

LETTER TO FATHER HYACINTHE FROM THE PARISHIONERS OF ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH --- September 2013

For what remains in our memory, for what was accomplished in these, so short, three years, we wish to thank you. We are eternally grateful for the unfeigned love and respect that Father Hyacinthe showed by deed and concern for all parishioners. He did not single out anyone and did not refuse anyone, he was always ready to listen, help, bless, and pray for each of us. He gave us an example of humility and tact, extraordinary delicacy. He taught us to meet and bear misunderstanding, to give ourselves to brothers again and again, without demanding anything in return. He taught us to respect the opinions of others and to put our interests after the common good. Three times a doctor of science, by his example he taught us to learn and not to stop. He taught us true unity.

Few know how much Father Hyacinthe actually managed to accomplish for our community and for our church. He secured the resumption of funding for restoration and for the first time received money for the restoration of the church from the city government, he brought to perform for us the best musicians, he invited outstanding figures of the Church to minister to us and showed our Mass to the whole world, he taught singing and the presenting of papers, he arranged meetings with interesting people, he convened a Parish Council and blessed the creation of the Brotherhood to help the church, he arranged for sacred images and banners, he built a confessional, he started the custom of drinking tea together after Sunday Mass. But this is not the main thing. The main thing for us, for all of its parishioners, was how Father Hyacinthe preached, read Scripture with us using *Lectio Divina*, taught the truths of faith in the classes of Catechumens, and, of course, first of all, how he served the liturgy. Many foreign guests envied us aloud, saying: "Rarely in Europe, in Catholic countries, can one encounter such an inspired, such a wonderful Mass." But they did not understand the sermons! In our church, sermons were not just moral, not just intellectual and inspirational. It is precious to hear the words of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy within these walls and to see behind these words a love for what constitutes a treasure of each of us — the Russian culture.

Father Hyacinthe was able to change, in just three years, our very position as Catholics. Here, in the church of St. Catherine, guests came, they prayed and rejoiced with us, we became, thanks to his openness and sincerity, a part of something bigger than a small and closed parish community. He so wanted us to come back, so to speak, to Russia, which he loves and wants to know more than some of us.

In his farewell letter, Father Hyacinthe asked for forgiveness. Rather, you, Father, forgive unworthy us. Forgive us for not always understanding you. Forgive us for being of little help. Forgive us for not being able to unite. Forgive us for not being able to keep you.

You loved us and our church and became our loved one. You will always be our father, our pastor. Blessing your road ahead and wishing you success and the gracious help of God, we will keep within ourselves a grateful memory and a hope for meeting again. May the Lord and His Most Pure Mother keep you. Come back!