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225th anniversary of Orthodox missionaries to Alaska celebrated with Divine Liturgy, gubernatorial proclamation



Kodiak, Alaska, September 25, 2019

“On December 21, 1793, Archimandrite Joasaph, along with three priest-monks, a Hierodeacon, and a lay monk, and a few support personnel left St Petersburg, Russia to journey over 7,300 miles to the Russian American settlement of Kodiak, Alaska. It remains the longest missionary journey by any group in recorded history. The treacherous journey took 293 days, traversing Russia and Siberia by land, and then a hazardous sea journey by ship to Kodiak. They arrived on September 24, 1794 to begin their work with the native peoples of Alaska, or as the Russians referred to them, ‘The Americans,’” writes His Eminence Archbishop David of Sitka and Alaska on the occasion of the 225th anniversary of the arrival of the Valaam missionaries, including the great St. Herman and the martyred St. Juvenaly, to

Kodiak, Alaska.



As Abp. David writes, “The heroic work of these handful of men brought about the spreading of Orthodoxy on this continent... Their only concern was fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord in Matthew 28, to make disciples of all nations and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

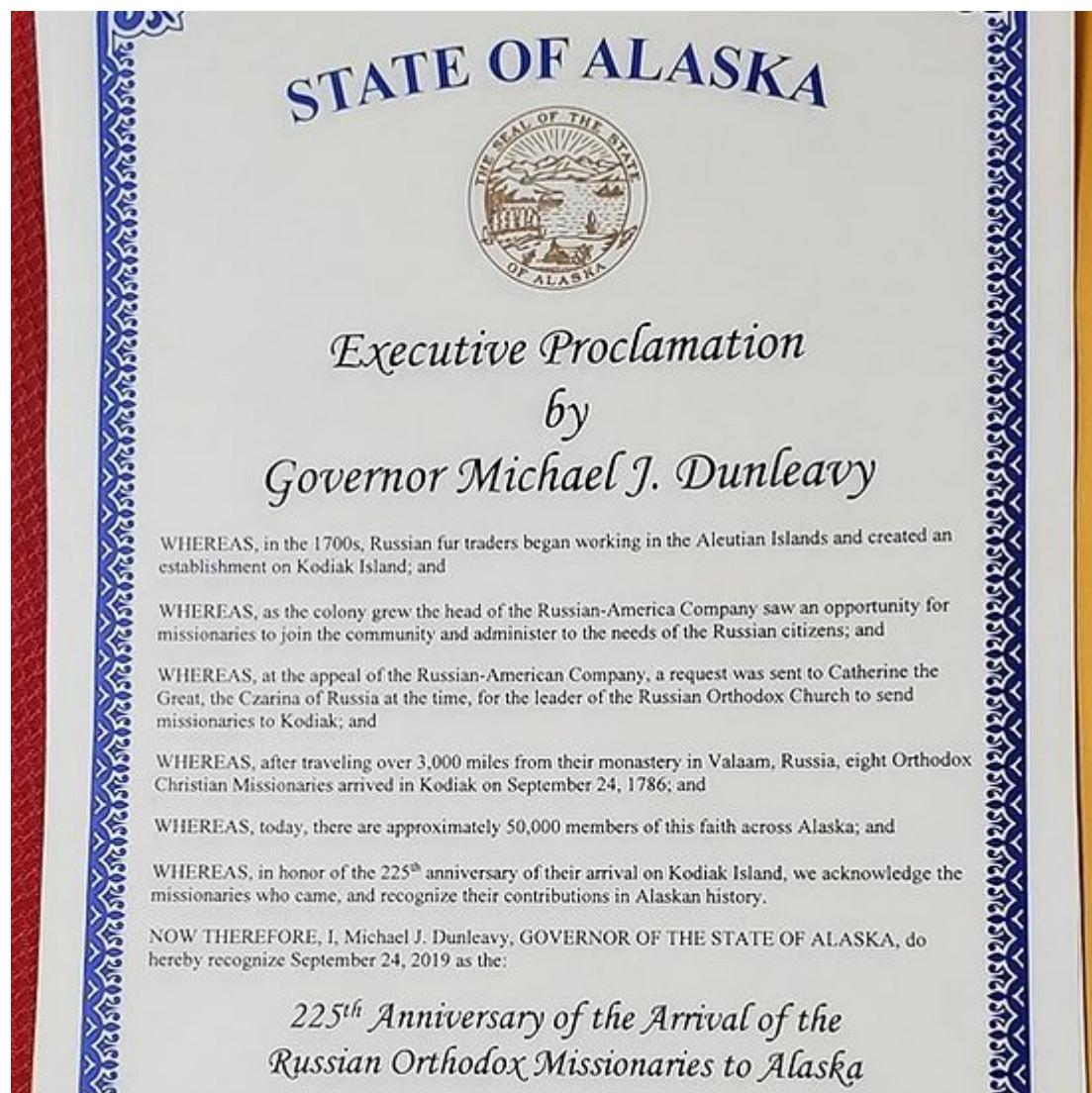
“This Anniversary is a way of marking the great work of the Valaam Missionaries, but it is also a way of showing us the path forward,” the Alaska hierarch continues, calling on his flock to become a “New Valaam” and bring the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those wallowing in darkness.

"It is now our time, it is our call to be the ones who perpetuate that great missionary work yet again. In our time, for our people," Abp. David writes.

The anniversary was also marked with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Kodiak yesterday, where St. Herman's relics lie in repose.

Watch the Beatitudes and Little Entrance from the Liturgy in the video below:

Governor Michael J. Dunleavy also issued an Executive Proclamation in honor of the anniversary of the arrival of the missionaries to Alaska. In the proclamation, the Governor recalls how the Russian-American Company appealed to Empress Catherine of Russia to send missionaries, which resulted in the missionary group traveling thousands of miles from Valaam Monastery to Kodiak.



According to the proclamation, there are more than 50,000 Orthodox residents in Alaska today.

Gov. Dunleavy officially recognizes September 24, 2019, as the "225th Anniversary

of the Arrival of the Russian Orthodox Missionaries to Alaska,” and calls upon all Alaskans to acknowledge this milestone in Alaskan history.

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