



Christ is risen!

Dear Fathers, please bless! Dear Mothers, Brothers, and Sisters in the Lord, from all our hearts we thank you for your wonderful support.

When in 2013 we responded to the wish and blessing of Vladyka Mark, Father Basilius und Father Justin, and decided to create a movie about Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, we could not foresee the magnitude of, and challenges presented by that project.

The Saint lived during a period marked by revolutionary changes, which, triggered by the First World War, led to the Russian Revolution of 1917. He suffered through the traumatic turmoil caused by the end of the Russian empire, the Revolution with its bloody and unparalleled persecution of Christians, the establishment of a communist atheist regime in the Soviet Union and China, the Second World War, post-World-War Europe and finally the United States during the early sixties in San Francisco, a time already ripe for the Beatnik and Hippie movements.

Unsurprisingly therefore, it took many years of research and shootings to document the most important historical stations of the Saint's migrations and to interview some of his few still living fellow travellers in 10 countries and on several continents. We started in 2013 in the US, then moved to Serbia, Germany, Macedonia, France, the Ukraine and finally, in 2018 during Pascha, Jerusalem.

As time went by, we learned to regard the Saint ever more completely through the eyes of those who had known and experienced him in person. We realized that even the places where he lived during various periods had exerted a great influence on his development.

Our protagonist was a man of many vocations and responsibilities. He was a monk, a priest and true pastor, an ascetic, miracle worker, teacher, theologian,

prophet, and in his role as a bishop he became even an apostle. Gradually, our own focus became his mission as bishop and true pastor.

Jesus Christ was and is the first pastor. He delivered His missionary task to the Apostles, and they became the first bishops, who in turn would deliver this task to succeeding generations of bishops, up to our day:

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.” (King James Version, John 21.15)

The realization that Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, just as Saint Nikolai Velimirovic and St. Justin Popovic, the leading characters of our movie, were such true shepherds, to whom Christ had entrusted this pastoral office, and who watched over their flock by day and night, prayed, took care of them in the midst of extreme danger, took leadership during their exile in foreign countries, and that they all, just like Christ, were willing to suffer and to offer their lives for those entrusted to them, -- all of that eventually determined both the content and the title of our film: **„THE TRUE SHEPHERDS.“**

Such a decision also made sense in light of the fact that many of today’s bishops and priests are spiritual sons of those True Shepherds, and that they in turn have become models for many young priests of our present generation. Every historical period has had need of such True Shepherds. This holds especially for us, who live in a time of great confusion and an unparalleled apostasy even among Christians. Living during these “last times”, we depend even more on such great shepherds, on their love and their intercession before God, to Whom they are so much closer now, after having fallen asleep. How often are we tempted to forget that they are spiritually and with their love much more present to us now, after having fallen asleep, - if only we would ask them. Outside of our freely offered request, after all, they cannot become active for us, since respect for human will is inherent in the Divine love.

When we started out, we had planned a 60 minute TV documentation. But meanwhile our project has developed into a 90 -120 minute movie version. During those years, we have accumulated unique picture material about extraordinary persons and places. Our trailer and teaser already offers a 30 minute rough survey of that material.

Such a project requires immense efforts and causes enormous costs. The 70000 € needed for the movie project so far have been covered by our own resources and other private donations. Obviously, our budget would have been easily

double or triple, had not a great number of camera men, translators, cutters, speakers, the director, producer and other support personnel renounced either part of their pay or worked entirely for free. Significant help was also provided by additional supporters who accommodated us during our travels in lovely rooms, huts, houses and monasteries, generously took care of our needs and offered us transportation to close or distant locations. And each time we returned, in addition, with lots of gifts.

Beyond such help, we have been profiting from many prayers, advice, inspiration, useful tips and from the truly amazing enthusiasm our project has awakened. Without the help of God, obviously, we could never have been able to take on such a holy subject, and this is why those prayers are crucial for us. We want to thank you, dear Fathers and Good Shepherds in Geilnau, Unterufhausen, München, Buchendorf, Berlin, Stuttgart, Indianapolis, San Francisco, Platina, Ohrid, Charkow, Jerusalem, Belgrade and Milkovo! Please continue to remember us in your holy prayers and please join the many contemporary witnesses who were so kindly willing to help us before the camera and in all other ways in forgiving us for not being able to finish this great project sooner.

For getting the movie finished, depending on the desired length and quality, we still need to gather 90.000 to 150.000 Euro. This amount would cover the shooting trip presently undertaken from 17th to 30st May 2018 to the US, as well as further shooting trips to Shanghai, the Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, and, finally, post-production.

We plan to depart for Nyack on May 17 and are grateful for the generous offer, once again, of hospitality from Father George Larin, a former altar boy of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, and from his Matushka. On the 22nd we proceed to Indianapolis, and on the 25th we plan to fly to San Francisco, where we will stay until the 29th.

We are very grateful for any kind of support for this trip, whether by financial contributions, hospitality during our stay in the US, driving and other help.

In the next weeks we will also start a crowdfunding campaign from the website we are in the process of developing for our film project.

This is a first: Christians and people who are interested in Christianity are offered the option of supporting a unique Christian movie project which is realized without financial help from the mainstream media, the tv stations or official film subsidies, and thus protected against the atheist impact

inescapably connected with such dependencies. You can help realize this project e.g. by distributing the link of our homepage to friends, acquaintances, and potentially interested persons. In this way, information about the progress of our work can be gained, and there is also a link for donations. We are grateful for any amount of support, even if it is small.

This is also the first great movie project made by Christians for Christians and those interested in Christianity. The project is not oriented towards monetary gain. Any resulting profit will be invested in further Christian movies, again produced by Christians for Christians.

We hope that with God's help, through the intercession of our saints and with your active support this great project can be completed next year.

May this movie about those three saints, the pillars of contemporary Orthodox Christianity, become a corner stone for our future Christian movie and tv program. And may that movie become an inspiring source for strengthening love for Jesus Christ, for our saints and for the Church.

Christ has risen indeed!

Bank account:

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