

Visit to the Orthodox in Brazil belonging to our Sister Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad

A festal anniversary and the Consecration of a Bishop

Following a kind invitation, and with the blessing of our Standing Holy Synod, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone went to São Paulo, Brazil, in order to take part in the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the Consecration of the Russian Cathedral of Saint Nicholas the Wonder-worker, which is located in this large city in Latin America.

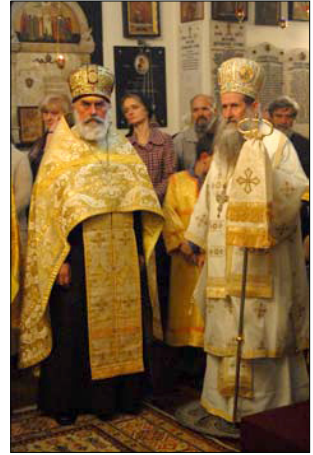
Bishop Ambrose arrived by air in São Paulo via Munich, after a long flight, on Thursday, July 17, 2009 (Old Style). He was met by Father Constantine Bussyguin, who drove him to the Church of Saint Nicholas, where Father serves as Rector. There, Bishop Ambrose met with His Eminence, Archbishop Sophrony of Saint Petersburg and Northern Russia and Protodeacon Basil Yakimov, who had arrived earlier from Russia and Australia, respectively.

That afternoon, they went to the airport to meet His Eminence, Metropolitan Agafangel, First Hierarch of the ROCA, who had arrived from Ukraine. From there, they went to the Church of the Holy Trinity, where the recently-widowed Mitered Protopresbyter George Petrenko resides.

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Late the next afternoon, Vespers and Matins for the Feast of Saint Seraphim of Sarov were served at the Church of the Holy Trinity, in accordance with the Slavic *Typikon*.

On Saturday morning, July 19 (Old Style), a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of Saint Seraphim of Sarov, in a suburb of São Paulo, on the occasion of its Feast Day. Metropolitan Agafangel concelebrated with Archbishop Sophrony and Bishop Ambrose, along with the Presbyters George and Vladimir and the Deacons Eugenio and Basil. Father Vladimir, who is Father George's son, serves at the Russian



Church of Saint Sergius of Radonezh, in São Paulo. Around one hundred Orthodox faithful were present.



On Sunday, July 20 (Old Style), the commemoration of the Holy Prophet Elias, Metropolitan Agafangel was the principal celebrant at the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, for the celebration of its anniversary. Also taking part were the two Bishops, Sophrony and Ambrose, Presbyters George, Constantine, and Vladimir, and Deacons Eugenio, Basil, and Kessari (Caesarios). Between three and four hundred Orthodox faithful—mostly Russian, but also those of other nationalities, including Brazilian converts—were present at this festal Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, during which Metropolitan Agafangel ordained a new Deacon. Archbishop Sophrony delivered a homily.



An *agape* meal followed in a spacious reception hall, during which the participants exchanged best wishes and made brief speeches. Bishop Ambrose, in turn, conveyed appropriate greetings to the festal gathering.

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The next afternoon, Protopresbyter George Petrenko received the monastic Tonsure at the Church of the Holy Trinity. Following the repose of his virtuous Matushka a few months ago, Father George was elected Bishop for the Eparchy of South America by the Holy Synod of the ROCA—an election which he did not accept. Now, however, he has acquiesced,

having been pressured to do so by clergy and faithful alike and being conscious of the great need of a permanent Hierarchy in Latin America, where practically the entire Russian Eparchy refused to accept the union with the Moscow Patriarchate two years ago. Metropolitan Agafangel performed the Tonsure, with Archbishop Sophrony serving as Sponsor. The newly-tonsured Hieromonk received the name Gregory, in honor of Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, the Wonder-worker.

Bishop Ambrose was obliged by this new and unexpected turn of events to change his plans and remain in Brazil over the weekend in order to take part in the Consecration of the new Bishop, having first, to be sure, duly informed the remaining members of our Holy Synod and having received their ready approval.

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The next day, Tuesday, July 22 (Old Style), Metropolitan Agafangel having left for a short pastoral visit to Russian ecclesiastical communities in Argentina and Uruguay, Bishop Ambrose visited the highlands near the city of Piedade, where a monastery is to be constructed in an area 1,200 meters above sea level. For the time being, there exists on this location the house of a former Roman Catholic monk, Brother Claudio, who lives there with his parents.



On Thursday, July 24 (Old Style), the precise date of the Consecration of the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas in São Paulo, seventy years ago, Bishop Ambrose celebrated a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Archbishop Sophrony, three Priests, and three Deacons, and delivered a homily. Since it was a work day, only a few of the faithful were able to attend.



On Saturday, July 26, a *Panikhida* (memorial service) was served in São Paulo's central cemetery at the simple grave of the Russian Archbishop Theodossy (†1968), who had taken part in the Consecration of the Church of Saint Nicholas in 1939. The participants prayed for his repose

and for that of all the benefactors of the Church. Metropolitan Agafangel, who had returned from his brief tour of South America, was present at the service, which was celebrated by Archbishop Sophrony.

On Saturday evening, at the Church of the Holy Trinity, after the services of Vespers and Matins for the following day, there took place the ceremony of the Great Edict for Bishop Gregory of São Paulo, Brazil, and South America. During the service the Bishop-elect tearfully read an address which profoundly moved the large crowd of those in attendance, and which we append below:



Most Reverend Hierarchs:

When, in 1986, my family and I visited the Monastery in Jordanville, the ailing Elder, Father Gury, said to my Matushka, while pointing at me: “Know that he will become a Bishop!” We considered his words to be simply those of a person in ill health. But when the Lord called my beloved Matushka to His Heavenly Abode and the proposals and pressures, so to speak, on the part of both the clergy and the faithful began, I then understood that those words had been prophetic.

And now, when, by the Will of the Most High, the time has come for this prophecy to be fulfilled, a feeling of fear, trembling, and reverence has filled my entire being. Approaching the Mystery of Consecration to the Episcopacy, I call to mind the venerable Hierarchs about whom I have heard or read or whom I personally knew, the majority of whom have already passed into eternity, while others are still alive. All of them were adorned with education, wisdom, piety, and an outstanding ecclesiastical formation. And now that I am to be elevated to the Episcopacy in their succession and to receive the Apostolic mantle, fear fills my spirit—fear lest, by my own entrance into this sacred company, I will degrade the Hierarchical vocation. I know that this twofold Grace cannot be contained in an unclean vessel, and, aside from my physical weaknesses, I am replete

with many sins, the dreadful accumulations of my own will. I would like to find a hole in the ground, so that I could hide therein from the All-Seeing Eye of God, but “Whither shall I flee from Thy presence, O Lord?”

Through you, Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Lord calls me, the unworthy one, to serve His Holy Church in the Apostolic office. But what conditions the Holy Church lives in today! If the Fathers of old were already lamenting with dread the apostasy of the world from the Faith and the Church, then we can affirm with certainty that we are living in apocalyptic times, when apostasy has reached its apogee.



False teachers and false Christs have won over almost the entire world. On account of the loss of “him that restraineth,” the anointed of God, all spiritual values have changed and there do not exist today righteous people who see as evil that which the Holy Orthodox Church sees as evil. So-called “world Orthodoxy” has long since entered the arena of globalization, which has as its goal the preparation of mankind to welcome the world leader and god on earth, the Antichrist.

The cunning of the Evil One has succeeded in rending asunder and dismantling her who stood firm in the past, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which for eighty whole years was the stronghold of Orthodoxy and the beacon of pristine and incorruptible Truth. An unbelievable temptation exploded like a bomb in the midst of our own ROCA and scattered the faithful in every conceivable direction. It is manifestly our primary concern to gather them together. The spirit of globalization is striving to gain ground in reinforcement of such disintegration. Borders between nations are disappearing, national values have been lost, and nations have been transformed into an amorphous mass. But here is the paradox: in the world, when it was divided into nations and states at war with each other, there was much greater love than there is today, when so many evil elements have been amalgamated in an external unity.

You see what difficulties the Hierarchy of what is left of the ROCA is experiencing. And it is on this path of the Episcopate, the way of the Cross, that I am entering—I, the sinner. I am in need of much help, but first and foremost of the special blessing of God, the blessing of wisdom and discretion, which will aid me in the just rendering of what is God’s to God and of what is Caesar’s to Caesar, and to condescend to human infirmities, but also to stand firm in the Truth even unto martyrdom.

Pray for me, Most Reverend Hierarchs, the least Hieromonk and the most sinful of all, and you, the Orthodox people, likewise, that Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who is glorified in Trinity, by the intercessions of His All-Immaculate Mother, Our Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary, may fill me with the spiritual wealth of the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

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On Sunday, July 27 (Old Style), the commemoration of Saint Panteleimon, the worthy new Hierarch, His Eminence, Bishop Gregory of São Paulo, Brazil, and South America was consecrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity, during a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Metropolitan Agafangel concelebrated with Archbishop Sophrony and Bishop Ambrose, assisted by four Priests and five Deacons (the Presbyter, Father Vladimir, and Deacon Father Constantine having already arrived from Argentina), with a large crowd of Orthodox faithful in attendance.



A spirit of peace, prayerfulness, and compunction held sway. The newly-consecrated Bishop communed a multitude of faithful for nearly half an hour, after which Metropolitan Agafangel delivered a homily. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the new Hierarch was vested with the *mandyas* of the ever-memorable Archbishop Leonty of Chile and Peru (†1971) and received the pastoral staff from the hands of Metropolitan Agafangel. As the *Polychronion* was chanted in his honor, he blessed his rational Flock and received the best wishes, love, and unreserved respect of all.



The newly-consecrated Bishop George was born in 1947 to Russian émigrés, in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, and knows the local Portuguese dialect. He studied at the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, New

York. His parents did not allow him to become a monk, as he wished, and so he married and was ordained a Priest. Four children were born to him, including a son who is now a married Priest, and three daughters. He also has grandchildren. He has applied himself to his pastoral work with zeal and self-denial. A particularly sober and prayerful clergyman, he has a great love for Church services and is exceptionally beloved of his entire flock in South America. For this reason, his elevation gladdened everyone and no one was found to have any complaint against him or any reservations about his Consecration to the Episcopacy. May the Lord grant him length of days and show him forth as a genuine successor of His Holy Apostles!



Following the Divine Liturgy, an *agape* meal was served in the Church's very spacious banquet hall, which had been specially decorated for the occasion. Around two hundred dinner guests attended, and tributes were exchanged. The new Bishop spoke with striking sobriety and spirituality about repentance. Bishop Ambrose duly greeted and congratulated the newly-consecrated Hierarchy.

The next day, Monday, July 28 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose departed by air for the long





and tiring return trip, landing in Athens, via Frankfurt, on Tuesday afternoon, July 29 (Old Style).

This was an inter-Orthodox event of great importance, which strengthened yet more the unity between the Orthodox in Resistance of Greece with our sorely-tried brothers and sisters in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

Glory to God for all things!

