



## FROM THE FATHERS

“HE WHO was engendered before the morning star, without mother from the Father, hath today, on earth, been born without father from thee. Whereupon a star announceth the good tidings to the Magi, and angels with shepherds sing songs of praise to thy miraculous Son, O full of grace.”

RIGHTEOUS ROMANOS THE MELODIST, SIXTH CENTURY

“THOUGH coming in the form of man, yet not in everything is He subject to the laws of man’s nature; for while His being born of a woman tells of human nature, virginity becoming capable of childbirth betokens something higher than man. Of Him then His mother’s burden was light, the birth immaculate, the delivery without pain, the nativity without defilement, neither beginning from wanton desire, nor brought to pass with sorrow. For as she [Eve], who by her guilt engrafted death into our nature, was condemned to bring forth in travail, it was meet that she who brought forth Life into the world should accomplish her delivery with joy.”

SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, + 394 A.D.

“ESTEEM NOT the words of the shepherds as mean and despicable, for from the shepherds Mary increases her faith, as it

follows: *Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart* (Luke 2:19). Let us learn the chastity of the sacred Virgin in all things, who no less chaste in her words than in her body, gathered up in her heart the materials of faith.”

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN, + 397 A.D.

“FOR WHOM they [the Angels] ask peace is explained in the words, *of good will* (Luke 2:14) - or them, namely, who receive the newborn Christ. For there is no peace to the ungodly (Esaias 57:21), but much peace to them that love the name of God” (see Psalm 118:165).

VENERABLE BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

“LET US MARVEL, O Christians, at the voluntary self-abasement for us of our great God and Saviour; but this is still too little. Let us stand in growing reverence before this self-abasement of His, but even this is not sufficient. *Let this mind be in you*, the Apostle teaches us, *which was in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 2:5). You also come to have the same feelings as Jesus Christ had; be disposed just as He was disposed. What does this mean? The Apostle himself explains this, stating just before the cited quotation: *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than himself* (Phil. 2:3). From this it can be seen that he teaches us the example of Jesus Christ, not to place ourselves on high and not to exalt ourselves with any prerogatives, but to humble ourselves, both within ourselves and before others.”

ST PHILARET, METROPOLITAN OF MOSCOW, + 1867 A.D.

# The Light of Understanding

THE EVER-MEMORABLE ARCHBISHOP AVERKY  
OF SYRACUSE & HOLY TRINITY, + 1976 A.D.

DEEP DARKNESS covered the earth. Everything was wrapped in sleep; quiet reigned everywhere. Only the shepherds were keeping vigil in the fields. And suddenly the heavens were torn asunder, an ineffable light shone upon the earth, a countless host of the angelic choirs appeared, and their wondrous hymn, which hitherto had been unknown to men, their song of unheard of beauty, was heard: *Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men of goodwill.*

Such an impenetrable darkness, like the darkness of the Bethlehem night, then enveloped all mankind in a moral sense. On the earth evil had reached the furthest limits. Life without God, without His wise and saving precepts, had brought people, who had become coarse and depraved, to a state wherein, as the Scriptures say, they could be compared to the mindless cattle, and had become like unto them (see Ps. 48:21). And in this way does not life become solely for the body, life for the stomach, life without any higher striving whatsoever, as if it had no rational purpose at all? And it had indeed lost all meaning, had broken its moorings and had become empty and needless. At that very time animal self-centredness, spreading without limit, led to a fearful enmity and hostility between peoples. Faith even in the pagan gods was almost totally eroded. The intelligentsia considered the gods a figment of folk fantasy; even the pagan priests could not be restrained from jesting as they conducted the pagan rites. The former heroism of the ancient Greco-Roman world no longer endured and was

past; everything was sinking into the crudest self-interest, luxuriating, indulgence and the pleasing of the flesh. There was no vice, not even the very vilest offence, which was not committed boldly and openly by everyone at every turn and everywhere. The writers of that time depict the situation then in these very same terms. The better people of those times literally choked in this dreadful atmosphere of faithlessness and moral depravity, and with raised voices declared that it was impossible to continue living in this way, and that there could be no salvation for mankind if God Himself did not come down to earth and deliver the people from the dreadful catastrophe which was obviously impending. And for many the only rational way out from this tortuously oppressive situation seemed to be to violently cut short their lives by way of suicide. Clear-sighted people were bound to conclude that they completely lacked the means even to contrive some sort of bearable life without God. Plato, the renowned pagan philosopher of ancient times, was remarkable in this respect; he wrote that there could be no order on earth if God Himself, concealed under the appearance of a man, did not make clear to us both our relationship with Him and our mutual responsibilities to each other.

And then, when this awesome darkness with its sinister gloom had enveloped all mankind, which was already beginning to despair of its salvation, there came *the fulness of time* (Gal. 4:4), fore-appointed from all eternity by the God of times and seasons. Then *the great mystery of piety* (1 Tim. 3:16) was accomplished. ***God sent His Only-begotten Son. God appeared in the flesh and dwelt among men.*** The brightly shining star of Bethlehem and the Angelic chanting proclaimed to the people the dayspring of the Sun of Righteousness, which illumined the whole world with His Divine Light, dispersing the sinister darkness. The Only-begotten Son of God Himself came down to earth and became man, while yet remaining God. He gave us ***light and understanding, that we might know the True God and that we might be in His True Son, Jesus Christ*** (see 1 Jn 5:20). He brought to earth that desired, sweet peace, for which the soul

of man yearned, while not comprehending or knowing how to find it. He came to reconcile man with God, and *preached peace* to us, to those far off and those near (see Eph. 2:17), reconciling us one with another and with our own consciences. On account of this, that peace became the fundamental and distinguishing mark of every true Christian, being made in Christ a genuinely ***new creation***, through an unalienable blood kinship. This, *the peace which passes all understanding* (Phil. 4:7), which transcends all knowing, which is more exalted than the comprehension and mental grasp of man, fills the soul with an inexpressible blessedness; this is indeed that very Kingdom of God, which our Lord Jesus Christ came among mankind to establish, and which, according to His word, is within us (Luke 17:21).

To the extent that the faith of Christ penetrates into people's souls, to that extent this peace is established as a characteristic of their lives. The people who come closer to Christ, those who more sincerely and more ardently believe in Him, and those who strive more to realize in their lives His good precepts, such people delight in a fuller and more perfect peace.

But what do we see today?

Mankind has reverted to mindlessness. What occurs in the world today vividly reminds us of a depiction of life on earth before the Birth of Christ. In the majority of people we see the very same lack of faith, the same dissipation, the same brutish ideals, egotism, mutual antagonism and envy, the very same loss of the purpose of life.\*

But isn't all this even worse in comparison with what happened before?

Bear in mind that then mankind was pagan; it did not know of Christ the Saviour and His exalted teaching; it was buried in the most profound religious and moral darkness. And now? All these things are happening amongst Christian people, or, at the very least, among people who have heard the preaching of the Gospels, who

have known of Christ, who are acquainted with His Divine teaching. The power of evil must have reached such an inconceivable force, that it has torn such people away from Christ and cast them into such a terrible abyss, not only of faithlessness, but of desperation, manifest satanic hostility towards God and of loathsome moral dissipation. Is it not to contemporary mankind that the stern warning of the holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews refers: ***For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it... which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned*** (Heb. 6:7-8).

But now Christ does not come to save us. He came for that once only, and once and for all showed us the everlasting and unchanging path unto salvation. He who has no desire to follow it can only blame himself for his own perdition. Nor will there be a thousand year reign of happiness upon the earth, as the sectarians falsely aver. Such a teaching is contrary to the Word of God and is decisively rejected by the Church.

Now Christ comes a second time not to save the world but to judge the whole world, ***to judge the living and the dead.***

The first time He came in self-abasement, giving us an example of humility, but now He will come ***in His glory and all the holy Angels with Him*** (Matt. 25:31). This will no longer be the bountiful condescension of God to an unhappy and despairing people, but the Dread Judge coming upon a transgressing arrogant people, who knew of God and stupidly and high-mindedly rejected His holy precepts. And if the first Christians, celebrating the First Coming of Christ into the world, always raised their minds up to His glorious and dread Second Coming, which they awaited with anticipation, then all the more is it essential and indeed indispensable for us, Christians of these times, to reflect upon it, when every day there are observable signs, as recorded in the Gospels, that it is drawing nigh. All our life on earth must be for nothing else, but only to prepare with the utmost care for that great and glorious ***day of the Lord*** (Acts 2:20). The all-evil enemy, the en-

emy of man's salvation, knows this and he strives in every way to extinguish within us this salutary thought. What arguments, apparently fine pretexts and stories does he not put forward, so that he might turn the Christians of our times from the thought of the Second Coming of Christ! And he succeeds in this. Many now say this, and it is dreadful to relate, they do so even with a smirk; and even clergymen rarely avoid conversations of this type. Yes, the enemy has firmly rivetted the thoughts and feelings of contemporary people to the earth, and does not want them to think of eternity. Isn't this very thing a true sign of the imminence of the Second Coming? We need only recall the words of Christ: ***As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be; for as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*** (Matt. 24:37-39).

Let such a perilous disposition of light-mindedness and carelessness be driven far from us! As we radiantly and joyously celebrate the First Coming of Christ into the world, let us also radiantly and joyously await His Second Coming, and let us live with this anticipation as did the Christians of the first centuries. And for this, so that it will truly be joyous for us and will open unto us the entrance into a blessed eternity, let us dedicate the remaining time of our earthly lives to the labours of repentance and intensified preparation of ourselves so that we might be vouchsafed ***to stand before the Son of man*** (Luke 21:36), and to give ***a good defence before the dread judgment seat of Christ*** (supplicatory litany).

*\* This homily was published by Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, in Russian as one of a collection of Archbishop Averky's sermons, dated 1951-1960, though no specific date is given for the piece itself. However, if such was his appreciation of the state of things in the 1950s, what a dire state the world is in now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century!*

# Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

## Explanation of the All-Night Vigil continued

**§ 31. The Chanting of the Verses on “Lord, I have cried.”** After the Little Litany, the choir chants: *Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me; attend to the voice of my supplication when I cry unto Thee. Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee, the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice... Bring my soul out of prison that I may confess Thy name* (Pss. 140, 141, 129, 116, & 122). Interspersed with these verses from the Old Testament, there are verses, hymns with a New Testament significance, which honour the persons or events celebrated on that day. During the chanting of these psalmic and festival verses, the deacon censes the sanctuary, the Royal Gates, the iconostas and the whole church, recalling the offering of incense in the Old Testament dispensation. The very last hymn is addressed to the Blessed Mother of God, and expresses the dogma of the incarnation from her of the Son of God, and for this reason it is called the Dogmatic Theotokion.

**§ 32. The Entrance at Vespers.** During the chanting of the Theotokion, the Royal Gates are opened, and the priest, like the promised Saviour, proceeds forth from the sanctuary, led by the deacon with the censer. After the exclamation, *Wisdom! Upright!*, he re-enters the sanctuary through the Royal Gates and goes to stand in the High Place. During this short ceremony, the choir chants a hymn which dates back to the first ages of Christianity: *O joyous Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy,*



*blessed Father, O Jesus Christ: We that come to the setting of the sun, when we behold the evening light, praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God. Meet it is for Thee at all times to be praised with gladsome voices, O Son of God, Giver of life. Wherefore, the world doth glorify Thee.*

**§ 33. The Prokeimenon and the Paremia.** After this hymn, the prokeimenon is intoned. This consists of short psalmic verses which introduce readings from the Holy Scriptures or [on days when these are not appointed] the rest of the service, and they emphasise the content and effect of the readings that follow, or simply point out the significance of the celebration of the present day. At the end of the prokeimenon, on the greater feasts, the *paremia* are read. The word *paremia* derives from Greek, and it means the proverbs or allegories. Those lections appointed for use at Vespers are usually sections from the books of the Old Testament, in which the subject of the feast being celebrated is either prophesied or foreshadowed, or the reason for the saints commemorated being lauded is made clear. After this, we have both the threefold and the supplicatory litanies.

**§ 34. The Threefold Litany.** [Often referred to as the **Litany of Fervent Supplication**]. This litany begins with the following three petitions:-

1) *Let us all say with our whole soul and with our whole mind, let us say:*

2) *O Lord Almighty, the God of our fathers, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.*

3) *Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.*

To the first two petitions, the choir responds, **Lord, have mercy**, and thereafter to each petition they respond with a threefold **Lord, have mercy**, and it is for this reason that the litany is called the Threefold Litany or the Litany of Fervent Supplication.

Further on we have petitions for ***all pious and Orthodox Christians***; for the Episcopate and the clergy; for ***our Sovereign Lady*** and all ***her Royal House, this country and the faithful that dwell therein***; for the ***blessed and ever-memorable founders of this holy house, our fathers and brethren gone to their rest before us, those that lie here and the Orthodox everywhere***; for ***mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, pardon and remission of sins of the founders and benefactors of this holy house, and for the servants of God who celebrate this holy feast***; for ***those who bear fruit and do good works in this holy house*** (that is those who give of their money, time or work to help keep the church running), ***those that labour*** (again this refers to those who contribute by their work to the church or serve therein in some capacity; in ancient times it also referred to those who gave burial to the bodies of those slain for the Faith) and ***those that chant, and the people here present, who await of Thee great and abundant mercy.***

The priest, confessing the goodness and love for man of God, ends the litany with the exclamation: ***For a merciful and man-befriending God art Thou, and unto Thee do we send up glory...*** In so doing he both inclines God to bestow the good things for which we have besought Him, and on the other hand he strengthens the hope of those praying with him that they will indeed receive these blessings.

*.... to be continued with "The Supplicatory Litany."*

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*We greet all our parishioners, supporters and readers on the approaching festivals of the Saviour's Nativity and the Holy Theophany. May the spiritual joy of these celebrations sustain you throughout the Coming Year.*

# HOMILY ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY NEW THREE HIERARCHS,

PHOTIOS THE GREAT, GREGORY PALAMAS,  
AND MARK OF EPHESUS

First Sunday in November, 3rd November, 2014 (o.s.)

## GENUINE ORTHODOXY IN VIEW OF THE CHALLENGE OF 2016

*† Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

Reverend Fathers and Brethren;  
Venerable Elders, Monks, and Nuns;  
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

### **1. The True Orthodox Church and the Heresy of Ecumenism**

Today, the First Sunday in the month of November, we yet again render common honour, common glory, and common gratitude to the Holy New Three Hierarchs: St Photios the Great, St Gregory Palamas, and St Mark of Ephesus. They have been the special Patrons of our Holy Metropolis since 2005, and also our peerless guides—as they are, to be sure, of all Genuine Orthodox Christians—in the sacred endeavour of our struggle against the heresy of ecumenism.

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This past March—March of 2014—as is now well known to all, our Lord, in His love for mankind, blessed our Church, the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece with unity. This God-pleasing Union was based on a very important theological and, to

be precise, ecclesiological document. In this document there is a meticulous and detailed analysis of, *inter alia*, the syncretistic pan-heresy of ecumenism, and also of so-called “official” Orthodoxy and, of course, of the True Orthodox Church. Our Church is the Genuine Orthodox Church; it is the now united Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece. Our Church is not to be identified with so-called “official” Orthodoxy, which consists of the official local Churches, since their Episcopal leadership officially espouses the ecumenical movement, and participates synodally, unwaveringly, and unrepentantly therein. The Genuine Orthodox Church is unable to have any prayerful, mysteriological, or administrative communion with those who resolutely promote the syncretistic panheresy of ecumenism. This newly manifest heresy abolishes the exclusivity of the Orthodox Church and acknowledges the ecclesiality of heretical communities, as well as the validity of their mysteries. In other words, by means of this heresy Light and darkness are put on the same level and mingled together, such that every heresy supposedly finds a place within the bounds of the Holy Church.

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## **2. The three principal heresies of Papism**

In Her steadfast and resolute stand, that is, of refraining from communion with the ecumenists, the Genuine Orthodox Church has as Her unerring guides the New Three Hierarchs, who in their day faced similar situations and challenges, namely, the grave danger, deriving from the West, of the pan-heresy of Papism. In two major Synods, which were convened in Constantinople in the ninth and fourteenth centuries, respectively, and which are justly and rightly characterized as Œcumenical, the three principal Western heresies were condemned: the heresy of the Filioque, the heresy of Papal Primacy, and the heresy of created Grace.

- The first heresy, that of the Filioque, is a Pneumatological and Trinitarian heresy; that is, it pertains to the doctrine of the Holy

Trinity, inasmuch as it maintains that the Holy Spirit proceeds “also from the Son.” Thus, it destroys the monarchy within the Holy Trinity and introduces a dyarchy.

- The second heresy is an ecclesiological heresy; that is, it pertains to the doctrine of the Church, inasmuch as it declares the Bishop of Rome, the Patriarch of the West, the Pope, to be a super-bishop, without whom the Church, in essence, does not exist. Thus, it makes ecclesiastical totalitarianism into a dogma, on the basis of which the related heresy of Papal Infallibility was later proclaimed.
- The third heresy is a soteriological heresy; that is, it pertains to the doctrine of salvation, inasmuch as it asserts that Divine Grace, which illumines and sanctifies us, and leads us to salvation and deification, is created. Just as the heretic Arius taught that the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God was created, so also the West now teaches that the Divine Energy is created. Papism does not make a distinction in God between the Essence, which is certainly uncreated and imparticipable, and the Energy, which is likewise uncreated and inseparable from the Divine Essence, but is nonetheless participable, sanctifies us, deifies us, and “ontologically bridges the gap between the Uncreated Triune God and created man.”

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### **3. The Eighth and Ninth Œcumenical Synods: criteria of Orthodoxy.**

These three great heresies of the West, then, were condemned by the Eighth Œcumenical Synod (879-880), under St Photios the Great, and by the Ninth Œcumenical Synod (1341-1351), under St Gregory Palamas. These Synods, by their Divinely inspired teaching, radically differentiate Genuine Orthodoxy from the heretical West, and specifically from Papism; and subsequently, in the fifteenth century, the third of the New Hierarchs, St Mark of Ephesus, pursued the same Orthodox course. Any future Major Pan-Orthodox Synod, in order to demonstrate its authenticity, will first have to recognize and declare that these two Synods, the

Eighth and the Ninth, are Œcumenical; that is, that their teaching is Divinely inspired and absolutely in conformity with the teaching of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The unity of the teaching of the Holy Œcumenical Synods shows forth also the unity of the teaching of the Holy Prophets, the Holy Apostles, and the Holy Fathers of all the ages: the unity of the doctrine and ethos of the Holy Orthodox Church.

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#### **4. The so-called Great Pan-Orthodox Synod of 2016**

In the light of these thoughts, the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians, our Church, observes with distress and disquiet the efforts of the so-called official Churches, which have adopted the syncretistic pan-heresy of ecumenism, to convoke a Great Pan-Orthodox Synod on Pentecost of 2016. This Synod will truly be a false synod, which will cause grave turmoil for the People of God and will render the chasm between the Genuine Orthodox and the ecumenists henceforth unbridgeable. The primary reasons that apply in favour of characterizing the so-called Synod of 2016 in advance as a false synod are the following:

1. It has been in preparation for many decades now, in a spirit that is not charismatic, but patently bureaucratic and scholastic; it functions within the framework of the ecumenical movement, on the basis of the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920, which was clearly and fundamentally ecumenist; and it has an ecumenical outlook.
2. The documents already prepared regarding relations with the heterodox attest to the intention of the ecumenists to recognize the ecclesiality of heretics, which they have, however, now recognized *de facto* and in a variety of ways.
3. There is no provision for recognizing the Eighth and Ninth Synods as Œcumenical; in fact, a proposal to include this issue on the agenda was rejected.
4. During the whole process of so-called “Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations,” which “draw up the theological and ecclesi-

astical topics that the Synod due to be convened in 2016 will deal with,” never have these topics “been put before the entire body of the Hierarchy” of the local official Churches, “so that the Hierarchs might take a synodal position on such topics,” as an eminent university professor points out; that is, “no guarantees” are provided “for the Church to express Herself in accordance with the Holy Spirit;” “complete transparency” is nonexistent; “the functioning of the synodal institution of the Church, which is governed by the Holy Spirit” has been abolished; “there is a ‘dearth’ of conciliarity;” “some form of Papism in the domain of the Orthodox Church is on the horizon;” and, as the aforementioned professor correctly observes, there is a sliding “onto the tracks of Papism,” since “someone is aspiring to be placed over all of the Bishops, and ultimately over the entire Church.”

5. The so-called official Churches, namely the ecumenists, are approaching the Synod of 2016 deeply divided and at odds with each other for many different reasons. However, the principal topic for a truly Great Pan-Orthodox Synod ought to be the unity, the union, the reunion, and the concurrence of all the Orthodox in the Apostolic teaching and the Apostolic ethos of genuine Orthodoxy, “that the world may believe.”

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

### **5. Awakening, zeal, and repentance.**

The Holy New Three Hierarchs, St Photios, St Gregory, and St Mark, awaken us today to a very critical turning point in history, especially in view of 2016. We need prayerful alertness, Godly zeal, and sincere repentance, so that we may be vouchsafed—even if we find ourselves in the furnace of tribulation—to chant a doxology of thanksgiving to our Lord and Saviour: Most glorified art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast established our Fathers as luminaries upon the earth, and through them hast guided us all to the true Faith. O Most Merciful One, glory to Thee.

## ***To God be glory and thanksgiving!***

*N.B. Lacking space, we have omitted the footnotes, which, however may be found on the former Synod in Resistance website: <http://www.hsir.org/pdfs/2014/11/17/E20141117aOmilia+Mhtropol3NeonIerarxon14%20Folder/E20141117aOmilia+Mhtropol3NeonIerarxon14.pdf>*



# THE COMING MONTH

NEARLY ALL of December falls within the **Nativity Fast**, and perhaps this is a good time to remark that the fasts of the Church are not optional or subject to negotiation. Recently someone asked (it was good that they did so) whether on a fast day we could have something made with milk and eggs. Then a few days later, an elderly person (obviously of a decidedly modernist disposition) came up with the “wonderful” excuse for breaking a fast that, as it was 2.30 p.m., we had “done Vespers” and so it was a new day. We had not done Vespers, and in any case the fasts are kept from midnight to midnight, but such is the way of those who desire *to make excuse with excuses in sins* (Ps. 140:4 - a verse sung daily at Vespers!). I remember years ago someone who kept rigorously to the one tradition that all Orthodox of every persuasion seem to cling to: criticizing the clergy. They complained about one of the elderly priests in London, and said, “Whenever you go to confession, he always first asks you if you have kept the fasts, not any of the important things, like have you loved your neighbour.” Of course, what this person had not comprehended was that perhaps this question was a litmus test of how seriously one took one’s commitment to the Faith. One is hardly likely to have loved one’s neighbour, much less laid down one’s life for that neighbour, if one has not even refrained from eating dairy and meat products.



Unless one is seriously ill or infirm, keeping the fasts is one of the fundamental steps of living an Orthodox Christian life, and has the benefit of bringing that commitment immediately and forcefully into our daily lives, so that it is not simply put aside for Sundays or other “religious” occasions.

The last day of this fast, 24th December / 6th January, is kept with particular strictness. Among many Orthodox peoples, it is customary not to eat at all until one sees the first star in the evening sky, in remembrance of the Bethlehem star. Others are less severe and count the bringing out of the candle at the end of the Vespertine Liturgy as being the Bethlehem star. Naturally after receiving the Holy Mysteries on the day of the Nativity itself, we break the fast, and thereafter we have **a fast free period**, until, but not including, **the eve of the Theophany**. This Winter, as Theophany falls on a Monday and the eve will be on a Sunday, even on that day we are permitted wine and oil, along with an otherwise vegan diet.

There is space for one Saint, celebrated in December:-

The **Holy Martyr Zoticus, the Protector of Orphans** (30th December / 12th January), an illustrious and rich Roman, was in the service of the Holy Peer of the Apostles, the Emperor Constantine the Great. When Constantine founded his new capital city at Constantinople, Zoticus moved there. Soon, however, spurning worldly life, Zoticus was ordained to the holy priesthood, and he began to provide for the destitute and orphaned in his own home. Then, receiving funds from the Emperor, he built a hospital for the treatment for the sick and a hostel for the homeless, where he took in those afflicted with leprosy. When Constantius, an adherent of the Arian heresy, succeeded his father, St Zoticus was accused of receiving a large sum of money from the deceased Emperor. When interrogated about this, Zoticus showed the authorities the homeless and sick, whom he was caring for. Constantius became enraged, for he thought that Zoticus had misappropriated the money received from his father, and

he desired to retrieve that wealth for himself. He ordered Saint Zoticus to be tied behind wild mules, which dragged the saint over rough places. His whole body was lacerated, and the saint gave up his holy soul to God. A stream of pure water sprang forth at the place of his death, from which many received healing.



## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“I AM WRITING to ask your advice on the following matter. I struggle to discuss the truths of Orthodoxy with people outside of church because I fear their negative or confrontational reactions, or worse - turning them away from Orthodoxy. On the other hand, it seems selfish not to be able to adequately outline main concepts of our faith with people who show an interest in talking about it, as it seems like this is a basic Christian’s duty. Your thoughts on this would be very helpful! - B.G., London*

YOUR LETTER heartened me because, of course, it is an act of Christian love to try and share our Faith with others. We believe that it is the true Faith, and that, as St Cyprian said, only could people be saved outside the Church if there were people saved outside the Ark of Noah. Of course, none were. So, we cannot simply live our Orthodox lives as if Orthodoxy were some sort of private possession, and not hope, pray and work to share it with our neighbours. If we do, we are not being true to our Church.

However, as you realize there are difficulties. The greatest of these, of course, is ourselves. St Seraphim of Sarov said: Acquire the Spirit of peace and thousands around you will be saved. Few of us are likely to achieve such heights, but that does not give us an excuse to make no effort to do so. So, the first requirement is our own correction of life. Our first missionary witness should not be so much what we say, but what we are. Our Saviour Himself in

speaking of fulfilling the commandments, says “whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). And notice He places “doing” before teaching. Most of us, of course, give up at the doing, and so we fail both ourselves and those around us.

Secondly, - and these are only pointers, I do not have the ability to give you a full and comprehensive answer - we must pray that we be guided to speak aright, because without God’s help we can achieve nothing.

Then, of course, you have to learn about your Faith so that you have the ability to answer, so spiritual reading is necessary. So many Orthodox today seem to rely on knowing one or two folk customs, but absolutely nothing about the teaching of the Church and even hold views contrary to that teaching.

And so that this does not go on too long, lastly when you answer questions, I would suggest that you do so as briefly as possible and as “lightly” as possible. People resent being preached at or being pinned down by a bore. If you say something which is true and edifying and it touches their heart, then they will come back for more. I remember the story of a man who was a Uniat, who spoke to an elderly Russian priestmonk, and in the course of the conversation this man confessed he was a Uniat. The old priestmonk did not condemn the deception of Uniatism or give him a lecture on the errors of Rome, but simply said: “Better to be something real!” That one comment struck home in the heart of that man, and he could not shake it off, subsequently he was baptized an Orthodox Christian. Hope this helps.

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“SINCE it is written that God opposes the proud (1 Ptr 5:5), let us take care to show no disloyalty to the Bishop, so as to be loyal servants of God. The more reserved a Bishop is seen to be, the more he ought to be respected.”

**ST IGNATIUS THE GODBEARER OF ANTIOCH, + 107 A.D.**

# ***NEWS* from the communities in England of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece**

## ***AN AUTUMNAL PASCHA!***

ON THE SUNDAY of the Three New Great Hierarchs, 3rd / 16th November, **His Grace Bishop Antonie from Cucova, Romania**, presided at the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward's. The Bishop arrived before the beginning of Matins, accompanied by **Archdeacon Glycherie**. **Fr Marcel Tofan**, who was in England for the Baptism of Sofia Petrescu, arrived somewhat later. The three Romanian clergymen simply attended our Matins service, praying in the sanctuary, and vesting for the Divine Liturgy towards the end of the service. At the Liturgy itself, His Grace and Fr Marcel served with Father Alexis and **Father Œconomos Stephen Fretwell**, assisted by Archdeacon Glycherie and **Hierodeacon Sabbas**. A choir from the Romanian Traditionalist community in this country chanted the greater part of the service, and for the first time, as we had Fr Marcel to lead, the Liturgy was celebrated according to the Romanian typicon, which is somewhat more elaborate than the Russian usage to which we were more accustomed. According to one member of the congregation, about 300 people attended. Certainly, the church was packed as it never is except perhaps at Pascha. The whole was an extremely uplifting experience. The Holy Fathers teach us that where the Bishop is there is the Catholic Church and, although for the English, Bulgarians, Russians and Greeks, most of this service was in a foreign language, one could experience the beautiful truth of this teaching, and understand that, for those whose lives are informed by their Orthodox Faith, the love which binds us together as Orthodox

Christians transcends nationality and language. After the communion of the faithful, which because of the numbers lasted some time, His Grace preached on the Gospel of the day, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, and also thanked members of our community for their hospitality. Later he joined the congregation in the Old Mortuary for our usual Parish Buffet Breakfast, which our volunteers had fortunately provided in abundance. In the afternoon, with the other visiting clergymen, he was taken by a number of the Romanian flock to visit Windsor, so that he could see something of our heritage here. On the following day, he visited **Mother Vikentia** and her sisters in Willesden, with whom he had lunch, and he stayed in England for almost a week pastorally caring for the Orthodox Romanians here. *Εἰς πολλά ἔτη Δέσποτα!*

## ***TWO BAPTISMS AT SAINT EDWARD'S***

THE INFANT daughter of **Florin and Mihaela Petrescu** of Brent, North London, was baptized at St Edward's Church on Friday 1st/14th November. **Fr Marcel Tofan** from Romania was the celebrant at the Mysterion, and the baby was named **Sofia**. Her sponsors were **Constantin and Nina Toma** and **Mihai and Viorica Tofan**.

The following day, **Moses**, the second son of **Luke and Zoë Kennard of Bournville, Birmingham**, was baptized here. Moses is named for the Venerable Moses the Black (feast day 28th August/10th September). His godfather was **Christopher Russell**. After the Baptism and Chrismation, the family provided a celebratory meal in the Old Mortuary.

Through the prayers of their holy Guardian Angels and their Name Saints, may our Saviour grant that the newly illumined **Sofia** and **Moses** be kept in a godly confession of the True Faith all the days of their lives. We ask the prayers of the faithful for them.

## ***SAINT MICHAEL'S PARISH, GUILDFORD, CHANGES JURISDICTION***

ON SUNDAY, 10th / 23rd November, the feast day of **Saint Philaret the New Confessor of New York**, parishioners of the **Saint Michael's parish in Guildford** held a meeting which finalized a further division in that parish. **Priestmonk Augustine (Lim)** and some of his parishioners had in conscience not been able to accept the union in March this year of the **Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece** (to which they had belonged) with the **Synod in Resistance** (to which, of course, our Brotherhood belonged). During the intervening months, Fr Augustine established friendly relations with us and the Convent, but during that whole period had only once concelebrated with clergy of the united Synod, when he did so and received the Holy Mysteries with **His Grace Bishop Photios of Marathon**, the First Secretary of our Synod. When the parish meeting was held on 10th / 23rd November, Father Augustine had already received a letter of canonical release from **His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni**, who administers the parishes in this country, and he and some of the parishioners will now be placing their parish under the **Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church**. Those parishioners who wish to remain loyal to Bishop Ambrose have been instructed by him to retire from both the parish council and the trust at St Michael's and to join the congregation at St Edward's, and naturally we welcome them.

### ***VISITORS***

**His Grace Bishop Ambrose** briefly visited us on Tuesday, 11th November, n.s. The previous day he had been in Italy, but arrived in England from Greece, and was leaving that evening for Australia, and so needed to rest. Fathers from Brookwood met him at the airport and brought him to the Brotherhood, returning

him to Heathrow in the evening for his flight to Australia. As a gift His Grace kindly brought us some chalice veils (having noticed on a previous visit that our best set was rather small) and a supply of Greek olives.

**Coptic Christian Pilgrims:** On Saturday, 1st November, n.s., a group of about two dozen pilgrims from the Coptic Church came to visit Saint Edward's. They were led by a priest from Alexandria, **Fr Athanasius**, and included both monastic and lay members of their Church. The visitors had been attending a conference in Windsor, and though some were from this country, others were from Egypt and the United States. They were shown the holy things in the church and stayed for about 45 minutes.

## ***COURT CASE APPEAL***

AS REPORTED in our last issue, the County Court at Lincoln required us to pay a sum of £28,412.47 by 12th November, as we had lost the case against us, which concerned a grave reservation. We informed our supporters of this by e-mail, and by a miracle of God's kindness towards us, and through their generosity and love, on the day that the payment was due we had raised **a total of £27,771**. To have raised this amount from a comparatively small circle of supporters and friends and within less than six weeks is indeed miraculous. It left us only just over £640 short of the required amount.

We had, however, been rather optimistic in assessing the total cost of the case for us, which we had put at approximately £45,000. In fact, now we have received the solicitor's final bill, we find that figure is in fact **£51,908.09!** (£23,495.62 over and above that payable on 12th November). Even here we have been helped. One rather large donation reached us from Ireland, and others are still coming, and to date **we have raised a total of £39,212.50**. God bless all who have helped.

# PRACTICAL TIP

**TWO QUICK BUT VERY IMPORTANT POINTS:** First, remember that the *antidoron*, the bread given out when at the end of the Liturgy the faithful come up to kiss the Cross, is blessed. It should be taken with reverence and fasting. If you take it home to eat during the week, dry it and keep it in the icon corner in your home and always take it fasting. In church be careful than none falls on the floor, and especially keep a watch on small children, helping them to consume it, and impressing on them that they should treat it as something holy. Make sure they do not play with it, or try to grab several pieces, or carelessly drop any.

Secondly, remember that when the Chalice is brought out for the communion of the faithful, it contains the Body and Blood of Christ, therefore unless you are especially infirm, you should remain standing all the time the people are receiving the Gifts and until the Chalice is returned to the sanctuary. Inevitably, with people coming up for Communion, there is some movement in church at this time, but that should never become an excuse for anyone to engage in conversations. If you are receiving, approach with fear and reverence. If, for some reason, you are not receiving, pray silently for yourself that you may be deemed worthy to receive on some other occasion, and pray for those who are approaching the Chalice, your brothers and sisters in Christ.



JUST as in the case of a sweet dish on the table or a gold piece thrown down on the crossroads, whoever comes first [to church] is the most satisfied or enriched. Godly words in the divine church are sweeter than honey and honeycomb and dearer than a thousand gold pieces, according to the holy David (Ps. 18:10). He who arrives first will enjoy grace first, but he who arrives lazily and carelessly is a stranger to grace.”

VEN. JOSEPH OF VOLOKOLAMSK, + 1515 A.D.