

Russia's airborne priests wage war on sin



Priests in an aircraft have “love-bombed” the Russian city of Tver with holy water, in an effort to purge its citizens of drunkenness and casual sex.

Father Alexander Goryachev has boarded a plane every September since 2006 to mark the Russian Orthodox Church’s Day of Sobriety, and flown over Tver armed with icons in the hope of tutoring his flock in the waves of righteousness, [the Tver News site reports](#).

But this year he and the local Bishop Savva decided extra measures were needed, and poured 70 litres of specially-sanctified water over the city from their creaky light aircraft – accompanied by the 19th century icon of the Inexhaustible Chalice that Orthodox believers maintain can heal alcoholics and drug addicts.

“I want my prayers to protect the city from the afflictions befalling it, from all accidents and social adversity,” Bishop Savva told Tver News ahead of the flight.

‘Confirmed success stories’

Fr Alexander is convinced his previous flights have won real victories over

alcoholism.

“A man saw our plane flying over head, and told his wife there and then that he would give up the drink – and he did,” he told viewers while holding the icon. The airborne priest believes all physical ailments have a spiritual root – “Every illness is caused by a virus, and viruses are demons. That’s why every illness is first and foremost a spiritual illness”.

A man called Vyacheslav endorsed this view.

He said he managed to quit the drink after turning to the Inexhaustible Chalice icon for help during a pilgrimage to Tver – on which he also met his future wife Olga. They both joined the clerics on the latest flight over Tver.

Fr Alexander insisted that the holy water had to be poured from a chalice, not the instrument called an aspergillum that priests use in church.

“This stops the spray from being blown back into the plane,” he explained.

The story has naturally caused much amusement in the Russian media, but Fr Alexander has an answer for everything.

“Laugh if you must, you’ll live longer. But what are you laughing at? Our efforts to help people heal themselves and stop drinking, taking drugs and fornicating?”

“Let them laugh, but it won’t stop us doing our job,” he said.

- Source: [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com)