

A Brief Tribute to the Holy Hierarch, St. John (Maximovitch)  
† 19 June (2 July) 1966

## The Holy Archbishop John and the Convent of the Annunciation in London, England†

In 1948, during the Palestinian War, the Superior of the Ein Karim Convent in the Holy Land, Abbess Elizabeth (Ampenoff), was expelled, along with part of the Sisterhood. The area where their convent was located had fallen under the control of the newly established state of Israel, which turned the convent over to the Soviet-dominated Moscow Patriarchate.

Since the expelled nuns remained faithful to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (in exile from the Soviet Russia), and thus had no hope of returning to their convent, after daunting and perilous wanderings from country to country in the Middle East for several years, they ended up at the Russian Convent of Lesna, in France, where they were offered hospitable refuge.

St. John (Maximovitch), who was at the time Archbishop of Western Europe, proposed to Eldress Elizabeth and her six disciples—the latter all of Palestinian descent—that they try to found a new convent of their own, and indeed in England, where Mother Elizabeth (though of Russian descent) was reared.\*

So, in 1954 the Sisterhood moved to London where, for some period of time, they were given quarters in the spacious home of a pious Russian physician, while a committee was established by the Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna, sister of the Royal Martyr Nicholas, last Tsar of Russia, in order to collect funds and find a suitable dwelling to accommodate a convent.



*St. John with other clergy and Eldress Elizabeth at the temporary residence of the convent. London, 1955.*



*The Holy Convent of the Annunciation in London.*

Finally, an appropriate building was located, in 1959, and purchased with the funds that had been collected and with the aid of various refugee organizations. In the attic of the house that was purchased, six holy Icons were miraculously found, all in ancient Russian style and of great value, which to this day are displayed in the convent Chapel. This was reckoned a sign and indication of the blessing by the Mother of God for the foundation of the convent.

The next year, 1960, St. John performed the Consecration of the new Convent of the Annunciation of the *Theotokos* in London and the Service of the Opening of the Doors of the

Chapel accommodated therein. Until his reassignment to America in 1962, the Saint regularly visited the Holy Convent, where he Liturgized and gave apposite counsel to the nuns with regard to the path of true Monastic Tradition.

The remaining nuns from that first sisterhood reverently preserve the counsels and their memories of the holy Archbishop, as well as the episcopal vestments that they sewed for him.

† Translated with various emendations from the Greek original on the website of the Icon Program of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Phyle, Greece: <[http://agiografikesmeletes.blogspot.gr/2010/07/blog-post\\_01.html](http://agiografikesmeletes.blogspot.gr/2010/07/blog-post_01.html)>.



This Icon of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco was painted by the hands of the iconographers of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Phyle, Greece