Celebrations marking 70th anniversary of liberation of Dachau concentration camp take place in Germany



On 3 May 2015, the celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp took place in the territory of the former concentration camp. The commemorative events are traditionally held on the first Sunday after April 29.

Taking part in the large-scale celebrations were representatives of Munich's major religious organizations, as well as public and political figures, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Minister-President of Bavaria, Horst Seehofer.

This year the celebrations concurred with the 20th anniversary of consecration of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Resurrection, located in the territory of the former concentration camp. This church, built to commemorate all those compatriots who had guiltlessly suffered and died in the concentration camp, was the first place of worship of the Resurrection Parish of Dachau and Munich.

As the website of the diocese of Berlin and Germany reports, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated there on May 3. Among those who were praying at the service were clergymen and lay people from the Orthodox parishes of Munich, Nuremberg, Ulm, and Kempten, as well as the Dachau camp survivors.

After the service the clergymen led the worshippers in a procession with the cross.

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The Dachau concentration camp was the fist concentration camp set up in Germany at the time of the Third Reich. It is notorious for severe tortures and medical experiments on prisoners. It was there, at the Hebertshausen shooting range, located two kilometers from the camp, that the mass shootings of the Soviet prisoners took place.

The Dachau concentration camp was liberated on 29 April 1945. Soon after that, the Orthodox Christians, its former prisoners, gathered to celebrate the Paschal Liturgy in the territory of the camp. A writer and public figure of the Russian émigré community, Gleb Rahr, who was a Dachau prisoner himself, wrote about this Divine service in his memoirs. In 1945 the Orthodox Pascha was celebrated on the 6th of May, concurring with the commemoration day of St Geogre the Victory-Bearer. The faithful made vestments out of sanitary towels for 18 priests and a deacon. Praying at the service were the Serbs, the Russians, and the Greeks. Notwithstanding the squalid conditions, that Easter Liturgy was an unforgettable celebration which made the hearts of the liberated people rejoice.

Nowadays the clergy and parishioners of the Resurrection Parish of Dachau and Munich (some of them are descendants of the Dachau prisoners) try to help preserve the memory of those who guiltlessly suffered and was killed in the Dachau concentration camp.

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