

SELECTED INTERFAX POSTS

Orthodox Culture Centre for representatives of national diasporas is opened in Moscow

Moscow, November 13, Interfax - The St. Thomas' Church and the Orthodox Culture Centre located near 'Kantemirovskaya' metro station for representatives of all diasporas living in Moscow were blessed, a source in the Union of Orthodox Citizens told *Interfax* on Monday.

According to the rector, Rev. Daniil Sysoyev, the national diasporas living in Russia can become a part of society only with the help of Orthodox culture. The 'indigenous' and the 'newcomers' can be reconciled, and extremist trends removed.

The priest spoke for a church and theological department to be opened at the Patrice Lumumba Russian University of the Friendship of Nations. He thinks the students introduced to Orthodoxy would go home as the 'friends of Russia.'

Experts in the Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Tajik, Tatar, Chinese and other Oriental cultures and languages will work in the Orthodox Culture Centre.

Many Russian priests and several hierarchs support open air Epiphany dipping

Moscow, January 18, Interfax – Many clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church together with their flock take a dip in an ice-hole on the Epiphany.

According to the head of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations' press-service Fr. Mikhail Prokopenko there are many clergymen among his friends who take a dip on the Epiphany every year, most of them are young healthy people. He noted that he even knows several hierarchs, who keep up the old tradition with their personal example.

'There are no set rules obliging priests to take a dip in ice-holes on the Epiphany. It is not obligatory especially in our climate', Fr. Mikhail said to *Interfax*.

The rector of the Moscow Apostle Thomas church in the Kantemirovskaya street priest Daniil Sysoyev says there are minimum 40-50 people among his friends-priests who take a dip on the Epiphany.

Fr. Daniil has taken a dip every year for the last 30 years. The priest usually goes to holy springs, and when he does not manage to get there, he fill his home bath with cold water, asperses it with holy water and dips into it.

'Dipping of all people including clergy on the Epiphany is justified and is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition', he believes.

Former Wahabi believer converted to Orthodoxy

Moscow, October 17, Interfax - Former adherent of not traditional for Russia Islamic trend - Wahhabism - decided to adopt Orthodoxy after a series of conversations with an Orthodox priest.

"This man came to our church to talk about interaction between Islam and Christianity. He asked why Christianity committed such "a ridiculous logical mistake" as a dogma of the Trinity. At the same time, he didn't understand the Islamic teaching on predestination. To clear up these questions he started attending our catechetical meetings," Rector of St. Thomas Church in Kantemirovskaya Fr. Daniel Sysoyev told *Interfax-Religion* on Friday.

The young man found the answers to his religious questions and then decided to take baptism. Fr. Daniel found that he was firm in his decision and baptized him.

The newly converted Christian conceals his name as he is afraid that his former Wahabi co-religionists will punish him.

Renowned Moscow priest urged to denounce “ideology of cadaveric rigidity” of the Church

Moscow, November 7, Interfax – Insufficient knowledge of the basics of Orthodox faith by ordinary people is a serious problem for the Church, Fr. Daniel Sysoyev, Rector of the St. Thomas Church in Kantemirovskaya, said.

“The Church is considered a kind of dead body that should be frozen. Nothing should be changed in it. It’s clear that dogmatics, Church tradition shouldn’t be changed, no one argues with it. However, the problem is that they try to preserve superstitions, false ideology and other bad heritage of the Soviet Union,” Fr. Daniel told an *Interfax-Religion* correspondent.

He called this problem “an ideology of cadaveric rigidity.” “It is not conservatism, it a murder of the Church.”

The conference devoted to the problems of modern pastoral ministry will be held this Saturday in Moscow in frames of the *Pravoslavnaya Rus* (the Orthodox Russia) exhibition-forum. Patriarch Alexy II, Metropolitan Kirill, renowned priests and laymen will participate in its work and discuss acute questions of church life.

According to Fr. Daniel, today “the Church disguises paganism under the mask of Christianity and it is hidden in teaching rather than in some exterior manifestations.”

“People forget that their task is to reach sanctity. Some of them believe it is a sin even to think of a possibility to reach sanctity, though it is a fulfillment of the direct commandment of the Lord. We should spare no effort to overcome this problem,” the priest stressed.

He also complained that “people coming to the Church take it as an industrial complex of spiritual services. They are not offered any spiritual growth, that’s why they go to sects.”

New Patriarch of the Russian Church to become a "great commander" and help it to win the whole world

Moscow, December 18, Interfax - The Russian Orthodox Church under a new Patriarch should become a real leader of the Orthodox world, Priest Daniel Sysoyev, head of the Moscow Church of Apostle Thomas on Kantemirovskaya, believes.

"Extensive capabilities have been delivered for the world Orthodox mission under preceding Patriarch. And special credit for that is due to the current interim head. Hundreds of foreign parishes of the Moscow Patriarchy are a real ground for the proper advance of the Church," the Priest said to *Interfax-Religion*.

According to Fr. Daniel, a new hierarch "should become a great commander of the militant Church; after all, our Church will gain its strength only when it becomes the guardian of the Orthodoxy all over the world."

"It is not by chance that God made us the world's largest Church. This is a sign of global responsibility of the Russian Orthodox Church for the world sinking deep in sins," Fr. Daniel believes.

He said that the Russian Orthodox Church should bring the true word about Christ to all peoples of the world," and adds that, "in light of the current political situation and with modern information technologies it is feasible to attain within the time of one hierarch."

As far as the Church's internal life is concerned, Fr. Daniel said that a new patriarch would have to establish "a proper spiritual life in revived churches."

"I have repeatedly mentioned staggering religious ignorance within the Russian Church," Fr. Daniel said.

Moreover, the priest thinks, we need to acknowledge the fact that the Church is in desperate need of "a clear vertical spiritual power structure: the decisions of Patriarch and the Holy Synod should be fulfilled at the local level, and we need to establish an implemented controlling body that could monitor the actual situation in dioceses and parishes."

Fr. Daniel appealed to the future participants of the Local Council calling them to elect Patriarch on the principle of "how well a candidate is able to meet" the above challenges, rather than on the assumption of "who we are united against".

Two Quechua women adopt Orthodoxy in Moscow

Moscow, January 11, Interfax - Two women from Quechua Indian tribe were baptized after Christmas service at an Orthodox church in south Moscow.

"We talked about faith with them. They read the Creed in Spanish, I found it in Internet," Rector of St. Thomas church in Kantemirovskaya Fr. Daniel Sysoyev, who conducted the Sacrament, told an *Interfax-Religion*.

According to Fr. Daniel, two Bolivian women - mother and daughter, who decided to take baptism - are studying in Moscow. Their friend from Peru told them about Orthodox faith. She is from Inka tribe, but has long lived in Moscow.

The women were named Maria and Elizabeth after Maria Magdalena and the Holy Martyr Elizabeth Romanova.

"It's probably the first time in history when Quechua Indians adopted Orthodoxy," Fr. Daniel noted.

The famous missionary urges to make Kirghizia a base for "offensive" of Russian Church to Central Asia and China

Moscow, February 18, Interfax - The famous missionary priest Fr. Daniel Sysoyev considers that Russian Church should make Kirghizia and neighbouring countries Orthodox.

"It's necessary to open theological faculties at Bishkek's State University and at the Russian-Kirghiz Slavonic University to use Kirghizia as a base for the whole Central Asia. Exactly from Kirghizia it's possible to come (in missionary meaning - "IF") to the whole Central Asia, Afghanistan, Tibet and China," Fr. Daniel told at the round-table conference in Moscow.

According to him, "Kirghiz and also a part of Uzbeks, Dungarz, Uigurs in Kirghizia are ready for Orthodox mission which could lead to enormous successes: there are straight gate to China, but it's not used."

"In Central Asia, according to underestimated official data, there are half a million Protestants which began to operate here only in 1992. At small activity of Protestants they've received a great success. The activity of Catholics is successful. Missioners from Uruguay made the whole diocese there in three years after the work start," the priest told.

About a hundred of Orthodox activists demand to ban abortions in downtown Moscow

Famous Orthodox priest killed in Moscow

Moscow, November 20, Interfax – The famous priest Daniil Sysoyev, the rector of the St. Thomas Cathedral, has been killed in Moscow, a source in law enforcement agencies told *Interfax*.

The priest received gunshot wounds to the head and chest, his assistant Vladimir Strelbitsky was wounded in the chest, he said.

"I do not recall a priest being killed in Moscow, let alone shot at by an assault rifle," the source told.

The priest died on the surgical table at 0:15 a.m. Moscow time, a source in medical circles said. His aide is in very critical condition.

A criminal case has been launched over the priest's murder.

Father Daniil was 35 years old.

Moscow, June 1, Interfax – Orthodox youth action *Russia for life! Russia against abortions!* has been held at Teatralnaya Square in Moscow.

About a hundred participants took part in the event timed for the International Children's Day.

Renowned missionary Fr. Daniel Sysoyev spoke during the action and stressed, "abortions are a murder and should be morally condemned as a grave sin."

"Terrible, undeclared, long-term and bloody war has been unleashed in our country and it has already killed hundreds of millions victims. Innocent defenseless babies are on one side of the battle, while adults, doctors, mothers, fathers are fighting against them. Babies cannot protect themselves and millions of them die without even seeing the light. We can hear the objection that these babies are not people. It is a lie. Any serious scientists won't say this about a human embryo," Fr. Daniel said.

Representatives of youth and public organizations urged State Duma MPs change the acting legislation and limit or even ban abortions.

The same actions were held in some other Russian cities.

Patriarch Kirill offers condolences over death of the priest

Moscow, November 20, Interfax - Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has extended condolences over the death of Orthodox priest Daniil Sysoyev.

"Father Daniil was widely known both among the Orthodox Christians of Moscow and a large number of other dioceses. His hard work to preach God's Word and to promote the Christian faith among people, as well as his care about the spiritual needs of the youth won him the respect of his fellow priests and representatives of society," Patriarch Kirill said in his address to Fr. Daniil's family and friends.

"People looking for the road to God will remember Father Daniil for his uncompromising position as a missionary and vivid and emotional words full of a profound faith in God," the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said.

Patriarch Kirill wished the family and friends of the murdered priest spiritual strength and courage.

A masked attacker entered the St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Moscow at around 10:45 p.m. on November 19, firing at least four shots at priest Daniil Sysoyev and his assistant Vladimir Strelbitsky. Fr. Daniil was killed and Strelbitsky was seriously wounded in the attack.

Council of Muftis expresses condolences on priest's murder

Moscow, November 20, Interfax - The Council of Muftis of Russia has expressed its condolences on the murder of Russian Orthodox priest Daniil Sysoyev and spoken against the crime's link to the Muslim community.

"On behalf of my colleagues and myself, I express my condolences. It is a violent, brazen crime. If any questions arise regarding a clergyman, answers should be sought in a civilized way, not through murder," First Deputy of the Muslim Board of the European Part of Russia, Damir Gizatullin, said to *Interfax-Religion* on Friday.

"We talk to people, we meet them. They may not always agree with us, but that is no reason to kill. Life was given to us by the Almighty!" he said.

"A believer could not have committed such a crime whichever religion he may belong to," Gizatullin said.

"Religion, Islam in particular, prohibits murder. The murder of one person is equated to the murder of the entire humanity. Especially as Muslims and Orthodox Christians belong to the Abrahamic religions. Such people will never raise their hand against their own brethren," he said.

In his opinion, cult followers are likely to stand behind the murder of Father Daniil.

Patriarch Kirill urges believers to think about importance of missionary outreach

Moscow, November 23, Interfax - Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia called on believers to think about the missionary outreach of every person.

"Father Daniil did a lot to promote God's truth. He took part in various disputes and defended that truth the best he could. His strongest message is the one we are witnessing now," the Patriarch said by the coffin of Father Daniil Sysoyev after the funeral service at the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Moscow's Yasenevo District.

"If a person is killed for disseminating God's truth, this truth strikes on people who reject it with a great force," he said.

The death of this cleric should make all believers think about "the importance to serve God's cause and deliver every word to the heart and mind of listeners," he said.

"He was loyal [to Lord] until his death, and we will always cherish the memory of the murdered servant of God, Priest Daniil," the Patriarch said.

Priest Daniil Sysoyev was shot and killed at the Apostle Thomas church in southern Moscow late at night on November 19.

The funeral of the Priest Daniil Sysoyev passed in Moscow

Moscow, November 23, Interfax - This Monday Orthodox Moscow has said farewell to the Priest Daniil Sysoyev killed the last week in the Apostle Thomas church where he was a prior.

At Thursday night Father Daniil has been shot by the unknown person, got gunshot wounds in a head and breast.

This crime became one of the most impudent for the last time and has caused a great public resonance: there was no case for more than half a century since Stalin reprisals when representatives of the Orthodox clergy have been shot in the Russian capital.

For the last 19 years Father Daniil became the 25th Orthodox priest killed in Russia.

The burial service has taken place today in the Saint Peter and Paul church in Moscow. The Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has also arrived to say farewell to the Priest Daniil. After the burial service the cleric was buried on the Kuntsevskoye cemetery in Moscow.

Within last days the body of Father Daniil was in the Apostle Thomas church where some thousand of believers have said farewell to him.

Father Daniil was known for his active missionary work, particularly among non-Orthodox, and also for his bright polemic performances. For the last years he repeatedly received threats from radicals. According to the investigation, the murder has been made on religious reasons.

Russian Muslim organization claims responsibility for clergyman's murder

Moscow, December 28, Interfax - An organization calling itself *The Information and Analytical Section of the Staff of the Armed Forces of the Caucasus Emirate* has claimed that its activist murdered Russian Orthodox clergyman Daniil Sysoyev for insulting Islam.

A statement from the organization posted on website said that the assassin entered the premises where the clergyman was staying "and fired several shots at him with a Makarov pistol with a silencer and filmed the execution on his cell phone."

After the murder he fled to the territory of "the Caucasus Emirate with the purpose of joining the Mojaheddins."

"Unfortunately, the video footage with Sysoyev's execution was lost," the statement said.

"We are not waging a war against peaceful Christians living in Russian territory but we are warning everyone that anyone who dares to open his mouth to insult Islam and Muslims may share Sysoyev's fate. The warning equally applies to all public figures, journalists and politicians who dare to insult Allah's religion," the statement said.

Father Daniil Sysoyev was shot dead on the night of November 19 in the Church of St. Thomas in south Moscow. Earlier he had received numerous threats from Muslim radicals dissatisfied with his rhetoric concerning Islam and his missionary efforts among Muslims.

Priest Sysoyev's murder solved, hitman killed in Makhachkala (*updated*)

Moscow, March 16, Interfax - The Russian Prosecutor's Office Investigative Committee (POIC) has identified the murderer of Orthodox priest Daniil Sysoyev, who was shot dead at the St. Thomas Church in Moscow in November 2009, POIC spokesman Vladimir Markin told *Interfax*.

"A man was delivered to a road patrol post in Makhachkala for criminal record checks after raising suspicions with law enforcement officers," Markin told *Interfax* on Tuesday.

"The detained man threw a grenade into the building and then started shooting at the policemen from a pistol," he said.

"He was killed by return fire," Markin said.

He held a passport in the name of Beksultan Karykbekov born in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, in 1987, and the pistol, from which he fired at the policemen, was an airgun reconverted for 9-millimeter cartridges, the spokesman said.

"Investigators received conclusive evidence that it was this pistol that killed Sysoyev," the POIC official said.

"Due to this, an additional inquiry has been launched to check whether Karykbekov was involved in the attack on the church priest," he said.

On November 19, 2009, a masked man entered the St. Thomas Church in Kantemirovskaya Street at around 10:45 p.m. and fired at least four shots at the head of the church, Daniil Sysoyev, and regent Vladimir Strelbitsky, the POIC official recalled. Father Daniil died of the sustained injuries on the way to hospital.

Fr. Daniil had received repeated threats from radical Islamists unhappy with his anti-Islamist rhetoric and missionary work among Muslims.

Later, an Islamic organization called *The Information Analysis Division of the Imarat Kavkaz Ingush Vilayat Armed Forces Headquarters* claimed responsibility for the priest's murder. Sysoyev was murdered by one of our activists for denigrating Islam, the organization said in a statement.

FRUITS OF FR. DANIEL'S LABORS...

Orthodox missionaries start working with Moscow Chinese

Moscow, April 13, Interfax - Prophet Daniel Orthodox missionary movement carried out a guided tour to the Holy Trinity - St. Sergius Laura for Chinese living in Moscow.

"We believe the Lord has brought foreign guests to our city not only to work or to study here, but to learn more about Orthodoxy," the movement leader, renowned theologian Yury Maximov told *Interfax-Religion* on Tuesday.

"Thus, we searched for possible ways to carry out missionary work among foreigners living in Russia and finally we decided that they can get acquainted with Orthodoxy in trips to our monasteries with guided tours in their native language," the interviewee of the agency further said.

The initiative was once approved by the movement's founder Fr. Daniel Sysoyev who was shot dead by unidentified criminals in St. Thomas Church in south Moscow late on November 19, 2009.

"We were preparing it for almost a year. It's a great pleasure that the initiative was welcomed by Chinese. Though we first thought to attract a small group of six people, we finally have got a group of fourteen Chinese students," Maximov noted.

According to Maximov, Chinese students showed such a "deep and lively interest in Orthodox shrines that we hope many of them will continue studying Orthodoxy in frames of Chinese Orthodox lectures, which will be soon organized by Prophet Daniel missionary movement."

Veteran of World War II decides to get baptized from German Orthodox priest

Moscow, May 11, Interfax – Prophet Daniel Orthodox missionary movement held an educative action for veterans of the Great Patriotic War in the streets of Moscow on May 9.

Orthodox German priest Thomas Diez participated in the action as a missionary. Veterans were surprised but glad to learn it and called it a good sign of changes in relations between our nations, organizers of the event told *Interfax-Religion*.

A veteran who was not baptized even insisted that he wanted to get baptized from Fr. Thomas.

Participants in the action approached veterans, congratulated them on the Victory Day, presented Gospels and leaflets about Orthodox faith and talked to them. Most of the veterans confessed that they were praying during attacks. One woman even said she prayed to the Mother of God during a shelling and was miraculously saved from the death.

Prophet Daniel Orthodox movement was founded by renowned preacher Fr. Daniel Sysoyev killed by unidentified criminals in St. Thomas Church in southern Moscow on November 19, 2009.

Priest Daniil Sysoyev's widow wrote a novel about suicide bombers

Moscow, September 24, Interfax - Yulia Sysoyeva, widow of Priest Daniil Sysoyev killed in November 2009, wrote a novel about radical Islamists involved in terrorist attacks.

According to the author, the book focused on complicated spiritual searches of the main heroine. She is a young girl and falls in love with a man who turns out to be a terrorist and takes her to the training camp of the so-called "Shahids".

"The book was approved by the Moscow Patriarchate Publishing Council and will soon be published," Sysoyeva told an *Interfax-Religion* correspondent.

It is not the first writing experience for Yulia. Her book "Notes of Priest's Wife" was issued several times.

Priest Daniil Sysoyev was known for his missionary work among the Muslims. He conducted public disputes with representatives of Islam and preached to guest workers at Moscow building sites and markets.

On November 19, 2009, Fr. Daniil was shot dead in St. Thomas Church where he was a rector. Soon on December 1, suspected in his murder Kyrgyz citizen was killed in Makhachkala at the attempt to arrest him.

Greek nuns pray to Father Daniil Sysoyev as saint

Thessaloniki, October 5, Interfax - Nuns of a large Greek Monastery are convinced that believers can pray to priest Daniil Sysoyev as to a saint.

"It's high time you prayed not for Father Daniil, but to Father Daniil," Sister Prosdoki from the Annunciation Monastery in Ormylia, Halkidiki Peninsula, told an *Interfax-Religion* correspondent.

She also wonders why Father Daniil is not widely venerated in Russia.

According to the nun, many Orthodox Greeks honor Father Daniil alongside with many Greek saints martyred for Orthodox faith by Turks.

The interviewee of the agency believes Father Daniil's tomb can become one of most beloved places for Greek pilgrims. Relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov have been such a shrine so far.

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Followers of killed priest Daniil Sysoyev go on preaching among migrants

Moscow, November 22 (2010), Interfax - The year after Priest Daniil Sysoyev was killed, his followers have continued Father Daniil's practice of active missionary work among migrants.

On the priest's memorial evening held last Sunday in Moscow, Viktor Kupriynchuk, warden of St. Thomas Church where Father Daniil served, said that missionary team of the killed pastor continue mission in diasporas.

They issue missionary leaflets for migrants in English, Tajik, Uzbek and Vietnamese, leaflets in Kyrgyz are being prepared, a book about Orthodoxy in Chinese is published for the Chinese diaspora.

Parishioners of St. Thomas Church continue practice of street mission, carry out "missionary raids" along Moscow streets and this street missionary work develops.

Besides, Fr. Daniil's followers set up a missionary school in Kazakhstan and publish methodic books for missionaries on argumentation with cultists.

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