



A JOURNAL OF ORTHODOX FAITH AND CULTURE

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The Cross

When you are granted
the ultimate privilege of
hanging on the Cross, and the
tears of joyful, liberating
pain flood your eyes, and
you taste the sweetness
and the perfect freedom
of dying to this life,
then you no longer feel
anger or rage, and
you know what it
means to forgive
everyone →

DEATH TO THE WORLD: AN ORTHODOX PUNK ‘ZINE REVIVED AND REVISITED

From Moscow to California, the following transcontinental interview features *Death to the World* editors John Valadez and Marina Crissman, with Geraldine Fagan, a British Orthodox journalist specializing in religious affairs in Russia and beyond. From differing decades, nationalities, and backgrounds, they trace the history of this little-known but widely influential Orthodox publication that has offered traditional Christianity to the punk sub-culture for over two decades.

RTE: John, can you start off by telling us what a ‘zine is, and about *Death to the World* in particular?

JOHN: If one were to walk through the doors of a concert venue and into the wall of people clad in leather and dancing to a blaring punk band screaming about some social revolution, you might be handed a black and white rough photocopied magazine by a mohawked youth filled with all sorts of art, social commentary, interviews from bands, etc. This is a ‘zine. The word is short for magazine, or sometimes called a fanzine. It’s a cheap way for people in subculture movements to spread their ideas and express themselves. The photocopier makes it all happen. There are no rules to it, it’s just usually text and images cut out and glued together to make up a photocopied version of a magazine that’s handed out at shows as a revolutionary manifesto. The

beauty of it is that people are able to make copies of their copies, thus the zines get circulated over and over again.

Death to the World brought something new to the table though, and I think this is why it continues to flourish. It addresses and explains a revolution that no other ‘zine touches on, at least not to this depth: a rebellion against the world through participation in spiritual life. It gives hope to subcultures that carry the banner of “no future.” It’s amazing, in fact, how many who

latched on to atheism and nihilism find *DTTW* and it opens their eyes to a much more serious and important side of themselves.

Death to the World looks like a classic ‘zine you would find passed out at a show or sitting in a record store, but flipping through it, people find the lives of martyrs, pictures of elders, and articles that give their rebellion meaning, or rather, transfigures their rebellion from a material one to a spiritual one against the snares of the world.

RTE: How did both of you become Orthodox?

MARINA: I was raised in an evangelical charismatic Christian denomination called Open Bible in Los Angeles, but I began to drift



John Valadez

away when I was about sixteen. I believed in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Bible, but the emotionalism somehow felt wrong. In high school I was very involved in the Christian punk scene. I’d go to the shows, listen to all of the bands and wore shirts that said, “Dead to the World,” “No religion, just Christ,” and “Religion kills, Jesus saves”. This was before I’d even seen the ‘zine, but I was already affected by it. When I finally saw a copy, I understood immediately what I’d picked up on.

After high school, I moved to Orange County, where my friend Turbo Qualls led a weekly Bible study for fifty young Christians interested in contemporary

art and punk music at Turbo's tattoo shop. John was a part of this also. This was part of a stream of alternative, counter-culture churches becoming popular in the evangelical circles.

GERRY: How did they differ from the usual churches?

MARINA: They were fairly unstructured and opposed to traditional forms of Protestant worship; a popular slogan was "No religion, just God." When one of the students at the Bible study converted to Coptic Christianity, Turbo, as the leader, was concerned about what his friend had gotten into and started looking into Orthodoxy. He was already acquainted with iconography from art history classes, and his investigation led Turbo and his family to convert at St. Barnabas Antiochian Church in Costa Mesa in November of 2004. He told us that he could no longer lead the Bible studies because he was beginning his own conversion. By the following June, John was also attending church with Turbo and had become a catechumen. I'd seen John's copies of the original *Death to the World* from the 90's and was curious, so I went to liturgy for the first time on July 17, 2005.



Marina Crissman

After that liturgy I knew that I wasn't going back to the Protestant church.

RTE: How did you receive your name?

MARINA: When I went to St. Herman's Monastery in Platina a few months later, the abbot gave us a box of old *Death to the World* 'zines. There was an issue in it we'd never seen before of a female saint smashing a demon with a hammer. I felt a strong connection to her story, but I also knew that I couldn't call her my patron just because I thought it was awesome that she'd smashed a demon.

In 2006 I was up at Platina again, and when I visited the nuns in Wildwood they asked me who my patron was going to be. I told them I wasn't sure, but I was thinking of St. Marina. Although they are on the old calendar, because I was at St. Barnabas they looked up the new calendar date on which I'd first gone to liturgy and the saint commemorated that day was Marina. So, I was chrismated Marina on Lazarus Saturday, 2006.

Around this time there was talk among converts at St. Barnabas about starting up *Death to the World* again—not only as a way to attract fringe young people to the Church, but as a publication for Orthodox as well. There's not much out there that really speaks to Orthodox teenagers and young adults.



Geraldine Fagan

RTE: What attracted you? I remember being intrigued by the original *Death to the World* because it was conceived and written by young novices and converts, who themselves had recently discovered Orthodoxy. It was fresh and passionate, and had started with the support of Abbot Herman Podmoshensky, who was always ready to bless inspired ideas.

MARINA: Yes. It was written by young converts who remembered the anguish of not being there. To read what people had gone through before coming to the Church made

you feel that you were part of a united front. Not that we necessarily knew each other, but we didn't need to because you felt that they were out there struggling along with you. The lives of saints and martyrs made us aware that no matter what we've gone through, the saints struggled harder. This shone a light on the physical reality of Orthodoxy— it's more than a belief or a feeling, it's a physical part of life. We were all tired of churches where people didn't seem to be searching for literal salvation, but had settled for feeling happy as the meaning of Christianity.

RTE: How did other people in your Bible study group react to your becoming Orthodox?

MARINA: About a quarter of the group converted; a small number fairly quickly, and others who initially said, “Good for you, but it’s not for me,” and then converted later. The majority, however, were very much against it. They’d been brought up to believe that Orthodox and Catholics are idol worshippers. They’d taken the scripture where Christ calls the Pharisees “hypocrites” to say that we shouldn’t concern ourselves with Church tradition, but just focus on our relationship with Jesus Christ. Tradition was external and unnecessary; you should talk to the Lord as your friend.

I’ve noticed that non-believers tend to have more respect for Orthodoxy than other Christians. They quickly pick up on the reverence and serious piety. Frankly, most mainline Christian churches have become a joke to non-believers. Why would I want to go to church that looks like a classroom and sing cheesy songs? With Orthodoxy, the church itself invites worship. There are psalms and scripture read with reverence, but without emotion, and deep spirituality in the sacraments. Orthodoxy has the roots people are looking for, not just someone’s random interpretation of what it means to follow Christ.

RTE: John, how about you?

JOHN: I wasn’t raised with any kind of Christian background, and came to it on my own. In high school I was involved in a Protestant punk scene in our area that kept me afloat. It was a community of musicians and artists that would come together at punk shows where Protestant bands with Mohawks and tattoos would play. I started attending Turbo’s Bible study and when Turbo converted to Orthodoxy I was working as his apprentice at the tattoo shop. At first Orthodoxy seemed weird because it was against everything I’d been taught as a Protestant (veneration of saints, the sacraments, etc.), but when I began investigating, I found that the bands I had followed all these years had used text from an Orthodox ‘zine called *Death to the World* in their songs. One band in particular, called “Headnoise” had cut articles out of *DTTW* and used them in their own ‘zines, but as Marina mentioned, the atmosphere of Protestant punk was “no religion, just Jesus” so the Orthodox aspect of *DTTW* was conveniently kept behind closed doors.

I felt deceived and upset that the truth had been hidden from me, so I tracked down where the original ‘zines had been made and got in touch with

Abbot Gerasim, the abbot of Saint Herman of Alaska Monastery. By this time, *DTTW* had been out of print for six or seven years, but he sent me a whole box of them along with the book, *Youth of the Apocalypse*, and I realized that the spiritual slogans I'd clung to for strength in the Protestant punk movement were also taken from *Death to the World*.

RTE: You mentioned *Youth of the Apocalypse*. Can you tell us about it?

JOHN: *Youth of the Apocalypse* was pretty much the book version of the 'zine. It is sadly out of print now, but we are working on printing it again. It was called a "virtual manifesto for the children of the eleventh hour" and addressed "the issues and social problems that are literally tearing apart the fabric of innocence." It is a book that contains at length what the 'zine didn't have room for. It says on the back cover that it deals with "... suicide, insanity, drugs, violence, art, the occult, the apocalypse; and finally with suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection." We hope to put it back into people's hands one day.

RTE: I hope so too. Gerry, can you tell us a little about yourself and how you came across *Death to the World* in England in the early '90's?

GERRY: I'm a British journalist working in Moscow, writing about religious freedom in the former Soviet Union. I've lived here for a decade and I converted to Orthodoxy in 2002 after coming to Russia.

I first heard about *Death to the World* around 1997—I'd just left university and was working at Keston College, an institute that studied religion in the former Soviet Union. I'd come into contact with a few Orthodox people through my work, and one day a colleague passed me an article called "Punks Turned Monks"¹. It was about these former punks who were now monastics in Platina who'd started this 'zine, and it was fascinating. I wrote to the address in California asking for all of the available issues and a copy of the book, *Youth of the Apocalypse*, and eventually a box turned up. Reading it was a revelation. Like Marina and John, I was very impressed by the freshness and genuine feeling. Everything else Christian that I'd come across attempting to appeal to young people had a fakeness about it. But *Death to the World* didn't have that. A few elements seemed very American to me—

¹ Frederica Mathewes-Green, "Death to the World: Punks Turned Monks", *Re:generation Quarterly*, January, 1997.

Opposite: Death to the World at the Cornerstone Music Festival.



DEATH TO THE WORLD

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Kill Zone

TIMELINE OF CHURCH HISTORY

What is Church in the 21st Century?



a bit too obvious, particularly some of the sentimental poetry—but otherwise, it was amazing. I couldn't believe that someone was combining Christianity and the punk scene.

MARINA: By the time you came across *Death to the World*, Gerry, it was already well-circulated in the Christian punk scene in America. There were even Christian punk bands with shirts that said, "Dead to the World" and "Dead to Sin." They liked how hard-core and real it was, but being Protestant they wanted to pick and chose: "We like being dead to the world, and not being afraid to die for our faith, but we don't like all those traditions and rules." They took the imagery of Orthodoxy without accepting the Church.

We knew the concept of being dead to the world, we just didn't have the tools to do it, but for you, Gerry, it must have been a real novelty to come across this ancient faith 'zine in the early 90's.

GERRY: We didn't have a Christian punk scene in Britain in the early 90's, so the combination of Christianity and alternative music seemed extraordinary. There was no crossover between Christianity and popular culture at all. Nothing credible, anyway. There was an annual music festival with evangelical Christian bands called Greenbelt, but no one serious about music would be caught dead there.

MARINA: Even in America in the early 90's there wasn't a big alternative Christian music scene. Most of the people writing for the original *Death to the World* were coming to Orthodoxy from no faith at all, whereas those of us who are coming now are just as hardcore about our music but we've grown up Christian. The Christian punk movement in 90's America was mimicking the earlier attempts to cross over. Later, with the 70's Christian hippie movement, it was the same beliefs and hokey songs you heard in church on Sunday, but this was our attempt to make it cool and with better music.

RTE: There was an authentic cross-over in the late 60's and early 70's by some edgy rock bands, particularly in West Coast Catholic churches that lasted for a few years but it was remarkable. I remember one Catholic church in San Diego that people drove for three hours from L.A. to attend, and then stood in the parking lot because the church was overflowing. There was real life there and a massive awakening, but later other churches co-opted it with well-meaning but hum-drum guitar masses.

What do you see as the difference between punk and the 60's and 70's counter-cultural movement? It seems to me that when the kids from the late 80's and 90's came around, they could see that the earlier idealism hadn't changed society to any great degree. This next decade of kids were more clear-sighted, but they were also more cynical, which hardens the heart.

GERRY: The punk movement began more as a protest against musical stagnation. The hippie stuff had developed into these huge rambling concept albums that were getting ridiculous, and there was a sudden reaction, a shock of people saying, "We don't want any more of this." It wasn't so much an ideology.

MARINA: It started with rebellion, and later people attached other ideologies to it.

RTE: So the 70's counter-culture had gotten too soft?

GERRY: By the time punk came along there wasn't really any idealism left. Many of the early 70's musicians had just gone off into drug-induced hazes. The punk scene was a protest against the indulgence of all that, a mixture of anarchy and anger.

MARINA: Yeah, it was like, "This isn't going anywhere, so let's just break it all down". Punk in the secular world was about being shockingly different, so the Christian punk idea followed: "We're supposed to be different from the world, we're supposed to be dead to the world, so we have to take people out of their everyday Christianity." That was why *Death to the World* was so important: the 'zine brought these ideas to the scene and made it hardcore.

Also, as you said, for many of us there was despair. I hadn't been going to church regularly for some time, and I was really upset at the spiritual emptiness in my life, but how to fill it? Young people have always wanted to find themselves, to discover who they are and not to just go with the flow. To be encouraged to be different from the majority was attractive, and the 'zine made you feel like, "I don't have to conform to what everyone else is doing."

GERRY: Those two spirits do mix together. I think what I found most impressive about *Death to the World* in the early 90's was that, because it really resonated, I could imagine people who were switched off by mainstream Christianity identifying with it. There are many people, like punks, who

might seem far from Christianity but are actually very close, and I'd never seen anything else approach them in the right way.

MARINA: I think people are also intrigued to see something that's so in-your-face and counter-cultural coming out of the oldest Christian church in the world. People have these preconceived notions that because Orthodoxy is old, it's legalistic and rule-oriented. What surprised me about the Church is that it has traditions and a lifestyle that you need to conform yourself to, but it's also practical. It's much less legalistic than the non-denominational church I went to growing up, and there's less quibbling over petty things. Because the Church has survived for 2000 years, people don't have to figure out how to interpret scripture, for example, it's already part of the tradition of the Church Fathers.

Just a few weeks ago here in Moscow, I was with a non-believing friend, and as part of our city tour we were taken into Christ the Saviour Cathedral. Without realizing it, the guide had brought us to see the church in the middle of liturgy. My friend just broke down. Within five minutes he had tears in his eyes, and went and lit a candle. I don't remember anyone ever walking into an evangelical church and feeling such a strong spiritual presence there that they were brought to tears. There's a spiritual reality here that you don't find anywhere else.

RTE: So when you read those first issues of *Death to the World* almost twenty years after their publication, they didn't seem dated?

MARINA: Not at all, which shows how genuine it was. The first 'zines are still classic because they dealt with the general issues that young people always deal with: loneliness, trying to fit in (or trying not to fit in), feelings of despair and not knowing who you are. These are the basic issues of youth and I don't think they really change, but they've become intensified because of higher divorce rates, the internet, drugs and social issues. Although punk music has become more varied, the music isn't all that different from what it used to be, and very different bands will claim earlier punk bands as their common influence. There's nothing else for Orthodox young people that has that edge, or that can bring young people without faith into the Church.

GERRY: There was a far greater shift between the 60's and 70's than between the early 90's and everything since. Before the early 90's, each particular style generation disassociated itself from the previous one, while people to-

day still respect things done in the early 90's, like grunge music.

RTE: Speaking of those early classic issues, there was a curious incident in the early history of *Death to the World* that you may not know about. In the mid-nineties, St. Herman's Monastery ran the Valaam Society Bookstore in Chico, California, dedicated to St. Sergius and Herman of Valaam, and readers of *Death to the World* were directed to the store to find mail-order Orthodox icons and books. In those years a soft-spoken and very reserved nun was taking care of the store and also sending out copies of the 'zine to people like Gerry who wrote for it. One day, two well-heeled men in suits and ties came in and after flashing their badges (as if she'd fallen into a bad 50's TV serial) informed the sister that they were from the FBI and had received a complaint from the East Coast about the 'zine. They were not familiar with it, and evidently only suspected something sinister because of the title. This was before internet and because it circulated so informally they hadn't been able to locate a copy. They stayed for the whole afternoon, interrogating her with "good cop-bad cop" techniques. That is, one would appear sympathetic and understanding while the other was sharp, rude and disbelieving of her answers. For all of her shyness the sister had a good head on her shoulders and spiritedly defended the 'zine as a modern purveyor of Orthodox patristic tradition. The agents finally left late that afternoon with several sample issues and were never heard from again.

JOHN: Whoa!

GERRY: Whoa, indeed!

RTE: John, after you and Marina were chrismated, what inspired you to restart the zine?

JOHN: After I received the first shipments of 'zines from the monks, I started going to punk shows to pass them out. When I ran out, I made copies or visited the monastery to get more. People started coming to the Church after reading them, and I felt there was a need for new issues. A week before my baptism, I went to the monastery and asked if the monks would do any more. Fr. Damascene said that it wasn't likely, but suggested, "Maybe you should start doing it at St. Barnabas." We began working, and after getting a blessing from the monastery we printed the first issue in eight years. We were stoked! I remember staying up all night with the smell of toner in my nostrils



THE LAST DEATH TO THE WORLD
The Last True Rebel

THE LAST DEATH TO THE WORLD
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watching those warm pages come out of the machine. We handed them out everywhere and even took the 'zine to the big Cornerstone music festival in Illinois a few months later.

MARINA: *Death to the World* wasn't something that the monastery had purposely stopped. They'd just become busy with other translation work, and some of the people working on it had gone onto other things, so it had been put on a back burner.

We put that first new issue together in April, 2006. It was mainly John, myself, and John Ma'ae, a Samoan subdeacon who is John Valadez' godfather. Mary Wellborn, who had come to the Church from the secular punk party-and-drug scene, wrote a poem about that inner void being filled in the Church. The theme of the first issue was Resurrection: we worked on it around Pascha just as we were getting chrismated and the 'zine itself was resurrecting. One of the first things we did was to make a website.

Our original office was in John's bedroom. His bed was tucked in the corner, and between his bed and the file cabinet was a big old copy-center style xerox that my Dad donated from his office. On the other side, a few feet away, was a huge desk with the computer and the layout. We had stacks of 'zines all over the room and we pulled some all-nighters before we drove from California to the Cornerstone Festival in Illinois.

RTE: A major difference from the early 90's *Death to the World* is that you've got technology now.

JOHN: At first there wasn't a big difference. We cut, pasted, and glued our issues together just like the original monks who had worked on it did, but recently we've started using photoshop. We haven't digitalized it, so it still has its classic look, but it's a little updated. Many 'zines now have become digital and you read them online, but we don't want to do that. We're trying to stick to its original style as much as possible because I think this is what makes *DTTW* so unique.

RTE: How do you fund it?

MARINA: The way the 'zine has always worked is that if you want to share it, you just pull the staples out and xerox it, or you can buy extra copies straight from us—you pay for the paper and a stamp. All of the money from the t-shirts and mugs goes back into making the new issue, paying for the

web site, and going to places like Cornerstone. It's also a good conversation starter when you're selling a t-shirt with a monk on it holding a skull that says, *Death to the World*.

RTE: Can you tell us about your experience at the music festival?

MARINA: We regularly go to Cornerstone, which is a huge annual Christian music festival in Bushnell, Illinois on the week of July 4 with over 300 bands from different genres. It attracts about 80,000 people a year from all over the country. Most of the punks are at the underground stage where the heavy bands play. Some of the original people involved with the 'zine had gone to Cornerstone in the 90's and this was how copies had gotten into the hands of early punkers. There was a Christian band that had a lyric in their song, "From war to war, death and genocide ...", a line taken straight out of *Youth of the Apocalypse*.

When we received the blessing to restart *Death to the World*, I said, "Too bad it's April; Cornerstone is only two months away, and it would have been a perfect way to start." John said, "No, we can do it!" We had two weeks to raise \$500, the price of a booth, so we convinced my parents to loan us the money and we did fund-raisers to pay them back.

We had our website up before we got to Cornerstone, and we printed stickers, posters and T-shirts to sell for gas money to get back home. The T-shirts had different designs. One was the old cover of *Youth of the Apocalypse*, that said, "*Death to the World: The Last True Rebellion*". We had another that portrayed Elder Nikodim of Mt. Athos with the *DTTW* quote of Saint Isaac on the back, and a third that had a picture of monks in a Pascha procession and the schema Cross on the back.

RTE: How did the Cornerstone folks react to you?

MARINA: Some were excited because they remembered the 'zine from years before and were asking for copies of *Youth of the Apocalypse*. A few thought it strange, but most were curious. There was a heavy metal band from Sweden called Crimson Moonlight that was very interested and they still receive it. At the end of the four-day festival, we had over fifty subscriptions. Now we have about 300, but the readership is much larger because the idea of a 'zine is that you xerox it and give it away. The subscriptions are just to pay for overhead. We don't get any salary.

When we returned the second year, we met people we'd talked to the year before who were now catechumens or had already become Orthodox through the 'zine, and it was a humbling experience. We wondered, "How can this touch anybody, when we're the ones working on it?" but through God's grace the message gets to people in spite of our flaws.

The second year, Fr. Nicodemos, a monk from Platina, was with us. We set up a tent next to our campsite with two wooden posts inside on which we hung icons of Christ and the Mother of God with burning lampadas. Fr. Nicodemos had brought the *Horologian*, the book of daily church services, and we printed out the services and icons for the saints of the day. We put up big posters with a church timeline asking, "Whatever happened to the Church of *Acts*?" with our booth number on it, and we did vespers, matins, and small compline every day. By the end of the week we had ten people who were coming regularly. The next year there were even more, and now there's a much larger network including Rainbow and Seth who are at St. Mary of Egypt in Kansas City.

That personal element in making contacts is essential. For example, I remember John giving me a crash course in Orthodoxy on the way to my first service: "We kiss icons but it's not like idol worship, it's just paying respect, and we cross ourselves but you don't have to cross yourself, no one will think it's weird, don't worry, and there's part of the service where we do bows and throw ourselves on the floor, but you can just sit there, it's fine, and we stand up in the service when we're not bowing down, but you don't have to stand the whole time, so if you get tired just sit down, and we pray to the Virgin Mary but it's not because we think she's our savior, but because we want her to pray for us to her Son, and you know that's not a problem either because she's God's mom, so it all makes sense, right? Good." After church, he and another friend came up and asked hesitantly, "So, what did you think? Are you freaked out?" I said, "No, I'm not freaked out. Of course I have questions, but I thought it was amazing."

JOHN: Last year at Cornerstone we had an entire Orthodox community of people who were catechumens or newly illumined. It seems to grow yearly as we meet more and more people. For us personally it is a test. The festival is in a very hot and humid environment with constant noise and busyness. We have to struggle like missionaries to maintain the spirit of the Church that we wanted to give these people. It is exhausting, but very much worth it. To

see people light up at the news of the Church is something I will remember for years.

RTE: Marina, I know that you've been to monasteries in the U.S. and now you are here in Russia. You still sport a very forward punk look. How do you find yourself fitting into more traditional Orthodox places?

MARINA: My first visit to an Orthodox monastery was in early October 2005, when I drove up to St. Herman of Alaska with John and Turbo. I'd just become a catechumen. I was going to stay with the nuns at St. Xenia Skete about fifteen miles away and I remember John saying, "You need to get a long skirt, take your lip ring out and no makeup." I was nervous because the only image of nuns I had were from movies, so I didn't know what to expect, but when I got there they were all wonderful and I didn't want to leave. I remember waking up and thinking that 5:00 AM was a terrible hour to have services, but I was wrong, of course. The services weren't as hard as I thought they'd be, and the reward you get is worth it.

RTE: Why did you come to Russia and how are you assimilating here?

MARINA: I'm in Russia now doing a summer study program. I've been studying Russian for three years and plan on transferring to a university to get my degree in Russian language and literature. I've always been interested in Russia and becoming Orthodox sparked my interest, especially in church history. I'm not sure if I'll be back here to live or work, but Russian is the only thing that got me back to school.

This is my first time being out of America, and before I came to Moscow, I went to the Kiev Caves Monastery in Ukraine. At the monastery guesthouse everyone speaks Ukrainian. They understood my Russian, but it took several tries before I understood them. I was given a room with two Russian nuns, Matushka Justina and Matushka Elena from Oriel, Russia. Before she entered the monastery, Matushka Justina taught Russian to foreigners and both of them speak a little English, so they showed me around. When they found out that I knew St. Herman of Alaska Monastery in Platina, their eyes got huge and they asked me about Fr. Seraphim Rose. I had pictures on my computer and pointed out Fr. Damascene. Mother Justina was very excited because he is the author of Fr. Seraphim's biography, her favorite book, which she's read several times, and they asked to copy my pictures onto their flash drive to share with their sisters. I had the same reaction from

the administrator of the guest house, who wanted me to tell him everything I knew about Fr. Seraphim. Americans have no idea how hugely important Fr. Seraphim is in Russia because he's often ignored by Orthodox in America. All of his books are translated into Russian and Ukrainian.

RTE: You have beautiful full-color icons tattooed on both arms, from your elbow to shoulder, of the Mother of God and of St. Marina beating the demon. How did the Russian nuns react?

MARINA: They never mentioned them. They certainly saw them in our room, but in the monastery I usually wore long-sleeves because I knew that some people might have a problem with them. I'm used to wearing a long skirt, sleeves and a head-covering at monasteries, and at church I do the same.

RTE: How do you answer people who object?

MARINA: I just let them know that I received permission from my priest at St. Barnabas in Costa Mesa who said that there was nothing specifically in the Church canons about whether or not tattoos are allowed. He said, "The Church hasn't voiced its clear stance on this, so I don't think I should either, because my opinion as a priest holds too much water."

RTE: What is it that makes St. Barnabas so attractive to young people?

MARINA: St. Barnabas is a convert church and everyone there knows what it's like to convert. Our priests and their wives were originally from the Evangelical Orthodox Mission and were received by the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese. Turbo and his family live near the church, so it was a natural choice for them, and others of us followed. It's also close to Biola University and quite a few students from Biola have ended up in the parish. There was a witch hunt situation at Biola a few years ago, where some faculty lost their jobs because of their Orthodoxy, but we have at least twenty young converts from Biola, and there are others who go to different Orthodox churches.

I'm also very grateful for my current parish, the Church of the Protection of the Holy Virgin, near my family's home in Hollywood, which is part of the Russian Church Outside of Russia. It was consecrated in 1965 by Metropolitan Philaret, St. John Maximovich (then archbishop of San Francisco), and Bishop Saava of Edmonton. We have two altars, two priests, and two liturgies every Sunday in Russian and English. We also have a vespers and vigil in English once a month. We are getting the best of the traditional Russian

culture, which is very important for converts, as well as English services. On feast-days there is only one service and the cultures mingle. Holy Week was a really good experience this year, with the scripture and stichera done alternatively in Slavonic and English. I understand enough Slavonic that I catch most of it, and having both communities celebrating together is the best. This is the only way that we converts can learn the real tradition.

RTE: Now that you've got this solid basis, where would you like to go with *Death to the World*?

MARINA: Because we were so new to Orthodoxy when we started republishing the 'zine, we wanted to be sure that everything was from a legitimate Orthodox source, so we ended up not having as much original material as the early issues. It was a safe move, but we might have been playing it too safe, as it lacked that fresh, immediate touch. This is where we want to take it back to now—more personal conversion stories and more original writing.

GERRY: That was easily the strongest thing about the early '90s issues.

RTE: I think you were courageous to start it up again. John, do you agree with Marina's assessment, and have you ever run into anyone who was involved with the first issues?

JOHN: Yes, I couldn't say it better. I am well acquainted with Fr. Damascene because we go through him when it is time to get a blessing for a new printing. I've had a little correspondence with Justin Marler who was on the ground with the first 'zine as a novice, but I've spent more time talking with Fr. Andrew in Alaska, one of the original writers for *Youth of the Apocalypse*. What they did through *DTTW* gave me a heart and inspiration for Orthodoxy.

RTE: What are your future plans for *Death to the World*?

MARINA: We want to get regular issues going again. There were twelve original issues and we've done ten more. We were zealous in the beginning and tried to do six issues a year, but now we do four issues with more content. Lives of the saints and teachings of the Church Fathers are great, but we also need personal stories that will connect the reader to living Orthodoxy.

Opposite: Booth chapel at Cornerstone Music Festival.

Red Top Scaffolding



I'd also like to see it break out of Christian circles and into the larger community. To do that we need to build a stronger network of people across the country. Bands have what they call "street teams," fans who leave leaflets or publicity fliers when they are going to be in your area, and I'm hoping we can work up a network of people who will drop the 'zine off at local colleges, coffee shops, art galleries, or stores that attract young people. People can take them to a concert and pass them out. We did some of this earlier and those things need to happen again.

JOHN: As Marina said, we are also trying to come up with fresh, original writing. I am working right now on an article from a man in Alaska named Magnus, who was recently baptized Orthodox as Joseph. He found Christ when he secluded himself in a cave in India on a spiritual quest. I pray that more stories like this will come our way so they can be included in the 'zine.

We hope to put up PDF web files of posters and fliers that people will be able to print out to promote the zine and inspire a close-knit fan base that will feed *DTTW's* message. There will be a site forum where people can create profiles and talk with one another. *Death to the World* has never been about one group of people, but about a universal search for Truth. This 'zine is not just ours, but everyone's. Everyone's help is wanted in it.

RTE: Speaking of *Death to the World* breaking out, Gerry, do you think that Russian youth would be interested in a Russian-language version?

GERRY: I have to say that Orthodox Russians I've shown it to, even people involved with punk, aren't particularly interested. I've given some issues away to visiting British band members, but it was mostly passed over by their Russian friends. This is because Orthodoxy itself was anti-establishment here during the Soviet period, so the combination of underground music and underground faith seems perfectly natural and nothing to get excited about. Russia doesn't have the western idea that Christianity is for "respectable" people who behave in a certain way, which is one of the things *Death to the World* challenges.

RTE: That's a good reminder. We can too quickly assume that what works for America is universal.

GERRY: Having said that, if Marina and John could do single-theme issues in Russian: material on Fr. Seraphim Rose or a western counter-cultural theme

like the “Rastafari Road to Orthodoxy” article from *Road to Emmaus*, this would work better than excerpts from the Fathers and the Lives of Saints, which are already deeply read here.

RTE: That’s something to look forward to. John, what would you like to say to end this?

JOHN: Like I said before, *Death to the World* is not just our magazine, but belongs to everyone who is searching for Truth in these nihilistic times. It helped shape who I am and that is what fuels me to bring it to others. It’s been a long road, but there’s so much more ahead. ✦

A note from John and Marina: Our website is: www.deathtotheworld.com, and anyone who is Orthodox or becoming Orthodox and would like to receive the zine or to submit something can e-mail us at: mail@deathtotheworld.com or send it by post to Death to the World, 3505 Cadillac Ave. G-3, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, USA. We continue to ask for your prayers and support and thank all of you who have helped us out from the beginning.

Following pages:

R: Marina Crissman’s tattoo of St. Marina beating the demon.

L: Death to the World at the Cornerstone Music Festival.



