

COLLECTION OF UKRAINIAN SAINTS, vol. IV

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In memory of Anastasija Androich, my beloved grandmother

**Вечная память! Царствие Небесное!
Memory eternal! May the Heavenly Kingdom be granted to her!**

--- ST. FILARET OF CHERNIGOV---

Dymytry Grigorievich Konobeyevsky was born on October 23rd 1805 in the village of Lisne Konobeevo, Shatsk district, Tambov province, to the parents Fr. Grigori Afanasyevich – the village priest – and Anastasia Vasilyevna Konobeyevsky.

As a young boy Dymytry's parents took him to the Sarov Monastery, St. Serafim of Sarov blessed Dymytry and said: “This boy will be a great lamp of the Church and will be famous throughout Russia as a learned man.” At the age of seven, Dymytry begged his parents to bless him to pursue the monastic life at the Vyshenskaya Hermitage. Despite the unusual request at such an age, his parents allowed him to enter the Hermitage

At the age of nine Dymytry was given a scholarship to enter the Shatsk Theological School. At the school Bishop Iona (Vasilievsky) of Tambov took notice of Dymytry's short stature for a boy his age and his great humility, Vladyka Iona gave him a new surname, “Gumilevsky”, derived from the Latin words “humilis” (low) and “humilitas” (humble).

In 1819 at the age of 14 Dymytry Gumilevsky graduated from the Shatsk Theological School and enrolled in the Tambov Theological Seminary, where he received a Master's degree in theology in 1826. After graduating from the Tambov Theological Seminary, Dymytry enrolled at the Moscow Theological Academy to obtain his Doctorate.

On August 19th 1829 Dymytry was tonsured a monk with the name Filaret – after St. Filaret the Merciful – by Metropolitan (St.) Filaret (Drozdov) of Moskva. On

February 3rd 1830 Fr. Filaret was ordained a Hierodeacon and on June 29th of that year ordained a Hieromonk.

Fr. Filaret served as a librarian at the Moscow Theological Academy until he graduated in 1831, when he was appointed the chairman of the Department of Church History at the Academy. During this period Fr. Filaret mentored Mikhail Petrovich Bulgakov, who later became Metropolitan Makariy of Moscow.

In 1832 Fr. Filaret was transferred to the Department of Holy Scripture and then transferred to the Department of Moral and Pastoral Theology. On May 1st 1833 Fr. Filaret was made an assistant dean of the Moscow Theological Academy. Later that year Fr. Filaret was made the Chief Editor of Church Books in the Moscow Diocese.

It was in the Moscow Theological Academy that Fr. Filaret started work in 1826 on his magnum opus: “History of the Russian Church”, which covered the history of Orthodoxy in Russia from the time of St. Vladimir to the 19th century. Fr. Filaret's work proved very popular and was printed in five volumes in Moscow and Riga for decades.

Fr. Filaret was a founding member of the Radonezh Spiritual Board in 1834. On January 27th 1835 Fr. Filaret was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite and on December 14th he was appointed the dean of the Moscow Theological Academy. In 1835 Fr. Filaret started editing the newsletter: “The Works of the Holy Fathers in Russian with Additions of Spiritual Content”. This newsletter edified many not just in Moscow, but all of Russia.

On March 9th 1837 Fr. Filaret was appointed the Igumen of the Moscow Epiphany Monastery, where he labored joyously in quiet monastic life. For his ceaseless service to the Church, on April 29th 1839 the Most Holy Synod awarded Fr. Filaret the Order of St. Anna in the 2nd Degree.

In 1841 the Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church elected Fr. Filaret to the Episcopacy and on December 21st of that year Filaret was consecrated and enthroned in the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg as the Bishop of Riga, a vicar of the Pskov Diocese.

After several months of training, Bishop Filaret moved to Riga in July 1842. Latvia and Estonia were majority Lutheran areas within the Russian Empire, with

the Baltic German aristocracy and Lutheran clergy being hostile to Bishop Filaret's efforts. According to Manuel Lemeshevsky: “(...the Lutherans) tried to paralyze the activities of the archpastor (Filaret) and did not disdain slandering and denouncing him with filthy accusations...”

In 1843 Bishop Filaret resumed the writing and publication of his newsletter: “The Works of the Holy Fathers”, which he had since translated into the Latvian and Estonian languages. The works of the Holy Fathers were complicated and foreign to the mostly Protestant population, so as a response Vladyka Filaret published a secondary newsletter to explain the concepts of Orthodoxy titled: “Supplements to the Works of the Holy Father”, which offered explanations for the teachings of Orthodox, making it more accessible for Protestants.

Eventually Vladyka Filaret had success in converting the Latvians and Estonians to the Orthodox Faith. In 1844 Bishop Filaret baptized several members of the German aristocratic Hernghuter family to the Orthodox Faith. The Hernghuter family wrote to Tsar Nicholas I with a request to celebrate the Divine Service in the Latvian language, which the Tsar granted. Thus the Divine Liturgy was served in the Latvian language for the first time.

After baptizing the Hernghuter family, Vladyka Filaret focused more on his efforts to translate the Divine Services, prayer books and catechism books into the Latvian and Estonian languages. Between 1841 and December 1845 over 16,000 Orthodox publications were printed and distributed to the people of Latvia and Estonia.

In 1845 Tsar Nicholas I issued protocols on the conversion of the Latvian and Estonian people; which prohibited coercion or promise of material benefits to convert the populace to Orthodoxy. Vladyka Filaret upheld these protocols thoroughly, censuring priests who violated the orders of the Tsar. People in the Baltics came to Orthodoxy by the thousands willing in the Baltics.

Mikhail Petrovich Rozberg, a German Lutheran and a Professor at the University of Dorpat, wrote in a letter to Count Nikolai Aleksandrovich Protasov:

“Without incitement, without any hope of earthly-benefits, crowds of good-natured and peaceful peasants, having finished their work, went to Russian priests to accept the Russian Faith. This spectacle is not only uplifting and moving, but also represents a triumph of Orthodoxy spirituality. These are not violators, not

half-wild pagans, not Uniates – who are closer to Orthodoxy – but Protestants who have been under the influence of eloquent, educated, Lutheran priests for three centuries.”

Between April and December of 1845, 9,870 Estonians and 4,564 converted to Orthodoxy. In the first seven months of 1846, 6,285 Estonians and 6,313 Latvians converted. Between 1845 and 1848 in the Estonian part of Livonia, 63,858 people converted to Orthodoxy. In total under Vladyka Filaret over 113,910 people in the Baltics converted to Orthodoxy.

Bishop Filaret put special attention to preparing worthy priests for the Vicarite of Riga; under his direction a theological seminary was opened in Riga in 1847. Shortly after the school's establishment Vladyka Filaret ordained two ethnic Estonians to the priesthood, marking a new effort for the Church's missionary efforts.

For his historical work, the Society of Russian History and Antiquities inducted Bishop Filaret as a lifelong member. Manuel Lemeshevsky wrote: “Bishop Filaret's works are striking in mass of critical articles and notes. This was a feature of his talent – to be inquisitive into any subject, to check everything with a critical eye. He read constantly, his whole life was devoted to reading and work. He gave himself to public society only when necessary. People who knew him closely said he constantly laboured and rarely rested. He even ate and drank with a book in his hands and immediately ceased from nourishment to take notes or excerpts as needed...”

Over the course of seven years, Vladyka Filaret consecrated twenty Church buildings that could be used in the winter, 43 Churches that could only be used in the summer and organized 92 mission communities throughout the Baltics. As a result of Bishop Filaret's efforts, Riga was re-organized in 1850 as a Diocese; which flourished, even after the Revolution.

Due to his excellent administration skills, the Most Holy Synod transferred Bishop Filaret to the Diocese of Kharkiv and Okhtyrka and made him a ruling Bishop. While in Kharkiv, Vladyka Filaret wrote a work titled: “Historical and statistical description of the Kharkiv Diocese.”

In Kharkiv Bishop Filaret supervised the educational process in the Diocesan schools and seminaries, updating the curriculum to the standards he had seen

across Russia; he donated much of his personal library of rare volumes and manuscripts to local libraries. Vladyka Filaret oversaw the construction of a school to teach women how to be mothers in Kharkiv, the first of its kind in the Diocese.

Many construction projects started under Vladyka Filaret's patronage, including: Several buildings of the Kharkiv Theological Seminary, an expansion of the Holy Protection Cathedral and a renovation of the upper floor of the Holy Ascension Cathedral in Kharkiv. Two Diocese houses were constructed to serve visiting clergy and pilgrims.

Vladyka Filaret blessed the construction of an almshouse attached to the Holy Protection Brotherhood that took care of the elderly, disabled and poor and renovated the Khoroshevsky Ascension Monastery. He established several printing presses, new parishes, schools and charitable organizations in the Kharkiv Diocese.

Bishop Filaret was beloved by the people of Kharkiv both for his charitable efforts and for his spirituality, his sermons he gave during Great Lent were recorded and published as: “Conversations on the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ”, these sermons were incredibly moving and gained popularity outside of Kharkiv, being printed across Russia.

On April 7th 1857 Vladyka Filaret was elevated to the rank of Archbishop and on May 9th 1859 he was transferred to the Diocese of Chernigov and Nizhyn. In Chernigov Archbishop Filaret immediately set to work on opening several new parishes and schools in the region, with the region receiving 700 new schools and churches during Vladyka Filaret's tenure.

Archbishop Filaret established a new seminary for Chernigov and donated the rest of his personal collection of books – 1,572 books – to start a library for the Diocese. Vladyka Filaret in 1861 published the newsletter titled: “Chernigov Diocesan Information”, containing writings from the Fathers and articles about spirituality.

In addition Vladyka Filaret renovated the Bishop's residence at the Trinity-Ilyinsky Monastery and the secondary chapel at that Monastery. Vladyka Filaret gave the entirety of his pension to the poor of the Chernigov Diocese, taking upon himself a strict ascetical life and depriving himself of basic amenities due to his charity.

In 1866 the Most Holy Synod awarded Archbishop Filaret with the Order of St. Aleksandr Nevsky for his diligent service to the Church. In the summer of 1866, a cholera outbreak affected the southern Chernigov region, to which Vladyka Filaret wished to visit the people there and serve a Molieben for the sick.

Even though Archbishop Filaret was already physically and mentally exhausted, he undertook the journey to the city of Konotop. While visiting hospitals, Vladyka Filaret contracted cholera and eventually fell asleep in the Lord on August 9th 1866 in Konotop.

Twelve thousand people accompanied the coffin of their beloved archpastor on the 180 versts (192 kilometers) to the city of Chernigov; people took turns serving as pallbearers and there was much weeping for the loss of Vladyka Filaret. After St. Filaret contracted cholera, the outbreak stopped and not a single case of cholera being reported after St. Filaret fell asleep.

St. Filaret was interred underneath the altar of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Chernigov. In 1884 the Church historian Gavril Miloradovich installed a bronze plaque on the exterior wall of the Holy Trinity Cathedral to celebrate the memory of St. Filaret.

In total there are 159 known writings from St. Filaret, covering topics from dogmatics, hagiography, commentary, patristics, Church history and education, which are still published and read today. Besides the awards he received from various Theological seminaries and academies in Russia, the Copenhagen Society of Antiquities also inducted him as a member during his lifetime.

Many miracles occurred at his grave and shortly after his repose, the people of Chernigov entreated St. Filaret for his intercessions. After the Bolsheviks closed the Holy Trinity Cathedral, most of the valuables from the Cathedral were stolen such as the bronze plaque outside the Church and the tamatas the pious left at his tomb.

In 2009 St. Filaret of Chernigov's relics were uncovered and transferred to a new reliquary at the Holy Trinity Cathedral. In March 2023 an attempt was made to move St. Filaret's relics to the Cathedral of All Saints of Chernigov and be placed next to the reliquaries of Sts. Feodosiy and Lavrentiy of Chernigov.

In April 2009 it was decided to leave a majority St. Filaret's relics at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, with a small portion being parted and left in the All Saints of Chernigov Cathedral. Another portion was parted and brought to the St. Panteleimon Church in Cologne, Germany around this same time.

The Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of St. Filaret of Chernigov on August 9th – the date of his repose – and on October 25th – the day of his glorification – with an additional celebration being on the commemoration of All Saints of Chernigov (second Sunday after Pentecost).

---ST. IOANNIKIY OF KYIV---

Ivan Maksimovich Rudnev was born on February 20th 1826 in the small village of Verkhneye Skorchye, Novosilsky District, Tula province within the Russian Empire. His family were of peasant background and his father was a Deacon, despite the poor background of his family, Ivan was given a scholarship to study at the Tula Theological Seminary where he excelled in study.

After graduating from the Tula Theological Seminary, Ivan was granted another scholarship and enrolled in the Kyiv Theological Academy, where he graduated with a master's degree in 1849; later that year on October 11th he received monastic tonsure with the name Ioannikiy – after St. Ioannikios the Great – in the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra.

Fr. Ioannikiy laboured in the spiritual life and was beloved by the Brotherhood. On December 21st 1854 Fr. Ioannikiy was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite, in 1856 he was appointed as an inspector the Kyiv Theological Academy. Due to his theological learning Fr. Ioannikiy was appointed the dean of the Kyiv Theological Academy on October 6th 1858.

After becoming a dean, Fr. Ioannikiy was transferred to the Epiphany Monastery in Kyiv where he was elected by the Brotherhood as the Hegumen of the Monastery in 1859. Fr. Ioannikiy taught classes for the children of Kyiv at the Epiphany Brotherhood School until 1860, when he was invited to St. Petersburg to deliver lectures at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. Fr Ioannikiy was asked to stay in St. Petersburg and on October 6th 1860 was appointed as the dean of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

In May 1861 the Most Holy Synod elected Fr. Ioannikiy for the Episcopacy and

on June 12th 1861 Ioannikiy was consecrated as the Bishop of Vyborg – Vicar for the St. Petersburg Diocese – while maintaining his position as dean of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. Vladyka Ioannikiy spent great effort trying to convert the Lutheran Karelians in Vyborg to the Orthodox Faith.

Over the years Vladyka Ioannikiy was transferred to several different dioceses; on January 12th 1864 he was made the ruling Bishop of Saratov and Tsaritsyn, on July 13th 1871 he was then transferred to the Diocese of Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas and on February 14th 1877 elevated to the rank of Archbishop. On December 8th 1877 Archbishop Ioannikiy assumed the title of Exarch of Georgia and Archbishop of Kartli and Kakheti.

Everywhere Vladyka Ioannikiy served, he organized homes for orphans and widows, diocesan candle factories – of which all income went to poor – as well as several schools for children, seminaries and for young women to teach skills necessary for being wives and mothers. All the institutions Vladyka Ioannikiy established were entirely self-sufficient and did not take money from the state for their upkeep.

Due to his excellent administration and humility Vladyka Ioannikiy was inducted as a member of the Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1881; later that year the Kazan Theological Academy inducted him as an honorary member. After Metropolitan Makariy (Bulgakov) of Moskva and Kolomna fell asleep in the Lord on June 9th 1892 the Most Holy Synod unanimously elected Vladyka Ioannikiy to be elevated to the rank of Metropolitan and given the Metropolis of Moskva and Kolomna.

Vladyka Ioannikiy's appointment was confirmed by Duma and he was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan in Moskva on June 27th 1882. On May 16th 1883 Metropolitan Ioannikiy officiated the sacred rite of Coronation for Tsar Aleksandr III. That same month Metropolitan Ioannikiy consecrated the completed Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moskva, which became the main Cathedral for Moskva before it was destroyed by the Bolsheviki in 1931.

Metropolitan Ioannikiy commissioned many new churches to be built in Moskva and wrote several essays on the responsibilities of clergy, the spiritual life and commentary on Patristic writings and the Scriptures. Several lectures he gave regarding repentance were especially moving, these lectures were collected and published as “Five Lectures on Repentance” (pub. 1899 St. Petersburg) and

translated into several languages and read all across the Orthodox world.

In 1889 Metropolitan Ioannikiy commissioned the famous architect Nikolai Vladimirovich Sultanov to build a Church for his native village of Verkhneye Skorchye. Metropolitan Ioannikiy consecrated the Church in honor of the Protection of the Mother of God on June 12th 1894; this Church in Verkhneye Skorchye was later destroyed with explosives by the Bolsheviks in 1945.

After Metropolitan Platon (Gorodetsky) fell asleep on October 1st 1891 Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev – the chief prosecutor of the Most Holy Synod – wrote to Tsar Aleksandr III in a letter dated October 15th: “...The Metropolitan of Moskva Ioannikiy – a man of impeccable moral character – does not fit in with Moskva by his character. He is sober and silent, and Moskva has its peculiarities: They love show and communicativeness... (He is not loved) by Moskva high society, and he himself feels this. In Kyiv, his character would be more appreciated and more in line with his nature...”

Tsar Aleksandr III replied in a letter dated November 8th 1891: “Thy thoughts regarding the appointment of Metropolitan Ioannikiy of Moskva are very important. Metropolitan Leonity of Warsaw and I both think also Metropolitan Ioannikiy (would be best) in Kyiv.”

On November 17th 1891 Metropolitan Ioannikiy returned to Kyiv, serving as the Metropolitan of Kyiv and Galicia and returned to his residence in the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, where he originally received monastic tonsure. The people of Kyiv – including the peasants and high society – were warm to receive Metropolitan Ioannikiy and many of his old friends rejoiced in his return to Kyiv. Vladyka Ioannikiy put great effort in organizing charitable institutions across Ukraine.

The Moskva Theological Academy inducted Metropolitan Ioannikiy as a permanent honorary member on January 31st 1892 and for his service to the Church, Tsar Aleksandr III awarded Metropolitan Ioannikiy the Order of St. Andrew on May 6th 1895. On May 14th 1896 the Most Holy Synod awarded Vladyka Ioannikiy the right to wear a Diamond Cross on his klobuk.

When the president of the Most Holy Synod, Metropolitan Palladiy (Raev) of St. Petersburg, fell asleep in the Lord on December 8th 1898 the Synod unanimously voted for Metropolitan Ioannikiy to become the president of the Synod on

December 25th 1898; a position incredibly rare for the Metropolitan of Kyiv and Galicia.

The spiritual character of Metropolitan Ioannikiy, his administration and almsgiving were well respected all throughout the Russian land. In the late 19th century in Russia even the Bishops became more secular, with Metropolitan Ioannikiy's humility and asceticism being a rare example in the Rus' lands; he seldom left the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and spent most of his time writing edifying essays – by the end of his earthly life over 19 collections of essays had been published, with one more being published shortly after his repose – and managing charitable organizations. Metropolitan Ioannikiy took on a strict vow of poverty and donated his entire pension he received from the state to the poor.

Metropolitan Ioannikiy fell asleep in the Lord on June 7th 1900. His funeral was officiated by Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky, later the first Martyr to be killed by the Bolsheviks) of Moskva; Vladyka Ioannikiy was buried in the Church of the Exaltation of the Cross in the Near Caves, being buried to the left of Metropolitan Arseniy (Moskvin) of Moskva. St. Ioannikiy's final wish was that his funeral was to avoid extravagance and thus his funeral resembled that of a simple monk rather than one of a Metropolitan.

Large crowds of the faithful attended the funeral, weeping for the loss of their beloved shepherd. In his writings St. Ioannikiy prophesied the future destruction of Russia and persecution of the Church, which came to pass in the decades following his repose. St. Ioannikiy's writings were read throughout Russia after his repose and people flocked to his tomb asking for his intercessions, as many considered him to be a Saint even during his lifetime.

After the Soviets closed the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra in 1926 and turned it into a museum, the visits to St. Ioannikiy's tomb became less frequent. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union people began to visit St. Ioannikiy's tomb once more and his writings were republished, and continue to edify Orthodox Christians to the present day. The Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of St. Ioannikiy of Kyiv on June 7th.

---ST. RAFAELA OF CHYHYRYN---

Raisa Vasilyevna Tertaskaya was born in 1877 to parents of noble background who were very pious; although where she was born and the names of her parents

are unknown. Raisa avoided the games of other children, rather spending her time after school in prayer alone or at Church, where she particularly loved singing and hymns. After going through primary school, Raisa sought her parents blessing to pursue monastic life.

While still young Raisa became a novice and grew spiritually in the Holy Trinity Convent in Chyhyryn under the guidance of the Mothers and the priests who served the Convent. Being youthful she diligently carried out obediences and physical work around the Convent. Sister Raisa was incredibly skillful in crafts, weaving carpets and making embroideries for the Mothers; but most of all Sister Raisa loved Church services and served in the choir, where her rich voice and excellent hearing was beloved and provided comfort during difficult times.

Sister Raisa learned the Psalter by heart and also began to practice unceasing prayer, obtaining prayer of the heart within a few years under careful guidance. Sister Raisa worked in the Convent's greenhouse, being proficient with gardening. She also cultivated flowers in her cell, which the Mothers of the Convent called "the new Garden of Eden" due to its beauty. Sister Raisa especially loved roses and decorated the Church on feast days with the flowers she grew.

When Sister Raisa took the monastic tonsure is unknown, but she was tonsured to the Lesser Schema without having become a Rassaphore first, due to already having obtained a high degree of the spiritual life and obedience. For her pure and chaste life she was tonsured with the name Rafaela after the Archangel Raphael. Mother Rafaela had a deep devotion to St. Raphael and even after she was given the gift of healing physical and spiritual ailments, she would tell those she healed to give thanks to St. Raphael and not her.

On August 29th 1920 the Sisterhood of the Holy Trinity Convent elected Mother Rafaela as the assistant Igumenia, as Mother Parfenia had fallen ill. On December 6th – the feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker – Mother Parfenia fell asleep in the Lord and the Sisterhood appointed Mother Rafaela as their Iguemnia. Becoming the Igumenia in the difficult times of the persecution against the Orthodox Church by the Bolsheviks, Mother Rafaela told the Mothers of the Convent that the crozier she was given was the lot of Martyrdom.

Despite her short stature and weakness of body as a woman, Mother Rafaela stood strong in the Faith and trusted in the Lord for everything, often quoting St. Paul to the Corinthians to her sisters: "The power of God was made perfect in human

weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9) As the persecutions against the Church increased, Mother Rafaela organized a meeting of the Sisterhood, where it was decided to ignore the ever increasing persecution by the state, the threats and reprisals by the authorities and any demand to leave their Convent. Mother Rafaela declared that the Sisterhood should follow Christ's command: “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (St. Mark 13:13)

Mother Rafaela strove most of all to guide by example during those difficult times. Many came to her in the midst great apostasy and spiritual temptation in need of spiritual counsel, being strengthened by her unshakable Faith in God. Mother Rafaela seeing that the confiscation of the Convent property by the Bolsheviks was unavoidable, decided to convert the Convent into an Orphanage, with the Mothers acting as hosts and caregivers for the orphans.

Soon the Holy Trinity Convent was filled with orphans – as many children lost their parents during the Civil War in Russia – and the Convent was registered with the Chyhyryn government as an orphanage. Mother Rafaela saw the conversion of the Convent into an orphanage a more desirable outcome than whatever sacrilegious purpose the Bolsheviks would use it for. Mother Rafaela assured the Mothers of the Sisterhood that taking care of the orphans would grant them treasures in Heaven and to guide the orphans in the spiritual life.

Despite the self-dissolution of the religious community in Chyhyryn, the Soviets still hated Mother Rafaela; Bolsheviks often confronted her as she went to get supplies for the orphans, berating or attempting to assault her, yet in all cases Mother Rafaela was undisturbed and unaffected by their attempts. At one point the Bolsheviks in Chyhyryn were even afraid of Mother Rafaela and left her alone, some atheists would even bow slightly when she walked by out of fear.

The Bolshevik commanders eventually shut down the orphanage the Sisterhood ran. The Sisterhood of the Holy Trinity Convent relocated to a private residence at House № 69 Dvoryanskaya Street, within the center of Chyhyryn (now located on Parizhskaya Street). The pious family of Dimitri Dimitrevich Ryasik and Taitana Ivanovna Ryasik (née Pavlenko) owned the property and invited the Mothers to live in their guesthouse.

Taitana Ryasik was a widow who had formerly been a novice at the Holy Trinity Convent years prior, but was blessed by Mother Rafaela to marry Dimitri Ryasik – a young widower who had children – at age 37, where she helped raised Dimitri's

children. The Mothers lived in the guesthome and laboured in the ascetical life, practiced unceasing prayer, gave charity and did handiworks. Living in the Ryasik property also were the Convent treasurer, Mother Elpidifora (Prokopovich) and the choirmaster Mother Epistima.

The Ryasik's home became a spiritual oasis in the city of Chyhyryn, with Divine Services being performed, spiritual counsels and Church meetings all taking place there. New buildings were constructed on the property when the Fathers of the Onufrievsky Monastery Brotherhood moved in, making the Ryasik property the home of two great monastic communities.

Several Fathers of the Onufrievsky Brotherhood who later became New Martyrs and Confessors lived and worked on the property in these years, including Fr. Alexei (Erimovich), Fr. Andrei (Lapchinsky), Fr. Kyprian (Olenyik), Fr. Sergei (Zemnitsky), Fr. Timofey (Khrapachenko) and Schema-Archimandrite Avvakum (Starov).

The Soviets soon took notice of the spiritual center that developed on the Ryasik property and moved to destroy it. Late in the night in August 1926, someone knocked on the door of the guesthouse where the Sisterhood lived, the knock continued even as the Mothers chose to ignore it. After Mother Rafaela awoke and opened the window, she saw the knock came from the local Fool-for-Christ Bartholomew – famous for his clairvoyance and prophecy – who spoke: “Matushka, flee this place! In half an hour's time, thou will die!”

Mother Rafaela replied from the window to the Blessed Bartholomew: “It is God's will. I cannot abandon my sisters.” As Bartholomew predicted, thirty minutes later a group of men belonging to a local chapter of an anti-religious organization arrived at the property, led by Cheka agent Ivan Leontievich Salamanaschenko. They broke into the Convent house and six drunk men took Mother Rafaela, dragged her to the street and tied her to a tree.

After tying Mother Rafaela to a tree, the atheists took bails of hay, piled them near the tree and set them ablaze. The Bolsheviks said they would put out the fire if Mother Rafaela took off her pectoral Cross and gave them the location of the bejeweled and gilded Church utensils and Icons, which she previously hid. The Ryasiks were not home, but their children watched in horror; Mother Elpidifora took an Icon of the Mother of God “of the Burning Bush” and ran outside, falling to her knees and praying for the Mother of God to help; the other Mothers ran

outside and prayed for the All Pure One's intercession. As the flames began to reach Mother Rafaela thunder was heard, lightning flashed and heavy downpour arrived.

Despite the intensity of the flame the rain put out the fire, after this miracle the Bolsheviks untied Mother Rafaela and placed her in a cart, sending it to the local slaughterhouse. At the slaughterhouse some of the men tried to defile Mother Rafaela, but were unable to do so, from there they beat and mocked Matushka, hitting her with the stocks from their rifles, tearing out her hair and knocking out her teeth; the atheists broke her jaw, several ribs and broke her legs by running over them with the cart.

During the torture Mother Rafaela crossed herself, when the atheists saw this, in a frenzy they broke her right arm. Finally she was stabbed with a bayonet and buried alive in a grave outside the slaughterhouse. A pious laywoman named Maria Ustinovna Nagornaya witnessed the torture of Mother Rafaela and after the Bolsheviks left she unearthed Mother Rafaela from the grave.

Mother Rafaela was still alive and took a few more breaths before giving up her soul to the Lord while in the arms of Maria Nagornaya. The Mothers of the Holy Trinity Sisterhood buried St. Rafaela in the Kazan cemetery in Chyhyryn, with a small metal Cross marking the grave. The Mothers were afraid to place a large Cross for fear the Bolsheviks would desecrate the grave.

Maria Nagornaya after St. Rafaela's Martyrdom became a novice with the Holy Trinity Sisterhood and was eventually tonsured a rassaphore Nun with the name Margarita; she cared for St. Rafaela's grave and shared the story of her Martyrdom with anyone willing to listen. Mother Margarita prayed that St. Rafaela's story would be known to all Orthodox Christians and entreated her daily for her intercessions before the throne of God.

Mother Margarita also witnessed Ivan Salamanschenko's horrible death, which came about by intestinal swelling – similar to Judas or Arius – and caused an awful stench, requiring his family to have a closed casket funeral. Despite the casket being sealed the stench was still so pungent that his own family did not want to even stand in the graveyard as his funeral was performed.

Over the years Mother Margarita recorded and witnessed several miracles that occurred at the grave and from the intercessions of St. Rafaela. Mother Margarita

lived as a Nun in the Catacomb Church while living secretly in the world before she fell asleep in the Lord in 1976. Mother Margarita's will requested she be buried to the left of St. Rafaela, as she was not worthy to be buried to her right.

Mother Margarita was the last Igumenia of the Holy Trinity Sisterhood in Chyhyryn, which dissolved shortly after her repose. St. Rafaela's grave was forgotten until 1999 when a series of miracles occurred there; after an investigation Mother Margarita's notes were rediscovered. Since then, the sick have been healed, those in distress comforted and many claiming that the Saint had appeared to them have been reported.

One man by the name of Aleksandr Mikhailyuta came to her grave, he was distressed as he wished to visit Pochaev Monastery, but had run out of money by the time he reached Chyhyryn. Walking away disheartened from St. Rafaela's grave, he heard a gentle voice of a woman say: "Don't be sad. Thou will go soon."

Startled he looked around to see if anyone was nearby and saw the cemetery was empty. A few hours later as he walked by the train station, a train en route to Pochaev stopped and two passengers unexpectedly got off. The conductor seeing Aleksandr walk by asked if he wanted to ride to Pochaev, as the seats had already been paid for.

In 2003 St. Rafaela's relics were uncovered and found to be incorrupt. Her prayer rope, pectoral Cross and kamilavka were also preserved in the grave. St. Rafaela's relics were placed in a special reliquary and brought to the St. George Chapel within the Kazan Cathedral in Chyhyryn. St. Rafaela's reliquary was located on the right aisle in the St. George chapel – in the basement of the Kazan cathedral – near a copy of the Wonderworking Hodegetria Icon of the Mother of God.

In August 2004 the relics of St. Rafaela began to emit a beautiful fragrance which filled both floors of the cathedral for two weeks. St. Rafaela had endured her suffering and Martyrdom in August 1926 and the date this miracle began was on August 24th. Over the years this miracle occurred several times.

In 2006 the Holy Trinity Convent in Chyhyryn was re-established and the relics of St. Rafaela were brought to the Convent church. On December 10th 2008 St. Rafaela's relics were transferred to the Holy Trinity Convent and were placed in the main Church permanently. On many occasions some of the Nuns of the Convent claimed to have seen St. Rafaela visibly walking around the Convent.

Natalia Obmankina, a journalist from Moscow, wished to visit Chyhyryn to see the relics of St. Rafaela, but needed 2,100 rubles for the journey. Natalia did not have the money, but as soon as she gave up, she received an unexpected bonus of 2,100 rubles from her work. When Natalia went to Chyhyryn to take a photo of St. Rafaela's reliquary a ray of light emitted from her relics, which remained in the photograph after it was developed.

Mother Alipiya, a Nun from the Stebletsky Spaso-Preobrazhensky Convent wished to make an Icon of St. Rafaela; despite being an amateur Iconographer, her Icon was unusually lively and beautiful, gaining attention even from esteemed Iconographers. Mother Alipiya said she felt as if the Saint was guiding her hand as she painted.

Mother Ekaterina of the Holy Trinity Convent related a story that on the Eve of Nativity, the Convent had run out of bread and flour. The Mothers in desperation read the Akathist hymn before St. Rafaela's relics. That night a letter was given to the Convent with 800 hryvnia, which covered the Convent's expenses for food. A week prior a young woman was visiting the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, when a Nun approached her and handed her a small printed monochrome Icon of St. Rafaela and 800 hryvnia. The Mother said to the young woman: “Sister! We must help the Chyhyryn Convent, send this to them immediately!”

After the Mother said this she disappeared. The woman looked around but could not see anyone that resembled the Nun. More unusual still, the Convent in Chyhyryn only made full-colour printed Icons, yet the monochrome Icon that this woman was given had no signs of being photocopied.

In 2006 a woman named Varvara Gul – from the village of Bilyki in the Poltava district – was travelling through Chyhyryn and was waiting at a bus station during a transfer to Lebedin. Tired and sitting with her head bowed, a Nun approached her and said: “If thou are looking for fulfillment, go to the Holy Trinity Convent.”

Before Varvava could lift up her head the Nun disappeared; Varvara went to the Kazan Cathedral and inquired about Nuns from the region, but none matched the description of who approached her. Arriving at the Holy Trinity Convent, Varvara fainted when she saw St. Rafaela's relics, recognizing her as the Nun who she had seen at the bus station.

Early one morning a woman named Svetlana Matyushkina – who was not very pious and had marital issues – came to the Holy Trinity Convent. She caused scandal, used profane language in the Church and loudly played music in the guesthouse. Near midnight Svetlana heard knock, answering the door to see a Nun standing with a kamilavka and crozier; the Mother said: “Please turn off the music, midnight is an hour for prayer.”

Svetlana fulfilled the request. The next morning she asked the Mothers who had come to the guesthouse at midnight, upon explaining that the Mother who visited her was wearing a kamilavka, the Mothers explained it was rare for their Iguemnia to wear a kamilavka. Svetlana approached the reliquary of St. Rafaela and realized it was the Saint who had appeared to her; Svetlana became very pious after this incident and became a faithful and obedient spouse for her husband.

Miracles continue to occur before her relics and Holy Trinity Convent remains a popular pilgrimage site in Ukraine. St. Rafaela has shown to be particularly merciful towards those suffering from addiction to narcotics or alcohol, additionally she has healed toothaches, head injuries, leg injuries, organ failure, disease and helped find employment or housing for the Faithful.

The Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of the Great Martyr Rafaela of Chyhyryn on August 24th. In Icons she is depicted as an Igumenia holding a crozier and a Cross, several Icons of St. Rafaela have been reported as being miracle-working. In Slavonic there exists several prayers, an Akathist and a Canon for St. Rafaela of Chyhyryn.

---ST. NYKODYM OF KOSTROMA---

Mykola Vasylevych Krotkov was born in the village of Pogreshino, Nerekhta district in the Kostroma province to the family a deacon on either October 29th 1868. During his early childhood, Mykola's father was ordained to the priesthood.

Mykola graduated from the Church-run primary school in 1883 and enrolled in the Kostroma Theological Seminary that same year. After graduating from Seminary in 1889 Mykola was appointed as a teacher for the parish school in the village of Olesh in the Galich district.

In January 1890 Mykola married Apollinaria Andreevna Upsenskaya and on February 25th was ordained to the priesthood; Fr. Mykola was appointed the rector

of the Sts. Peter and Paul Church in the village of Tezino in the Kineshma district.

Fr. Mykola taught religion at the public school in Tezino and held lectures on the spiritual life, readings works from the Holy Fathers and the Akathist services multiple times a week at the Church in Tezino.

In 1892 Fr. Mykola's wife Apollinaria during childbirth and their daughter reposed shortly after birth. After this tragedy Fr. Mykola sold most everything he owned and wrote to his Bishop for a blessing to relocate to Kyiv, so he could enter the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra.

In 1896 Fr. Mykola received the blessing to move to Kyiv, where he enrolled in the Kyiv Theological Academy and became a novice at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. Fr. Mykola was tonsured after the traditional three year probation with the name Nykodym (after the Righteous Nikodemos) on August 13th 1899. Not wanting preference due to his previous rank, he asked to be given the rank of a Hieromonk through special ceremony.

In 1900 Fr. Nykodym graduated from the Kyiv Theological Academy with a Master's Degree in Theology. For his academic credentials, Fr. Nykodym was transferred to Vladikavkaz where he was made the Dean of the Theological School and placed on the Diocesan Education Board.

In 1902 Fr. Nykodym was transferred to Kutaisi and made the Dean of the Theological Seminary there; he was also elected as the Igumen of a local Monastery in Kutaisi. In January 8th 1903 Fr. Nykodym was elevated by the Most Holy Synod to the rank of Archimandrite and appointed the Dean of the Ardon Seminary.

Using his own funds, Fr. Nykodym built a house church near the Ardon Seminary where he served. Fr. Nykodym learned the Ossetian language and served the Liturgy in, to better help the people of the Vladikavkaz Diocese. Many Armenian Monophysites and Muslim Chechens converted to the Orthodox Faith due to Fr. Nykodym's humility and intellect.

Despite his deep love for the Kavkaz region and missionary efforts, the local Russian populace disliked Fr. Nykodym for serving in the Ossetian language. Fr. Nykodym was transferred by the Most Holy Synod to Pskov in 1905, where he was appointed the dean of the Pskov Theological Seminary and placed on the

Diocesan Council.

In October 1907 the Most Holy Synod elected Fr. Nykodym for the episcopacy and consecrated him on November 11th as the Bishop of Akkerman (later renamed Belgorod-Dniester), a Vicarite of the Kishniev Diocese. Bishop Nykodym's consecration was performed by Bishop Vladimir (Senkovsky) of Kishniev, Bishop Sergei (Petrov, later a founding member of the ROCOR) of Novomirgorod and Bishop Innokenty (Yastrebov) of Kanev. The retired Bishop Arkadiy – who preceded Vladyka Vladimir as the Bishop of Kishniev – was also present for Bishop Nykodym's consecration.

On November 16th 1911 Bishop Nykodym was transferred to the Chyhyryn Vicarite – one of the two Vicarites of the Kyiv Metropolis – and appointed as the Igumen of the St. Michael “Golden-domed” Monastery in Kyiv. That same year Vladyka Nykodym was made the inspector of all schools in the Kyiv Metropolis and made a member of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

In 1914 Bishop Nykodym was appointed the Igumen of the St. Volodymyr Brotherhood. In 1915 the Most Holy Synod appointed Vladyka Nykodym in charge of the Kyiv Clergy Committee for the Care of Refugees, where he helped those who were displaced by the Austrian and German invasion of Russia. In 1916 Bishop Nykodym travelled to the frontlines in Ukraine, donated icons to soldiers, performed the Divine Services while under artillery bombardment and blessed weapons for defense of the homeland.

For his loyal Church service and chaplaincy for the Russian military, Bishop Nykodym was given the Order of St. Anna in the 2nd degree in 1905, later promoted in 1913 to the 1st degree. Bishop Nykodym was also awarded the Order of St. Vladimir in the 3rd degree in 1910 and promoted to the 2nd degree in 1916.

Vladyka Nykodym was a staunch monarchist and supporter of the Tsar; he condemned the February revolution in 1917 and together with several other Kyiv clergymen, sent a letter to Tsar Nicholas II encouraging him not to abdicate. The State Duma considered Bishop Nykodym's letter seditious, for which they exiled Vladyka Nykodym to Saratov.

Due to the efforts of various clergymen and secular politicians from Kyiv, after only three months Bishop Nykodym was allowed to return to Ukraine and resume his ministry. In late 1917 Bishop Nykodym initiated the foundation of the Council

of United Parishes and Brotherhoods, an organization dedicated to protecting the Church during the Revolution. Metropolitan (St.) Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) of Kyiv appointed Bishop Nykodym as his personal assistant during this time.

Bishop Nykodym condemned the efforts of Vasyl Lypkivsky to form his parasynagogue and promoted Abp. Antony (Khrapovitsky) to become a permanent member of the Most Holy Synod, who helped in the opposition to the Lypkivskites. Bishop Nykodym explained his position for resisting the efforts to divide the Church by saying: “I always stood for a single, indivisible Church and Fatherland, regardless of who would rule it...”

After the Martyrdom of Met. St. Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) of Kyiv in January 1918, Vladyka Nykodym was elevated to the rank of Archbishop and governed the Kyiv Metropolis temporarily. On April 29th 1918 Archbishop Nykodym received Pavlo Skoropadsky – a former Uniate – into the Orthodox Church by Chrismation and blessed him to become the Ataman of the Cossacks in the St. Sofia Cathedral.

Pavlo Skoropadsky wrote of his first encounter with Vladyka Nykodym: “When I returned home, my wife informed me that Archbishop Nykodym – who had been the locum tenens after the assassination of His Eminence Vladimir, would arrive in the evening. Indeed Vladyka arrived in the evening. I hardly knew him and knew little of his politics. After having seen him several times during my early leadership, I saw that in Ukraine with his asceticism we had a valuable archpastor...”

(I regret) not being more understanding with the drama of our church life... We could have avoided many mistakes. I spoke with him for a very long time and introduced him to my idea to establish a Rada for the Ukrainian people. He blessed me to do so.”

After the Ukrainian State was established by Ataman Pavlo Skoropadsky, Archbishop Nykodym led a prayer service for the victory of the Ukrainian Army over the Bolsheviks. Vladyka Nykodym was close to Ataman Skoropadsky during his tenure over the Ukrainian State, but he lost political influence when Symon Petliura came to power.

At the insistence of Ukrainian authorities, Archbishop Nykodym reviewed the historical question of the anathema against Ataman Ivan Mazepa: He concluded it was done for political reasons and not canonical, thus he permitted clergy in the

Kyiv Metropolis to commemorate Ivan Mazepa in the Litany for the Departed during the Divine Liturgy.

Archbishop Nykodym participated in the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918, arriving at the 3rd Session in May 1918, where he voted for the enthronement of Met. Antony (Khrapovitsky) as the Metropolitan of Kyiv and Galicia and was appointed as his assistant for the Metropolis. Archbishop Nykodym supported the election of Metropolitan (St.) Tikhon (Bellavin) as the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

When Archbishop Nykodym returned to Ukraine in December 1918, he was arrested by agents of the Central Directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic, who believed he travelled to Russia to collaborate with the Bolsheviks. Vladyka Nykodym was put on trial along with Met. Antony of Kyiv and Galicia and Abp. Evlogy (Georgievsky), where all three were sentenced to exile.

At first the three Bishops were banished to Galicia where they were forced to live in a Uniate monastery, then moved to Poland. After nine months in exile, Vladyka Nykodym was allowed to return to Kyiv in August 1919. In December of that year Archbishop Nykodym moved to Crimea and in 1920 he chaired a Committee of the Temporary Supreme Church Authority (TSCA) to house clergy who had to flee Russia due to the Bolshevik persecutions.

On August 31st 1920 the TSCA appointed Vladyka Nykodym as the Archbishop of Kuban and the Black Sea, an Archdiocese that was recently liberated by the White Army. In September 1921 Archbishop Dimitri (Abashizde) of Crimea retired, Archbishop Nykodym was made the temporary administrator of Taurida Diocese until Patriarch Tikhon appointed him the residing Archbishop of Simferopol and Taurida on October 23rd 1921.

In 1922 Archbishop Nykodym was arrested by the Bolsheviks on charges of resisting confiscation of Church property and organizing unregistered Church assemblies. Archbishop Nykodym was sentenced to eight years in solitary confinement in the Nizhny Novgorod prison. In prison Vladyka Nykodym became ill with typhoid fever and was granted a compassionate release in 1923.

Vladyka Nykodym was not allowed to return to Ukraine, but was allowed to settle in Moscow, where he was appointed a permanent member of the Synod of the TSCA. Archbishop Nykodym was one of the few people allowed to visit Patriarch

Tikhon, who was under house arrest in the Donskoy Monastery. Archbishop Nykodym visited and served often with Patriarch Tikhon during his residency in Moscow.

The Bolsheviks allowed Vladyka Nykodym to correspond with the Crimean clergy, with whom he planned for a return to Crimea. On November 17th 1923 the OGPU office in Simferopol sent a message to the Main Directory of the OGPU in Petrograd: “In the near future, Nykodym intends to come to Simferopol and therefore, in the interest of developing the Renovationist movement and weakening the reactionary activities of insubordinate clergymen, we request measures be taken to eliminate Nykodym's return to Crimea.”

On January 14th 1924 Archbishop Nykodym was arrested in Moscow and exiled to the city of Krasnovodsk (modern day Turkmenbashi) in the Turkestan region for two years. In 1926 Vladyka Nykodym was released and allowed to return to Moscow, where he served in the Church of the Life-Giving Trinity in the suburb of Kapelki.

Only a few weeks after his release, Archbishop Nykodym was arrested again for “counter-revolutionary behavior” and exiled once more to the Turkestan region; first to the city of Krungrad, then to Kyzylorda and finally to Turtkul. After his release in 1929, but the Soviet authorities forbade him from residing in any large cities.

Archbishop Nykodym returned to the village of Tezino – where he had started his priestly ministry – which had since been incorporated and renamed as Vichuga. Vladyka Nykodym gathered clergy who had been exiled or through the Soviet prisons in the Kostroma region; he secured employment for clergy who had been considered unemployable by the Soviet government and transferred them to rural parishes that had not been closed by the Bolsheviks.

With help from Archpriest Pavel Ostrogsky – the warden of all churches in Kostroma – Vladyka Nykodym set up a trust fund to help impoverished clergy in Kostroma. In 1932 Met. Sergei (Stragorodsky) sent a letter to Archbishop Nykodym offering to formally appoint him as the Archbishop of Kostroma and Galich, and to deter Soviet persecution; but under the condition that he sign the Declaration.

On July 10th 1932 Archbishop Nykodym unfortunately signed the Declaration. In

November 1933 Archbishop Nykodym received a letter from Bishop (St.) Makariy (Karmazin) of Ekaterinoslav – a Catacomb Bishop and later New Martyr – who told him that by signing the Declaration, he had apostatized from the Church.

Archbishop Nykodym repented bitterly, weeping, confessing his sin and asking for forgiveness from the Bishops of the Catacomb Church. He stopped commemorating Sergei in the Liturgy and wrote publicly telling others to do the same if they had previously signed the Declaration or commemorated Sergei.

St. Makariy of Ekaterinoslav and Professor Nikolai Ivanovich Serebryansky – an associate of Vladyka Nykodym from the Pskov Theological Seminary – visited Kostroma and served with Archbishop Nykodym, who commemorated St. Joseph of Petrograd in the Liturgy after November 1933.

Vladyka Nykodym after his return to the Orthodox Church became more bold in resisting the Renovationists and Sergianists: When the Epiphany Cathedral of the Kostroma Kremlin was seized and given to the Renovationists, Archbishop Nykodym personally took the wonderworking Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God from the cathedral and brought it to his house chapel.

Despite Vladyka Nykodym's opposition to the Sergianists and Renovationists, he continued to operate with relative impunity in Kostroma while openly being a member of the Josephite Catacomb Church. Archbishop Nykodym received Bishop (St.) Vasily (Preobrazhensky) of Kineshma after he was exiled to Kostroma. On December 4th 1936 Archbishop Nykodym was arrested by the NKVD based on a complaint made by his secretary.

At trial Archbishop Nykodym was charged with being a foreign agent and spy for the Kingdom of Romania and Polish Republic. Vladyka Nykodym was tortured in prison with the promise he would be released if he signed a document implicating priests in his Diocese. Despite the severe torture, Vladyka Nykodym refused to sign the document.

Eventually Vladyka Nykodym was found guilty of “preparing an uprising against the Soviet power” and exiled to Krasnoyarsk Krai in Siberia for five years. Archbishop Nykodym's health deteriorated shortly into his sentence, for which the Soviets offered a compassionate release under the condition he retired from the Episcopacy.

Out of humility and his failing health, Vladyka Nykodym wrote a letter on January 2nd 1937 announcing his retirement. The Bolsheviks granted him a compassionate release but forbade him from returning to Kostroma; Vladyka Nykodym moved to Yaroslavl in 1937 and lived as a simple monk.

The Bolsheviks again arrested Vladyka Nykodim in 1937 and convicted him, placing him in a local prison hospital in Yaroslavl. After suffering from illness for years, Vladyka Nykodym of Kostroma fell asleep in the Lord on August 21st 1938 in the Yaroslavl prison hospital at the age of 69.

The Bolsheviks buried St. Nykodym secretly and his relics have not been located since. St. Nykodym wrote many works throughout his ministry, which are read across Russia. The Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of the New Hieromartyr Nykodym of Kostroma on August 21st.