

## **Baptism madness seizes Russians on Epiphany**



HRWF (23.01.2017) - This picture is symbolic of the relations between the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church: both are narrowly united to strengthen their mutual power. This picture perfectly illustrates the concept of "spiritual security" put in place in 2000 which consists in identifying the Russian people with Orthodoxy and rejecting any religious groups and non-religious organizations with foreign roots. The invisible spiritual security concept is the new Iron Wall built by Russia against the Western World and its values. It is more efficient than the Wall made of bricks and concrete during the Cold War because it is being built in and with the minds of the people in Russia. It leads to cultural and religious isolationism, to the banning of 'undesirable' 'foreign' groups (Jehovah's Witnesses and other peaceful religious groups) and to religious and ideological cleansing with the final objective of purifying the Orthodox lands.

### ***Putin visits St Nil Hermitage where at night he swam in Lake Seliger***

[Portal-Credo.ru](http://Portal-Credo.ru), 19 January 2018 - On 19 January the Orthodox Church celebrates one of the twelve chief feast days-the Baptism of the Lord, or Epiphany. According to a tradition that has been established in recent years in the Russian federation, on this day Russians participate in mass Baptism bathing.

On the night from 18 to 19 January, Russian President Vladimir Putin also bathed in a Baptism ice hole. He visited the hermitage of the male monastery of St. Nil of Stolobnoe, which belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate, and he plunged into Lake Seliger, Rosblat reports on 19 January.

His press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, reported that for Putin this was "not the first experience of Baptism bathing." "In the course of a number of years the president has

already plunged into an ice hole." Peskov added that this year the traditional Baptism freeze has not occurred in central Russia and therefore "the temperature in the region of the lake on this night did not go below 6 or 7 degrees below zero [Celsius]."

Social networks were not slow in reacting to this event. A Rosbalt correspondent writes that opinions varied: from "Muzhik [Mensch]," "Krasava [Bravo]," and "where else is there such a president, I am proud!" to "they heated the water in the lake with an atomic heater." (tr. by PDS, posted 19 January 2018)

### ***Around 1.8 million participate in baptism bathing in Russia***

[Interfax-Religiia, 19 January 2018](#) - Almost two million persons participated in mass bathing and services for the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord and their safety was guaranteed by more than 30,000 troops of police, an official representative of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs [M.V.D.], Irina Volk, reported.

"In the night from 18 to 19 January, more than 7,300 festive worship services and mass bathings occurred in the Russian federation, which were devoted to the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, in which around 1.8 million persons participated," I. Volk said.

She said that the securing of public order on territories near Orthodox churches and specially equipped fonts was provided by about 34,000 police personnel. In addition, around 2,500 troops of the Russian Guard were activated and also more than 11,000 representatives of national guards, cossacks, and private security enterprises.

"The security of religious events was ensured to the fullest. No violations of public order were reported," I. Volk emphasized. (tr. by PDS, posted 19 January 2018)

### ***More than 104,000 swim in ice holes on baptism in Moscow***

[RIA Novosti, 19 January 2018](#) - More than 104,000 persons have already plunged into ice holes during Baptism bathing on the territory of Moscow, and no incidents have occurred, a representative of the press service of the capital headquarters of the Ministry of Emergencies told RIA Novosti.

"As of 12:00 [noon], places for conduct of the ritual of Baptism bathing were visited by more than 166,000 persons, of whom more than 104,000 bathed," the news agency's source said.

He said that no incidents occurred during the time of Baptism bathing in Moscow.

"In the course of patrolling bodies of water along with agencies of internal affairs, five unsanctioned places of bathing were discovered and measures were taken to prevent access to them by citizens," the representative of the ministry added.

Approximately 1,300 personnel of fire and rescue agencies of the capital were involved in measures for guaranteeing the safety of people in places of Baptism bathing along with 335 technical units, including 16 hydrofoils. (tr. by PDS, posted 19 January 2018)

### ***Patriarch Kirill thinks that the feast of baptism opens captivating perspective before believers***

[Interfax-Religiia, 19 January 2018](#) - Patriarch of Moscow and all-Rus Kirill noted that the feast of Baptism opens special perspectives before Christians.

"The present day, which constitutes an integral part of the day of the Nativity of Christ, opens before us an especially captivating spiritual perspective: we know that we are not

alone in the face of grief and difficult circumstances and we know that God is with us," he said on Friday after the liturgy in the Epiphany cathedral of Moscow.

The patriarch recalled that it is no accident that in the Great Compline on the eve of the feasts of Nativity and Baptism these words are solemnly intoned: "God is with us!" The primate is sure that "the epiphany of the Lord in the flesh for the salvation of humankind is the turning point in all of human history."

"And you and I are heirs of all that the Lord accomplished and it is only required of us never to forsake him and never to permit that distrust would paralyze our thinking and our feelings and our will so that our prayer will always be sincere and heartfelt, and then the grace of God appearing in the Savior's coming into the world will accompany us on all paths of our life," he concluded. (tr. by PDS, posted 19 January 2018)

### ***Orthodox celebrate baptism of the Lord***

[Interfax-Religiia, 19 January 2018](#) - On Friday, Orthodox believers are celebrating one of the most ancient of Christian holidays, the Baptism of the Lord or Epiphany.

On this day Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River with which his ministry for humanity began. The word "I baptize" literally in translation from the Greek means "I plunge into water." Christ was baptized by the prophet John, who immediately recognized in him the Savior who was awaited by the Hebrew people.

The first mentions of the feast day date to the early third century; to be sure at the time it was celebrated along with Christmas and the two celebrations were separated only toward the end of the fourth century, although even now in some ancient churches these holidays are marked on the same day.

The eve precedes Baptism when believers prepare themselves by prayer and fasting for the upcoming celebration. Christians believe that in the night the water in all bodies of water on earth becomes holy and acquires miraculous healing properties.

In Russia, despite the traditional freezes, on this day baptismal bathing is conducted in specially equipped fonts, called "Jordans." Believers come to bodies of water and plunge themselves into the icy water, believing that thereby they will be able to be healed from spiritual and bodily diseases. This year the Ministry of Emergencies expects that about 1.5 million people will participate in Baptism bathing.

At the same time, representatives of the church remind them that immersion in the baptismal font is a pious ritual which should not be turned into showy action and that, when plunging into the water, it is necessary to seek not external health but inner and spiritual health.

The great consecration of the water is also performed on this day in Orthodox churches. By tradition, Patriarch Kirill performs the festive liturgy today and consecration of the water in the Epiphany cathedral church in Moscow.

According to ancient tradition, on the feast of Baptism it is customary to consecrate water not only in churches but also in open bodies of water. Priests of the Russian Orthodox Church will consecrate today all four oceans of earth in various parts of the world. (tr. by PDS, posted 20 January 2018)