

From St Bernadette's to Moscow

Letter from Sue Moorhen, Monday 19 November 2012

Dear friends, Well, I'm here and I managed to get to St Louis, one of the four Catholic churches in Moscow this morning, for mass in English! It was a lovely little place, with a mostly expat congregation.

There were a couple of items in their bulletin which I thought might interest you:

“St Louis church is not actually owned by the Church, but instead still belongs to the authorities. The church has been disconnected from the local district heating system because of its status; Fr Slava and the Church have been working on alternatives. Anyone interested in assisting in the resolution of this problem can contact ...(&etc). “ Actually the church wasn't cold so they may have found some temporary solution, but then, I was wearing a lot of clothes as it was only 1 degree outside! The other item I found interesting was this (more):

The parliament of the Czech Republic has voted to return Church property to the Catholic and other churches that was seized under the communist regime. The long awaited law will see just over 3bn Euro of assets (representing just over half their value) being returned to churches ... [the general secretary of the Czech Bishops' Conference said] ... “the administration of the money would not be centralised. It's very important to us that these properties will be divided between individual parishes, dioceses, orders and congregations. The management of the properties will be done locally, from the places where they are at,” he said. Asked about parish priests becoming, “managers more than pastoral workers,” Fr Holub said the Church is not in the situation, “where the pastor or the parish priest would ever be solely responsible for these things.” “After the second Vatican council we shifted a great deal of responsibility to lay people in the parishes so some economic or parish council will be responsible for many things. What we're trying to explain to society again and again, is that it's not the decision of one person in the parish, but it's up to the elected people in the parish to be responsible for it”.

I think our Czech brothers are going to have some interesting times ahead and will need our prayers!

The picture, is the famous St Basil's on the edge of Red Square. A really weird little place, just a series of tiny interconnect chapels and crypts at different levels. Completely painted floor to ceiling inside and out. Amazing. Closed from 1907 to 1999! All the best Sue.

