



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill conducts a funeral service for Archpriest Nikolay Gundyayev



On January 2, 2022, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Transfiguration Cathedral in St. Petersburg, and a funeral service was conducted for Archpriest Nikolay Gundyayev, the elder brother of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Father Nikolay passed away in the Lord on December 30, 2021, at the age of 81.

The coffin with the body of the newly departed Archpriest Nikolay Gundyayev reposed in the centre of the cathedral.

Placed at the coffin were wreaths from the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, Governor Alexander Beglov of St. Petersburg, the chairman and deputies of the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg, Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga and clergymen of the St. Petersburg metropolia, and a floral basket from the faculty and students of the St.

Petersburg theological academy.

Officiating at the Divine Liturgy was Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill prayed at the sanctuary.

Also praying at the sanctuary were Bishop Ignaty of Vyborg and Priozersk; Bishop Mstislav of Tikhvin and Lodeynoye Pole; Bishop Mitrofan of Gatchina and Luga; Bishop Siluan of Peterhof, rector of the St. Petersburg theological academy; Archpriest Sergy Kuksevich, secretary of the diocesan administration of the St. Petersburg metropolia; Archpriest Nikolay Bryndin, rector of the Transfiguration Cathedral in St. Petersburg; Archpriest Vladimir Sorokin, rector of the St. Nicholas Naval Cathedral in St. Petersburg; Archpriest Mikhail Gundyaev, rector of the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God in Geneva, Switzerland; Archpriest Alexander Budnikov, dean of the Vyborg church district of the St. Petersburg diocese and rector of the Church of St. Elijah in Porokhovye district in St. Petersburg; Archimandrite Alexey (Turikov), private secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill; Archpriest Gennady Bartov, rector of the Trinity Cathedral of the Izmailovsky Life Guard Regiment in St. Petersburg; Archpriest Lev Neroda, dean of the Toksovo district of the diocese of Vyborg; and other clergymen.

Among those who came to pay the last respect to Father Nikolay were his near and dear, clergymen, monks, nuns, and laypersons of the St. Petersburg metropolia, as well as Mr. Alexander D. Beglov, Governor of St. Petersburg.

After the Liturgy, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill conducted the funeral service for Archpriest Nikolay Gundyaev, at the beginning of which he said:

“We are ready to begin a funeral service for Archpriest Nikolay Gundyaev, the honorary rector of this holy church. As his own brother, I would like to say a few words about the deceased. What I am going to say about him, maybe no one else would, because usually it was left outside general knowledge.

“Father Nikolay was a very humble and modest man. A person of great abilities, with a talent to articulate his thoughts expressively in writing and speech, he had been, speaking in modern terms, in great demand. He used to be directly involved in working out all documents issued by the Church at his time. He often was the author of such documents, but they never came out under his name, because they were of the church-wide authority. He offered a hand to many archpastors, writing their messages and addresses, which they were to present as persons of authority in charge of important spheres of church life, while Father Nikolay was to stay in the sidelines. But this is what is important: one may stay in the sidelines, but the whole world will know about it. Aren't there such speechwriters, about whom all our country knows for whom and about what they are writing? Or is there a shortage of state and public

leaders without scruples trumpeting their importance? Unlike them, Father Nikolay stayed in the background of his own free will, and there were very few who knew that documents recorded in history as the church-wide ones were written by him.

“His talent was seen in his splendid sermons, thanks to which, I knew, many became Orthodox believers. It happened so that random visitors to the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, non-believers yet, having heard Father Nikolay preaching, would keep his words in memory and become his parishioners in the end.

“Father Nikolay was very modest in his service that physically was very strenuous. His talent for composing important texts was needed in Moscow, at the Department for External Church Relations. He was its deputy chairman, a professor of the Leningrad, now St.Petersburg theological academy, and the rector of this cathedral. His working schedule was this: from Monday to Friday in Moscow; lectures at the Academy on Saturday morning and the All-Night Vigil in at the Transfiguration Cathedral in the evening; Liturgy on Sunday morning and a night train back to Moscow. But when somebody, including myself, asked his immediate supervisors to let him spend at least Monday with his family in Leningrad, the usual answer was: “How could we possibly do without Father Nikolay? We have everything scheduled by the hour, and he is to be in at 10 a.m. on Monday.” Such had been his life for many years...

“I would like to say once again that he was a very modest and a very talented man, richly endowed by the Lord. But he never showed off his talents, nor put himself forward for awards; he never elbowed his way to occupy a more prestigious place; he always preferred to stay in the shadow, and he never strived for human glory. In a certain sense, Father Nikolay was an example for many of us, especially for those who knew his life style and state of mind. Yet if we draw a certain line and deduce an ‘average value’ of his service, it would be absolutely clear that among his numerous assignments and duties, the most important for him was to celebrate divine services and preach the word of God.

“A difficult old age befell Father Nikolay – not in the sense that he was overburdened by some external circumstances, but because he was pinned down by a grave illness. But until the very last moment, when he no longer could speak, there was an unusual light in his eyes. I came to see him a few days before his demise. When I asked him if he knew who I was, he could not articulate the answer, but his eyes lit up in a special way to let me know that he recognized me and was parting with me..

“I believe that many would pray for Father Nikolay. Now let us conduct the funeral service for this faithful servant of God. May the Lord forgive him his voluntary and involuntary sins and rank him among those deserving to inherit the eternal Kingdom of God! Amen.”

After the funeral service, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill thanked those attending for their prayers and all those who expressed their condolences, saying: “I would like to cordially thank all of you for your prayers and express my sincere gratitude to Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, for his condolences and the beautiful wreath he sent for the funeral. I think that the condolences of the President, the Governor, many clergymen and our Orthodox faithful have become a certain summing up of Father Nikolay’s life.

“Now he does not need any gratitude, he needs only prayers, and I ask all of you to pray for him at home and at church. Remember Archpriest Nikolay, the faithful and humble servant of God. May the Lord rest him in His heavenly mansions. Amen!

The coffin was carried to the Laura of the Holy Trinity and St. Alexander Nevsky for interment.

Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia/

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