

## **Bishop Irenei announces the establishment of an annual 'St Herman's Youth Conference' for the Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe, beginning in the 50th anniversary year of the canonisation of St Herman of Alaska**



On May 25, 2020, the Diocese announced that, with the blessing of Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe, it will establish an annual 'St Herman's Youth Conference' in the present fiftieth-anniversary year of the canonisation of St Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. In conjunction with this new undertaking, the Bishop has also today established a new Diocesan Youth Department, to oversee the annual conference as well as other activities for youth throughout the Diocese.

The tradition of holding annual youth conferences dedicated to the memory of St Herman is longstanding in other Dioceses of our Church Abroad. The feastday of St Herman is 12th / 25th December, which is Christmas on the civil calendar, meaning

that this is a period when the majority of the young people of our Church are on school and work holidays, while at the same time not yet marking the Nativity of Christ on our Church calendar, enabling them to be free to travel — thus it is, each year, an ideal ‘free week’ in which to gather youth together as fellow Orthodox Christians in order to grow in the faith and in their Christian friendships with one another.

Thus in other Dioceses of our Church, already for many years youth have been gathering each year for these conferences, which have become important annual events in their lives: centred on strengthening their Orthodox lives, the conferences provide not only liturgical life centred on the feast, but also education in the form of talks and lectures from invited speakers, practical workshops, as well as the precious opportunity to gather together with other Orthodox young people — an all-too-rare occurrence in our modern world in the Diaspora — to make and strengthen friendships and meet fellow youth outside of their own parish. The conferences always involve many social elements, excursions, activities and other elements intended to foster this social dimension of Godly Orthodox lives.

From this year, God willing, our Diocese will initiate this custom for our own young people, joining the other Dioceses of our Church already doing the same. The ‘St Herman’s – Europe’ Youth Conference will take place around the feastday of St Herman each year, held in a different place annually — hosted by different Diocesan parishes, permitting the youth to see the diversity of our Diocese as well as experience the social and natural wonders of the diverse places in which our parishes thrive. The conferences will also be multi-lingual, working in the three principal languages of our Diocese (Russian, English and French), thereby permitting youth to learn new phrases and expressions in each other’s languages, building yet further their sense of community and friendship with those of other countries and tongues.

In order to organise these conferences, as well as other youth activities throughout the Diocese, Bishop Irenei has established a new Diocesan Youth Department, to be overseen by Archpriest Quentin de Castelbajac of the parish in Lyon, and Priest Ioann Ciurin of the parish in Bern.

### **Video - A Taste of the Experience:**

Those who wish to learn more about these St Herman’s Youth Conferences as they already exist in other Dioceses’, may view a video of one of the recent conferences

here (or scroll down further for a photogallery):

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