



Protodeacon Peter Metlenko

Peter Metlenko was born to Alexandra Safonievna (née Rekin) Metlenko (1906-2001) and Ioan Iosefich Metlenko (1898-1988) on 12

July 1938, in Kuldja, Xinjiang Province, China. His parents were of Cossack descent and upon illegally crossing the Chinese border from Russia in the 1930s, settled as farmers near Kuldja.



Peter received an elementary education and worked as a miller until at the age of 22 he decided to surreptitiously leave China, making his way to Shanghai. From Shanghai, he reached Hong Kong where he was able to secure sponsorship to bring his family from China. They finally arrived in Australia on the MS Anking on 31 February 1961.



In 1965, Peter married Elizabeth Elkin, who was also a recent Russian migrant from China. Together they had three children - John (Vanya) (1965), Daniel (1966), and Alla (1972), and more recently five grandchildren - Adrian (1995), Justin (1998), Emilia (2002), Juliana (2006), and Anastasia (2008).



Upon arrival in Australia, Peter settled in Dandenong, where a community of Russians emigrating from the Xinjiang Province was growing. At first, some of the new arrivals joined the Melbourne church choir and children attended the parish school. As the community grew, and to continue retaining their Orthodox traditions, Bishop Anthony of Melbourne offered the suggestion to new migrants to set up their own community. In 1962 it was arranged for clergy from the Melbourne parish to visit Dandenong. At first, services were held in private houses and then a more permanent place was found in the garage of the private home of Peter and Elizabeth Metlenko for several years.

After a few years and great efforts in fundraising for the purchase of land for a permanent traditional Orthodox church to be built, in the early 1960s land was finally purchased. Soon after, a building was erected for use as a temporary church while architectural plans

were being prepared for the current church of Our Lady's Dormition, located on Morwell Ave, Dandenong. Peter Ivanovich became closely associated with the foundation of the parish in Dandenong, where he was the Churchwarden and Reader and on 22 August 1982 Archbishop Paul Pavlov ordained him to be deacon for the new parish of Our Lady's Dormition in Dandenong.





Their second son Daniel also became a clergyman. He graduated from the Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville, USA, in 1993 and was ordained to the diaconate by Archbishop Laurus Skurla, that same year. In 1997, Archbishop Hilarion Kapral ordained Fr Daniel to the priesthood, and he has since served at the St Vladimir's Church in Centennial Park, Sydney.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of Fr. Peter's ordination Archbishop Hilarion Kapral petitioned the Synod of Bishops to elevate him to the dignity of protodeacon. This was done on 28 August 2002. (Decree No 8-9, 28 Aug. 2002).



In 2003, together with his son Fr. Daniel, he travelled to Russia for the first time. In June 2007, he returned to Russia, shortly after the unification of ROCOR and the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as visiting parts of China. During this trip, he met up with some of his grandchildren and attended his nephew, Boris Metlenko's wedding in Siberia, now deacon Boris.

Shortly after returning to Australia, Fr. Peter experienced a stroke, which affected his speech and ability to serve. A few years later, in 2010, together with his wife matushka Elizabeth they moved from Dandenong, Victoria to Sydney, NSW. Fr. Peter attended and lived at St. Vladimir's Church in Centennial Park, NSW with his son Fr. Daniel and his family, while his wife was cared for at the St. Sergius Russian Aged Care in Cabramatta. Two years later, after a cancer diagnosis, he too moved to the aged care centre to join his wife and receive additional care.



In August 2022, his oldest grandson Adrian, got married. Already in quite a frail state, he attended the wedding where he was able to meet much of his extended family who were also in attendance (this would be his last outing). A few months later he was overjoyed by the news of them expecting his first great-grandchild - but with his quickly deteriorating health, it was uncertain they would ever meet.

On 24 July 2023, Fr. Peter met his great-grandson, Seraphim Metlenko, and in his presence asked for the prayer "Now release Your servant" to be read. A month later, on 24 August, Protodeacon Peter Metlenko passed peacefully in the presence of his family.

