



Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe conducts the Great Consecration of the church of Saints Barsanuphius and John in Auvergne



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On September 28, 2024, the Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe, Metropolitan Nestor of Chersonesus and Western Europe, conducted the great consecration of the church in honor of the Venerable Barsanuphius and John in Chavennon (Allier department, Auvergne region, France), built through the efforts of the sisters of the Monastery of the Icon of the Mother of God Znamenié in Marsena. The relics of the ancient Gallic saint, the Holy Martyr Benignus of Dijon († ca. 200), a disciple of the Holy Martyr Polycarp of Smyrna, were placed in the holy altar of the consecrated church, as reported by the Chersonesus Diocese website.

After the procession, Metropolitan Nestor anointed the holy relics with holy oil, placed them along with a certificate of consecration in a reliquary inside the Holy Table, and sealed it with mastic. The placement of the honored relics in the foundation of the Holy Table serves as a reminder that the Church of Christ was established on the martyrdom of the saints during the era of persecutions.

After the consecration of the church, the archpastor performed the ordination of the reader and parish

warden in Clermont-Ferrand, John Ghibert, to the rank of a subdeacon.

Then, in the newly consecrated church, the Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe celebrated the Divine Liturgy, during which he was assisted by: Protopriest Nikolai Rebinder, rector of the Three Saints Cathedral in Paris; Priest John Dimitrov, rector of the parish of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church in Vanves, who oversees the monastic communities in Marsena and Grassac; Hieromonk Amphilocheus (Besson), abbot of the Michael-Arkhangelsk Monastery in Auvergne (Archdiocese of Western European Parishes of the Russian Tradition); Priest Eric Prat, rector of the Church of Christ the Savior in Vichy (Archdiocese of Western European Parishes of the Russian Tradition); Priest Mark Andronikov, cleric of the Three Saints Cathedral in Paris; and clerics of the Paris Holy Trinity Cathedral: Priest Daniel Naberezhny, Hieromonk Irinei (Gribov), and Deacon Roman Onika.

The liturgical hymns were performed by a choir under the direction of Hierodeacon Dionysius (Volkov).

Present at the Liturgy were Abbess Anastasia (Zhomar) with the sisters of the convent, as well as numerous parishioners, pilgrims, and guests from various parishes in Central France.

Also in attendance were François Tarien, the mayor of Chavennon, and Jean-Marc Giro, the subprefect of the neighboring Montluçon.

At the end of the Liturgy, Metropolitan Nestor addressed those gathered with archpastoral words, congratulating the community on the consecration of the church.

In her response, Abbess Anastasia thanked His Eminence Nestor for the consecration of the church and for his attentive archpastoral care of the monastic community, presenting the Patriarchal Exarch with an icon of the Venerable Barsanuphius the Great as a gift.

Subsequently, the archpastor, clergy, parishioners, and guests of the celebration shared a festive meal held in the municipal reception hall in Chavennon.

The estate of Saint-Hubert, located within the administrative boundaries of Chavennon, is a former hunting lodge that was donated in 2006 to the Monastery of the Icon of the Mother of God Znamenié in Marsena of the Chersonesus Diocese for the construction of an Orthodox church.

In 2014, the convent established an Orthodox chapel on the estate, and a few years later, a church was built, which, with the blessing of Bishop Nestor of Chersonesus (now Metropolitan), was dedicated to the Palestinian desert dwellers—Venerable Barsanuphius the Great and John the Prophet. The church building was constructed in the architectural style typical of the local Allier region.

In September 2019, the painting of its walls was started (by the iconographer A.A. Belashov). According to the will of the founder and longtime spiritual father of the Monastery of the Icon of the Mother of God Znamenié, Archimandrite Barsanuphius (Ferrier; 1935-2018), the iconographic program of the frescoes was primarily dedicated to the holy fathers of the desert and the Old Testament righteous hermits.

Following the completion of the construction work, on September 28, 2024, the Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe, Metropolitan Nestor of Chersonesus and Western Europe, conducted the great consecration of the church.