

Daniel S. Johnson

- Catechist to Siberia & Baltic Churches

Garbė Dievui aukštybėse

ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται

Χριστος Воскрес!

June 2014

Daniel.Johnson@lcmsintl.org



Siberian Bishop returns to Estonia

On a cool Sunday evening in June, we walked from the Lutheran Institute in Tallinn, Estonia, where we were lodging, to an awards ceremony at the Lutheran Cathedral. A light rain had been falling throughout the day. There was concern that rain may return, as we walked the kilometer to

the upper city, where the cathedral was located. Clad in light jackets and sweaters, with umbrellas in hand, our band of eight Siberians, two Estonians, and two Americans walked the narrow cobblestone streets of Tallinn. Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin walked with us, as he humbly anticipated receiving the award from the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC). This medal was to be bestowed by the Archbishop of the Church, Andres Pöder, in a liturgical ceremony given in Bishop Lytkin's honor.

Bishop Lytkin's theology teacher and catechist, Jaanus Noormägi, witnessed the presentation. He sat by his former student and catechumen's side during the ceremony. Bishop Lytkin was called forward from the front pew as his wife, son, and several Siberian clergy and laity, along with my wife, Amy, and I, looked on. The award of "First Rank Cross of Merit of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church" was hung around his neck. The congregation applauded in appreciation of Bishop Lytkin's service to the church; for the man who had been used by Our Lord, Jesus Christ, to restore the Lutheran confession to Siberia. This award was seen as recognition of what the Holy Spirit of Pentecost has done in Siberia among many, instead of any man's single achievements. The bishop represents the entire Church.

Before Vsevolod Lytkin became bishop of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church, he was a man in search of answers to theological and philosophical questions. In the late 1980s, as a young man living in the academic city outside of Novosibirsk, he had read some Soviet propaganda that criticized Christianity. From this

Church officials from the Lithuanian, Latvian and Siberian Lutheran churches frequently visit the United States. If you wish to invite one of these church officials to visit your congregation, please contact me at:

Daniel.Johnson@lcmsintl.org

propaganda, the Holy Spirit worked "where and when it pleased." It "pleased" the Holy Spirit to create faith and a desire in young Vsevolod to receive Holy Baptism.

In 1987, this young "believer" traveled to Estonia to seek Holy Baptism. It was on his first trip to Tallinn that he would meet the wife of the

pastor. It was through her efforts that her husband (the man who would later become archbishop of the EELC; from 1994 until his unexpected death in 2005) agreed to give Vsevolod his first Small Catechism. What he received was a binder containing photographs of pages from a Russian language catechism. After studying the documents for two days at the train station, Vsevolod presented himself before the Holy Font at the Church of the Holy Spirit and was baptized. He would later bring his wife, Daria, and daughter, Sonya, to the same font, to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

continued on the next page



To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to Daniel.Johnson@lcmsintl.org with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.





Prayer Requests, Praises, and Thanks

Many Siberian pastors serve multiple congregation parishes. Pray for safe travel as these dedicated clergy travel to provide care for their parishioners. Also, pray for the laity as they travel to attend liturgy.

***We poor sinners implore
You... To put an end to all schisms and causes of offense; to bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived;...***

-- The Litany

In the beginning, very few of Vsevolod's friends shared his interest in Lutheranism. Although many were interested in spiritual things, some of them turned to cults instead of Christianity. Gradually, he gathered a group in Akademgorodok (the academic city outside of Novosibirsk where he lived) to study the Bible. Soon the group of students realized from their study that in order for them to be church they must be baptized and have a pastor. Vsevolod returned to his pastor in Estonia with a request that this "group" in Novosibirsk become a church. He received theological training and was ordained as a pastor in Estonia in 1993, passed his theological exams in 1996 and received his pectoral cross. To receive a pectoral cross at ordination is an Estonian tradition, similar to when a man receives a stole at his ordination in American Lutheran Churches. Vsevolod was then appointed as Probst of the Estonian Church in Siberia. This was a title he would hold until his consecration as Bishop of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) on May 6, 2007.



This event on June 8, 2014, at the Lutheran Cathedral in Tallinn, Estonia, helps put an exclamation point on the life of a man, a father, a teacher, a pastor and a

bishop, who has been used by the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, to bring hope and confidence to a people dying in sin and despair. In his sermon, delivered at the Feast of Pentecost, earlier that day, Bishop Lytkin expressed his work as a bishop and pastor with these words:

"...Yes, it always has been and will be, that in the world there are heroes of the faith and there are ordinary people. We are of the latter. We feel fear of our Savior's



call to give Him all our life and follow Him, taking the cross. Perhaps this is because our faith is weaker than the faith of the ancient saints,

who gave all their possessions to the poor [see Luke 12:33] and went to proclaim the Gospel.

"But I think that God understands this and therefore His demand to us is softer. You can start with coming to church at least every Sunday. Can you make such a sacrifice? And to pray every day, to read the Bible, to help neighbors, to bring your children to Sunday school... It looks that without a helper we cannot do it. So ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

"... The color of the Pentecost Day is red. Red means the fire of the Holy Spirit. But red also means the blood of martyrs who suffered for the witnessing of Christ - in order that we who have reached the end of times can hear and believe and be saved. And so, we now proclaim the Gospel to all who are near and far away.

Happy Pentecost festival, beloved brothers and sisters! Amen." ✠ DSJ



To support my work financially, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

**The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 790089
St. Louis, MO 63179-0089.**

Make checks payable to "The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." Write "Support of Rev. Daniel S. Johnson" on the memo line. Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at www.lcms.org/Johnson.