

Bangor Chaplaincy Thought for the Week

Amongst the expressions of Christian faith that came abruptly to an end with the collapse of the Russian Empire were religious processions. No longer would there be these visible, festive proclamations that God is with us in the ordinariness of our lives in the streets of towns and villages, in the civic centres, amongst the poor and the wealthy, amongst those with faith and amongst those with neither faith nor hope.

Such processions also took place at times of crisis. There had been famous processions around Kazan with the Seven Lakes Icon - in 1654 when 400,000 people had been killed by a plague in Moscow and already 40,000 had died in Kazan and again in 1771 when another pestilence had attacked Kazan.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the new government embarked on its attempted elimination of all religious faith and practice throughout the U.S.S.R., and this applied to all religions. By the 1930s, no more than 3,000 churches remained open of the 50,000 that existed before the Revolution, and only a hand-full of the 1,000 monasteries were still open.

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And times changed, and the hope of the babushki was realised. Churches reopened and the