

Isabel Florence Hapgood (1851-1928)

Observed 26 June

Isabel Hapgood grew up in New England in a family settled there since the 17th century. During the course of her education, she became fluent in many languages, but was especially drawn to Russian. Thanks to her skill as a translator, the English-speaking world was treated to Dostoevskij's masterwork, *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as many other influential literary works. To quote Marina Ledkovsky, "She was a formidable lady of many talents and vocations: a polyglot-translator of works by great literary masters, a prolific journalist and writer, a successful lecturer and administrator, a moral crusader, an organizer of charitable work, a liturgical scholar ..." Around the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries there was widespread and profound interest in English and Episcopal church circles in uniting with the Russian Orthodox Church, with which there had always been deep affinity. Hapgood fostered that affinity by her work of translation and appreciation. A devout Episcopalian, she had a fierce devotion to the ideal of Christian unity. During her early travels in Russia, she fell in love with Orthodox liturgy and befriended many clerics. Her book of Orthodox liturgical texts is still indispensable among both the Orthodox faithful and scholars of liturgy. It is referred to simply as 'the Hapgood'. Her decision to translate this vast store of Orthodox liturgical texts was partly for the benefit of the dialogue, but most importantly for the benefit of the Orthodox faithful immigrating to America and losing their original languages. She appreciated the commitment of the Orthodox tradition to worship in the language of the people, which had been an inspiration to the originators of Anglican liturgy. The work of translation took 11 years for which she received almost no pay, calling it her gift of love to the Orthodox Church. The astonishingly prolific translator traveled frequently and extensively in Russia, where she became friends with Tolstoy, spending an entire summer at his country estate. Later she was instrumental in raising a great deal of money in America to aid the author's efforts to provide relief for the victims of the Russian famine of 1891-2. Her last trip to Russia ended with the Russian Revolution, which she barely escaped only. The imprisonment of the Patriarch of Moscow prevented his planned review of the second edition of her book of liturgies. Hapgood is remembered with gratitude and love by the Orthodox faithful throughout North America. Although she is much less well known among Episcopalians, we too owe her a great debt of gratitude for opening to us the beauties of Eastern liturgy which have enriched our own liturgical growth since the early 20th century.

Lessons Isaiah 6:1-5; Psalm 24; Revelation 5:8-14; John 17:17-23

Collect Loving God, we thank you for the work and witness of Isabel Florence Hapgood, who introduced the Divine Liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church to English-speaking Christians, and encouraged dialogue between Anglicans and Orthodox. Guide us as we build on the foundation that she gave us, that all may be one in Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, unto ages of ages. Amen.

SERVICE BOOK OF THE HOLY ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC (GRECO-RUSSIAN) CHURCH

COMPILED, TRANSLATED, AND ARRANGED FROM
THE OLD CHURCH-SLAVONIC SERVICE
BOOKS OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH,
AND COLLATED WITH THE
SERVICE BOOKS OF THE
GREEK CHURCH

BY

ISABEL FLORENCE HAPGOOD



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