

## Perspectives and Experiences of the Russian Orthodox Church Regarding Evangelization in Russia and China

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Dmitry I. Petrovsky. Photo: Mariola Krystecka.

China today has entered a peculiar period of development as the destruction of the ideological foundation of atheism and the period of economic and social transition have led to a spiritual vacuum. For the past thirty years the number of Christians in China has increased many times over. Tens of thousands of Catholic and Protestant parishes have opened throughout the country. It is only Orthodoxy that remains a Christian confession whose parishioners and churches have not increased in number as vividly.

In speaking of Chinese Orthodoxy, it is necessary to consider the problems of Orthodoxy in China proper, to which we include with certain reservations Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and Orthodoxy in Chinese communities outside China, primarily in Russia.

Orthodoxy in China has a long history in which a special role belongs to the Russian Orthodox Mission which worked in China for two and a half centuries. Such a long existence of Orthodoxy in China allows us to treat it as an element of traditional Chinese culture. Orthodoxy came to China peacefully in order to take spiritual care of its followers who found themselves in a foreign land. At the same time, it laid the foundation for mutual acquaintance and dialogue between the Russian and Chinese civilizations to become a spiritual and moral pillar for the development of relations between the two countries.

The work of the Mission included the study of the language, culture, history and contemporary life of the Chinese people. Through the efforts of its members it made a considerable contribution to the development of world and Russian sinology. However, all the concerns of the Mission were focused, in the first place, on the preaching of the Good News of Christ, the translation of liturgical texts, as well as the spiritual guidance of the

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Orthodox faithful in China, both Russian and Chinese, who followed Christ according to the dictates of their hearts.

The beginning of the Mission's work is traditionally dated to 1685 when the first Orthodox priest, Maxim Leontyev, began his service in the Chinese capital. It is precisely for this reason that we mark the 330th anniversary of Orthodoxy in China this year [2015]. Formally the Mission was established in 1713, while the intention to set it up was documented in 1700, 1703, 1706 and 1709.

The traditionally loyal attitude of the Orthodox faithful towards the Chinese authorities and their respect for local customs have determined the long life of the faithful in the Chinese environment.

Already in the late 17th century, the Orthodox Church sought to fit into the Chinese public order and to avoid conflicts with the authorities. Priests in China were called to behave carefully to avoid provoking unnecessary friction with the authorities of the neighbouring empire. It should be stressed that the tasks of pastoral care for the Albazian Cossacks, who lived in Beijing, and the Russian visitors were made a priority.

I want to note that the Mission proper as a Church institution was established only after the consent of the Chinese side. With the blessing of Metropolitan John (Maximovich) of Tobolsk and All Siberia, the first Orthodox mission was formed in late 1712 or early 1713 and arrived in Beijing in 1715.

Initially, the Mission was a Church institution under the Sacred Governing Synod. It was only after the status of the Russian Orthodox Mission in Beijing was approved by the Treaty of Kiakhta, Article 5, on June 14, 1728, that it was placed under the authority of both the Synod and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire – a situation that lasted until 1863. Subsequently the Mission became subordinate only to the Synod and was engaged only in religious work.

The Orthodox Church is universal. This universality, however, is made up of a diversity of national Orthodox Churches. It is precisely in creating a national Chinese Church that the Russian clergy in China saw the meaning of their work.

By the 20th century there had been formed a large Chinese flock with its own national clergy and later the episcopate. The spiritual planting of seed by Russian missionaries and the presence of Russian settlers in China brought forth as a fruit the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church. In the rules of Orthodoxy, the autonomy of the Chinese Church implies full independence in its internal governance. The Chinese Church preserved only spiritual ties with the Church in Russia, from which Orthodoxy had come to China. However, the development of the young Church organism was tragically interrupted under the stress provoked by the Cultural Revolution.

In the 1950s, the first relatively stable decade in the PRC's life, the Chinese Orthodox people did not manage to finish the construction of their own Church and to lay a solid organizational foundation for it. The legal status of the Church was vulnerable as it had failed to set up at that time "an Orthodox patriotic association," as the authorities demanded. It should have been a structure recognized by the state as a body for building Church-state relations. Such patriotic associations were established in the PRC by the Catholics,

Protestants, Muslims, Buddhists and Daoists. As a result, the Church in the PRC failed to complete *de jure* the procedure of state recognition on the national level, remaining a group of separate parishes in various parts of the country. It proved impossible to fulfil the procedure of recognition during the upheavals of the 1960s-70s. The persecution in the period of the Cultural Revolution and the loss of most of the clergy led to the present difficult situation of the Chinese Orthodox Church.

Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church in China is still alive, although there is no state-recognized Chinese Orthodox clergy in China, who could celebrate the liturgy on a regular basis. Meanwhile, there are about 15,000 Orthodox believers in the country, most of them living in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, the north-eastern Province of Heilongjiang as well as in Beijing and Shanghai. To continue living, the Chinese Orthodoxy needs priests and bishops but there are no Orthodox educational institutions in the PRC. Orthodox Chinese have repeatedly appealed to the Russian Orthodox Church to send them a priest for celebrating the liturgy and requested services, such as baptisms, weddings and Church funerals.

The Russian Orthodox Church respects the principles of independence and autonomy of the religious communities in the PRC. It is precisely on this basis that in due course she granted the status of self-governance to the Chinese Orthodox Church. However, we cannot be indifferent with regard to the situation of our faithful in China; the more so that most of them belong to the Russian ethnic minority.

The numerous appeals made by Chinese citizens to the Russian Orthodox Church to provide pastoral care have increased with the policy of reforms and openness. Then the Russian Church had to face a difficult dilemma – to begin responding to the actual needs of the Orthodox flock in China by sending priests even without the knowledge of the Chinese authorities or to remain faithful to the missionary tradition of loyal existence in the Chinese milieu and respectful of the political realities and to begin a long official dialogue for normalizing the status of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church as a whole – which will make it possible to solve particular problems of pastoral care.

The second way of dialogue was chosen. It was Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, now His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, who became the architect of the efforts in the Chinese area.

There is no reason to believe that the problem of the Chinese faithful can “disappear” in the wake of their full immersion into the surrounding secular culture when they are left without pastoral care. The point is not only that the Chinese Orthodox Christians seek to preserve their religious traditions and to hand them down to their descendants. In today’s open world, the size of the Russian diaspora in Beijing and other large cities in China is growing and will inevitably continue growing. Therefore, the need for reviving the Chinese Orthodox Church is felt already now not only by the Albazinians’ successors but also by the ethnic Russian newcomers and their descendants from mixed marriages, as well as the Orthodox citizens of third countries. At the same time, today many Chinese are interested in Orthodoxy, often choosing it as their faith.

The Chinese Orthodox Church did not perish during the years of trials, but her revival needs care and support from the Mother Church. Nowadays China is for the Russian

Orthodox Church a region of pastoral responsibility and will remain as such until the hierarchy of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church will be restored.

At present, Orthodoxy in China has the status of one of the traditional religions of ethnic minorities. This status does not correspond to the universal nature of the Christian Church and already now represents a limiting factor in the normal development of Orthodoxy in China, as was noted in the report of Shi Hengtian, Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), which reported the findings of a field study on the life of Orthodox Chinese in a number of regions of the country at the Russian-Chinese Conference on “Russian Cultural and Historical Traditions and Russia’s Relation to the Asian-Pacific Countries,” which took place in December 2013 in Beijing.

Although the problem of restoring the legal status of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church in the PRC is still unsolved on the state level, the Chinese Orthodox Christians are free from internal disorders. Even in the absence of a centralized Church administrative organization, the Chinese faithful have preserved an enviable internal unity. This enables it to easily restore the legal internal governance structure, making it mutually correspondent with the Chinese socialist society.

At present the officially open Orthodox churches in the PRC have the legal status of places in which it is permitted to celebrate Orthodox divine services. In China today, however, there is not a single Orthodox religious organization. This seriously complicates the task of normalizing Orthodox life, in which the first step lies in the ordination of Chinese priests. The Russian Orthodox Church is exerting every effort to support the Chinese Orthodox Christians’ desire to receive official state recognition on the all-China level.

Beneficial prospects for reviving the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church have been created by the policy proclaimed by the Chinese authorities to create a “harmonious society” called to unite different interests of various social groups for the benefit of developing the whole country and thus also to reveal and develop the positive role of religion in promoting social harmony. The consistent implementation of this policy will help realize the aspirations of the Chinese Orthodox who for the last three centuries have become an integral part of China’s diverse religious culture.

At the same time, the close partnership of the two countries stimulates the interest of the Chinese in Russia and Orthodoxy as an organic part of contemporary Russian religious culture.

Since 2004, the theme of Orthodoxy in China has been featured in high-level talks. The problems began to be discussed during the visits made by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Beijing in October 2004 and in March and June 2006, and during the visit made by the PRC President Hu Jintao to Moscow in July 2005. It is noteworthy that along with the political dialogue on Orthodoxy in September 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, as part of his official visit to China, presented the PRC President Hu Jintao with a book on the history of Orthodoxy in China.

Initially this agenda was limited to particular problems, such as the restoration of the Dormition Church in Beijing. Later, complex problems began to be posed concerning the Russian Orthodox Church’s pastoral care of our compatriots in China at the Olympics in



The Dormition Church on the territory of the Russian embassy in Beijing was restored in 2009.  
Photo: Dmitry I. Petrovsky.

2008, Expo in 2010 and the ROC clergy's service for Orthodox compatriots in surviving Orthodox churches in China.

The continuous dialogue on these questions was reflected in bilateral documents adopted at a high level, such as action plans for implementing the Treaty of Good-neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China for 2005–2008, 2009–2012 and 2013–2016, which envisioned the establishment and development of dialogue and cooperation between the leading religious confessions in Russia and China, as well as the establishment of contacts and the deepening of relations between the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations and the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs, and between the Interreligious Council in Russia and the Chinese Association for Cultural and Religious Relations. All this led to the establishment of a mechanism for regular contacts on the departmental level – the working group for contacts and cooperation under the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations and the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs.

In terms of practice, the common efforts succeeded to restore the Dormition Church on the territory of the Russian embassy in Beijing, to come to an agreement concerning the service of priests from Russia for Orthodox participants and guests of the Olympics in 2008 and the Expo in 2010, as well as the celebration of the Easter service by a priest from Russia for compatriots at the Pokrov Church (Protection of the Mother of God) in Harbin in 2010 and 2014.

A possible level of contacts was secured between the Russian Orthodox Church and the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs, as well as a number of official visits of Russian Orthodox Church delegations to China. In July 2006, the head of the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs Mr. Ye Xiaowen made an unofficial visit to Russia. He met with the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations.

In February 2009, a delegation of the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs led by its head Mr. Ye Xiaowen made an official visit on the occasion of the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and Mr. Ye Xiaowen had a meeting.

In November 2009, a delegation of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations together with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations visited China at the invitation of the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs. They held negotiations concerning the development of the Russian-Chinese cooperation in the religious sphere. As a result of the visit, the two bodies signed memoranda on mutual understanding concerning the cooperation procedure and the training of Chinese students at Russian Orthodox Church theological schools.

The Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations set up a working group for cooperation with the PRC in the religious sphere. On June 8, 2011, the first consultations of the Russian-Chinese working group for contacts and cooperation in the religious sphere were held in Moscow. The second round of consultations took place on June 19, 2012, in China. The third round of consultations, held on July 16, 2014, in Moscow, was attended by the leader of the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs Mr. Wang Zuo'an. The fourth round took place last May in Beijing.

The progressive development of constructive dialogue with the State Administration for Religious Affairs has helped to advance Chinese citizens' knowledge about the history and role of Orthodoxy in their country and to implement beneficial cultural and religious projects. These efforts had as their most important result the historic visit made by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to China in May 2013. It was the first ever visit made to China by a Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

On May 12, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrated the Divine Liturgy on the territory of the Russian embassy in Beijing, on May 14 at the Pokrov Church in Harbin and on May 15 in the building of the former Cathedral of Our Lady the Warrantress of the Sinful in Shanghai. In Shanghai, among the concelebrants of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox



On May 14, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Pokrov Church in Harbin. Photo: Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia press service, [www.patriarchia.ru](http://www.patriarchia.ru).

Church, along with the Russian delegation members in holy orders, were the clergy of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church, including Father Michael Wang and Proto-deacon Evangel Lu. The Patriarchal services were attended by a great number of faithful. During his visit to China, His Holiness the Patriarch met with the President of the People's Republic of China Mr. Xi Jinping, Chinese religious leaders, the director of the PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs Mr. Wang Zuo'an and the leaders of Heilongjiang Province and Shanghai.

The Patriarch and the PRC President had a talk at the Great Hall of the People. Reports about his meetings with the head of the Chinese State and other state officials were on the news of the Chinese central TV networks and became the topic of *Renmin ribao's* editorial. Only a few years before that, the Chinese media did not cover any event of religious life and a visit of the head of a Church from a foreign state, institutionally unregistered in China, was unimaginable. The meeting between Patriarch Kirill and President Xi Jinping was the first ever meeting between the leader of the People's Republic of China and the head of a Christian Church.

Among the important tasks of the visit was to coordinate with the PRC political leaders a vision of the ways for normalizing the status of the Chinese Orthodox Church, replenishing its clergy and restoring regular services in surviving Orthodox churches in China.

During his meetings with both the supreme political leaders of the country and the state officials in charge of the PRC's religious policy in the country as a whole and in particular provinces and cities, His Holiness the Patriarch consistently explained the above-mentioned approaches of the Russian Orthodox Church towards the normalization of the status of the Orthodox Church in China and the positive impact resulting from contacts in the religious sphere on relations between our two countries as follows:

- Russian missionaries brought Orthodoxy to China over 300 years ago. Now it is formed as the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church does not interfere in the internal affairs of the Chinese state, but it cannot be indifferent regarding the situation of our faithful in China;
- The creation of favourable conditions for normalizing the religious life of the Orthodox Christians in China will give an impetus to the development of humanitarian contacts and strengthen the cultural and religious components of our cooperation;
- The Russian Church regards it important that the Chinese civilization may be seen by the Russian people not as an interesting though alien culture but, on the contrary, as a spiritually close culture. In this connection, the Chinese Orthodox Christians represent a part of the Chinese people that can play a special role in the development of our relations;
- The restoration of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church will contribute to the strengthening of the PRC's relations not only with the Russian Orthodox Church, but also with the countries of the Russian Orthodox Church's canonical space including Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the countries of Central Asia.

This approach of the Russian Orthodox Church to the problems of Orthodoxy in China was appreciated and supported by the Chinese side.

In response to Patriarch Kirill's invitation to continue talks, on May 8, 2015, a meeting



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill with President Xi Jinping on May 8, 2015, in Moscow. Photo: Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia press service, [www.patriarchia.ru](http://www.patriarchia.ru).

took place in Moscow between His Holiness and President Xi Jinping. They continued discussing the significance of a value approach to policy, state development and consolidation of society and the role of religion in promoting social harmony and fostering patriotism. They continued considering the problems of Orthodoxy in China. The PRC President gave a high value to the patriotic role that the Russian Orthodox Church played during the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) and to her contribution to the struggle against German fascism and Japanese militarism.

The high-level meetings have given an impetus to the work in all areas.

As far as it concerns the implementation of the agreements reached about the training of Chinese students in Russia, the Chinese side nominated two Orthodox citizens of the PRC from Harbin. In October 2012, they arrived in Russia and began their studies. In September 2014, the student who was trained in St. Petersburg was ordained deacon. During the fourth round of consultations in May 2015 in Beijing, an agreement was reached that he be ordained as a priest and an intention was expressed to send new candidates for training. Thus, the immediate future will see the first priest of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church to appear in China after the Cultural Revolution.

After their studies and ordination, the Chinese students will serve their own people, taking pastoral care of the Chinese faithful and the Russian compatriots living in China, who are seen by the Russian Orthodox Church canonically as the flock of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church.

Once they begin their service in China, the Church life of the Orthodox communities, in which they will work, will take a normal course. I believe that following the appearance of the clergy, these communities can be legally recognized as local religious organizations, which will eventually form an all-China Orthodox religious organization – the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church which will have regained state recognition after it had to stop its work for historical reasons in the 1950s.

With an increased number of clergy, the Orthodox communities will need to regulate their governance. In the Orthodox tradition, this concern for the parishes is the duty





The Chinese side nominated two Orthodox citizens of the PRC to study in Russia. In September 2014, the student who was trained in St. Petersburg was ordained deacon. Soon he will become the first ordained priest of the Chinese Church after the Cultural Revolution. Photo: Saint Petersburg theological academy, [www.spbda.ru](http://www.spbda.ru).

of a bishop. I hope that the Chinese Orthodox bishop, who will be elected by the Chinese faithful and approved by the PRC state authorities as head of the Chinese Orthodox Church, will govern their work, cooperate with the authorities and maintain contacts with other religious communities, including developing relations with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Russian Orthodox Church is the only Local Church involved in preaching Orthodoxy in China. By virtue of legal succession, it is the Russian Orthodox Church that is responsible for the fate of Orthodoxy in China. However, for instance, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has made attempts to challenge both the legal succession and the principles of canonical life of the Church in China laid by the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople does not recognize the factual existence in China of her own national Orthodox Church and in 2008 included the territory of China in the metropolitanate of Hong Kong. This metropolitanate also includes the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar. The Russian Church immediately made a public statement about the inadmissibility of interference in the internal affairs of the Chinese Church. We stood out in defense of the rights of the faithful of the Chinese Orthodox Church and stated that the decision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was illegal. Of course, it would have been better if such a statement had been made by the Chinese Orthodox Church herself, but in China there is no Orthodox bishop of her own as yet, who would represent the Chinese Orthodox Christians at the international level and defend their interests.

At present, the process of preservation and restoration of Orthodox churches in China is underway. Thus, during the Patriarch's visit to China, a question was posed about the need to preserve the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky in Wuhan, the oldest Orthodox building in China today. The church was to be demolished in view of the construction of a tunnel under the Yangzi River, but the efforts to preserve it were a success. With the help of Russian specialists, it was restored and recently opened, though only as a cultural center so far. The Chinese authorities also restored the cathedral in Shanghai and re-equipped it as

an exhibition hall. During his visit to China, Patriarch Kirill celebrated in it, and negotiations are underway to be able to celebrate Easter services in it.

In China, there are Orthodox citizens of her own nationality (we differ from the PRC authorities in statistical estimates because of the complexity of counting, primarily due to the unorganized Church structure, but we are talking about thousands). The dialogue with the Chinese state institutions and its positive fruits points to the PRC leadership's desire to normalize the situation of the Orthodox faithful in the country as part of the efforts to build a harmonious society. The removal of obstacles for the natural development of Orthodox Church life will contribute to the strengthening of mutual understanding, cooperation and good-neighbourly relations between the Russian and Chinese nations.

Having considered the common approaches, I would like to dwell on the pastoral care of our compatriots and citizens of the third countries, who live or reside in China. It is easier to organize their religious life than to solve all the problems of Orthodoxy in China.

Therefore, pastoral work with the foreigners of Orthodox confession can and must become an active part of the effort to preserve Orthodoxy in China. Without focusing on legal regulations and actual law enforcement of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens Within the Territory of the People's Republic of China, I would like to speak about some important approaches to Church mission among them.

Speaking of the peculiar features of mission among Orthodox foreigners in China, I would like to repeat that China, in a strict sense, is not a mission area but represents the territory of a national autonomous Orthodox Church. Therefore, Orthodox foreigners in the Church comprise a flock of the Chinese Church. And the common task for all the Orthodox faithful in China is to help normalize the situation of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church.

The Russian Orthodox Church as Mother Church is responsible for preserving the integrity of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church; she does not create in China any structures distinct from the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church; she seeks to prevent canonical conflicts in China or claims by other Local Churches. To organize mission among foreigners in China, other Local Churches are invited to help as much as they can with normalizing the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church, provided that they share the above-mentioned principles. This activity of Orthodox Churches cannot be used for any interference in China's internal affairs and is carried out with respect for the established historical realities including all possible consideration for China's political realities and for the need to build the canonical architecture.

In taking care of Orthodox foreigners in China with the above-mentioned understanding, it is possible to educate Christians to integrate into the Chinese reality around them with the clearly articulated Christian message. The clarity of the message free from political or social implications and focused on the saving mission of Christ and His Church is extremely important. I believe that the pure Christian message has an essential advantage over the preaching that mimics the Chinese cultural phenomena.

Along with a well-considered Church understanding and vision of the future of the Church in China, the organization of communities for foreigners should be accompanied by special pastoral and missionary responsibility.

There is a revived Parish of Apostles Saints Peter and Paul functioning in Hong Kong. Through its efforts a broad translation and publishing work is carried out. Among the parish clergy is Anatoly Gong, a citizen of Hong Kong, who recently started to provide pastoral support to the international community in Hong Kong.

In Shanghai, there is an international and a Chinese Orthodox community working in close cooperation. With the consent of the authorities, a priest from Russia conducts regular services in the surviving St. Nicholas Church in which Russians and Chinese worship together. When Father Michael Wang Quansheng, the oldest priest in the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church, died, the funeral service for him was conducted by a Russian priest and a Chinese deacon from Harbin.

There is growing cooperation between the Chinese Orthodox community in Beijing and the clergy and parishioners of the Dormition Church on the territory of the Russian embassy. On August 28, 2015, the rector of the Dormition Church on the territory of the Russian embassy in Beijing, Father Sergiy Voronin, celebrated the Divine Liturgy in one of the Catholic churches in Beijing for the Orthodox citizens of the PRC.

The request to conduct a festive service on the Dormition Day was made to the authorities by the Orthodox Chinese, descendents of the Russian Cossacks who brought the seeds of Orthodox faith to China 330 years ago. There are several hundreds of their descendents who have preserved the faith of Christ through centuries and who live to this day in Beijing, Shanghai, Harbin and other cities of the Celestial Empire.

The exact day when the Cossack prisoners of war and Father Maxim Leontyev came to Beijing from the Albazinian fort is not known. For this reason, the festivities were timed to the patronal feast of the first Orthodox church in Beijing, which was consecrated by Father Maxim in 1696 and dedicated to St. Sophia the Wisdom of God. In 1732, this church was consecrated again by the head of the Second Russian Orthodox Mission in China, Archimandrite Anthony (Platkovsky), and dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God. Due to the fact that the Dormition Church in Zhengwumiao Street, which was the cathedral church of the first primate of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church and a descendent of the Yakovlev Cossacks, Bishop Basil (Yao Fu'an), who died in 1962, was closed during the Cultural Revolution, the Catholics in Beijing were so kind as to offer to the Orthodox one of their churches in Beijing for the festive service.

The liturgy was attended by over 80 people. Most of them went to confession and partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Among the worshippers were Albazinian Chinese, young citizens of the PRC who have chosen Orthodoxy as their faith and Orthodox compatriots.

Through the efforts of Russian believers a temporary procedure for sending Russian Orthodox Church priests to Harbin has been developed for them to come for special Church occasions with the consent of the authorities. In May 2015, a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church came to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the church in Ergun city, Inner Mongolia (see photos next page).

The Russian side has consistently posed a wide range of questions concerning the organization of the pastoral care for our compatriots and the normalization of the situation of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church.



Photos: Dmitry I. Petrovsky.



I dwelt in detail on the work in China since in the Chinese Orthodoxy outside of China, especially in the Chinese Orthodox communities in Russia, the attitude towards particular developments in China is of great importance. As the Chinese diaspora is very closely linked with the current political, economic, social, cultural and religious reality in Mainland China, positive shifts in the situation of Orthodoxy in China proper contribute to a more calm and interested attitude towards Orthodoxy among the Chinese in the diaspora.

Speaking about the direct work among the Chinese in Russia, I want to stress that we are not restricted by anything here. For this reason, the Chinese diaspora in Russia, the PRC citizens who live or reside in the Russian Federation, are an object of the missionary interest of the Russian Orthodox Church. We can and must carry out mission among the Chinese in Russia. To organize mission in the Chinese milieu with its specificity it is necessary to take into account the attitude towards Orthodoxy in China itself. For this reason,

among the important stages of this mission should be the introduction of Chinese citizens to the history and today's status of Orthodoxy in China and its long historical journey that allows speaking of Orthodoxy as traditional for China. It is especially important to draw attention to the above-mentioned approaches of the Russian Church to the problem of normalizing the situation of Orthodoxy in China at the present stage. These approaches are as follows: non-interference in the internal affairs, respect for the established historical realities including as flexible as possible consideration for China's political realities and the building of a canonical structure.

To organize this work, a Chinese Patriarchal Representation has recently been established in Moscow. Its establishment was initiated by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill who took the most active part in its restoration in Moscow. He expects that the Representation will become a mediation center called to develop and carry out a work program with the Chinese diaspora in Russia.

I believe that after the full launching of its work, the experience of the Representation can be extended to frontier dioceses, in which there should appear churches oriented for work with the Chinese faithful. At present, the appearance of such churches is restricted by an objective shortage of personnel in the Far East, as well as a lack of understanding and experience in organizing the work in the Chinese area.

I would like to make a special mention of the work carried out in Chinese Internet communities. The creation of Orthodox Weibo, the Chinese analogue of Twitter, as one of the most operative forms, appears to be very effective for such a widely Internet-covered country as China. If political assessments are avoided, such blogs can quite successfully exist even in a situation of state control. And there are very successful examples of it.

I believe that the work carried out in China, Hong Kong, Russia and other countries helps to preserve the Orthodox presence in China and helps Chinese people to meet Christ as He is known in the Orthodox Church – the Christ, the knowledge of whom was spread by the workers of the Russian Orthodox Mission in the Celestial Empire more than 300 years ago.