

**On the First Anniversary of the Repose of His Eminence  
METROPOLITAN LAURUS and the 80th Birthday of His Holiness  
PATRIARCH ALEXY**

**TWO YOUTHS**

[March 16, 2009] The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad was orphaned twice in the year 2008. On March 16, after the first week of Great Lent, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the Lord called to Himself His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus. On December 5, after the first week of the Nativity fast, having served his last liturgy on the feast of the Entry into the Temple of the Holy Theotokos, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy departed to the Lord. Soon after the repose of each, a series of photographs was posted on the Internet illustrating their life's path ([Patriarchia.ru](http://Patriarchia.ru) и [Holy Trinity Seminary](http://Holy Trinity Seminary)). Each photograph seemed to be a precious gift, as it not only presented the opportunity of once more being in the company of those who were no longer alive, but also afforded a glimpse into the inner lives of our first hierarchs. In this respect, two photographs, taken not too far apart both in time and geographically, particularly attracted attention.



*1939, Valaam. A group of clergy and pilgrims. In the center, holding a staff, is hegumen Khariton (Dunaev), the abbot of the Valaam monastery. Directly in front of him, in the first row, is ten-year-old Alyosha Ridiger, the future Patriarch Alexy.*



*1940, Monastery of St. Job of Pochaev, Ladomirova, Carpatho-Russia. Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) surrounded by monastics and several laymen. In the first row, at the far right, is 12-year-old Vasya Shkurla, the future Metropolitan Laurus.*

We see before us two boys who, despite the rather large disparity in age between them and the others on the photograph, feel very much at one with their spiritual-monastic milieu. They don't seem to notice that they are the only ones still in knickers, because they are already living according to the principles and aspirations of the adults who surround them. The spiritual world is their world—they are entirely in their element. In just a few years, Alyosha will become subdeacon to Archbishop Pavel of Tallinn and Estonia and Vasya will enter the brotherhood of St. Job of Pochaev as a novice. Having devoted their entire lives to God, they will become the first hierarchs of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church. Although in childhood the boys lived not too far from each other (their hometowns were separated by a mere 3° of longitude), fate later drove them far asunder—not only geographically, but church-politically. Yet, thanks to the apperception of spiritual life that they had assimilated in childhood, they were able to overcome the rift that divided them, bringing us, their flock and children of the one Russian Orthodox Church, with them. Of all those depicted on the above photographs, Patriarch Alexy and Metropolitan Laurus were the last to enter eternity, the last representatives of a vanished world with which we were able to be in touch through them, yet leaving behind as an inheritance for us the precepts of that world: exemplary personal piety and zealous service to the Church. O Lord, give rest to the souls of Thy servants, the ever-memorable Patriarch Alexy and Metropolitan Laurus and by their holy

prayers help us to struggle for our salvation, to faithfully serve the Church, and to raise our children and grandchildren in such a way that they would grow to love Christ and His Church from their earliest years as ardently as those two wondrous boys, our beloved first hierarchs.

**By Elena PEREKRESTOV**

**THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AND THE REIGNING ICON** It is not without significance that His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus reposed during a weekend when the Church celebrated both the feast of the Reigning Icon of the Mother of God (March 15) and the Triumph of Orthodoxy (3/16 March 2008). It can be said that these two feasts tell the story of Vladika's life and his tenure as First Hierarch.

Our Heavenly Queen sent us her Icon on the day that God's Anointed was removed from the Russian throne (2/15 March 1917). This marked the beginning of events that eventually led to division in the Russian Orthodox Church. The Reigning Icon has been a sign of the Heavenly Queen's protection and guidance during the era of discord, confusion and trouble.

Last year the Feast of the Reigning Icon, the last day of Metropolitan Laurus's earthly life, was juxtaposed with the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the day of his repose. The Sunday of Orthodoxy celebrates the triumph of unity, truth, and peace. During Vladika's life the church experienced the painful period of discord, confusion and trouble. Through his efforts this period was ended by a great triumph of unity, truth, and peace when Eucharistic communion between the two sundered parts of the Russian Orthodox Church was restored. Memory eternal!

**By Reader Tikhon THOMPSON**