

Western European Diocese: The first archpastoral visit by Bishop Irenei to the Belgian capital



His Grace Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe made his first archpastoral visit to the Belgian capital on the weekend of November 9-10, 2019, visiting both Brussels parishes: the Parish of the Resurrection of Christ and the Memorial Church of the Righteous Job the Long-suffering.

Upon arrival in the Belgian capital on Friday evening, 26 October/8 November, Bishop Irenei led the evening service in honor of the Holy Martyr St Nestor in Resurrection Parish, where on Saturday morning he celebrated Divine Liturgy for the saint. His Grace was co-served by the rector, Archpriest Stefan Veerts, together with Priest Rafael Kommers, visiting from Dordrecht in the Netherlands, as well as Deacon Vladimir Svistun, a cleric of the Geneva Cathedral. At the Sixth Hour, Mr

John Andersen, long-time warden of the Amsterdam parish of St Mary of Egypt, was tonsured to the rank of reader.

In his homily at the Resurrection Parish, Bishop Irenei reflected upon the key words heard in the day's Gospel, "My mother and My brothers are those who hear the Word of God and keep it" (Luke 8:21), noting that the Lord had fleshly relations with some, which is part-and-parcel of the divine condescension of His incarnation; while at the same time, in Bishop Irenei's words, "The Lord's 'family' is not constituted only by His beloved mother or his brethren through Righteous Joseph, but all those who truly follow Him are His true relatives. He is united with all flesh in incarnation, and thus He is Brother, Son and Family to all who hear the Word of His Father and keep it with all thier hearts" — and thus the Bishop encouraged everyone to try daily to be as close to Christ the Savior as possible through the keeping of God's Word.

After the service, Fr Stefan addressed the parish's distinguished guest with a grateful word, expressing genuine joy at the visit on behalf of the parish, and wishing the diocese's Archpastor every spiritual strength in the labors of his ministry. In memory of the first archpastoral visit to the Resurrection Parish of Brussels, the Bishop was presented with a red mitre on behalf of the parishioners. Throughout his visit, including at a generous meal following the Liturgy, Bishop Irenei acquainted himself with the history of the parish with genuine interest, especially with those relics and items associated with the earthly life of St John of Shanghai and San Francisco, dating from the period when the great Wonderworker was Ruling Bishop of the Western European Diocese.

On Saturday, November 9 and Sunday, November 10— days in which the Holy Church celebrates the memory of St Job the Abbot and Wonderworker of Pochaev — His Grace made his first archpastoral visit to the Memorial Church of St Job the Long-suffering, also in Brussels, erected in St Job's name in memory of the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II (who was born on the day of St Job's commemoration) together with his August family and all Russian peoples slain in the turmoils of the atheistic powers that captivated Russia for most of the twentieth century. At the Memorial Church Bishop Irenei led all-night vigil, cop-served by Archpriest Leonid Grilikhes and Priest Vasily Orekhov, clerics of the Parish, together with Deacon Vladimir Svystun. At the Vigil and at the Sunday Liturgy, the Divine Services were accompanied by the refined singing of the parish's choir, under the direction of Subdeacon Yaroslav Oreshchuk. On Sunday, the large temple could barely accommodate all the parishioners.

In the words of his Sunday homily, His Grace explained the Gospel narrative about

the healing of the possessed man in the country of the Gadarenes, paying particular attention to the reaction of the local residents, who, instead of taking joy in the healing the possessed man, were overtaken by fear and confusion and asked the Savior to depart from their land. The Bishop emphasized that “too often we too often do the same. We grow accustomed to life ‘as we know it,’ with all its problems, its brokenness; and when Christ comes to change this life, to change this world, man often reacts with fear and anxiety. But Christ has come to do precisely this: to change the world! To change our hearts. Our lives.” His Grace called upon all to cast aside all doubt and show daily desire to follow the Savior and be His worthy followers, like the young man healed the Gospel.

At the end of the service, Eternal Memory was proclaimed for all those “slain in the turmoils and persecutions of the godless powers,” honoring the memorial tradition of this particular church. Further, since on this feast-day of St Job of Pochaev the much-respected Monastery of St Job in Munich keeps it patronal feast, Many Years was proclaimed for His Eminence Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany, Abbot of the Monastery, together with his brotherhood; in assembly with the whole Holy Sobor of the Russian Church Abroad.

Addressing the Bishop, Frt Leonid wished the Archpastor many years of life and, on behalf of the parish, expressed his special wish to regularly see Vladyka, as his Rector in the walls of the Memorial Church.

After the service, a tea reception was held in the refectory, where His Grace continued to visit with the flock. During his stay, Bishop Irenei had meetings with the local clergy and many parishioners, including members of the Construction Committee of the Memorial Church, as well as the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of Belgium, Mr Alexander Avrelevich Tokovinin, and other officials.

— Source: orthodox-europe.org & synod.com