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The Crisis of Exile: Social and Spiritual Solutions in emigration

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In fact, what I was first asked to talk about was immigration – the situation of people who come to live here – rather than about emigration, where people are compelled to move to live outside their own country. I have a lifetime of experience of both conditions.

Emigration and immigration (top)

Emigration and immigration are not all that different in their practical consequences. Refugees, exiles, temporary residents, expatriate per-sonnel, people who have been extradited or deported, migrant workers, and people married to foreigners all live outside their mother country. The main distinction between them is decided by two factors – is it possible for them to go back? Do they wish to go back?

All communities of expatriates are similar in some respects:

(1) People tend to form ghettoes, that is they tend to settle close to each other, if only because of the need access to the basic ingredients for their national food.

(2) If ghettoes are impractical, people will still cling to their compatriots because of their shared language, culture, experience, and often because of their rejection by the host community. Indeed they often do not know their host community anyway.

(3) The first thing to be abandoned (or at least pushed to the back of one's life) is the national calendar: work and study take precedence over everything, and therefore the able-bodied and the young live by the local calendar, thus relegating religious festivals to second place.

(4) The children insist on using their school language at home. This is not just laziness – but a genuine inability to describe one's school experiences, acquired in the local language, in one's family language. Most often the family switch to a mixed-language communication, with local words inserted into the family language structure and vice versa. With school taking up most of the children's time and interests, this often gradually moves into the children speaking the local language all the time. This is a universal feature and is very difficult to counteract, unless children have frequent and welcome contact with monolingual communities, preferably with monolingual children who share their own interests. (In our family experience, our children were sent regularly to Russian scout camps in Germany, where the only common language for games, songs and learning was Russian).

(5) The last things to be abandoned are traditional foods, traditional festivities and traditional music.

(6) For most migrants, especially involuntary ones, loss of standing in the world is a major and practically universal factor. The old quarrels which preoccupied people in their mother country survive and proliferate, and new divisions appear as a result of the conditions in the new country.

(7) Political parties split, and religious communities also form according to new and not necessarily healthy motivations: personality of the clergy, geographical situation of the place of worship, political affiliation of the parishioners, hatred towards another group, rejection of authority, rejection or introduction of rituals, not to speak of finances… the list is practically infinite and again concerns every exiled community.

If a community is large enough, it can combat quite a few of these changes: it can create its own schools (at all levels); it can publish its own periodicals and entertainment materials; it can run theatres, music and social centres. Whatever it does, if the community cannot maintain a permanent living link with its mother country, it will gradually lose most of its young to the dominant host community in any case.

And why ever not? Once people move away from their own country, once they give up their own country, they ought to try and fit into their new home as soon as at all possible, to avoid the permanent pain and burden of living in two separate worlds. It is encouraged. In modern society, even skin colour no longer separates immigrants from the original inhabitants – witness the immense proportion of mixed-race children in Britain.

The operative words here are 'once they give up their own country'. Sometimes this happens automatically: some people leave their country because they liked another better; some realise they will never be able to return because the conditions which forced them out do not change (this happened to the original Russian émigrés).

Sometimes, however, people do not give up their country, although they accept that they will never be able to return. They create a community which encapsulates the best of their original country and add it to their life in the new one, sharing it with their friends and new relatives.

The first two Russian emigrations of the twentieth century (top)

In the case of Russians in the twentieth century an entirely original element appeared: while people became assimilated into the economic and cultural life outside Russia, they also created a diaspora, a homo-geneous Russian community in exile, speaking many languages but still easily identifiable by being Russian Orthodox.

Russians brought Orthodoxy to the whole world without meaning to, not as missionaries, but simply by settling there, making a church, worshipping in it and opening their Church to their environ-ment. This was their main treasure and the main root of their life, which they were eager to share with the locals (in this the Russian diaspora is unique, since it would appear that for most other groups religion is inextricably linked to national feelings. In the case of Jews, of course, the most famous diaspora, religious and racial feelings are completely fused, while nationality is irrelevant).

It did not happen easily. Nor did it happen quickly – but it did happen. And it happened largely because of the courage and spiritual strength shown by the first two great waves of Russian emigration. They were fully committed to their mother country but they were prevented from living in it or even from having a living contact with it, so they had to create a Russian community outside Russia, a spiritual one.

The two huge waves of emigration from Russia and the Soviet Union – the first after the October Revolution in 1917 and the Civil War and the second during the Second World War – were forced out of their country, and in both cases they were forced out by an immediate and real danger of death. A very considerable proportion of the first wave were soldiers who had lost their war, and a very considerable proportion of the second were soldiers who had been taken prisoner through no fault of their own but were considered traitors by the very government who had let them down. In both waves women and children were involved in huge numbers, often separated from the men; in the case of the second wave, many of these women had been forcibly deported as slave labour, but they were (rightly) afraid to return home to the Soviet Union.

It must be mentioned also that those émigrés of the first wave who had settled in countries subsequently occupied by the Soviet Union (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia etc.) were forced out of these countries as well and joined the second wave of emigration since their fate under Soviet occupation was predictably fatal. (We have ample evidence for the persecution of Russian émigrés who stayed behind, for instance, in Czechoslovakia).

In both waves, these people came to a world devastated by war, unemployment and financial catastrophe. Moreover, the first two waves (especially the first one) came into a world that had no experience of vast numbers of refugees (we find it difficult nowadays to imagine such a world, since our society is so experienced in this field). For the early wave there were no organisations, no structures, no laws, no procedures which one might follow if one was to survive. The only organisation that could help at all in the 1920s, as far as I can tell, was the Red Cross, whose remit was entirely medical. Emigrés had left their country, often as part of the Army (or Navy) of a regime which no longer existed. They could not be issued any identity papers, let alone passports, since their country was no longer acceptable to them and indeed would not accept them back. Practical and diplomatic arrangements had to be invented by the Russian refugees and also by the international community: for instance, the idea of 'Nansen's passports' was created, at the initiative of the Norwegian explorer of blessed memory, to give émigrés the chance to have an official identity under the protection of the League of Nations. We were stateless, but under League of Nations protection, and this arrangement worked for a long time.

The Soviet State hated the first two waves of émigrés and fought against them, realising full well that émigrés were its enemies. People were murdered, kidnapped, libelled, blackmailed, forcibly deported. Thank God, Russians who leave the country now do not know this permanent stress.

Later waves of emigration from Russia: emigration and exile (top)

It might be useful one day to compare the first two waves of Russian/Soviet emigration (who were refugees and exiles) with the later ones whom I would call real émigrés: these later waves consisted first of people who left officially in core Soviet times, mostly on Jewish or ethnic German visas, then those who were expelled as dissidents; and finally those who left in perestroika times as well as the current wave, those who come here in post-Soviet times. There is no time for this comparison today, though I would like to point out that their problems are rather different from those faced by the first two waves.

The first difference is that the later waves leave the country vol-untarily in the majority of cases, and have the possibility at least to visit if not to return. The second is that they come to a settled and relatively prosperous world. I am not saying that the second variation on the emigration theme is necessarily easier than the first: from my own experience in 1947 I know that I felt infinitely more miserable (and nearly starved to death) in prosperous Morocco than in deva-stated Germany, since Morocco had not experienced any war to speak of and its population simply could not understand our distress and predicament. The difficulties facing those who leave Russia now are however primarily psychological rather than life-threatening: it is easier to find one's feet in a society which is at peace, organised and settled, with a good social infrastructure and a functioning economy, than amidst ruins. One can at least be sure of surviving physically in a prosperous society, while it was all too easy to die of malnutrition and illness in a devastated host country. Also the host societies are organised and experienced in receiving new arrivals.

In my opinion, the main difference between the two first waves of emigration and the ensuing ones lies in their attitude to their mother country. If you cannot return to your country (or the country of

your parents and ancestors), you are an exile. If you choose to leave your country and live elsewhere, you are an emigré. The first two groups were and remain exiles; the ensuing ones are genuine émigrés, people who take the decision to leave and settle elsewhere. (I am an emigré from France, which I left to settle in Britain, and have spent most of my life as an exile from Russia – now commuting between London and St Petersburg).

The post-Revolution group was committed to carry on the fight which they had lost. It was psychologically centered on Russia, wished (often passionately) to help "save" it and worked hard at it. The WW2 group was much more negative, critical and pessimistic, rejecting any action, but both were entirely centered on Russia.

The dates and even the epochs are immaterial to determining one's category: for instance, Solzhenitsyn was sent out of the USSR/Russia against his will and all his behaviour proved that he belonged to the first category, that of exile. As another example, I would like to mention the people who had left Russia before the Revolution whose representatives I have met all over the world: those who were abroad temporarily or on business and whose return proved impossible belong to the category of exiles; those who had moved abroad either to fight the Tsarist regime or to escape from it (and stayed after the Revolution) belong to the category of émigrés.

The activities of Russians in the host countries (top)

This active category of both waves of exiles created a great many organisations and led a life which was entirely centered on anti-Com-munist activities. Everybody obviously had to earn their living, but many (especially in the first wave) preferred very undemanding jobs, even low paid ones, to keep their energies free for their main interest in life. I am truly amazed by the number and exceptionally high quality of émigré publications, and by the number of educational and cultural activities undertaken all over the world without any financial resources at all.

For instance, in Czechoslovakia (which admittedly for a time had a State policy of helping Russian refugees) between 1919 and 1939 the exiles created: a Russian People's University; a Russian Teachers' College; a Russian Institute of Agricultural Cooperation; a Russian Institute of Commercial Skills; a Russian Higher Education College of Technical Communications, a Russian Law Faculty; an Economics Institute and other scientific and teaching institutions as well as schools at all levels. Numerous periodicals and publishing houses existed, as did several theatres. Prague was called 'The Russian Oxford' in 1919-28. More detail is given in a recent book: Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars in the USA.

We usually remember Paris and possibly Berlin as centres of Russian culture outside the Soviet Union, but Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were at least as important before World War II.

The attitude of these two waves of exiles towards the education of their young is very interesting to study. They both created their own schools and even institutes of higher education, their own libraries and conservatories, as well as innumerable publications. They also created many youth organisations. Some of the most formative experiences of Metropolitan Anthony (and mine as well) were provided in youth camps, at lectures and discussions initiated by these organisations. Please note that for me these camps and conferences for the young happened in the 50s, and they still take place now, more than eighty years after the Revolution! The very peculiar thing is that some of these activities no longer happen in the Russian language, because the fourth and fifth generation of émigrés have lost the original mother tongue, but the ideas and inspiration remain the same: centered on Russia and on service to Russia, though the initial striving for returning to a monarchy-centered past seems to have disappeared. This deep and active love for the mother country explains

the very energetic humanitarian aid activity, for instance, of the Paris-based ACER (a branch of the Orthodox Youth movement), and of many more groups, particularly in Germany, the United States and Canada, who help the mother country.

The first wave exiles were the mostly highly patriotic, expecting Communism not to last, intent on fighting it and on returning to Russia in order to rebuild it. They had a readymade youth organisation, the Scouts, which had been founded in 1909 and had the Heir to the throne as its patron and official head. Some of the Russian Scout movement survives to this day both in emigration and now re-born in Russia after massive persecutions. In exile, several new organisations were created, all patriotic and militant to various degrees. Some survive to this day, now even with offshoots in Russia (for instance the Vitiaz movement and the Russian Christian Student Movement, based in part on YMCA).

The second emigration was familiar with Communism in practice and had fewer hopes of its demise in the near future; it had fewer illusions about the pre-Revolutionary past, it harboured fewer monarchists; it was however even more anti-Communist for both personal and patriotic reasons. It too wanted its young people to be brought up as Russians, and as militant Russians at that.

I generalise, of course, and I do not even intend to discuss all those worthy people who from the beginning 'merged into their environment', possibly changed their names, and just gratefully lived their own life as members of their host community: the fact is, I know very few of these people.

The role of the Church (top)

In emigration the Orthodox Church became, possibly without wishing to, the only common factor for Russians who wanted to retain a link with their origins. It was thus placed in the difficult and unwelcome position of being the only organised Russian body abroad, constantly subject to nationalist and political pressures. The only relief from this purely secular pressure, ironically, lay in the contradictions between the various (and numerous) factions. The Church mostly succeeded in remaining above and outside political quarrels and squabbles. At times of serious stress external to Church affairs (such as World War II) this was not always possible, and the Church was forced into politics. Through God's grace, these occurrences were few; as a rule, the Russian Orthodox Church in emigration remained above party politics and current events. Sadly, it did split into several administrative bodies, but it must always be remembered that the split was administrative, not doctrinal. The doctrinal unity of the Russian Orthodox communities abroad remained intact.

In practical terms, the Church also provided an immensely important focus of creativity and solidarity. This was most important in a hostile world, and the world was indeed hostile more often than not. Think back to the nineteen twenties: the war had devastated Europe, ravaged the male population, and destabilised society and economic life. This Europe had also invested very heavily in Russia before the Revolution, since the country was developing so well (faster than the United States) and capital investment brought excellent dividends (at a time when even people of small means were investing). This capital was lost, gone forever, and in the eyes of European investors the Russians had simply stolen their life savings. (I was verbally attacked many times for this in the 50s and 60s, so what was it like in the 20s and 30s?) This Europe also had to accept hundreds of thousands of destitute Russians who had opted out of the war, leaving their allies to fight on. No one wanted to know about politics, no one wanted to listen to excuses. Hundreds of thousands of beggars had turned up in beggared countries and they were not welcome. The only way for the Russians to keep afloat was to keep together, to help each other, to keep up hope.

In the 1940s, the second wave of émigrés had several additional handicaps: links with Germany (however unwelcome they might have been to the exiles themselves); Displaced Person status (which favoured these people as opposed to the refugees of the host nation); or the stigma of traitor to an allied country. This last was especially bitter in the UK, as I understand it, because "Russians" were blamed on two counts: between 1939 and 1941, when Britain was at war with Germany while the USSR was Germany's cordial ally through the Ribbentropp-Molotov pact, for those whole two years the 'Russians' had provided Germany with support, particularly with aircraft fuel. This was used by German planes for fighting the Battle of Britain. I met British people in the seventies and eighties who still resented this fact and hated all 'Russians' because of it. Quite illogically, the second count, of course, was that these ex-Soviet Russians refused to go back to the Soviet Union, which after all had been Britain's ally in the victorious war.

Faced with such hostility, one could either go under (and about a quarter of early émigrés in each wave did perish very quickly) or to find inner strength, build up solidarity, create hope. The Church became a centre of such solidarity and hope even for non-believers.

We must not look at the early exiles through rose-tinted glasses, and especially we must not imagine that even the first wave were all deeply religious, by which I mean spiritually committed to Christ through the Orthodox Church. As to the second-wave refugees, they came from a Stalin-run Soviet Union. They were not necessarily relig-ious at all and they certainly had only a limited recent experience of Orthodox Church life. As to the first wave, although practically all were christened Orthodox as a matter of course (not to say as a matter of routine) and all had received a basic Orthodox education at school (since it was compulsory), personal commitment to God and the Church was certainly not prevalent, especially among the educated people. Also, at the time of the Revolution the Russian Orthodox Church was only beginning to move into educated circles, into the mainstream of culture.

Moreover, the Orthodox Church to which the exiles were used was not the one which they had in emigration. In Russia before the Revolution, the Church had been rich, influential, a powerful branch of the State. If you were a civil servant or a soldier (of any rank) you had to produce yearly certificates of attending to an Orthodox Christian's duties of confession and communion. When Peter the Great put the Russian Orthodox Church under the authority of secular power (through the Procurator-General) he limited its freedom but he also added to its immense influence, which in turn resulted in many privileges.

Already at the end of the nineteenth century and certainly in the twentieth, the subjection of the Church to secular power was sharply criticised, and our last monarch gave his approval to the calling of a national Council to put matters right. These were serious, fundamental matters, designed to return to the Church its freedom, and reinstating the Patriarchate as the supreme ecclesiastical power. If the Revolution had not happened, Russian society would have had to adjust to a new concept of Church in the country, but the Revolution did happen and whatever Church life was salvaged under Communism was very limited. The implementation of decisions taken by the Council was beyond its reach.

Many members of this Council left Russia after the Revolution and continued developing its work, which in Russia itself had been stopped by local events. Most of Church life outside Russia has been conditioned by the Council rather than by pre-Revolutionary practice.

We had thus in emigration a vast number of people who were used to a powerful Church, vested with secular authority, rich in material possessions, finely structured, famous for the beauty of its

services and of its churches. (The first wave of refugees remembered it vividly, the second had heard all about it). All this was lost. What the exiles could have was only and exclusively the spiritual life of the Church, which so often (especially if we judge from literature) had been barely noticed by people engaged in their everyday city lives before the Revolution.

With a very few exceptions, there were no buildings abroad in which Russians could worship – I can think of St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Paris and of numerous smaller churches built by very rich Russians (or by the Russian Royal family) in Germany and France, in spas and holiday places. So the Russians in exile had to continue their religious life in entirely new surroundings, with a rather different motivation, as poor, helpless and defenceless people, humiliated, defeated, thrown out of their own place. They had lost literally every-thing apart from their lives. Nothing of their former selves remained in their new and hostile surroundings – apart from the essence of their Church: its faith, its servants, and everybody's own path towards God, open through Baptism and an experience of the Sacraments, however formal in the past. Now this experience was still offered, in the same words, in the same gestures, in the same spirit – and it was the one and only surviving feature of the exiles' past life. The fact that the Church was persecuted in Communist Russia gave it additional weight in émigré society: not that they needed proof of the Church being the one and only organism which withstood Communism, the one which was obviously the main enemy for the Communists. This last, political, factor attracted to Church services many people who were not particularly interested in God – with a variety of results, including conversion and ordination. The main attractions, however, were that the Church offered a link with an exile's true self, linking past and present, and also it offered a way of personal salvation both through prayer and through social service.

It is from this position of poverty, of humility, of rejection – but also from a feeling of being in the right, of being on the side of God and of the angels, of being needed to help the very poor and able to offer this help, that Russian Orthodoxy was built in the world outside Russia. The people found that the Church was not a place or even an organisation, it was a path towards God which each person could take and each person could build, a path of salvation, a path from despair to life.

The exile community produced priests from its ranks – people who would have been unlikely to choose this service in pre-Revolutionary Russia, people who earned their living as best they could in the market place, and who spent the core time of their life serving the community. Doctors, scientists, engineers, formerly leisured aristocrats became our priests and bishops and shared our poverty, our distress, our loss of status, our rebirth to a new Orthodox existence. The community supported them as best they could, but from the financial point of view this support was minimal. In my personal opinion, the life of a Russian Orthodox priest in exile was and remains a true spiritual podvig, not to say martyrdom, and their wives and families shared in it. Many still do.

The very first thing a group of Russian refugees did, wherever it found itself, was to start equipping a building, or at least a room, or a bit of territory, as a church. I do understand the word 'sacred' very well by remembering all the places of worship I attended, which were sacred to God, that is set aside, reserved specifically for this function.

Russian exiles found that their principal common factor was their Orthodoxy, and that their Orthodoxy had to find its expression in organised common worship. As a result, the world is now enriched by a tremendous multitude of Orthodox communities: they are every-where, on all continents, bearing witness to our faith and our commitment. They may still be called 'Russian Orthodox', but very often this name has only a historical meaning; very few parishioners are Russian.

Please do not think that all was peace, light and love. One of the jokes circulating in the Russian European community when I was a child concerned a Russian man, an émigré, stuck on a desert island, as industrious as Robinson Crusoe – or as a Russian émigré had to be. He is found after several years and his rescuers admire his dwelling, his kitchen garden, his animals, but are puzzled by his having built two churches on that desert island of his. 'Why two?', they ask. 'Well,' he says, 'it is obvious. One church I go to, and the other I would not dream of going to.'

This was certainly the story of our beginnings: social, political, personal feelings often took over and the community was split into spheres of influence, often totally and violently hostile to each other.

I did think about this a great deal. It is of course a universal occurrence, especially in expatriate communities where national feelings and customs take precedence over religion. But can this not be fought? Is it really compulsory to have such a distressing mix of religion and national feeling, even if it IS universal?

A personal experience of being a Russian Orthodox in Britain (top)

It might be useful if I digress a little at this stage and describe a personal experience, especially since the way out of the difficulty was shown by an idea developed by the Russian Orthodox diaspora, based on the Council of 1917-18. Not that it is obvious at first sight!

When I was about twenty-six and working at the BBC, my best friends there were the News Room journalists, supreme professionals and most kind to a beginner, but cynical and deeply puzzled (as well as critical) by my timetable being dependent on Church services. In fact, there was a concerted attack on this attitude until the moment when the leader of the pack suddenly said 'Leave her alone, religion is her hobby'. 'Oh,' said colleagues, 'oh, in that case, OK'. And that was it. I was free to go to church as they were free to go to the golf course.

I was profoundly shocked. Truly, deeply shocked at such a lack of respect, at such a lack of understanding, at such a defacement of the value of what I held most dear. But why then do I go to church? Do I really look so worldly, so flippant about Church, so people may think it is a hobby for me? This conversation happened in Great Lent, to make things even more offensive. And what is a hobby anyway, if one thinks seriously about it?

What does one do if one pursues a hobby? Well, one engages in an activity which brings pleasure and fulfilment more than anything else. True – attending an Orthodox Church service, singing and reading at it, gave me more pleasure than anything else. (Well, maybe pleasure was the wrong word, but it would do).

A hobby gives one membership of a world of people who are interested in the same activity. Yes, the Church definitely gave this; nowhere in the world could I find more people of a like mind. Even more important, I had in fact a ready-made community to fit my deepest need anywhere I went, thanks to the Orthodox Church.

A hobby allows one to express oneself to the best of one's ability in the activity which is the all-pervading interest in life. It also pushes one to do one's best at all times for the purest of reasons, for the sake of doing well at something one loves. Well, surely one's life in the Church fits the picture if anything does.

Attendance at Church services brought me aesthetic pleasure: the singing, the mystical semi-darkness, the incense, the mysterious language (moreover presented in a chant rather than spoken) – all these touched chords which were never moved by anything else, and in a most welcome way. I

was grateful for the fact that being in the choir and having a job to do prevented me from sinking into this atmosphere, losing myself in something which I sensed was a temptation rather than a fulfilment. But this element of pleasure was definitely there, and I knew that for many beginners it was a major attraction of our services – as it is in so many hobbies.

Intellectual stimulation offered by talks and discussions, with a ready-made community with which one could share one's thoughts and a ready library of texts precisely suited to one's interests…

On a purely selfish note – the opportunity to sing, to chant words of immense weight, carrying an eternal message, to participate in a common effort of presenting a service as perfect as we could make it – was so much more attractive than joining the Bach choir! But was it truly a service to God that I was engaged in, or was I primarily singing and chanting rather than praying?

Was my commitment to the Church really a hobby? (top)

I brought the result of my meditations on the theme of hobby to Metropolitan Anthony – I had the good fortune at that time to see him often – and complained that it worried me that I thought that my News Room friends were right to a degree which was utterly devastating. The more I thought about, the more I saw that religion was truly my hobby in the traditional sense of the word. Surely there must be something else behind the hobby aspect!

Please note that the question of national feelings did not come into it at all, or that of family history, traditions, the teaching I received throughout my life. No, this question of hobby came as a pretty violent attack on me as a whole person in a working context, on me as a responsible adult in the world.

Metropolitan Anthony did not appear as deeply shocked as I felt myself, but rather entertained by this novel approach and encouraged me to carry on thinking, even to write about it if I really wanted to. I did not write, but I did continue with the meditation.

So I saw that the Church for me was definitely a social club, and a Russian social club in addition to the discussion club on spiritual matters. It was a place where my singing interests and skills could be accommodated. It was a safe haven in a world where an unattached young girl was constantly on the defensive. It was a continuation of my life in childhood and early adulthood in every way.

None of this was enough to justify my spending most of my free time in church when I was very busy in my job and was building a new life in my new country. Why then did I feel compelled to be a practising Orthodox churchgoer? Surely there must be something else in it, to explain this overwhelming commitment not just to the services, but also to a certain way of living, of thinking, of behaving? By then I was very much sensitised to the fact that everything I did or thought seemed to be conditioned by religion.

The shock was very deep and for a long time I was unable to make the connection with the real me, staying on the outside looking at myself with the eyes of the post-Christian world.

Then at last it clicked: what the Church was adding to the undoubted hobby aspects was its essence, the opportunity to commun-icate with God. And moreover this opportunity was not man-made but God-created: the Sacraments, one's own participation in eternity as it unrolled in the present. The relief of finding this answer was immense.

Like everyone else, I had gone through the adolescent religious crisis – and what made me remain in the Church was not a religious decision but a typically Russian exile practical situation: the Orthodox

Church was our heritage and I was needed in it, to sing, chant and run the children's education programme. The purely religious angle had to be dealt with separately.

The Russian exile situation later also gave an answer to the religious angle, and this in an organised and most efficient way: through the doctrine of making all your life an extension of your Church life. Otserkovlenie mira is what the Russian Christian Stud-ent's movement called it and being a youth leader in France I attended many conferences where this theme permeated everything.

Usually we all treat our Church life as something holy and totally different from our everyday life, possibly even alien to our everyday behaviour. Being shocked into analysing my Church life from an entirely secular angle, I saw that this separation is entirely wrong: in fact, our participation in Church life, that is in the practical manifestations of our faith, is an essential part of our spiritual life in the Church and in God. We need to accept that we have some purely worldly satisfactions and motivations for coming to Church, and then we will find that many of our worldly desires are acceptable and satisfied in Church as well. There is no clear cut distinction between the world of men and the world of God – and when this is perceived, then the divide between the world of God and the world of the Evil One becomes much more evident.

We will also find it much easier to concentrate on our spiritual life if we distinguish between the hobby (or social) angle of our Church attendance and the truly religious one. Our services would be much less disrupted by mobile telephones, private conversations, late arrivals and early departures, if people would realise and admit that their social needs exist and must be satisfied – then they would see the sense of concentrating these social needs into occasions outside the services. If they knew that such occasions exist, they could con-centrate on praying more easily. I wish we had social activities and a club attached to each of our parishes or at least designated as a desirable place to meet and socialise!

What then is this Otserkovlenie mira? I must admit that while I try to practise this in life, the definition eludes me. Father Vassili Zen-kovsky, Father Alexander Schmemann, Father John Meyendorff have talked about it often enough! And so does Metropolitan Anthony, even if he does not use the terminology.

You could say that it is the fusion of our Eucharistic life with our everyday practical life. Our life is one, whatever we do.

Please forgive this very primitive explanation: it may be more intelligible if we look at the way in which the practice works.

We must always remain the same person at all times, whatever we do, and this person is not the teacher, accountant, cleaner, secretary, dentist, or the husband/wife, child, grandparent, but the unique person who stands before Christ when taking part in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It does not matter whether we stand in church or work at our job: we must at all times be aware that our life is meant to be with Christ at all times, and that Christ is with us in whatever we do.

This is the experience and the teaching which I received from those teachers and leaders of the Russian exile who saved our community and who led us from a state of despair into a state of bringing Orthodoxy to the world. A confident Orthodoxy, based on personal knowledge of Christ through the Sacraments which He gave us, not through customs, or the wearing of certain articles of clothing, or of following certain rules of fasting and feasting, not of using a certain language rather than another. The Sacraments, and a constant, vigilant state of responsibility.

The old quarrels are fading and the new ones are just replays of universal human quarrels. These are becoming more and more irrelevant.

As Russians and as Orthodox of whatever nationality inside the Russian Orthodox Church, we are living at a most responsible time, when the attitude centred on following tradition and formality in religious observance is seeking dominance in the life of our Church over the attitude of bringing God into the world through our own personal endeavour and our own personal example. Also, the 'gilding of domes' in the words of Patriarch Alexis II, and the restoration of influence in State affairs, are in danger of taking precedence over the Liturgy of Life.

We cannot afford, we cannot allow, a return to the stagnation of pre-Revolutionary Church practices, symbolised for me by granting Baptism without individual preparation or personal commitment. The Church is not a social club or a formal insurance guaranteeing salvation by going through the approved motions. The Church is a path to salvation through personal and ever-present commitment to Christ and His teaching which permeates one's whole existence. One can remain in the world and follow this commitment, but observing the commandments and coming to the services is not enough.

Metropolitan Anthony's teaching, spread in Russia and throughout the world by radio and print, as well as by video, is centred entirely on personal endeavour and personal example, rooted in prayer, in the Eucharist, in the Sacraments.

When working at the BBC I had the good fortune to take interviews for the Russian Service religious programme from Metro-politan Anthony, and on at least one occasion, being a cheeky and passionately political young person, I tried very hard to make him issue a political statement: that was on the occasion of Solzhenitsyn writing an open letter to the Patriarch of Moscow. We fought it out – and of course he won, but I did make him say something which I had not heard before. Metropolitan Anthony said that he would never make a political statement on behalf of the Church because the function of the Church was unique and should not be defiled. The one and only function of the Church (and it is a monopoly) is to make possible the direct communication between man and God, God and man. Nothing else is admissible.

On the other hand, he said, once a person is a member of the Church, this person has an absolute duty to realise their potential to the full, and this means to be as good at their work as at all possible in the eyes of God, and to be as active a member of society as at all possible – for the name of the Lord and to fulfil one's own vocation. It is a duty imposed by one's commitment as a Christian to turn everything one does into a service to the Lord our Saviour.

This statement was broadcast on the BBC Russian Service.

Now that I spend so much time in Russia, trying to follow this command, I constantly meet people who too follow this command, and an unbelievably large number of people refer directly to Metropolitan Anthony as their inspiration. The vicar of the church where we worship in St. Petersburg came to Christ in Soviet times through listening to Metropolitan Anthony on the BBC. The vicar of the parish of Kondopoga calls himself and his flock disciples of Metropolitan Anthony, as does the priest in charge of all charitable Church activity in St Petersburg and North-West Russia. I could go on – but I won't. There are too many people who received spiritual life through our Bishop, I could not possibly describe even the variety of types of person.

Before drawing to a close – I will tell you how very privileged I feel to be part of this Diocese of Sourozh. Not so much because of its influence in Russia (although that is a great joy) but because of

its insistence that we are all personally responsible for our life and that of the world around us in the eyes of the Lord. Because we are encouraged not to demean ourselves by noticing practical details of dress or behaviour during services, because we are encouraged to develop our worldly life for the glory of God rather than stifle it in a mistaken effort to comply with some custom. Because we are treated here as adults – as adult people, servants of Christ, walking the earth for the glory of God.