

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware writes in his book, *The Orthodox Way*: "The fool for Christ is a living witness to the truth that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world; standing the pyramid on its head, he practices an absolute voluntary poverty, identifying himself with the humiliated Christ. He combines audacity with humility. Because he has renounced everything he is truly free. Folly for Christ's sake, needless to say, is an extremely rare vocation; nor is it easy to distinguish the counterfeit from the genuine, the "breakdown" from the "breakthrough." There is in the end only one test: "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). The false fool is futile

and destructive, to himself and others. The true fool for Christ, possessing purity of heart, has upon the community around him an effect that is life enhancing. Through some startling action or enigmatic word, he awakens others from complacency and pharisaism.”

In the Old Testament, prophets like Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for three years, predicting a forthcoming conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia by the Assyrians who would lead them all – including the people of Israel – into captivity naked (*Isaiah 20:2-3*); and Hosea was commanded by God to marry a prostitute to symbolize the adulterous unfaithfulness of the Israelites to God (*Hosea 3*). Perhaps the most famous example of being a fool for Christ in western Christianity is St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). The Russian Orthodox Church numbers 36 fools for Christ among its canonized saints – most famously, St. Basil the Blessed (1469-1552), for whom St. Basil’s Cathedral in Moscow’s Kremlin is named.

**St. Xenia:** Little is known about St. Xenia’s life. Born around 1730, Xenia Grigorievna Petrova was the wife of an army officer, Colonel Andrew Petrov. Xenia became a widow at the young age of 26 when her husband died suddenly, probably of alcohol poisoning, while they were attending a party – literally drinking himself to death. After the death of her husband, she experienced a spiritual rebirth and began living the life of a fool for Christ – first giving away all of her possessions to the poor (*Matthew 19:21*). When she gave away her house and possessions, her relatives questioned her sanity and complained to the authorities who upon examining Xenia, were convinced that she was in her right mind and entitled to dispose of her property as she saw fit. She donned the military uniform of her now deceased husband and insisted that she be addressed by his name, telling people that it was she and not her husband who had died. She lived on the streets of the city for the next four decades, owning only the clothes she wore. She put off her old self (*Ephesians 4:20-24*) and lived only for God. By giving everything away, she became rich in humility, self-



She donned the military uniform of her now deceased husband and insisted that she be addressed by his name, telling people that it was she and not her husband who had died. She lived on the streets of the city for the next four decades, owning only the clothes she wore. She put off her old self (*Ephesians 4:20-24*) and lived only for God. By giving everything away, she became rich in humility, self-

denial, simplicity and kindness. She gave her mind and her heart completely to God and developed a deep and profound love for everyone and everything. She trusted that God would provide for her as He provides for the birds of the air (*Matthew 6:26*). During the day, she wandered through the poorest sections of the city; at night, she prayed. When a new chapel was being built in the Smolensk cemetery, she would carry bricks to the site and up the scaffolding throughout the night to help the workmen while she was praying there. One night the workmen hid to find out who was helping them, and discovered that it was "crazy Xenia."



St. Xenia fell asleep in the Lord sometime in 1803 and was buried in the Smolensk cemetery. By the 1820s thousands of people began flocking to her grave, asking her to pray for them and finding that their prayers were answered. Healing miracles still occur to this day. In 1902, a chapel was built over her grave. Xenia was canonized as a saint by the Church in 1988, during the celebrations for the millennium of Christianity in Russia. Her memory is celebrated on January 24th.

Below is one of the prayers we prayed in the chapel that contains her relics and where we were anointed with blessed oil:

"O holy and most-blessed Mother Xenia: you lived under the protection of the Most High God, enduring hunger and thirst, oppression and persecution and received from God the gift of clairvoyance and the power to work miracles. Honoring your memory and praying before your holy icon, we ask you as one who is alive in Christ: accept our prayers and intercede for us, sinful and unworthy as we are. Pray that our children may be faithful, honest and live in the fear of God; that our families may live in concord and love; those who are sick and infirm may be healed; that our pastors, having received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, may be wise and faithful teachers; and by the power of the Holy Spirit all of us may be united to Christ our God both in this life and the next. To Him who is wondrous in His saints and to His eternal Father who is without beginning and His Holy Spirit we offer - together with you - glory, praise and worship now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen."



We next visited the *St. Nicholas Maritime Cathedral* that has long been closely associated with the Russian navy and is often called “the Sailors Cathedral” by locals. Built in the shape of a cross, decorated with Corinthian columns and crowned by five gilded domes, the Cathedral is a baroque style “double-decker” building consisting of two separate churches on two different floors – a

church design somewhat unique to 18th century Russian Orthodoxy. The Church dedicated to St. Nicholas – the patron saint of sailors - is located on the first floor of the Cathedral, while the Church dedicated to the Epiphany or Baptism of Christ is located on the second floor. The main shrine of the Cathedral is built around a 17th century Greek icon of St. Nicholas that contains a portion of his relics located in the lower Church. Designed by Savva Chevakinsky, one of Russia’s better-known architects

of the 18th century, construction on the Cathedral began in 1753, and the main altar was consecrated in 1760 in



the presence of Empress Elizabeth (1709-1762). Catherine the Great (1729-1796) officially made the Church a Cathedral specifically for the Russian navy in 1762. The Cathedral can accommodate 5,000 worshippers and is one of the very few churches in all of Russia that was not closed during the Soviet era because of its associations with the Russian navy.

*The Catherine Palace* in *Tsarskoe Selo* – literally, “the Tsar’s village” – bears the name of Catherine I (1684-1727), the second wife of Peter the Great, who ruled Russia for 2 years following her husband’s death – the first woman to do so, opening a legal path for a century of women rulers in



Russia. Originally a relatively modest 2-storey building commissioned by Peter for Catherine in 1717, today’s Catherine Palace owes its opulence to their daughter, the Empress Elizabeth who chose *Tsarskoe Selo* as her primary summer residence.

Starting in 1743, the building was reconstructed by 4 different architects before Bartholomeo Rastrelli (1700-1771), the Chief Architect of the Imperial Court, was instructed to completely redesign the building on a scale that would rival the Palace of Versailles in France. The resultant baroque palace, completed in 1756, took over 220 pounds of gold to decorate its lavish exterior.

**The *Novodevichy* (or New Maidens) Convent** was established in 1845 on

orders from Tsar Nicholas I (1796-1855). The Cathedral of the Resurrection (*right*) that is associated with the cemetery of the Convent, with 5 domes and 5 side-altars, was constructed from 1856 to 1861. In 1918, following the Bolshevik Revolution and the beginning of the persecution of the Church, the Convent was closed. It was not until 1995 that the



*Novodevichy* Convent was allowed to re-open and only in 2002 were all the buildings associated with the Convent returned by the government.

## Thursday, May 25th - Day 4

Today is the celebration of the Ascension of Christ and we will attend an early morning Liturgy in the lower chapel of the *Feodorovsky* Cathedral.

The Ascension of Christ into Heaven 40 days after His resurrection from the dead is recorded in the Scriptures – Mark 16:14-19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts



of the Apostles 1:9-12 – and is one of the great liturgical celebrations of the Church. Because the Ascension occurred 40 days after the resurrection, its celebration always falls on a Thursday. Jesus' Ascension is His final physical departure from this world, the fulfillment of His resurrection and ours, and when He ascends into Heaven, He takes our human nature with Him into

the Kingdom of His Father; the Ascension is also the precursor to the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, by which we live in Christ here and now in the Church.

The Scripture readings at Liturgy this morning are:

*“IN MY FIRST BOOK, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. To them He presented himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, “you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So when they had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” And when He had said this, as*

*they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into Heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven." Then they returned from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away."*

**- Acts of the Apostles 1:1-12**

*"AT THAT TIME, Jesus, having risen from the dead, stood in the midst of His disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a ghost. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questions rise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; touch me, and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate before them.*

*Then He said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."*

*Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God."*

**Luke 24:36-53**

***The Hymn (Troparion) praising the Ascension of Christ into Heaven***

*You ascended in glory, O Christ our God,  
granting joy to Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit.  
Your blessing assured them that You are the Son of God  
and the Redeemer of the world.*

*The Feodorovsky Imperial Cathedral* was the parish Church of the last Tsar, Nicholas II, and his family when they stayed at *Tsarskoe Selo*. On August 20, 1909 the cornerstone of the Cathedral was laid by Tsar Nicholas with liturgical services presided over by Bishop Theophan, then the rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. The Cathedral was closed by the Communists in 1932 and was used as a storage facility, dairy plant and garage until 1992. It had

also suffered severe damage as a result of the Nazi bombardment of the city during WWII, when the main dome was completely shattered by a Nazi artillery shell. Restoration on the *Feodorovsky Cathedral* began in 2005, when the



building was returned to the Church. By 2013, the restoration was complete, with an upper Church dedicated to the Mother of God that has a five-tier iconostasis and the lower Church dedicated to St. Alexander Nevsky done in a 5th and 6th century Byzantine style with iconography by Archimandrite Zenon Theodor, one of the most renowned of modern Russian iconographers. (Notice the *iconostasis* - or lack of one - in the lower Church, built in a more ancient Byzantine style, as well as the *ciborium* built over the altar.) Here is what Father Zenon says about iconography and the painting of icons: “The icon is embodied prayer. It is created in prayer and for prayer, which is the driving force of love for God, the desire for Him as perfect beauty. Beauty is one of the names of God. As

a form of preaching the Gospel, as a testimony to the Church of the Incarnation, the icon is an integral part of our worship, along with church singing, architecture and ritual. An icon painter is not an artist in the worldly sense of the word. He must not express himself in the icon. He must

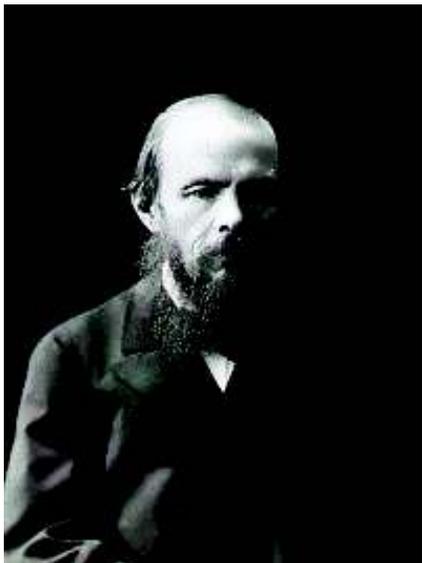


paint the icon so that it will be an aid to prayer. A badly painted icon grates in the same way as bad church singing or a poor, illiterate reading of the texts of the Liturgy. When Church life is weakened and in decline, then of course church art also falls into decay. When the Church’s spiritual level is high, then ecclesiastical art is at its best.”

*The St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra* is the oldest monastery in St. Petersburg and was established by Peter the Great in 1710. (A *lavra* is a type of monastery consisting of a cluster of cells for hermits with a church and refectory in the center.) On April 5, 1713, in the presence of the Tsar, the wooden Church of the Annunciation was consecrated and this has come to be considered the official date for the founding of the monastery. In 1724, Peter had the relics of St. Alexander Nevsky (1221-1263) transferred from the Russian city of Vladimir to the monastery in order to make Nevsky – the prince who defeated the Swedes in 1240 – the patron saint of his new capital. (Peter the Great engaged the Swedes in the Great Northern War for more than 2 decades – from 1700 to 1721 – to establish Russian dominance of the Baltic Sea and making Russia a major new force in European politics.)

*The Tikhvin Cemetery* is located on the grounds of the St. Alexander Nevsky *Lavra* and contains the graves of a number of famous Russian writers and composers like Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) whose *Swan Lake* we saw performed on Saturday evening, May 27th at the Mikhailovsky Theatre, founded in 1833 and one of the oldest opera and ballet houses in Russia.

*Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881)*, considered to be one of the greatest writers of all time, is buried here and we prayed a *Trisagion* at his grave.



Trained as an engineer, he was arrested in 1849 for belonging to a socialist literary group in St. Petersburg that discussed banned books critical of Romanov Russia. He was tried and sentenced to death by firing squad. On December 22, 1849 Dostoevsky was actually led before a firing squad on the grounds of the Peter and Paul Fortress; a priest allowed him to kiss a blessing cross; a shroud was placed over his head; and, at the very last moment, he received a stay of execution from the tsar, Nicholas I (1796-1855). He was instead exiled to a Siberian prison camp for 4 years, followed by 6 years

of compulsory military service in exile on the Mongolian frontier. During his time in prison, Dostoevsky studied the New Testament intensely and underwent a profound spiritual transformation. He married a widow,

Maria Isaeva, and returned to Russia in 1859. In 1864 his first wife died and in 1867 he married his stenographer, Anna. They had 4 children – 2 sons and 2 daughters – their oldest daughter dying as an infant in 1868 and oldest son dying as a toddler in 1875. Dostoevsky died in 1881, while at the height of his fame as a writer, and some journalists of the time estimated that more than 50,000 people attended his funeral procession. Dostoevsky wrote 11 novels, 17 short stories and numerous other works set in the troubled political, social and spiritual atmosphere of 19th century Russia. His books are considered to be “philosophical novels” that enter deeply into questions of religion and psychology, ethics and morality, faith and doubt and have been translated into more than 170 languages. His first novel, *Poor Folk*, was published in 1846, when he was only 25 years old. His most acclaimed works are: *Crime and Punishment*, written in 1866, the story of an impoverished ex-student in St. Petersburg who murders an unscrupulous pawnbroker for her cash; *The Idiot*, written in 1869, the story of Prince Myshkin, a young man whose goodness and open hearted simplicity lead many of the more worldly characters of the novel to assume that he is mentally deficient; *Demons*, sometimes translated as *The Possessed*, written in 1872, is an allegory of the potentially catastrophic consequences of the political and moral nihilism that was becoming prevalent in the Russia of the 1860s; and *The Brothers Karamazov*, written in 1880, the story of four brothers, one of whom murders his father over a woman both are interested in. He wrote as if the soul of Russia was at stake – and indeed it was.



*The Peter and Paul Fortress* is the original fortress established by Peter the Great in 1703 on an island in the Neva River during his war with Sweden and is the birthplace of St. Petersburg. Sometimes called “the Russian Bastille” it has been used as a military fort and as a prison for political prisoners: two of the most famous were the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky and the Bolshevik Leon Trotsky. The centerpiece of the Fortress and – until modern times – the tallest building in the city is the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul with its 400-foot spire. This church is the final resting place of the Romanov tsars who ruled Russia from 1613 to 1917 and are buried 10 feet below floor level. The Cathedral,

completed in 1733, was designed in a Baroque style by the Swiss-Italian architect Domenico Trezzini (1670-1734) to constitute a definitive break with traditional Russian Church architecture and mark Peter's turn to western models. As you face the altar, the tomb on the right, in the front, marked by his bronze bust, is Peter the Great, the first of the tsars to be buried here. In a small chapel near the entrance to the Cathedral are buried the remains of the last Tsar and Tsarina, Nicholas and Alexandra, their son and four daughters, who were murdered by the Bolsheviks on July 16, 1918. Originally buried in an unmarked grave, their remains were only rediscovered in 1991 and buried here in 1998.

*The Church of the Resurrection of Christ our Savior (or The Church of our Savior "on spilled blood")* is built on the site where Emperor Alexander II (1818-1881) was assassinated on March 13, 1881. As the Emperor of Russia at that time, he was also the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Finland. Known as Alexander the Liberator because of his emancipation of Russia's serfs in 1861 - 4 years before the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in the United States - he played an important role in American history by selling Alaska to the United States in 1867. Construction of the Church in his memory began in 1883 during the reign of his son, Alexander III but was not finished until 1907 during the reign of his grandson and the last Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II. The Church contains more than 80,000 square feet of mosaics - more than any other church in the world (with the possible exception of the Roman Catholic Cathedral in St. Louis, MO). In the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Church was ransacked and looted, badly damaging its interior. The Soviet government under Stalin closed the Church in 1932. During WWII and the Siege of Leningrad (1941-1944), it was used as a morgue. After the war, it was used as a warehouse



for vegetables. But in July 1970 management of the Church passed to St. Isaac's Cathedral, which at the time, was being operated as a highly profitable museum. The Church of our Savior was designated as a "museum of mosaics" by the government and after nearly 3 decades of restoration work it was re-opened in 1997. Technically, it is still a Museum for Mosaics and one of the most popular tourist attractions in St. Petersburg but it does not function as a house of worship.

*The State Russian Museum* is the largest museum of Russian fine art in St. Petersburg and was established on April 13, 1895 by the last tsar of Russia,



Nicholas II (1868-1918), on the day of his coronation in order to commemorate his father Tsar Alexander III (1845-1894). Although relatively few are on exhibit, it has one of the

largest collections of icons - more than 6,000 of them - most dating from the 12th to the 17th centuries, in all of Russia. The first four halls of the Michailovsky Palace exhibit only a part of this massive collection, containing beautiful icons from the major centers of icon painting in medieval Russia - Novgorod, Pskov, Suzdal and Moscow.

### *Friday, May 26th - Day 5*

This morning we will visit *the Holy Trinity Cathedral*, built between 1828 and 1835; it was closed by the Soviet government in 1939 following extensive looting and turned into a warehouse. In 1990 the Cathedral was returned to the Church and restoration began. The Cathedral re-opened in 2010.



*Dostoevsky's Apartment and Memorial Museum* was opened in 1971 in the former apartment of the famous writer, where he spent the last three years of his life - 1878-1881 - and in which he wrote his masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the picture at left is the desk at which Dostoevsky wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*. The Dostoevsky's apartment

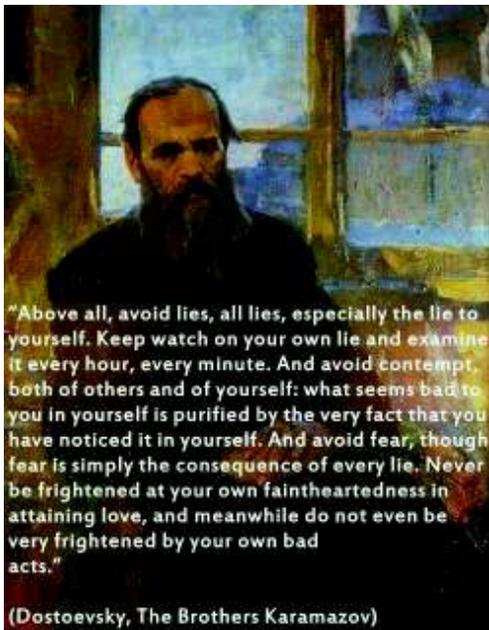
has been re-created for the most part from the memoirs of his second wife, Anna.

A very brief excerpt from *The Brothers Karamazov*:

*The Teaching of the Elder Zossima (a character in the novel)*

Do not forget to pray. Every time you pray, if you do so sincerely, there will be a flash of new feeling in it, and a new thought as well, one you did not know before, which will give you fresh courage; and you will understand that prayer is education.

Brothers, do not be afraid of men's sin, love man also in his sin, for this likeness of God's love is the height of love on earth. Love all of God's



creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love animals, love plants, love each thing. If you love each thing you will perceive the mystery of God in everything. Once you have perceived this, you will begin tirelessly to perceive more and more of it every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with a complete, universal love.

Love the animals: God gave them the rudiments of thought and an untroubled joy. Do not trouble them, do not torment them, do not take their joy from them, do not go against God's purpose. My brother asked forgiveness of the birds; it seems senseless, yet it is right, for all is like an ocean, all flows and connects. Let it be madness to ask forgiveness of the birds, still it would be easier for the birds and for any animal near you, if you yourself were more gracious than you are now, if only by a drop – still it would be easier.

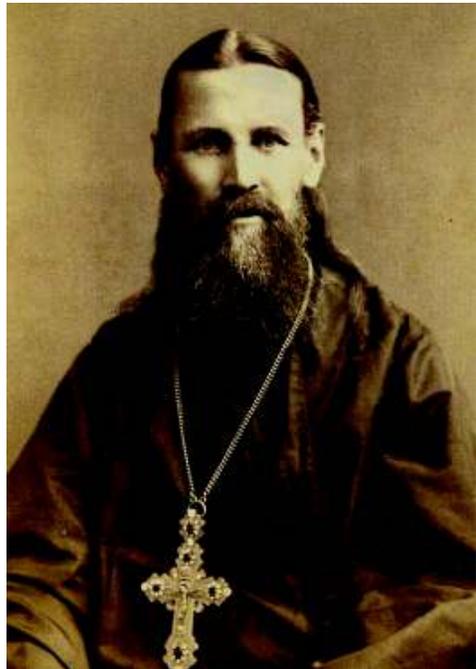
To transform the world, to recreate it afresh, men must turn to another path psychologically. Until you have become really, in actual fact, a brother to everyone, brotherhood will not come to pass.

Fathers and teachers, I ask myself: what is hell? And I answer thus: The suffering of no longer being able to love.

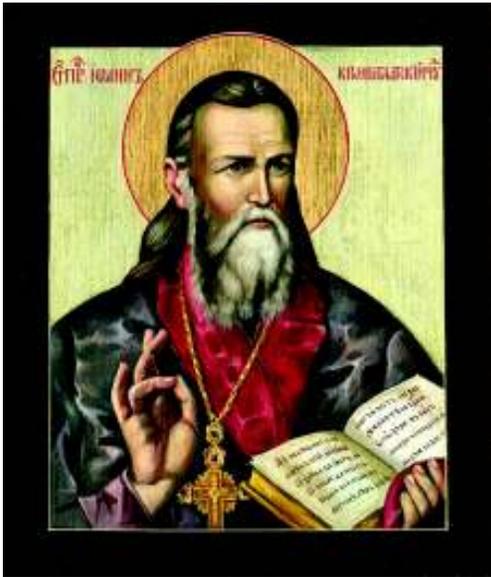
*The Our Lady of Vladimir Cathedral* is another remarkable “double-decker” church with the upper floor of the Cathedral dedicated to the Vladimir icon of the *Theotokos* currently housed in the Chapel of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the lower floor dedicated to St. John of Damascus. The Cathedral was begun in 1761 and completed in 1769. This was the parish church of Dostoevsky. Closed by the Soviet authorities in 1932 it was given back to the Church in 1989.

*The St. John of Rila Convent* is today the largest convent in St. Petersburg and was established in 1900 on the Karpkova River by St. John of Kronstadt (1829-1908) who is buried there in the lower Church. The 5-domed neo-Byzantine Church of the 12 Apostles was built in 1902. Because of its location in a major metropolitan area and the capital of the Russian Empire, as well as the Convent’s association with St. John of Kronstadt, it quickly attracted hundreds of nuns and by 1908 included a 5 story residence for the sisters, an infirmary, icon-painting workshops and a print shop. The Convent eventually supported an orphanage for girls and during WWI a hospital and a nursing school with a residence for 200 nurses. The Convent was disbanded by the Soviet government in 1923. In 1989 the Convent was returned to the Church and after a brief period of restoration it was re-opened in 1991. The monastery is now a place of pilgrimage for those wishing to venerate the relics of St. John of Kronstadt.

*Who was St. John of Kronstadt?* Father John Sergiev was a married parish priest assigned in 1855 to St. Andrew’s Cathedral in Kronstadt, the naval port of St. Petersburg. He remained there for 53 years as an urban missionary, first as an assistant priest and then as the pastor of the Cathedral, bringing Christ to all who would listen. The son of peasants, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, he was widely venerated as a living saint even during his lifetime. He was tireless pastor, rarely returning home before midnight; he was known as a man of deep prayer, a healer, someone gifted with spiritual discernment and prophecy. He loved people, all people, without limits. Thousands of



people, including non-Christians, flocked to him for spiritual and material support. He built a “House of Industry” that provided jobs, job-training, food, shelter and medical care for the poor. He celebrated the Liturgy daily, starting at 6AM, often attended by as many as 5,000 people. He was a liturgical reformer who lowered the *iconostasis* separating the altar area from the rest of the Church. He insisted on frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in Communion at a time in Russian history when a “devout” Orthodox Christian only received Communion once or twice a year at most. When the numbers of people wishing to have Father John hear their confession reached into the thousands, he took an amazing step: he began to hear confessions *en masse*, with thousands of people shouting out their sins during Liturgy before coming forward to receive Communion, as in the ancient Church. His celebration of the Liturgy was concentrated, emotional and intense. Descriptions of the way in which he celebrated Liturgy abound: “I was struck at the time by Father John’s extraordinary, burning inspiration, his voice full of tender emotion. He celebrated the Liturgy as though consumed by an inner fire. He hardly



opened the prayer book, knowing all by heart. Other priests who served with him seemed, beside him, to be inert, lifeless and wooden. Father John’s face was continually bathed in tears.”

Some brief quotes from the writings of St. John of Kronstadt:

*“Your Lord is love: love Him and in Him all men as His children in Christ. Your Lord is fire: do not let your heart grow cold, but burn with faith and love. Your Lord is light: do not walk in darkness and do not do anything in darkness of mind, without reasoning and understanding or without faith. Your Lord is a God of mercy and generosity: be a source of mercy and generosity to your neighbors. If you will be such, you will find salvation for yourself and everlasting joy.”*

*“Pray for the forgiveness of the sins of others as you pray for the forgiveness of your own; pray for the salvation of others as you pray for your own. Then you will receive from God a wealth of spiritual gifts, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Who loves a soul which is concerned with the salvation of others.”*

*“Every sin comes from love of self.”*

*“Everyone on earth is sick with the fever of sin, with the blindness of sin and is overcome by its fury. As sin consists mostly of arrogance and malice, it is necessary to treat everyone who suffers from the malady of sin with kindness and love. This is an important truth which we often forget. Very often we act in the opposite manner: we add malice to malice by our anger and we oppose arrogance with our pride. Thus evil grows within us and does not decrease; it is not cured – rather it spreads.”*

*“Never confuse the person, formed in the image of God, with the evil that is in him; because evil is but a chance misfortune, an illness, a devilish reverie. But the very essence of the person is the image of God and this remains in him despite every disfigurement.”*

*“Love every man in spite of his falling into sin. Never mind the sins, but remember that the foundation of the man is the same – the image of God.”*

*“Do not lose your temper with those who sin. Do not have a passion for noticing every sin in your neighbor and judging him, as we usually do. Everyone will give an answer for himself before God. Rather, correct your own sins, your own heart.”*

*“You cannot conquer evil by evil, just as you cannot put out fire by fire, but only by water. A Christian must always be kind, gracious, and wise in order to conquer evil by good.”*

*“Sometimes during a lengthy prayer only a few minutes are really pleasing to God, and constitute true prayer, true service to Him. The chief thing in prayer is the nearness of the heart to God.”*

*“The only requirements of our soul are righteousness, holiness, truth, love, mercy, kindness, meekness, peace and spiritual freedom – the grace of God in the heart. These treasures give life to our whole being and are eternal.”*

*“What is a pure heart? It is meek, humble, guileless, simple, trusting, true, unsuspecting, gentle, good, not greedy, not envious and not adulterous. My soul! Remember your heavenly dignity!”*

This evening, we enjoyed a Russian folk performance at the **Nikolaevsky Palace** not far from the hotel.

## *Saturday, May 27th - Day 6*

Today, following a boat tour of the city on its many canals, we visited one of the largest, oldest and most amazing art museums in the world: The Hermitage, originally a part of the residence - the Winter Palace - of the Romanov dynasty. The Winter Palace, like so much of 18th century St. Petersburg, was designed by "imported" Italian architects - most notably

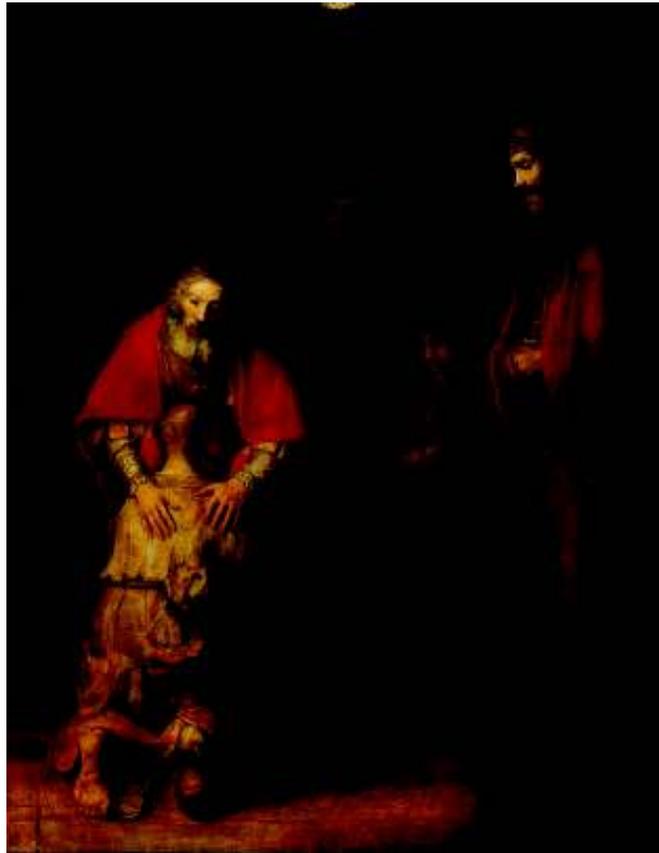
Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli (1700-1771) - to amaze and impress visitors with the wealth and power of the



Romanovs. Built by Elizabeth (1709-1762), the daughter of Peter the Great and Empress of Russia from 1741 until her death in 1762, the origins of the museum's great collection of art begins with Catherine the Great (1729-1796) in 1764 when she purchased, among many others, 13 paintings by Rembrandt, 11 paintings by Rubens, 2 paintings by Hans Holbein, 1 painting by Titian and 2 paintings by Raphael. During her lifetime, Catherine purchased the best collections of art offered for sale in Europe and acquired 4,000 more paintings, 10,000 engraved items, 38,000 books, 10,000 drawings and a natural history collection filling two galleries. Today the Hermitage art collections are comprised of more than 3,000,000 pieces, including the largest collection of paintings in the world. The Hermitage collection includes paintings by the "old masters" like Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and the Cretan-born artist Domenikos Theotokopoulos, better known as El Greco (1541-1614); as well as statues by Michelangelo (1475-1564); paintings by "modern masters" like the Frenchmen Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), the founders of Impressionism; the moody and ultimately suicidal Dutchman Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890); Henri Matisse (1869-1954); and the Spaniard Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). The Hermitage also contains exhibits of ancient Egyptian and Hellenistic Roman art and houses a small but important collection of Russian icons, some of them dating from as early as the 12th century and continuing through the 20th century, which highlights the artistic styles of Moscow, Novgorod and Yaroslav.

One of the many famous paintings at the Hermitage is *The Prodigal Son* by the Dutch painter Rembrandt (1606-1669). Depicting the moment of the prodigal son's return to his father in the parable told by the Lord Jesus (*Luke 15:11-32*) that we read in the Church every year just prior to the beginning of Great Lent, it has been described as Rembrandt's most moving painting. It is filled with light, intimacy, deep reds, characters at the periphery and dark, empty spaces. Art historian Kenneth Clark describes it as "a picture which those who have seen the original in St. Petersburg may be forgiven for claiming it as the greatest picture ever painted." In Rembrandt's painting, finished just 2 years before his death, the prodigal son has returned home in a wretched state in travels from which he has wasted his inheritance and fallen into poverty and despair. He kneels before his father in repentance, hoping for forgiveness and a renewed place in the family, having realized that even his father's servants had a better station in life than he. His father receives him with a tender gesture of welcome emblematic of lost, weary and sinful mankind taking refuge in the shelter of God's mercy while his older brother, who crosses his hands in judgment, objects to his father's compassion towards his brother.

Father Henri Nouwen (1932-1996), a Catholic priest and one of Father Steve's professors at Yale, having been deeply moved by this painting, wrote a slim book of meditations on it in 1992 entitled *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of*



*Homecoming* that we have read as part of our Orthodox/Catholic book club. In his book, Father Nouwen writes that "the true center of Rembrandt's painting is the hands of the father. On them all light is concentrated; on them the eyes of the bystanders are focused; in them mercy becomes flesh; upon them forgiveness, reconciliation and healing

come together and through them, not only the tired son but also the worn out father find their rest.”

*St. Isaac's Cathedral* is dedicated to St. Isaac of Dalmatia, a 4th century monk in Constantinople who attended the 2nd Ecumenical Council in 381AD and whose memory is celebrated in the life of the Church on May 30th. Peter the Great, whose birthday was May 30th, adopted St. Isaac as the patron saint of the Romanov dynasty. Originally ordered to be built by Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825) it was designed in a neoclassical style by the



French architect Auguste de Montferrand (1786-1858). Designed to hold 14,000 worshippers the Cathedral took 40 years to build - from 1818 to 1858. The Cathedral's main dome is 333 feet high and is plated with pure gold. St. Isaac's is still - even in the 21st century - the 3rd largest domed Cathedral in the world. The design of the Cathedral's dome later influenced the design of the dome of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. and the dome of the Lutheran Cathedral in Helsinki, Finland. Under the Soviet regime the Cathedral was closed and in 1931 it



was turned into a Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism. With the collapse of the USSR, in 1992 the Museum was removed and services are now held in the Cathedral twice a day. A UNESCO world heritage site,

the Cathedral attracts as many as 3 million visitors annually and negotiations are underway to possibly return the Cathedral to the Church.

This evening we went to a performance of Swan Lake, the famous ballet by Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), at the Mikhailovsky Theatre.

### *Sunday, May 28th - Day 7*

This morning we participated in the Liturgy at the second largest functioning Church in all of Russia: the neo-Byzantine *Naval Cathedral of St. Nicholas* in Kronstadt.



Originally taking 10 years to build, from 1903 until 1913, it was to be the main church of the Russian Navy and dedicated to all fallen

seamen. The Cathedral was modeled after the Church of the Holy Wisdom of God (*Hagia Sophia*) in Constantinople and was consecrated in a public ceremony attended by the last tsar, Nicholas II and his family, on June 10, 1913. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, in 1929 it was closed by the new Soviet regime and in 1932 converted into a cinema. Damaged during



WWII and the Siege of Leningrad, in 1953 it was turned into a concert hall. By 1980, it had been converted into a Museum of the Russian Navy. In the 1990s the Church attempted to repossess the Cathedral with little initial success. However, on November 2, 2005 the Church celebrated

its first Liturgy in the Cathedral since 1929. In 2008, the Cathedral became a functioning Church again, but services were conducted only on special occasions. The Cathedral then underwent extensive repairs and renovation and was re-consecrated as a fully operational Church by Patriarch Kirill on May 30, 2013 - just in time for the Cathedral's 100th anniversary.

After lunch we had the blessing to visit the *St. John of Kronstadt Memorial Apartment Museum*, a second floor apartment where he lived with his wife Elizabeth for more than 50 years. Married for 53 years, his wife Elizabeth died on May 22, 1909, less than six months after St. John. During Father John's lifetime, the address of this apartment was known all over Russia and tens of thousands of letters and telegrams asking for prayer were sent here. The heart of the apartment was St. John's study which served for work, study and even sleep. It was in this study that St. John wrote his spiritual diary which later became *My Life in*



*Christ*, within these walls that he had a vision of the *Theotokos* and here that he died, falling asleep in the Lord on December 20, 1908. The Museum was officially opened to the public in 2008, in time for the 100th anniversary of the death of St. John. Staffed by volunteers, the Museum today consists of a small ground-floor entry room and two restored upper rooms, originally Father John and *Matushka* Elizabeth's

guest parlor and his study. Some of the furniture is in fact St. John's - the desk, the chair, a divan and several smaller chairs. Local Orthodox Christians in Kronstadt hope one day to obtain the entire apartment space and restore St. John's Holy Trinity Chapel within it.

*What kind of effect did St. John of Kronstadt have on people?* Here's one example, recounted from a letter in the Museum: "At the time, I was 22 or 23 years of age. Now I am an old man, but I still remember well the first time I saw Father John. I had a family, two children. I worked and drank. The family went hungry. My wife quietly begged on the side. We lived in a ramshackle hut. One day I came home not too drunk and I saw a young priest sitting inside, holding my son in his arms and saying something to him very lovingly. The child listened to him quite intently. It seemed to me

that Father John looked like Christ in the painting called “The Blessing of the Children.” At first I wanted to curse: why was he hanging around here? But Father John’s loving and solemn eyes stopped me. I felt ashamed. I lowered my eyes while he continued to look at me, looking straight into my soul. He began to talk. I can’t even begin to remember what all that he said. He spoke about my hut being like paradise, because wherever there are children, all is light and warmth, and that I should not trade this paradise for the smoky atmosphere of a bar. He did not accuse me – no, he kept excusing me, only I didn’t feel like being excused. He left while I just continued sitting there quietly. I didn’t cry although I felt my soul was on the brink of tears. My wife kept looking at me...and ever since that time I became a decent man.”

*The Peterhof Palace and Gardens* is a magnificent series of palaces and gardens initially laid out on the orders of Peter the Great to be a kind of “Russian Versailles” to showcase the wealth and power of the Romanov dynasty. It commemorates the imperial expansion and



modernization of Russia under Peter the Great. Peterhof, like *Tsarskoe Selo*, was captured by the Germans during WWII who largely destroyed it. It was restored to its former glory in preparation for the 300th anniversary of the founding of St. Petersburg in 2003.



### *Monday, May 29th - Day 8*

This morning we departed St. Petersburg for Moscow by train at 9AM, arriving in Moscow at about 1PM. (Moscow is about 400 miles southeast of St. Petersburg.) We had lunch and then made our first visit to Red Square, where we got caught up in a tornado that killed 11 people in Moscow. We checked into our hotel - the Golden Ring, near the *Arbat* shopping district, just off Red Square - that afternoon.

### *Moscow*

Moscow is today the capital of Russia with nearly 18 million residents in and around the city. It is the most populous city on the continent of Europe. Moscow has served as the capital of a progression of states from the Grand Duchy of Moscow (1283-1547) to the Soviet Union (1917-1991)



and the current Russian Federation. For more than 600 years, Moscow has also been the center of the Russian Orthodox Church, today the largest Orthodox Church in the world with an estimated membership of 100 million - of the 300 million Orthodox Christians in the world. If St. Petersburg was built to be a "window onto Europe," Moscow is considered to be a more traditional Russian city and the heart of the nation. In 1990, the Kremlin -the ancient fortified center of the city - and Red Square were designated as World Heritage sites by UNESCO.

The first surviving reference to Moscow dates from 1147 where it is described as an insignificant border "town" - probably little more than a

small fort. With the Mongol invasion of the 13th century, Moscow was burned to the ground and its inhabitants slaughtered. Taking its name from the Moscow River, the rebuilt timber fort *na Moskve* - literally, "on the Moscow River" - was inherited by the sainted Prince Daniel of Moscow (1261-1303), the fourth and youngest son of St. Alexander Nevsky (1221-1263). Daniel was only two years old when his father died and he did not become the ruler of Moscow until the 1270s. Daniel, who was known for his meekness, humility and charity - unusual qualities in a ruler - has been credited with building the first monastery in Moscow around 1282, dedicating it to his patron saint, Daniel the Stylite (409-493), a monk from what we today call Iraq who eventually settled in Constantinople. Today the Danilov Monastery - since 1983, when it was returned to the Church by the Soviet government - is the residence of the Patriarch of Moscow.

In 1328 the Mongols chose the power-hungry Grand Prince Ivan I (1288-1340), the son of St. Daniel of Moscow, to collect tribute from all of their conquered Russian principalities, making Moscow wealthy and giving it supremacy over all of its neighbors. Because of this, Ivan was given the nickname of Ivan "*Kalita*" or Ivan "Moneybags" and he proved his loyalty to the Mongols by crushing a revolt against them by one of his neighbors, the Prince of Tver. Under Ivan Kalita, Moscow began to grow and he built a number of Churches in the Kremlin, perhaps most significantly, the first Assumption Cathedral, which is today regarded as the mother church of Muscovite Russia. Yet as Moscow began to flourish, the seeds were laid for the city and its princes to eventually become a real threat to Mongol power. Within 50 years an army gathered from several Russian principalities, led by Moscow's Grand Prince Dimitry Donskoy (1350-1389) - Donskoy meaning "of the River Don" - inflicted their first defeat on the Mongols at the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380 and the idea of a Russian nation with Moscow as its center was born.

Much of Moscow was destroyed during its brief occupation by the French under Napoleon (1761-1829), who entered the city on September 14, 1812. Expecting the Romanov Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825) to offer his surrender, Napoleon instead entered an abandoned city, as the Russians had evacuated Moscow and adopted a scorched earth policy, setting much of the city ablaze. Sitting in the ashes of a ruined city with no foreseeable prospect of an official surrender, his troops exhausted, with few rations and no winter clothing, Napoleon began the long retreat of his army during the harsh Russian winter of 1812-1813. Out of an original force of

615,000 men – the largest European military force ever assembled to that date – only 110,000 frostbitten and half starved survivors stumbled back into France. The Russian Campaign was a decisive factor in the Napoleonic Wars, weakening his military strength and showing that Napoleon could indeed be defeated, as he eventually was at the Battle of Waterloo (in what is today part of Belgium) in 1815.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 Lenin – fearing foreign invasion during WWI – moved the capital of the new Soviet state back to Moscow on March 5, 1918. During WWII, when Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 and laid siege to Moscow, Soviet defenses and counterattacks – in the Battle of Moscow – were able to turn back the Nazi invaders but at a tremendous cost in human lives. Estimates vary, but the German army probably lost some 400,000 men; while on the Soviet side, military and civilian casualties were somewhere near 1,000,000 people – as in St. Petersburg.

When the USSR was dissolved in 1991, Moscow remained the capital of the new Russian Federation. Since then a market economy has emerged in Moscow, producing an explosion of western-style retailing, services, architecture and lifestyles.

*Red Square* is the main city plaza of Moscow. It separates the Kremlin, the former citadel of the tsars and currently the official residence of the



President of Russia from the historic merchant quarter known as *Kitai-gorod* of which the GUM – a shopping mall – is perhaps symbolic. The Russian word красная (*krasnaya*) which means both "red" and "beautiful," was applied to the area between St. Basil's Cathedral and the Spassky Tower of the Kremlin that was meant to serve as Moscow's main marketplace. During the Soviet era, Red Square became a focal point for the new state and showcase for military parades from 1919 onward,

particularly for the celebrations of May Day, Victory Day (WWII) and the October Revolution.

*Lenin's Tomb or Mausoleum* would become part of Red Square following his death in 1924. It is the quintessential remaining symbol of the USSR. Today, the job of maintaining Lenin's corpse for display belongs to a handful of men who work for an institute known in post-Soviet times as the Center for



Scientific Research and Teaching Methods in Biochemical Technologies. Since 1991 there has been occasional discussion of burying Lenin's body. Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007), with the support of the Russian Orthodox Church, intended to close the mausoleum and bury Lenin next to his mother in St. Petersburg. However, Yeltsin's successor – Vladimir Putin – opposed this in 2001, stating that the re-burial of Lenin would imply that generations of Russians had observed "false values" during the 70 years of Soviet rule. (Yes, they did!)

Believe it or not, since the fall of the Soviet Union concerts have been held in Red Square featuring everyone from Paul McCartney of Beatles fame to the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

*St. Basil's Cathedral*, the most famous building in Moscow and a national icon, bears the name of St. Basil the Blessed (1469-1552), the fool for Christ, but it was originally consecrated as the Church of the Trinity, with the central sanctuary of the Church being dedicated to the feast of the Protection of the *Theotokos* (October 1st), one of the most beloved celebrations on the Church calendar by Slavic peoples. Built by Ivan the

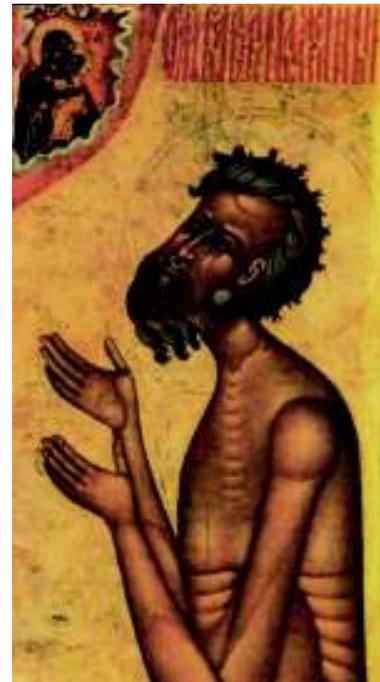


Terrible (1530-1584) to commemorate his military victories, St. Basil's Cathedral is today a museum and not a functioning church, having been

confiscated by the Soviet government in 1928 and, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, remaining a property of the Russian Federation.

St. Basil's Cathedral has no architectural precedent in Byzantium or previous Russian church construction. Legend has it that the architect was ordered blinded by Ivan the Terrible so that no other church like it could ever be built again. The Cathedral consists of 9 small, separate chapels that share a single foundation and are aligned to the points on a compass. The chapels are dedicated to The Protection of the *Theotokos*, The Entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), The Holy Trinity, Sts. Cyprian and Justine, St. Gregory the Enlightener of Armenia, St. Nicholas, St. Alexander of Svir, the Three Patriarchs of Constantinople (Alexander, John and Paul the Confessor) and finally, St. Basil the Blessed who is buried there. The interior of the Cathedral is a maze of galleries winding from chapel to chapel and from level to level via narrow stairways and low archways with the walls often painted in floral and geometric patterns.

*Who was St. Basil the Blessed?* Born to serfs, Basil became an apprentice shoemaker, a cobbler, in Moscow. But he soon became known as a healer, miracle-worker and clairvoyant able to see the future. A fool for Christ, he wandered the streets of Moscow half naked and barefoot and would throw stones at the homes of rich people and then ask why they didn't share their wealth with those who were impoverished and in great need. Basil, a contemporary of Ivan the Terrible, was one of the few who dared warn the tsar that his violent and murderous oppression of his own people - Ivan and his military slaughtered whole towns - would doom him to Hell if he didn't repent. According to one story, in the midst of Lent, when Orthodox Christians fast, Basil presented the Tsar with a bloody slab of raw meat, telling him that there was no reason for him to fast: "Why fast from meat when you murder your own people?" Ivan, whose irritated glance often meant a death sentence to others is said to have lived in fear of Basil. Ivan would allow no harm to come to Basil and often sent him gifts, but Basil simply passed these gifts off to others in



need. When he died in 1552, Ivan the Terrible himself acted as a pallbearer at his funeral. Basil the Blessed was canonized as a saint only a few years later, in 1558. His memory is celebrated in the Church on August 15th.

To confirm that Ivan was indeed terrible and deserves his name, it's instructive to compare his treatment of St. Basil the Blessed with that of another saint of the Church, Metropolitan Philip II of Moscow (1507-1569). When Philip refused to condone Ivan's massacre of all the citizens of Novgorod he was arrested, deposed and executed by being strangled. Philip was canonized as a martyr to the brutality of this "Christian" tsar in 1652 and his memory is celebrated in the life of the Church on January 9th.

### *Tuesday, May 30th - Day 9*

*The Kremlin* is the fortified complex at the heart of Moscow and includes 5 palaces, 4 cathedrals and the enclosing Kremlin wall and towers. The name "kremlin" means "fortress inside a city" and Moscow's Kremlin complex today serves as the official residence of the President of the Russian Federation as it once did for the tsars before Peter the Great moved the capital of Russia to St. Petersburg in the 18th century. Grand Prince Ivan III (1440-1505), also known as Ivan the Great, built the 3 of the surviving cathedrals within the Kremlin - The Cathedral of the Dormition of the *Theotokos* (or *Uspensky Sobor*) completed in 1479; the Cathedral of the Annunciation completed in 1489; and the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael completed in 1508 after Ivan's death.



*The Cathedral of the Dormition* is considered the "mother church" of medieval Muscovite Russia and was designed by the Italian architect and engineer Aristotele Fioravante (1415-1486). From 1547 with the crowning of Ivan the Terrible to 1896, with the crowning of Nicholas II, Russia's last tsar, it was the place where the coronation of the Russian monarch was held. In addition, it is the burial place for most of the Metropolitans and Patriarchs of Moscow down through the centuries. The design of the Cathedral, with its 5 domes symbolic of our Lord Jesus Christ



and the 4 evangelists – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – was taken as a template for numerous other churches throughout Russia. In 1917, it was the place where St. Tikhon of Moscow was enthroned as the first Patriarch of Moscow in nearly 200 years – since Peter the Great had abolished the Patriarchate in the 18th century. Following the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin closed all of the churches in the Moscow Kremlin and converted the cathedral into a museum. It was by special permission from Lenin that the last Pascha services until the collapse of the Soviet Union were celebrated there in

1918. In 1990, the Cathedral was returned to the Church for periodic religious services; it was given back to the Church completely in 1991.

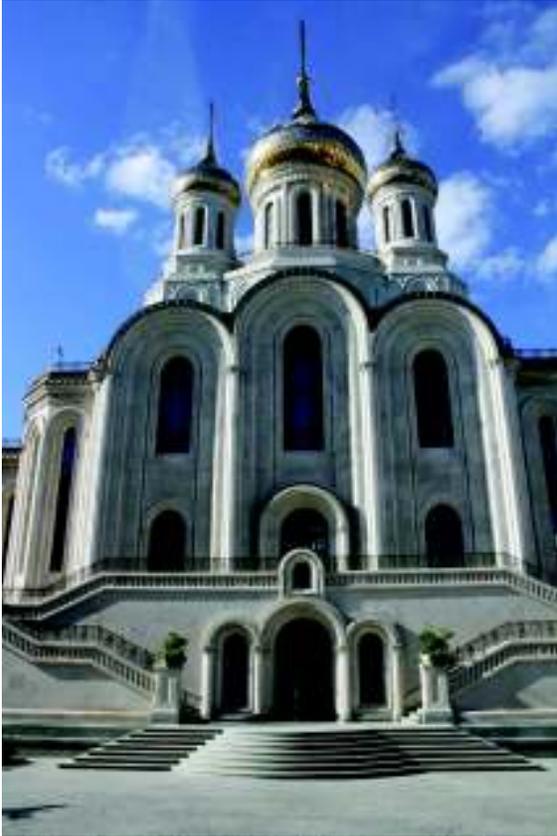
*The Cathedral of the Annunciation* was built by architects from Pskov. From the time Ivan the Terrible's coronation as tsar, the royal family of Russia worshipped at the Cathedral, got married there and baptized their children there. The iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Annunciation includes icons painted by St. Andrei Rublev (1360-1428) and his teacher, Theophanes the Greek (1340-1410).

*The Cathedral of the Archangel Michael* was constructed under the supervision of the Italian architect Aloisio the New between 1505 and 1508. It was the burial place for all the tsars and princes of Russia until Peter the Great – so buried in this Cathedral are, among others, both Ivan the Great and Ivan the Terrible. The placement of the tombs is given on the next page:



We saw much more in the Kremlin than what I've described here....

In the late afternoon we went to *The Sretensky Monastery* in central Moscow - which is, ironically, within a few blocks of the historic KGB headquarters on Lyubanka Square - where we were able to see its' newly consecrated main Church, dedicated to the New Martyrs of Russia - victims of the Bolshevik Revolution and subsequent persecution.



Established in 1397, it is the oldest monastery in Moscow. The monastery is named for one of the 12 Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church: The Presentation of Christ to the Temple in Jerusalem as recorded in the Gospel of Luke 2:22-38. The origin of the monastery's name comes from the fact that it was built on the spot where Grand Prince Vasili I (1371-1425) and the Muscovites *met* the icon of Our Lady of Vladimir on August 26, 1395 - the Russian word *sretenie* meaning "to meet" - which was being brought from the city of Vladimir to Moscow to protect the capital from imminent invasion by the Mongol ruler Tamerlane (1336-1405). Following the retreat of Tamerlane's armies,

the monastery was founded in gratitude to God for saving the city. In 1925 the monastery was closed down by the Soviet authorities and by 1930 most of its buildings had been destroyed. The remaining buildings were occupied by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs or the NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB, and the grounds were used as a "killing field" for executions. The monastery was returned to the Church in 1991 and made into a *stavropegial* monastery directly under the authority of the Patriarch of Moscow. In 1993, Bishop Tikhon Shevkunov was designated as the abbot and personal representative of the Patriarch. Bishop Tikhon is the author of *Everyday Saints* - by far the best-selling book in Russia in decades, depicting the Church's human face - and its sales - in 10's of millions of copies, has made its author something of a celebrity. In

addition to regular services, a daily Liturgy is celebrated, a seminary has been established on the monastery grounds with 200 students and it has become one of the largest publication houses in Russia.

The new Church was consecrated by Patriarch Kirill on May 25th, the feast of the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, while we were in St. Petersburg. The consecration was attended by President Putin.

### *Wednesday, May 31st - Day 10*

*The Holy Trinity Lavra founded by St. Sergius of Radonezh (1314-1392) in 1337 is the most important monastery in Russian history and the spiritual heart of the Russian Orthodox Church. St. Sergius is perhaps the most important saint in the history of Russia, and is closely connected with the*



recovery of the land from the Mongols in the 14th century. The outward pattern of his life recalls that of St. Antony of Egypt (251-356AD), the father of monasticism. As a young man Sergius withdrew into the forests (the northern equivalent of the Egyptian desert) and here he founded a hermitage dedicated to the Holy Trinity. After several years of solitude, his place of retreat became known, disciples gathered around him, and he became a spiritual father and guide, an "elder" or, to use the Russian word, a *starets*. Sergius turned his group of disciples into a monastery, which became within his own lifetime the greatest monastery in all of Russia.

Sergius played an active part in politics. A close friend of the Grand Dukes of Moscow, he encouraged the city in its expansion, and it is significant that before the Battle of Kulikovo the leader of the Russian forces, Prince Dmitry Donskoy, went specifically to Sergius to secure his blessing. Sergius has been called a "Builder of Russia," and such he was in three senses: politically, for he encouraged the rise of Moscow and the resistance against the Tartars; geographically, for it was he more than any other who inspired the great advance of monks into the forests; and spiritually, for through his experience of mystical prayer he deepened the inner life of the Russian Church. Better, perhaps, than any other Russian saint, he succeeded in balancing the social and mystical aspects of monasticism. Under his influence and that of his followers, the two centuries from 1350 to 1550 proved to be a golden age in Russian spirituality.

One of the saints besides St. Sergius whose relics we'll have an opportunity to venerate the Holy Trinity *Lavra* is **St. Innocent of Alaska (1797-1879)**, the Enlightener of the Aleuts and Apostle to America, the married priest and missionary who after the death of his wife in 1838 went on to become the Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia. It is he for whom St. Innocent's Orphanage outside of Tijuana, Mexico is named. St. Innocent spent 4 decades as a missionary working among the indigenous peoples of Kamchatka, the Aleutian Islands and mainland Alaska. He baptized 10,000 people! During his seemingly endless travels overland and by kayak he studied the languages, customs and cultures of the people he served, and composed an alphabet for the Aleut language, providing the Aleuts with a written language for the first time in their history; and then he translated the Liturgy and the Scriptures from Slavonic into Aleut (as Sts. Cyril and Methodius had done for the Slavs). He wrote ethnographic, geographical and linguistic studies for which he was later elected an honorary member of the Russian Geographical Society and the Moscow Royal University. St.



Innocent built churches, orphanages and schools where trades like carpentry and metalworking were taught along with the Christian faith and academic subjects. He was canonized as a saint in 1977 and his memory is celebrated in the life of the Church on March 31st.

On our way back to Moscow, we stopped at Semkhoz where the witness of Father Alexander Men is remembered...

*Father Alexander Men (1935-1990)* was a Russian Orthodox priest of Jewish background, a theologian, Biblical scholar, charismatic preacher, author and leading figure in the religious revival that took place in Russia just before the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 80's and who was in



many ways a modern-day apostle to the Soviet people after nearly 70 years of atheistic Communist propaganda. He wrote dozens of books, baptized thousands of people, opened one of the first Sunday Schools in Russia, established an Orthodox Open University, was one of the founders of the Russian Bible Society (remember - publishing Bibles had been illegal in the Soviet Union) and lectured widely and very publicly to packed lecture halls on the Christian faith when it was still dangerous to do so. His homilies and pastoral activity led him to speak out for freedom of worship and against anti-

Semitism and what he saw as a potentially dangerous Russian nationalism. Father Men was constantly harassed by the KGB because of his work as an evangelist and missionary. He experienced endless interrogations, house searches, confiscation of papers, constant electronic surveillance and much else. Yves Hamant, one of his biographers and the translator of several of his books into French, remarked that at one point in his life Father Men "was summoned to interminable daily interrogations, to which he went as if to work." Father Men was assassinated by axe-wielding assailants while walking from his home to his parish to celebrate the Liturgy on Sunday morning, September 9, 1990. His last public words, delivered at a lecture attended by more than 600 people on the eve of his murder, were: "In Christianity the world is sanctified while evil, darkness, sin and death are

conquered. But the victory is God's. It began on the morning of the Resurrection and will continue as long as the world remains." As a Christian, and specifically as an Orthodox priest and pastor, he was "the real deal" - someone who gave his all for the Lord Jesus and can serve as a role model for Orthodox clergy in every country.

Here is an excerpt from Father Men's last talk, simply called "Christianity," as he attempted to explain the fundamentals of the Christian faith to hundreds of people emerging out from under the rubble of Communism:

"I must immediately draw your attention to the fact that Jesus Christ did not teach Christianity as some sort of concept. That which he proclaimed he called *besora* - in Greek, εὐαγγέλιον (*evangelion*), which means "Good News."

What was this Good News?

Man has the right to distrust the universe, to feel he is in a strange and hostile world. Modern writers like Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre and others have spoken of the terrible absurdity of existence. We live in a cold, dead or dying world which we cannot trust because it is threatening, inhuman, meaningless and absurd. Of course these writers, novelists, dramatists and philosophers spoke as atheists (Sartre and Camus spoke from the standpoint of atheistic existentialism), and seemed to have overlooked one thing. When they said that the world was absurd and meaningless they knew this only because man possesses the opposite notion of meaning. The person who does not know what meaning is does not feel, nor will he understand, what meaning is. He will never rebel against, nor be disturbed by, absurdity; but will live in it like a fish in water. And the fact that man revolts against the absurd and the meaninglessness of existence speaks for the existence of that meaning.



The ancient Scriptures teach that we can change inwardly and say "yes" to our existence: to trust what seems terrible and frightful. When we do, the

eye of God like the sun through dark clouds appears through the chaos, absurdity, and monstrosity of life. And this God is personal, for his personality is reflected in each individual so that contact with him is possible as between like beings. Man finds ultimate meaning in the fact that he is made in the likeness of the one who created the world.

Christianity is not a new ethical system, but a new life which brings humanity into direct contact with God through a new union or covenant. How is this mystery to be understood? How are we to comprehend the way in which humanity is attracted like a magnet, to the person of Jesus Christ, even though he came into the world in humility,

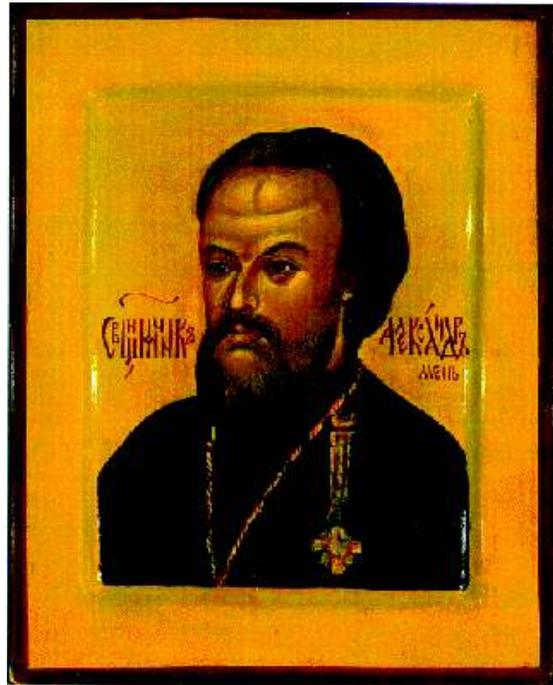
Everything Jesus said was plain and clear. His parable illustrations were taken from everyday life and he used simple words to reveal the mystery. When in the gospel of John we read how Philip had asked to be shown the Father (or the One the Greeks called ἀρχή (arhē), “the first beginning”)

Jesus answered as no philosopher on earth had ever answered: “Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know me Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus spoke such words on other



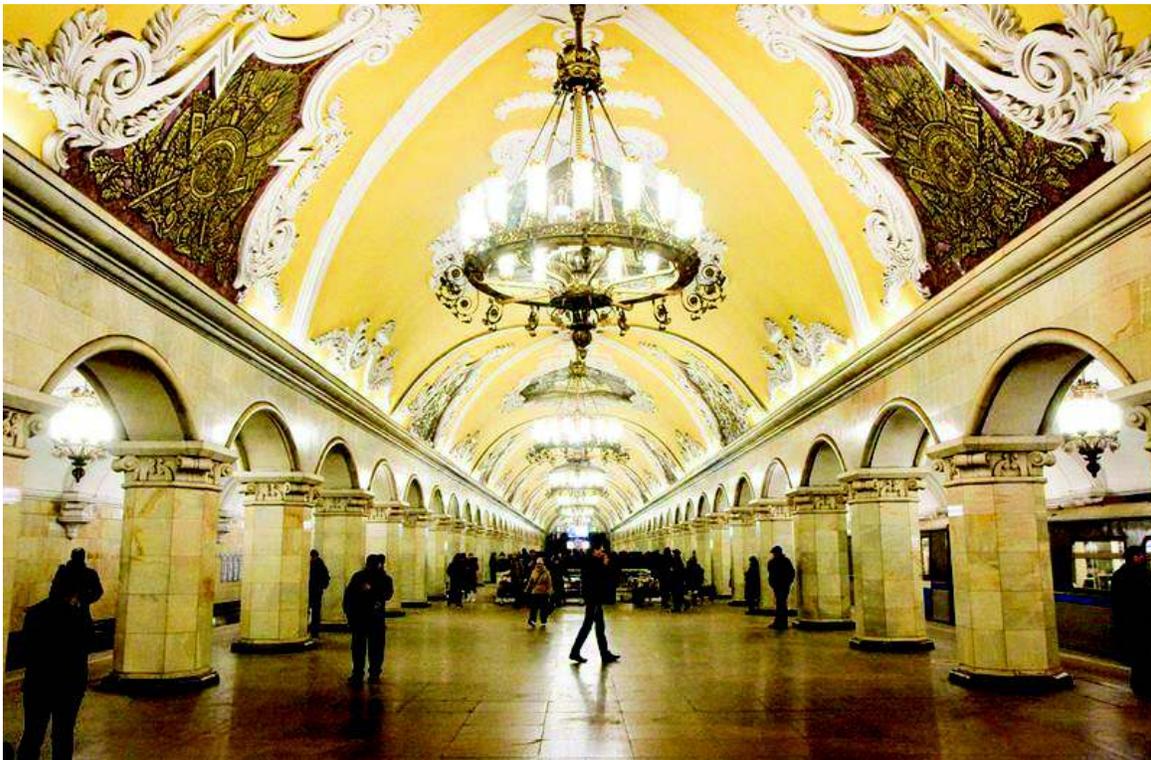
occasions, and many turned their backs on him and left in indignation because these words were always a call. One had to grasp the special mystery - Jesus Christ is the human image of the Eternal, Ineffable, Boundless, Inscrutable, Nameless One. And Lao-Tse was right when he said that the eternal Name is the one we do not utter. If God is Nameless and Unfathomable, in Jesus Christ he becomes not only nameable, but he can be known even by name, even a human name, as the one who carries with us the burdens of life. Herein lies the center and axis of Christianity.”

Here is brief excerpt from Vladimir Zelinsky one of the many people who reflected on their relationship with Father Men following his murder and who would later become an Orthodox priest himself: "Hundreds of people no doubt consider themselves to be his spiritual children. Thousands consider themselves to be his friends. I count myself as one of these thousands. He was the happiest person I ever met. He was extremely gifted, and all that was given to him--profound faith, a "forgiving heart" (spoken of by St. Isaac the Syrian), mind, will, courage, tact, many talents, a phenomenal intellect, an inexhaustible sense of humor, and, Lord, how much more besides - all this was harmoniously united in him. And all this together - he placed in the service of his pastoral calling. It was as if he were born a pastor, as if he were a pastor from the first day of his life until his final hour. That Fr. Alexander had a cross to bear one could guess only from fleeting moments, in meeting his eyes, during confession, but joy was something he radiated constantly. To see him for a quarter of an hour (he rarely could spare more than that) was for each person a joy. One could not escape the charm of his personality, his friendship, inner strength, gentle humor and his ability to say a needed word at a needed time. Back in the seventies I asked if he found it oppressive to talk for hours on end with his interrogators. "Understand, Vladimir," he replied, "I am after all a priest. I can converse with anyone. It's never burdensome." It seems to me that even his assassin, had he stopped to talk with Fr. Alexander for even five minutes, might have changed his mind. But he struck him in the back, without having spoken with him..."



Although not officially canonized as a saint, some have already begun to paint icons in his honor.

*The Moscow Metro or Subway* is unlike any other subway system in the world and is today one of the most extensive and heavily traveled subway systems in the world, transporting some 9 million people every day. A state-owned enterprise, it is the world record holder for on-time departures and arrivals. Opened in 1935, it was one of the USSR's most ambitious architectural projects meant to embody the superiority of socialism (and hence Stalinism) over the capitalism of the West. The Metro was designed to be not merely transportation but something akin to a national heritage site, a "palace for the people," an artistic expression of what Russians call *svet* (radiance, or brilliance) and *svetloe budushchee* (a bright future); and its palatial design – high ceilings, mosaics, stained glass



and chandeliers – was meant to remind riders that their tax rubles were being well spent. Some of the materials that were used in the construction of the Metro – like marble and mosaic – were taken from looted churches like the Cathedral of Christ the Savior that had been destroyed by Stalin in 1931. During WWII, the Moscow Metro became a bomb shelter and more than half a million people found shelter underground, with women and children sleeping in the carriages of trains that were parked overnight next to the station platforms. Today, 44 of the more than 200 stations are listed as cultural heritage sites by the Russian government.

## *Thursday, June 1st - Day 11*

*The Butovo Killing Fields* (or “Shooting Range”) were, from 1938 until 1953, used by the NKVD – the predecessor to the KGB – as a site for mass executions and mass graves for those deemed “enemies of the people” by the Soviet government. The victims ranged from peasants and factory workers to tsarist generals and Christian clergy – and even Moscow’s Chinese launderers, dozens of whom were executed as enemies of the state. The scope of the murders carried out here is staggering. During Joseph Stalin’s “Great Terror” from August 1937 through October 1938 more than 20,000 political prisoners were transported to the site and executed by firing squad, including Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov) of St. Petersburg, who along with more than 300 others – bishops, priests, monks, nuns and laypeople – have recently been canonized as “New Martyrs for Christ” by the Russian Orthodox Church. Because ground drenched in the blood of the martyrs exudes holiness, Butovo is sometimes referred to by believers as Russia’s Golgotha.



Shrouded in secrecy for the duration of the Soviet Union, the site was sold to the Russian Orthodox Church by the government in 1995 and the Church has since turned Butovo into a national shrine where the Patriarch of Moscow, since 2000, has annually celebrated an outdoor Liturgy with several thousand people in attendance. The Church has also built a Memorial Church on the grounds to commemorate the victims murdered there: The Church of the Resurrection of Christ and the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.

In a 2007 article in *The New York Times*, Father Kirill Kaleda, the priest of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ and the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, spoke of his intimate family connection to the site. His grandfather Vladimir Ambartsunov (1892-1937) was canonized by the Church in 2000 and is one of the new martyrs and saints remembered here. He was arrested in 1937 and sentenced to “10 years without the right of correspondence” – the official euphemism for a death sentence, which according to Soviet records, took place at Butovo on November 5, 1937. The Kaleda family spent decades looking for him. It was Mikhail Mindlin, a gulag survivor who devoted his retirement in the late 1980s and 1990s to systematically studying Soviet repression that fought to have the existence

of the Butovo Killing Fields officially recognized by the State. Eventually, thanks to sympathetic KGB officials, files with the names of those executed were found in old NKVD files, including the name of Father Vladimir Ambartsunov. "I'm here because my grandfather, Vladimir, is buried here," Father Kaleda said in an interview. "I see it as my mission." The memory of the New Martyrs for Christ shot at Butovo is celebrated on the 4th Saturday after *Pascha* – in 2017, this past May 12th.

*The Church of the Protection of the Theotokos at Yasenevo* has been called "a miracle of liturgical art." It is a magnificent mosaic masterpiece on the



outskirts of Moscow whose beauty is simply stunning. Completed only several years ago, the Church was consecrated by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow on December 27, 2015.

Mr. Andrew Gould, a well-known

designer of Orthodox Churches in America, writes of this Church in *The Orthodox Arts Journal*: "What makes this Church so striking is that its wall-to-wall mosaics are modeled after the great Byzantine style Sicilian Cathedrals of the 12th century. But the true miracle of the Yasenevo church lies not in its richness, but its poverty. Astonishingly, this church,

constructed in just seven years, had no major individual donors. There was no great oligarch or wealthy institution footing the bill. Rather, the money came in small donations from ordinary people and pious organizations – 800,000 donors in total. Likewise, the astonishing



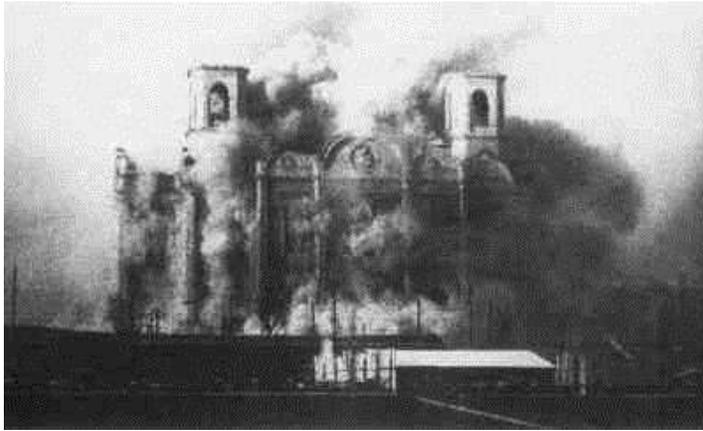
mosaic work was not the work of a professional studio, but of students

and amateurs, all volunteers. There was one professional iconographer hired to draw the great icon of Christ as *Pantocrator*; but beyond that, the work was planned by highly capable art students. They could not afford to buy Italian *tesserae* for the vast areas of gold, so they asked for donations of gold jewelry from across Russia, and developed their own technique for depositing the gold onto ceramic tile fragments. The mosaic workshop was run by a retired master who taught anyone who showed up. On the day I visited, she introduced me to her crew for the day - a hairdresser, an economics student, an architect, all there on their day off from work to come lay *tesserae*, and doing work like skilled masters. In total there were at least 225 of these volunteer mosaicists, some of whom arrived with no skills, but only a life-long dream of making an icon, and ended up creating works of incredible beauty. Everyone involved in the project recognized that a miracle was taking place - that God had ordained that this project was to be different from any other - that this church would be built only with love, and that it would outshine all others."

*Christ the Savior Cathedral* is the largest functioning Church in Russia; one of the largest functioning Orthodox Churches in the world; and, with the height of the dome topping out at 338 feet, it is presently the tallest Orthodox Church in the world. It is the Cathedral of the Patriarch of Moscow.

The present Church is the second to stand on this site. The original Church was built in the 19th century and took more than 40 years to build. Following the retreat of Napoleon from Moscow in October 1812, Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825) pledged to build a cathedral in honor of Christ the Savior "to signify our gratitude to Divine Providence for saving Russia from the doom that overshadowed her" and as a memorial to the sacrifices of the Russian people. However, the task of designing and building fell to his son, Nicholas I (1796-1855). Nicholas commissioned his favorite architect, Konstantin Thon (1794-1881), to create a new design based on the Church of the Holy Wisdom of God (*Hagia Sophia*) in Constantinople. Thon's design, a return to a more Orthodox architecture than the 18th century baroque churches of St. Petersburg, was approved in 1832 and the cornerstone of the new church was laid in 1839. Construction was not completed until 1883. Although Tchaikovsky's famous *1812 Overture* was written to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the events of 1812, it had its world premiere in a tent outside the unfinished Cathedral in August 1882.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution and the death of Lenin in 1924, Joseph



Stalin chose the prominent site of the Cathedral as the proposed site for a monument to socialism that would be known as the Palace of the Soviets, topped with a 328 foot high statue of Lenin. On December 5, 1931 the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was dynamited and

reduced to rubble, its golden domes having been removed the year before to provide funding for the Soviet government. It took more than a year to clear the debris from the site. Ultimately, the Palace of the Soviets was never built due to lack of funds, the flooding of the site by the Moscow River and the outbreak of WWII. In 1958, under Nikita Khrushchev, the flooded site was turned into the world's largest open-air heated swimming pool and named the Moscow Pool.

In February 1990 the Russian Orthodox Church received permission from the government to rebuild the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. The new Cathedral was designed to be a replica of the previous building down to

some of its most minute details. A construction fund was initiated in 1992 by Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007), the newly elected president of the Russian Federation, and funds began to pour in from ordinary citizens in 1994. More than a million people made contributions to rebuild the Cathedral. Later that year the pool was demolished and construction began. The basic structure of the new Cathedral was built between 1994 and 1997. The new Cathedral was consecrated on August 19, 2000 - the Feast of the



Transfiguration of Christ on the Old Julian calendar - and, like the original

Cathedral destroyed by the Soviet government, can accommodate 10,000 worshippers for Liturgy. The Cathedral has become a defining landmark in Moscow's skyline and a symbol of Orthodoxy's post-Soviet revival.

One of the most moving things about our pilgrimage to Russia was the opportunity to *venerate the relics of St. Nicholas of Myra* which were "on loan" by the Roman Catholic Church and offered for veneration at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. People waited in lines stretching for blocks and blocks for 6-8 hours in the cold, in rain, with the police present for crowd control. As of June 25th, a little less than a month later, the *Moscow Times* reported that more than a million people had come to pay their respects and venerate the relics of St. Nicholas.

*Who was St. Nicholas?* St. Nicholas, the son of Christian parents, was the early fourth century archbishop of Myra in Lycia, a province of the Roman Empire that is today in the modern state of Turkey. He is the patron saint of Greece and Russia, as well as many classes of people, including children, sailors and prostitutes. Thousands of churches are named after him and his feast day is a time of celebration in many parts of the globe. Imprisoned for being a Christian during the persecution of the emperor Diocletian (284-305 AD), Nicholas lived long enough to see Christianity vindicated in 313 AD when Constantine granted Christianity legal status as a religion in the Roman Empire. He attended the First Ecumenical Council, convened by Constantine, in 325 AD. Known for his compassion for everyone, St. Nicholas is praised in the liturgical life of the Church for his possession of the "fruit of the Spirit" as written in St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." He proclaimed the Word of God with clarity and conviction, exposed the sins of those who were evil, defended the rights of the oppressed and afflicted and battled against every form of injustice. In a word, he was a good pastor, father and bishop to his flock, known especially for his love and care for the poor. One of the more famous stories about him was his saving of three poverty-stricken young girls from lives of prostitution by providing for their dowries. Most simply put, he was a truly good person. In 1087 AD, Italian merchants stole the relics of St. Nicholas from Myra and enshrined them in Bari, Italy where they remain today. The memory of St. Nicholas is celebrated in the life of the Church on December 6th.

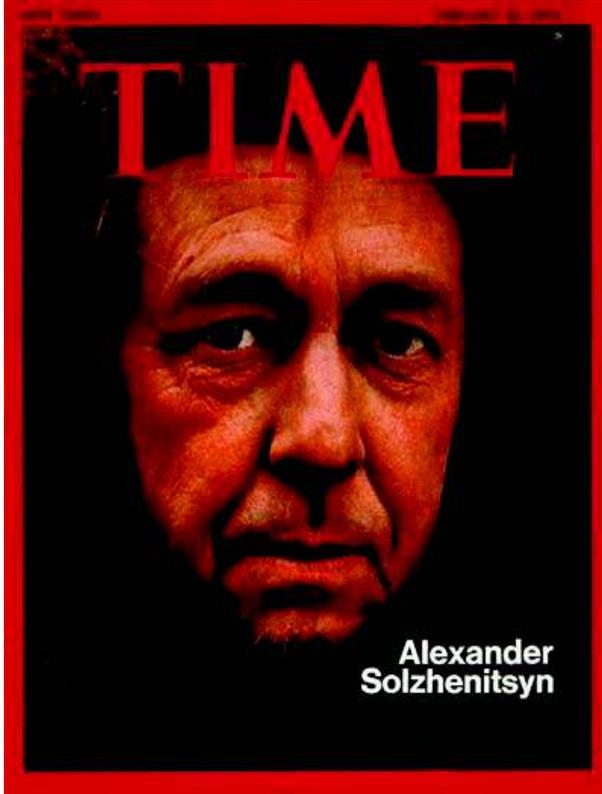
## *Friday, June 2nd - Day 12*

*The Donskoy Monastery* – named for St. Dimitry Donskoy, who defeated the Mongols at the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380 – is a fortified monastery established in 1591 to commemorate Moscow’s deliverance from Mongol forces and defend southern approaches to the Kremlin. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the monastery was closed; however, from 1922-1925, St. Tikhon of Moscow (1865-1925) was imprisoned here and remained in the monastery until his death. Buried in the cemetery associated with the monastery, his relics were discovered in 1989 and today are exhibited for veneration. Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), the Nobel Prize winning Russian writer and anti-Soviet dissident is also buried at the Donskoy Monastery and we will pray a *Trisagion* at his grave.

*Who was St. Tikhon of Moscow?* St. Tikhon of Moscow was the 11th Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia during the early years of the Soviet Union, from 1917 until his death in 1925. A graduate of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, he was named Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska on September 14, 1898. Traveling throughout the U.S. at a time when large numbers of immigrants from Orthodox Christian backgrounds were coming to America, he visited emerging immigrant parishes in New York and Chicago as well as those in coal and steel-making cities in Ohio and Pennsylvania. All who met him were moved by his humility, accessibility, simplicity and kindness. While serving in the U.S. he became an American citizen. In 1907 he was called back to his native Russia to serve the Church there and at the 1917-1918 All-Russian Council he was chosen by lot to be the first Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia since Peter the Great had abolished the Patriarchate in the 18th century. During the Russian Civil War following the Revolution, St. Tikhon was considered to be anti-Bolshevik. He condemned the murder of Tsar Nicholas II and his family in 1918 and protested against violent attacks on the Church by the Bolsheviks. Accused of being a saboteur by the Soviet government, Tikhon was arrested and imprisoned in the Donskoy Monastery where he died in 1925. He was canonized as a saint and confessor of the faith in 1989 and his memory is celebrated on April 7th.



*Who was Alexander Solzhenitsyn?* A novelist and historian, he was an outspoken critic of the Soviet regime and Communism and helped raise worldwide awareness of the Gulag forced labor camp system first put in place in 1918 for everyone from petty criminals to political prisoners.

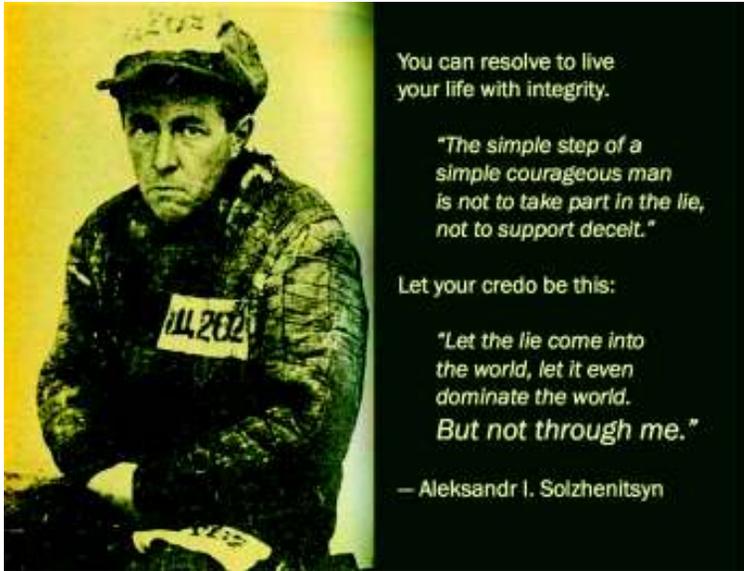


Solzhenitsyn survived 8 years of incarceration in the Gulag system for “anti-Soviet propaganda” i.e., negative comments about Joseph Stalin made in a private letter to a friend in 1945. He was one of an estimated 14 million people interred in these camps. It was during this period of imprisonment that he abandoned Marxism and turned to Christ and the Church. He was allowed to publish only one work in the Soviet Union during the de-Stalinization of Russia under Khrushchev: *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962). After this, having fallen out of “official” favor for his criticisms of the Soviet government, his works

had to be published outside of Russia, most notably *Cancer Ward* (1968), *August 1914* (1971) and *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973). It wasn’t until after the fall of the Soviet Union – in 1990 – that these books were printed in Russia for the first time. In 1970 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature *in absentia*. In 1974 he was expelled from the Soviet Union and ultimately settled in Vermont in 1976. He did not return to Russia until 1994 following the dissolution of Soviet state. He died of heart failure in Moscow in 2008 at the age of 89.

In an interview Solzhenitsyn once told the story of his falling into despair during his time in the Gulags when the hopelessness of his situation became too much for him to bear. He saw no reason to continue living. He thought the rest of his life was meaningless and that he would most likely die in his Siberian prison camp. So he gave up. Laying his shovel on the ground, he slowly walked to a crude work-site bench and sat down. He knew that at any moment a guard would order him to stand up and when

he failed to respond, the guard would probably beat him to death with his own shovel. He had seen it happen to other prisoners. As he waited in the cold, head down, he felt a presence. Slowly he lifted his eyes and saw a skinny, old prisoner squat down next to him. The man said nothing. Instead, he took a stick and drew it



across the ground at Solzhenitsyn's feet, tracing the sign of the Cross. The man then got up and went back to his work. As Solzhenitsyn stared at the sign of the Cross, his entire perspective changed. In that moment he knew that there was something greater than the evil he saw in prison, something even greater than the Soviet Union. He suddenly knew that the hope of all mankind was represented in that simple Cross. Solzhenitsyn slowly got up, picked up his shovel and went back to work. Nothing outwardly had changed, but inside, in his heart, he had received the most precious gift of all: hope. It was that hope, he said, that sustained him for the remaining years of his imprisonment, enabling him to survive.

In 1983 Solzhenitsyn won the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion and in remarks about the official atheism of the Soviet Union, Solzhenitsyn declared: "Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: "Men have forgotten God. That's why all this happened." Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our Revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies and have already contributed 8 volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this happened."

*The Martha and Mary Convent* was established in 1908 by one of the most beloved of Russia's modern saints: Grand Duchess Elizabeth (1864-1918), considered to be one of the most beautiful women in Europe in her day and the sister of Alexandra, the last empress of Russia. St. Elizabeth was the widow of Grand Duke Sergei (1857-1905), a member of the Romanov family and uncle of the last tsar, Nicholas II. It was at Sergei and Elizabeth's wedding at the chapel of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg on June 15, 1884 that Nicholas II met his future wife, Alexandra, for the first time. Elizabeth's grandmother was Queen Victoria of England and she and her sister Alexandra were most comfortable speaking English. In fact, most of the surviving letters exchanged between Tsar Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra and St. Elizabeth were written in English. A convert to Orthodoxy from Lutheranism in 1891 despite the protests of her parents, Elizabeth embraced her new-found faith wholeheartedly, out of "pure conviction," as she wrote to them. In 1905, her husband Sergei, who had been appointed Governor-General of Moscow, was assassinated by Ivan Kalyayev (1877-1905), a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Arrested at the scene, Kalyayev was later to have a secret visitor to



his cell: Elizabeth, offering forgiveness on behalf of her husband but Kalyayev rejected this. Although she asked Tsar Nicholas II to spare his life, Kalyayev was tried, convicted of murder and later hanged. After the assassination of her husband, Elizabeth's life forever changed. On the day of his funeral, she arranged that free meals be served to the poor in Moscow. On her husband's tombstone she had written a verse from the Gospel of Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

In 1909, Elizabeth sold her magnificent collection of jewelry and other possessions, including her wedding ring. With the proceeds Elizabeth acquired a small property in one of "the poorer parts" of Moscow on which she constructed a hospital, an

orphanage for girls and a residence for the sisters, her new monastery combining intense prayer with social outreach. There was also a dining hall where 300 meals were served daily to Moscow's poor. Her vision was to begin a religious community, made up of women from all social strata, which would merge the ideals of Martha and Mary, contemplation and action, and be dedicated both to prayer and to serving the needs of the poor. A bishop who supported her work described what she was trying to do as "to be not of this world and at the same time to live and act in the world in order to transform it - this was the foundation upon which she desired to found her convent." As she wrote to Nicholas II in 1909, "I want to work for God, and in God, for suffering mankind." In 1910 she was made Abbess of the Convent which, at that time, had 45 sisters. In 1910 a Church was built for the convent dedicated to the Protection of the *Theotokos*. Her work continued and during WWI the convent hospital became a place of care for wounded Russian soldiers. She soon became respected and admired throughout Russia. People sensed an inner light about her and came to her seeking spiritual direction.



With the Bolshevik Revolution, it was inevitable that St. Elizabeth as a member of the royal family and as an Orthodox nun would be singled out for execution. This occurred on July 5, 1918 when she and a number of others with her were thrown down a mine shaft with grenades thrown in after them. St. Elizabeth lived for several hours and could be heard singing hymns by her executioners. Later, the White Army recovered her body and ultimately, in 1921, she was taken to Jerusalem and buried in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, a Church which she and her husband had helped build on the Mount of Olives, in the Garden of Gethsemane, overlooking the Holy City. St. Elizabeth, the New Martyr under the Communists, was canonized in 1992 and her memory is celebrated on July 5th, the date of her execution. In 2004, a reliquary containing her relics toured Russia and was venerated by 10 million people. Those who went to Jerusalem with Father Steve in 2011 had the opportunity to venerate her relics.

*The Tretyakov Gallery* was founded in 1856 by the wealthy Moscow merchant Pavel Tretyakov (1832-1898) who began acquiring works by Russian artists of his day with the aim of creating a collection which might later grow into a museum of Russian art. In 1892, Tretyakov presented his already famous collection of more than 1300 paintings, 15 sculptures and a collection of icons to the city of Moscow. The official opening of the museum, which was at first called the Moscow City Gallery of Pavel and



Sergei Tretyakov, took place on August 15, 1893. The collection of the Tretyakov has continued to expand and today it houses the largest collection of Russian art in the world.

In terms of iconography, the Tretyakov Gallery contains some of the most beautiful and theologically important icons in the history of the Church. One of these icons is "*The Trinity*" painted by St. Andrei Rublev (1360-1427), a

monk of the Trinity Monastery founded by St. Sergius of Radonezh. Probably painted sometime between 1425 and 1427 in order to be hung over the tomb of St. Sergius, it is the most famous of all Russian icons and is regarded by scholars and art historians as one of the highest achievements of Russian art. So perfect was the blending of aesthetic and spiritual values in this icon - unity, peace, harmony, mutual love and humility with a lightness, clarity and ethereal touch - that the Russian

Church Council of 1551 prescribed it as the canonical model for all future icons on the subject. *"The Trinity"* depicts the concrete Old Testament event that foreshadowed the revelation of God's Triune nature in the New Testament rather than attempt to paint the ineffable mystery itself. *The Trinity* - also known as the *"Hospitality of Abraham"* - depicts the three angels who come to Abraham and Sarah by the Oak of Mamre in Genesis 18:1-15. From the text of the Scriptures, it is clear that the 3 angels who appear to Abraham and Sarah are a visitation from the Lord: God has appeared to them in the form of 3 persons. In Rublev's icon, the 3 angels are depicted as equal in dignity and are shown from left to right in the order that we profess our faith in the Creed: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The first angel is God the Father; the middle angel is God the Son and the third angel is the Holy Spirit. The memory of St. Andrei Rublev is celebrated in the life of the Church on January 29th.

Another icon of tremendous significance in Russian history is *"The Virgin of Vladimir,"* a medieval Byzantine icon probably painted in Constantinople in the 12th century by an unknown iconographer. It was first brought to Kiev, the ancient capital of Rus' then taken to the city of Vladimir and ultimately, from 1480 to 1918, to Moscow where it was housed in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin. It is a fine example of what in our tradition is called an *Eleousa* icon, an icon depicting the tenderness between the Christ Child and His mother, the Virgin Mary.



According to art historian David Talbot Rice, it is one of the most outstanding religious paintings in the world and is today kept in the chapel at the Tretyakov.

***What are icons?*** Icons are the visual art of the Church, a window into the new life in Christ offered by the Church. The icon is a window onto Reality, the truth of things as they really are; a window onto eternity. The purpose of an icon is to take us into the realm of the Spirit. The icon is not merely a work of art; it is a work of Christian witness. An icon is a reflection of that which is Beyond. It offers us Truth as a vision. An icon is dogma and theology in colors. It is an expression of spiritual experience, mystical life, of worship and surrender. An icon is a reflection of divine

Beauty. To gaze at an icon with the correct attitude of devotion is to acquire the proper orientation of our vision, thought, desire and will: the face of God in the face of Christ and His saints, the divine destiny that is the vocation of every human soul. An icon radiates joy and peace. It is meant to be a luminous celebration of life, an expression of God's victory over sin and death in the Person of Christ. As Dostoevsky once wrote: "There is only one face in the whole world that is absolutely beautiful: the face of Christ."



*What are the qualities of an icon? What are the qualities that "make" an icon an icon?*

Some thoughts by Jim Forest, the author of *Praying with Icons*:

*"It is the task of the iconographer to open our eyes to the actual presence of the Kingdom of God in this world."* — Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

A good icon is a work of beauty and beauty itself bears witness to God. Perhaps for those beginning to form a deeper appreciation of icons, some general comments about the essential qualities of an icon may be helpful.

*An icon is an instrument for the transmission of Christian faith*, no less than the written word. Through sacred imagery, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, revealing truths beyond the reach of words.

*Icons are integral to worship.* Wherever an icon is set, that place more easily becomes an area of prayer. The icon is not an end in itself but assists us in going beyond what can be seen with our physical eyes into the realm of mystical experience.

*The icon is a work of tradition.* Just as the hands of many thousands of bakers stand invisibly behind each loaf of homemade bread, the icon is more than the personal meditation of an individual artist, but the fruit of many generations of believers uniting us to the witnesses of the resurrection. *Read 2 Thessalonians 2:15* about the necessity of holding on to tradition.

*The icon is silent.* No mouths are open nor are there any other physical details which imply sound. But an icon's silence is not empty. The stillness and silence of the icon, in the home no less than church, create an area that constantly invites prayer.

*The icon is concerned solely with the sacred.* Through line and color, the iconographer seeks to convey the awesomeness of the invisible and divine Reality and lead the viewer to a deeper awareness of the divine Presence.

*The icon is a work of theology* written in line, images and color. Part of the Church's response to heresy has been articulated through iconography. For example, the bare feet of the child Jesus shown in many icons serve as a reminder that He walked the earth and left His imprint — that He was not simply a spirit who gave the appearance of being human.

*The icon is not intended to force an emotional response.* There is a conscious avoidance of movement or theatrical gesture in iconography. In portraying moments of biblical history, the faces of participants in the scene are rarely expressive of their feelings as we might imagine them, but rather suggest virtues — purity, patience in suffering, forgiveness, compassion and love. For example, in crucifixion icons, emphasis is not placed on the physical pain Christ endured on the cross. The icon reveals what led Him to the cross: the free act of giving His life for others.

*Icons guard against over-familiarity with the divine.* An icon of the Savior is not merely a sentimental painting of "our dear friend Jesus," but

portrays both the divinity as well as the humanity of Christ, His absolute demands on us as well as His infinite mercy.



*Icons rely on a minimum of detail.* There is either nothing at all in the background or, if a setting is required, it is rendered in the simplest, most austere manner.

*Icons have no single light source.* Iconographers have developed a way of painting which suggests a light source that is within rather than outside. The technique builds light on darkness rather than the other way round. The intention is to suggest the “uncreated light”: the light of the kingdom of God. The icon’s light is meant to illumine whoever stands in prayer before the icon.

*The icon is not an editorial or a manifesto.* The icon painter does not use iconography to promote an ideology or personal opinion. Neither do iconographers decide who ought to be regarded as a saint. The iconographer, having been blessed by the Church to carry on this form of non-verbal theological activity, willingly and humbly works under the guidance of Church canons, tradition, and councils.



*The icon is unsigned.* It is not a work of self-advertisement. The iconographer avoids stylistic innovations intended to take the place of a signature. This does not preclude the names of certain iconographers being known to us, but we can say that the

greater the iconographer, the less he or she seeks personal recognition.

In addition to icons, the Tretyakov Gallery is home to thousands of other very significant paintings in Russian history, including the following painting by the Russian realist painter and sculptor Ilya Repin (1844-1930) that gives insight to the religious life of the Russian people:



*1883 - Religious Procession in the Kursk Province*

In the evening, we had our farewell dinner at the hotel.

### *Saturday, June 3rd - Day 13*

Departure and return home: We departed Moscow to Frankfurt at 9:05AM on Lufthansa flight #1453. We depart Frankfurt on Lufthansa flight #0450 at 2:05PM arriving at LAX at 4:40PM the same day.

# *Glory to Jesus Christ!*