

ORTHODOXY IN IRELAND

No Orthodox parish existed in Ireland before 1969. A small number of Russian emigrés arrived shortly after the 1917 Revolution, among them Nicholas Couriss later to be Ireland's first resident Orthodox priest. Several hundred Orthodox including Greek and Greek Cypriots settled in the country by the early 1950s. In 1969 a parish was established by the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR) with Father Nicholas as priest. A number of Irish were received into the Church. From 1971-3 he was assisted by Fr Michael Beaumont, University College Dublin lecturer and priest of the Moscow Patriarchate. Father Nicholas died in 1977 and with him the house chapel. The first Greek church was consecrated in 1981 at St Mary's, Mary Street, Dublin. In 1986 the building was declared unsafe. A mendicant period ensued. A permanent building at Arbour Hill was consecrated in 1994. The Greeks have house-chapels in Limavady, and Monasterevin. Their present congregation is multinational and numbers about 400. Oriental Orthodoxy is represented since 1995 by the Coptic Church with its church centre at Herbert Road, Bray, to the south of Dublin. They cater for some 80 Egyptian families and some Irish.

The late 90s saw an influx of people from Eastern Europe. The Russian Church (Moscow Patriarchate) began its services in 1999 with monthly Liturgies at the Greek Church Arbour Hill, but subsequently moved to premises at Harold's Cross Dublin in 2002, thanks to the Church of Ireland (Anglican). There are about 1,500 members of the church. They also have monthly Liturgies for members in Waterford, Cork and Galway. The Romanian Church came into being with its own priest in October 2000. From January 2001 Sunday worship took place in Belvedere College chapel in the centre of Dublin, courtesy of the Jesuit Fathers. In June 2005, the Church of Ireland made available their church at Christ Church Leeson Park, Dublin to the Romanian Orthodox community. On April 9 this year our fourth Priest in Ireland was ordained with responsibility for two new parishes in Cork and Galway. There are also occasional Liturgies in Tipperary, Tralee, Killorglin and Navan. This church serves about 1,500 in the Dublin area, about 120 in the two new parishes. Meanwhile, the Russians Abroad (ROR) have taken on a new lease of life with monthly Liturgies at Stradbally, Co Offaly in the middle of the country. The Antiochian Orthodox Church is the latest arrival, founded in 2004. They have just acquired a church building in Belfast, Northern Ireland with a community of 50. They have a second small parish in Dublin of about 10 members who worship courtesy of the Lutheran church in St Finian's once a month.

Father Godfrey O'Donnell

Romanian Orthodox Church in Ireland

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