

FROM THE FATHERS

“THE FATHER of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, Who came to man to wash him with water and the Spirit; and He, begetting us again unto incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the spirit of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver, he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead. Wherefore I preach to this effect: Come, all ye kindreds of the nations, to the immortality of the Baptism. I bring good tidings of life to you who tarry in the darkness of ignorance. Come into liberty from slavery, into a kingdom from tyranny, into incorruption from corruption. And how, says one, shall we come? How? by water and the Holy Spirit.”

HOLY HIEROMARTYR HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME, + C. 237 A.D.

“OUR SAVIOUR did not simply command to baptize, but first says, ‘Teach,’ and then, ‘Baptize in the Name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit,’ that the right faith might follow upon learning, and together with faith might come the consecration of Baptism. There are many other heresies too, which use the words only, but not in a right sense, as I have said, nor with sound faith, and in consequence the water which they administer is unprofitable, as deficient in piety, so that he who is sprinkled by them is rather polluted by irreligion than redeemed.”

ST ATHANASIUS THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA, + 373 A.D.

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THE FOLLOWING WORK, translated from the sermons of Archbishop Averky is undated, but is published in a collection of his works dated only 1961 - 1968. Internal evidence suggests it was written in 1964, when, in early January, Pope Paul VI and Œcumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I met in the Holy Land. The specific instances that he mentions may therefore be a little dated; however, the teaching that he gives is timeless. And if he expresses deep concern over the inroads of ecumenism in that period, how much more greatly would he have been distressed by its progress in our times?

MAY ONE SPEAK OF THE UNION OF CHRISTIANS APART FROM GRACE AND TRUTH?

BY THE BLESSED & EVER-MEMORABLE ARCHBISHOP
AVERKY OF JORDANVILLE

*All ye that in Christ have been baptized,
Christ have ye put on.*

WE HAVE JUST celebrated the Great Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, or the Theophany. Wondrous is this festival! “The the Christian mysteries,” says the holy hierarch Theophan [the Recluse] of Vysha, concerning this feast, “shine forth here with their Divine light, and they illumine the minds and hearts of those who keep this great celebration with faith” (Thoughts for Every Day of the Year). It is for this reason that the very feast itself is called the “illumination” in our Church Typicon.

But what does this illumination consist of? It comprises the illumining and sanctification of our minds and hearts **through Grace and Truth**, brought to earth for the salvation of people by the Incarnate Only-Begotten Son of God Himself, as Christ’s beloved disciple, Saint John the Theologian, bears witness at the very start of his Gospel: “**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth.**”

“And of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace; for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1: 14, 16-17).

When Christ was born, only a few people knew of this. Only on the day of His Baptism did He clearly and openly appear for that great ministry of His, for which He had become incarnate, and therefore, in her hymns, the Holy Church calls the festival of the Baptism of Christ, the Theophany, the **“most radiant”** and the **“most glorious”** day, even in comparison with that most joyous feast for us the Nativity of Christ, and, exulting, she chants: **“In the Jordan River’s streams, the Saviour, Who is grace and truth, hath openly appeared to all, and hath enlightened them that once slept in the shadow and the dark; for He hath come and shone forth, the Light unapproachable”** (Exapostilarion, 3rd tone).

But what is exactly is the “grace” and “truth,” imparted to us on the day of Theophany?

What exactly happens that is important to us on this “most radiant” and “most glorious” festival?

On this day, the sinless Christ accepted baptism from John in the waters of the Jordan, so that in His Person He might wash away the sins of all mankind, taken upon Himself in His inexpressible love for man.

On this day, the Master of heaven and of earth bows his neck and receives baptism from a servant, so that He might give an example of humility by observing the rule of baptism established by Him for all people, so that He might thus fulfil “all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15) and by His own example sanctify this great mystery of spiritual rebirth, without which it is impossible to enter into the Heavenly Kingdom.

On this day, the Messiah Christ first manifested Himself to the world as the beloved Only-Begotten Son of God, in Whom there rests the favour of God the Father and in Whom the Holy Spirit rests. His measureless humility opened wide the heavens and clearly revealed to the people the formerly hidden mystery of the Three Persons of the Divinity: Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.

On this day, Jesus Christ, having reached the age of majority according to the law, in that He had reached thirty years of age, enters upon His public ministry to the race of man; having remained until this time in obscurity, **today He is manifest to the world and His light is signed upon us**, illumining the people “that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death” with a mystical illuminations from on high.

In what does this “illumination” consist?

In what we received today in the holy Apostle [reading]: In the Jordan waters, **“the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:11-13).

Thus, our **Saviour, Grace and Truth**, Christ appeared that He might proclaim to us **liberty from sin and the beginning of a new life - a life according to Grace and Truth**.

Believing with our whole heart in this Divine Truth, brought to us by the Incarnate Son of God, and accepting this saving Grace in the Mysterion of Baptism, **we die unto sin and we are born again unto a new, pure, holy and God-pleasing life, we are clothed upon with Christ and we become one with Him through Grace**.

How can we dare to sin, if we have died to sin, if we have been clothed with Christ and become one with Him?

In truth, sin is now something completely foreign to us Christians; it is something wholly not our own - it is a rude attack upon our nature reborn in Christ: **we cannot sin at will**. It is not in vain that the holy Apostle informs us: **“as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death, we are buried with him by baptism into death, knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord”** (see Rom. 6:3-11).

Thus, the holy Apostles ends this instruction: **“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof, neither yield ye up your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield ye yourselves up unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”** (Rom. 6:12-13).

“Sin shall not have dominion over you,” the Apostles concludes and he explains: **“For ye are not under the law, but under grace”** (Rom. 6:14).

From all of the above, it should be abundantly clear that **where there is neither grace nor truth, there is no freedom from sin; where they disdain grace and truth, there they involuntarily sin and excuse sin, and there there is no Christianity.**

But grace and truth abide only in the true Church, namely that Church which was founded by the incarnate Only-Begotten Son of God, and which was granted the great promise, that the gates of hades should not prevail against her (Matt. 16:18), and which, it follows, always was, is and will be until the end of the age, and does not stand in need of being founded anew.

It is from this precise viewpoint that we must understand and assess all that is happening in the world now.

And it is because of this that we cannot but be horrified at that which is accurately called “a sign of the times,” and is in actuality a terrible, terrifying, ominous sign that we, who witness it and see it, behold who are living through our dreadful times.

We have in mind those “fruits” which the so-called “Ecumenical Movement” has produced, particularly now the meeting that has taken place, and the “symbolical” kiss, between the Pope of Rome, Paul VI, and the Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras I. *[Now in 2012, nearly forty years on, we could add countless other examples of meetings, common prayers, “sacramental hospitality,” to this one instance that Archbishop Averky cites - translator].*

It is not the meeting itself, such as it was, that horrifies us, but its inner content, which encloses within something spiritually unhealthy, at root rejecting authentic Christianity, something of a fully ecumenical bent, which was so clearly and powerfully exposed in Patriarch Athenagoras words themselves, when he spoke in a sermon before setting out for the Holy Land and for this meeting with the Pope: **“I will meet the Pope and embrace him as a brother, leaving aside theological discussions.”**

“What is this?” - it only remains for us to ask: “Extreme mindlessness or a conscious betrayal?”

Did we really so quarrel with the Pope that it was necessary to be reconciled, demonstrating before the whole world this “reconciliation” with brotherly embraces?

Or does Patriarch Athenagoras desire to abound more in love that the very “Apostle of love” himself, the beloved disciple of the Lord, Saint John the Theologian, who tells us in a teaching which stands for all times: **“If there come any unto you and bring not this (the true, Apostolic teaching of faith and piety) doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither greet him”** (2 John 10)?

Is Patriarch Athenagoras not a theologian? If he really did not study theology and is not aware of the fundamental dogmatic truths of Orthodox Christian teaching, nor how they are manifested in the spiritual and moral life of each and every Orthodox Christian, is it not a mistake that he bears such a high calling?

Can it really be that our separation from the Roman Catholics was caused by some purely personal feelings of hostility, by some personal ill-will?

Or is it that our profound divergence from them, being dogmatic as also of a spiritual and moral character, only came about through some abstract disagreement of learned theologians, divorced from real life, mindlessly quarrelling between themselves? And was it necessary only to “make peace” with the Pope, so that all these disagreements and “discussions” could be so lightly settled?

Truly, one could only marvel at such infantile naïvety on the part of the “First Hierarchy of Orthodoxy” (as the Patriarch of Constantinople considers himself by tradition, it being once the [*premier*] see of the world empire), if only this apparent naïvety did not conceal something much more dreadful.

All this is exactly in the spirit of authentic ecumenism - ecumenism without a mask. Our Orthodox “ecumenists” have for a long time persistently assured us that they had entered the ecumenical movement with one purpose - which outwardly appears wholly good - “to witness before the heterodox about the truth of Holy Orthodoxy,” “to reveal to them the depth and beauty of Holy Orthodoxy,” and thus “to draw them to embrace Holy Orthodoxy, from which they had fallen away.”

And how has it turned out in fact?

The complete opposite thing has come about: not the return to Holy Orthodoxy of those who had fallen away, but the tacit, “symbolical” recognition of the unimportance and the insubstantiality of all that which distinguishes Orthodoxy from heterodoxy, that is and that caused a complete falling away from Her, and therefore also from the **One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, founded by Christ the Saviour**, of Roman Catholicism and thereafter of Protestantism and the other, now numberless, sects and every possible self-directed confessional entity, which without any rationale lays claims for itself to the name “Church of Christ.”

Grace and truth, which abide only in the true Church, which has received the promise of Christ that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against Her, are, apparently, completely forgotten!

And how strange it is to hear from the “First Hierarchy of the Holy Orthodox Church” that all the distinguishing characteristics of Holy Orthodoxy, which form a definite barrier between it and Roman Catholicism, are no longer to be the subject of theological discussion.

The dogmas of Holy Orthodoxy are not somehow abstractions, out of touch with the life of truth, such that we can consider them or recognise them as inconsequential.

The dogmas - the great and saving truths of the Faith, were revealed to us by the incarnate Son of God; they are His Divine words. And these “words, that I speak unto you,” as He Himself says, “they are Spirit and they are life” (John 6:63).

How can we consider them as having no substance in the great work of the union of all Christians, which can only come about **in grace and in truth?**

How can one think that this task can consist only of “brotherly” embraces and kisses?

And are such kisses not those of Judas, if behind them there is concealed the betrayal of grace and truth?

And furthermore the fundamental difference between us and the Roman Catholics and all the others, who profess to call themselves Christians, obtains precisely in spirit and in life.

It is awful to say, but apparently for the contemporary ecumenists, in whose number one can think to include both Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, **even Baptism itself, which was inaugurated for all who desire to become Christians by Christ the Saviour Himself on the great day of Theophany, is not a great Mysterion (sacrament), which opens to us the entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom, but just a empty subject of “theological discussion,” devoid of any significant meaning.** And therefore for eternal salvation, in the view that is precisely theirs, it is not a necessity **to be baptized** and to be **clothed in Christ**. For their talk now is of a general union not only of Christians, but with Jews, though they do not recognise Christ the Saviour as the Messiah - (concerning this the notorious proposal of the Vatican Council testified regarding the Jews and the amicable regard that the Pope now has for the state of Israel) - and with the Muslims and with the pagans. *[Again this tendency has gone much further than when Archbishop Averky wrote, with pagan ceremonies being part and parcel of WCC and other Ecumenical Assemblies (see News Section below) - translator].*

They speak and write more and more nowadays about the one,

common, universal religion for all peoples, just as they do about a one world government.

Yes, this is in very truth a sign of the times, but a dreadful sign! **The union of all peoples, “at any price,” and “in spite of everything,” is required, as we have long since known well from the prophecies of the ancient Fathers of the Church, so that in the last days all peoples will be united under one authority, and it will attempt to substitute another for Christ.**

Truly, even now it is fearful to live in the world in the midst of such anti-Christ untruth, such deception, such falsehood and hypocrisy, through which the servants of the coming Anti-Christ strive even now to replacev in the consciences of the people and to obliterate the true Church.

But, **God is with us!** And “**the fear of them we shall not fear, neither shall we be troubled!**” For we know that the “gates of Hades” shall not overcome the true Church. It remains only for us to adhere to this true Church until the very end, to draw from her the grace and truth of Christ, and always to bear in mind that we, **who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ**, and therefore we must live worthily of our high calling as Christians, as ones **dead unto sin, and raised again to a new, God-pleasing life - life in Christ.**



“WITH regard to the sacrament of baptism, in accordance with Eph. 4:5 and the Creed, there exists one and only *one* baptism, the baptism of the One Church, i.e. the Orthodox Church. This is a ‘baptism’ properly speaking, performed by three immersions and emersions, inasmuch as the term βαπτισμα can only mean this. Baptism by triune immersion is ‘taught of God’ and ‘God-given;’ this is confirmed by Apostolic, synodal and patristic Canons.”

FROM “I CONFESS ONE BAPTISM”

BY PROTOPRESBYTER GEORGE D. METALLINOS, FORMER DEAN OF
THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS,

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TEACHING
OF THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV
ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS

I beseech you, brethren, says Chrysostom, never to neglect the rule of prayer and never to omit it. I have at no time heard of the Fathers saying that one is a monk, who forgets or omits this rule. But whether he is eating, or drinking, or sitting, or serving, travelling, or doing something else, he must constantly call out, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, - so that the remembrance of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might counter the enemy in the conflict. For the soul, compelled by the remembrance, may then discover everything, the bad as well as the good, and may observe within the heart at first its own evilness, and then the good. Because this remembrance can rouse the serpent, and this remembrance can subdue him; this remembrance can expose the sin living within us, and this remembrance can consume it; this remembrance can arouse in the heart all the power of the enemy, and this remembrance can conquer it, for the name of the Lord Jesus, descending into the depths of the heart, subdues the serpent that lords it over its pastures, saves the soul and quickens it. Thus, constantly maintain the remembrance of the name of the Lord Jesus, so that the heart soaks up the Lord, and the Lord the heart; for the two things are as one. However, this task is perfected not in one day or two, but over many years and with much time, for it requires much struggle and time to cast out the enemy and settle in Christ. And further: one has to firmly establish and compose the mind, and to put down every thought and every evil activity by calling upon our Lord Jesus Christ; and where the body stands there must the mind be also, so that between God and the heart there is nothing other, acting as a barrier or obstacle, screening off the heart and separating the mind from God. If, however, the mind is carried away, then one must not let it stagnate in those thoughts, so that its converse with the thoughts bring blame upon

you for this fact on the day of the judgment before the Lord, when God will judge the secrets of men. Thus constantly labour and abide in the Lord your God, until He has compassion upon you. And seek nothing else besides the mercy of the Lord of Glory, and in seeking mercy, seek with humility and contrition of heart, from the morning until the evening, and, if it be possible, even throughout the whole night cry out: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. And force your mind to this task even unto death, for this work requires a great struggle, because “straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life” and “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 7:14, 11:12). So I beseech you do not let your hearts be separated from God, but assiduously guard them with the unremitting remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ until the name of the Lord is raised within your heart, and you think of nothing other than that Christ might be magnified within you. (See Sts Callistus and Ignatius on Silence and Prayer).

... to be continued in the next issue.



The Coming Month

FULFILLING the Old Testament Law, the Law-Giver Himself was circumcised on the eighth day after His birth in Bethlehem. So, on that eighth day, 1st January on the Church calendar, we celebrate the feast of **His Circumcision**. Not only did He fulfil the Law, and thus show us the most excellent way of obedience, but on this day for the first time, He shed His blood, foreshadowing His Passion and our redemption. And on this day too, He was given the name Jesus, which had been foretold to his ostensible father, the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, and to this day in the Orthodox Church babies are named in a short ceremony on the eighth day of their birth. Thus this feast, which is probably hardly noticed by the vast majority of our co-religionists is one of great significance for us.

It also coincides with the celebration of **St Basil the Great, the Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia**, one of the greatest fathers of the Orthodox Church, and because of this, his Liturgy, rather than that of St John Chrysostom, is celebrated on this day in our churches. St Basil was such a staunch defender of Orthodoxy at a time when the Arian heretics were in the ascendancy and had the support of the Emperor Valens, that the Emperor took special pains to lure him into his heresy. The Saint could not be persuaded by promises, bribes or flatteries, and finally he was threatened by Modestus, a prefect sent by the Emperor. The Saint told him: "Take away my possessions, they are few and poor, and will neither enrich you or greatly impoverish me; send me into exile, that will not concern me, for the earth is the Lord's and I shall be at home whether I am sent; torture me, that will only bring me closer to my goal, because it will haste by despatch unto God." The prefect marvelled at his boldness and said that he had never been so audaciously spoken to. Saint Basil told him, "Then it is clear that you have never spoken to a Bishop before!" The Saint was never in robust health and died in his mid-forties. Near the end of his life he was treated by a Jewish doctor, Joseph. Repeatedly, in his love, he called this man to Holy Baptism, but Joseph would not have it. On the day before his repose, Saint Basil summoned him again, not so much for medical treatment - he was beyond that, - but to call him again to the true Faith. Joseph told him that he would die before sunset. Saint Basil assured him he would not. Joseph then vowed that he himself would die if the Saint lived for another day. Again the Saint took opportunity to instruct him, telling him that it was better that he died unto sin, and Joseph's heart was touched. He promised that if the Bishop lived to the next day, he would take it as a sign and be baptized with his whole family. Next morning Saint Basil was still alive, and Joseph told him he would keep his promise. Saint Basil responded "I will baptise you myself." Joseph protested that the Bishop was too infirm. But the Saint rose from his deathbed, prepared and then baptized Joseph and his family, and celebrated the Divine Liturgy imparting unto the newly-illuminated the Divine Mysteries. At the end of the Liturgy, this great father of the Church quietly surrendered his pure soul into the hands of God, on 1st January, A.D. 379, his very last act being one of pastoral love.

The most important celebration in January is, of course, the **Holy Theophany**, the celebration of the **Lord's Baptism in the River Jordan** (6th / 19th). For this reason we have included teaching on Baptism in the pieces above, and in last month's issue we said something about the structure of the services. The most important difference between the services of this Great Feast and those of the Nativity is that on the eve of the feast we have the **Great Blessing of Waters**. Because of our shortage of clergy, we do this at the Convent (as is appointed) after the Liturgy on that day (5th / 18th), and then again at Saint Edward's at the end of the Vigil (so that we have a supply of Holy Water here). On the day of the feast itself, this beautiful ceremony is repeated, but this time it is appointed to be done, not in church, but on the seashore, at a lake or by a river. Here it has become our custom to chant this service at Chertsey on the site of the seventh century monastic house, founded by Saint Erkenwald, who was later Bishop of London, and where later many of the monastics were martyred by the Vikings. With the waters blessed at Theophany, the homes of the faithful are blessed by the priest. In Orthodox countries, where parishes nestling around their churches still exist, he simply takes the Holy Water and processes round the village or neighbourhood, blessing the homes. Here, where our people are scattered over a wide area, we have to make arrangements for this to be done in the days (or weeks) that follow the feast. If you live so far away that the priest cannot reach you, you should at the very least take some of the Holy Water and sprinkle every room in your house yourselves, chanting the troparion for the festival as you do so, and gathering the whole family together to do so. We might add here, that it is also an excellent custom for the faithful to take of the waters that are blessed at the **Lesser Blessing of Waters** every month, and sprinkle their homes with these.

Among the other saints celebrated in January we have:

The **New Martyr Zorzes (George) of Iberia** (2nd / 15th) was sold into slavery when he was a young boy. His master, a Muslim from the Greek island of Mytilene, forced him to embrace Islam and renamed him Salah. After his master died, George remained on the island and opened a small shop. Although it appeared that he had completely for-

gotten his Christian background, and only spoke Turkish, apparently this was not so, and, his heart being touched, in 1770, when he was seventy years old, he appeared before the authorities and announced that he was an Orthodox Christian. The kadi (judge) thought that George had lost his mind, since his declaration would lead to his death. The next day George was questioned again, and then he was beaten. He endured his torments with silence, but would not be turned from his confession of faith, refusing even to betray with a sign. After more torture, the holy martyr was hanged on 2nd January, 1770 A.D., receiving a crown of glory from the Saviour Christ.

Our **Venerable Mother Domnica** (8th / 21st) was born in Rome and reared in the love of Christ. She secretly left her parents' house and travelled by ship to Alexandria, where she found lodging with four virtuous pagan maidens. By her example and counsel these four were in time led to abandon idolatry and embrace Domnica's faith. The five then sailed to Constantinople, where the Patriarch, Saint Nectarius (11th / 24th October) was foretold of their coming by an angel, and he met them at the quay side. The Patriarch baptized the four maidens himself, giving them the names Dorothea, Evanthia, Nonna and Timothea, then settled them and Domnica in a monastery. Soon the fame of Domnica's pure life, wise teaching, and wondrous healings spread throughout the city, and even the Emperor Theodosius, with the Empress and his court, came to see her. Soon the crowds made it impossible for her and her sisters to live the heavenly life for which they had entered the monastery; so they moved to a remote, demon-haunted location where executions had once commonly been performed, since everyone avoided the area. Here a new monastery was built by order of the Emperor, and the sisters found peace. Saint Domnica's fame continued, and she became not only a healer but an oracle for the city of Constantinople, prophesying the death of the Emperor Theodosius and the unrest which would follow it. She reposed in peace, having first entrusted the care of the monastery to Dorothea. At the moment of her death, the whole monastery was shaken, and those present saw Saint Domnica dressed as a bride, being borne heavenward escorted by a company of white-clad monks and nuns. Many miracles were worked at her tomb.

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POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“Father, was the pre-schism Celtic Church fully Orthodox? I don’t mean the ersatz one based in modern Brittany.” - P. B., Chertsey

I THINK you have asked a question which it is impossible for anyone alive today to answer. Look at the church situation in our own days. There is so much confusion, so many claims and counter-claims, that it is hard enough to steer one’s way through, and one can only do so with the guidance of the teachings of the Fathers, with prayer, and with great hope in God’s mercy. For the situation of the old “Celtic” Church, about which we know so little, it is correspondingly much, much more difficult. We know so little about their teachings and their practices. Fortunately, unlike the situation in the Church today, it something that we do not necessarily have to address. The situation in the Church today we have to address lest we be led astray, but the situation in the Church in these islands well over a millennium ago is something that we must needs leave to the judgment and mercy of God.

Having said that, I do not know that any of the Fathers accused the Christians in this country of un-Orthodoxy in the “Celtic” period. St Bede mentions that the Arian heresy infected the churches in these islands. There was, indeed, also the heresy of Pelagianism which was fostered by a British monk, Pelagius, but other than that there seems to have been no charge of heresy against the Church in this country. St Germanus of Auxerre and St Lupus of Troyes came to Britain to preach against the uprising of this heresy. However, the fact of their coming gives one to suppose that the main body of the Christians here were Orthodox in belief, and that they were here to call back those who were tempted to go astray.

Otherwise it seems that, although there was a calendar difference between the “Celtic” Church and the rest of Christendom, and although there were differences of rites, and various jurisdictional disputes, there seem to have been no hint of any charge of un-Orthodoxy.

Of course, it may well be that among the list of “Celtic” saints that we now have, some may have been heroes in schismatic or even heretical groups (Arian or Pelagian) - we simply do not have enough information on them to judge, but we do have the precept of St Photius the Great, that it is better mistakenly to honour a man whose Orthodoxy is questionable than to denigrate him (I paraphrase - I remember the quote, but cannot source it at the moment). He also, in speaking of the adoption of the heresy of the *filioque* in the West (which did not affect the “Celtic” Church), tells us that those who accepted it in ignorance and uncorrected in times past could not be blamed, although he also suspected that some texts had been amended by later copyists to correspond to the “new orthodoxy” of the Papacy. So, with the “Celts,” we should perhaps accept those who may have fallen into some error, simply through their geographical isolation from the rest of the Church. The only guide we have is the fact that they were broadly recognized as Saints by the Church in this country, and sometimes even further afield, when that Church was undoubtedly Orthodox. In any case, as I said at the beginning, we have so little information in this regard that it is impossible for us to judge. A better course for us would be to assess the current claims and counter-claims within the Church, so that we follow the Royal Way and are not led astray by the un-Orthodoxy of our own times, and a yet better course still would be to judge ourselves.



"IT IS NOT POSSIBLE that anyone uninstructed and ignorant about the Christian Faith can be purified by the mysteries of this Faith, nor is it sufficient that one be cleansed from his sins in the laver of Baptism if he does not strive to devote himself to good works after Baptism. Therefore He commanded them first to teach the nations, that is, to educate them in knowledge of the truth, and so to baptise them, because without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, one cannot enter into the kingdom of God (Jn 3:5)"

SAINT BEDE THE VENERABLE, + 735 A.D.

NEWS SECTION

ATHONITE ABBOT ARRESTED

ARCHIMANDRITE EPHRAIM, the Abbot of the **Sacred Monastery of Vatopedi on the Holy Mountain Athos**, one of the twenty ruling monasteries on the Mountain, was arrested on 24th December in connection with alleged real estate crimes. Fr Ephraim, who is known in this country for his connections with the **Friends of Mount Athos**, is apparently being held in custody and, according to the reports that have reached us, armed police were deployed by the Greek authorities when he was arrested. Whether there is any substance in the allegations we do not know, although the police response seems rather heavy-handed in the circumstances. One of the much revered Orthodox relics, the Cincture of the All-holy Theotokos, is kept at the Vatopedi Monastery and this was taken to Russia this past autumn. It was the first time that the Cincture has been taken out of Greece. The Vatopedi Monastery believes that the lawsuit against their Abbot has been prompted by his permission to take the Cincture to Russia. However, the fact that the relic was taken to Russia has called forth protests about the arrest from Russian Orthodox Christians, and the **Foundation of Saint Andrew the First-Called** there has started a petition protesting the arrest. It seems premature to pre-judge the legality of the arrest in such a way, even if the way it was done is to be regretted, but assuredly Father Ephraim and the fathers of his monastery should be in our prayers at this time.

PAGAN DEITY HYMNED IN ROMAN CATHOLIC BASILICA

IN THE PRESENCE of **Pope Benedict XVI** and of the **Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I**, on 27th October, at the Basilica of Holy Mary of the Angels in Assisi, **voodoo warlock Wande Abimbola** from Nigeria sang a hymn to the deity, Olokun. Abimbola represented the Yoruba voodoo sect at the **Fourth Assisi Inter-Faith Meeting**, which commemorated the first of these events held in 1986. After singing to his goddess, Abimbola greeted the Pope and was given a place of honour among the pagans. The Pope is shown in photographs of the event with the Œcumenical Patriarch standing on his immediate right and then the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and

with Rabbi David Rosen on the Pope's left and then the voodoo warlock. Some 300 religious leaders were participating, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Zoroastrians, Taoists, Shintoists and Buddhists, so the place given Abimbola was indeed prominent. The present Pope, then Cardinal Ratzinger had not participated in the first Assisi gathering hosted by John Paul II, properly citing his objection to "common prayer." This time the delegates withdrew to various rooms around the Basilica of St Mary of the Angels in the lower part of Assisi for what the programme called "silence, reflection and personal prayer," in a pretense of meeting this objection. However, this in itself indicates that the Roman Catholics were prepared to allow one of their consecrated places of worship to be used for prayer to other gods. Abimbola's hymn to a pagan goddess was chanted before the assembly and no protest was made on the part of any of the Christians there, most lamentably not even by His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomeos, who weekly in the Divine services must hear the Scriptural proclamation: "All the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens" (Psalm 95:5). Yet for the sake of the peace which the world gives they are prepared to sit quietly by and observe the Prince of Peace Himself and His teaching - "thou shalt have no other gods but me" (Ex. 20:3) - pushed aside, and a demon hymned.

CONCELEBRATION OF OCA AND ROCA-MP METROPOLITANS

ON THE FEAST of the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God, Saturday, 10th December n.s., **His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America**, and **His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia** (i.e. now ROCA-MP) concelebrated the Divine Liturgy for the first time, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Sign in New York City, along with member hierarchs of the Holy Synods of both Churches. At the end of an exchange of greetings, Metropolitan Hilarion awarded the Metropolitan of All America and Canada the First Synodal Order "of the Sign," First Class. In return, His Beatitude, expressing his joy over their first prayerful and Eucharistic concelebration, gave the Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York the Order of St Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow, along with an icon of Righteous Jacob (Netsvetov). The hierarchs, clergymen and worshippers were then congratulated by **Mr Andrei Yushmanov, Consul General of the Russian Federation in New York**.

Rather strangely, it was reported some months ago that the two jurisdictions had established high level commissions to study the canonical relationship between them. This, in itself, seemed somewhat redundant as both jurisdictions are in full communion with the Patriarchate of Moscow, which is in both cases in some sense their Mother Church now. It was Moscow that granted the OCA its autocephaly, and the ROCA-MP is an integral but autonomous part of the Moscow Patriarchate. Their canonical relationship is surely to a large extent defined by their relationship to Moscow. However, for reasons which perhaps we cannot understand, these commissions were set up. Now, without their findings being widely published if at all, the two jurisdictions are suddenly in full communion. It appears to echo the course of the rapprochement of the greater part of the then ROCA with Moscow in 2007. Commissions were set up; in that instance several meetings were even reported, but the findings of those commissions were never publicized, but suddenly the two Churches came together. One cannot help wondering whether these commissions are simply window-dressing to give decisions already made some semblance of propriety.

CONTROVERSIAL ORTHODOX RESPONSES TO THE DEATH OF KIM JONG-IL

THERE has been much criticism in Orthodox circles of two Orthodox priests in North Korea, Frs. Theodore and John, who had studied at the **Moscow Theological Academy**, and conducted a memorial service for the notorious dictator, **Kim Jong-Il**. Present at this service were **Valery Sukhinin, Russian Ambassador to North Korea**, with Russian colleagues, and **Kung Sok-Ung**, Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of Russian affairs. Such services are not permitted by the Church for those outside the Church, because the prayers are clearly for those who have been baptized and have died with the hope of resurrection unto life eternal. They are inappropriate for those who do not share this hope, and even more so for those who are avowed enemies of religion. However, one suspects that, though essentially correct, this criticism is somewhat misdirected, the priests in Pyongyang were doubtless under immense pressure to perform this service. Much more disturbing, but hardly noticed, is the fact that the **Deputy Head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Synodal Department for External Church Relations, Archbishop Nikolay Balashov**, told an *Interfax-Religion* correspondent: "The Russian Orthodox Church remembers with gratitude Kim Jong-Il's contribution to developing spiritual links between

Korean and Russian peoples rooted in work of the Russian Ecclesiastic (*sic*) Mission in Korea.” It is true that Kim Jong-Il allowed a Russian Orthodox Church to be erected in North Korea, but this can have had little to do with any “spiritual links” and was, in all likelihood, more an expression of his gratitude for the political and military support of the Soviet and post-Soviet governments for his own detestable regime. That two local priests were pressured into doing something so wrong is probably of not of any great import, but that a person of the standing of Archpriest Nikloay Balashov, makes such statements, without being corrected by a higher authority, indicates that the Moscow Patriarchate itself is in complicity with the spread of yet another falsehood, indeed one may wonder whether higher authorities within the Patriarchate were among those who brought pressure on Fathers Theodore and John.



SIR-UK NEWS

BISHOPS' VISITS

LAST MONTH, we rejoiced in having five Baptisms in our church, and this past month we had two Hierarchal Divine Liturgies both at the Convent and here at Brookwood, four in all. **His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** came to England on Friday 2nd December n.s., and was taken from Heathrow to the Convent by **Baroness Anna von Bennigsen**. There he was present at the evening service with **Mother Vikentia and her sisters**, and the next morning, assisted by Fathers Alexis and Sabbas, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy on the feast of **St Gregory of Decapolis**. At the end of the service, in his sermon, His Grace told us of the significance of this feast in the life of **St Glycherie of Romania** and spoke very beautifully about his personal remembrances of the Saint. He prefaced his remarks by saying that all the lives of the saints are for our edification, but that perhaps with ones from times past we wonder about some of the details, but in knowing and meeting a Saint of our times like St Glycherie, one sees these same things and faith is

confirmed. After breakfast with the Sisters and those who had gathered for the Liturgy, His Grace came to Brookwood with the fathers.

That evening, he was present at the Vigil service for the **Great Feast of the Entry of the All-holy Theotokos into the Temple**. His Grace led the prayers at the *liti* and *artoclasia* and again at the *polyeleos*. On the day of the feast, the Bishop served with **Fr Stephen Fretwell** and Fr Sabbas at the Brotherhood, telling the faithful in his sermon about the significance of the festival and the Gospel of the Sunday, the parable of the rich man and his barns. Fr Alexis was consigned to the Convent for that day, so that the sisters could have a Liturgy on a day of such importance for the monastics. After the Divine Liturgy at Brookwood, Bishop Ambrose attended the Parish Breakfast, and, as is his way, took the opportunity to speak to as many of the parishioners as possible, and then he was taken back to London by **Dimitri Mihai** in his transit van! After visiting his brother, who is not well, Bishop Ambrose returned to Greece on the Tuesday.

The very next day **His Grace, Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** from our Sister Church, the **Traditionalist Orthodox Hierarchy of Romania**, arrived in London. He was accompanied by **Deacon Lucian** from Bucharest and the **Monk Mercurie** from Bishop Flavian's monastery, also in Bucharest. These two fathers briefly visited Brookwood with Dimitri in order to collect the Bishop's vestments, and thus had an opportunity to visit us for the first time.

On the Thursday, the feast of the **Great Martyr Catherine**, His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Convent, and Mother Vikentia blessed them to do everything in Romanian, so that the sisters did not do any of the reading or chanting, but simply participated in the prayers. We had intended to join the Bishop on this occasion, but at that time three members of the Brotherhood had very bad colds, and we were unable to do so.

However, on the Sunday, the feast of **St Stephen the New**, Bishop Sofronie came to Brookwood, and presided at the Divine Liturgy, assisted by the three Brotherhood clergy and Fr Lucian. At about the halfway point in the service, the Bishop blessed Fr Lucian to assist in the

choir, which helped the Romanian side of things there and also meant that our Fr Sabbas was able to do more in English - the Bishop is always evidently embarrassed about taking over our services and making them Romanian, and always insists (without success!) that Fr Alexis preach in English, even though whenever he comes the church is packed with Romanians. In the event, to everyone's relief, the Bishop himself preached at the end of the Liturgy. He then stayed in church for some time to hear the confessions of the faithful, and left without joining us at the parish breakfast because, owing to his severe ill health, his diet is restricted and he had food prepared for him where he stays in London by people who know exactly what he can and what he cannot eat. However his visit, like that of Bishop Ambrose, brought a spiritual uplift to our small communities here in Britain, for which we give thanks.

VISITORS TO SAINT EDWARD'S

FATHER **Hieromonk Evfimy** and **Mother Evfrosinia** of the **Lesna Icon Convent in Normandy, France**, briefly visited us on Tuesday 27th December n.s. They brought us icons and bundles of treats, and in turn were offered refreshments in the Exhibition Room, and visited the candle factory and book-bindery, and then went to the church, where before the **Shrine of Saint Edward**, they chanted the magnification of the holy Martyr. They were in England because their Synod of Bishops has established a new parish here, and they were kindly brought to Brookwood by **Dr Vladimir Moss**, who nonetheless discreetly did not join us for the refreshments but only visited the church and bookstall, leaving us monastics to talk together about recent events in church-life. On the previous day, the pilgrims from Lesna had visited the **Convent of the Annunciation** in Willesden, which Fr Evfimy had never visited, and which Mother Evfrosinia had last visited when she came for the funeral of **Elizabeth Palmer**, the sister of the **Gerald** (in Orthodoxy: **George**) **Palmer**, co-editor and translator of the *Philokalia* volumes, published some years ago by Faber and Faber.

ORTHODOX AID FUND

IN 2011, our Brotherhood's "*Orthodox Aid Fund*" gave a total of **£8,727.97** to various church, humanitarian and environmental charities. Of this total £512.50 had been donated by readers of this magazine, when sending in their re-subscriptions forms in the Autumn. We are grateful to all of you, who by your almsgiving and support of our Brotherhood have made this charity giving possible. We would also like to extend our thanks to all those of you, who, while not taking the printed version of the magazine and instead reading it from our website, www.saintedward-brotherhood.org, have nonetheless sent us donations in appreciation of the magazine. May God bless you all and prosper you spiritually and in the things of this life.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL....

EVERY EVENING in Vespers we chant "Incline not my heart unto words of evil, to make excuse with excuses in sins" (Ps. 140:4), and yet most of us spend a great deal of energy "excusing" our sins to ourselves and to others, especially sins of omission. For this reason we would like to bring to your attention the recent inspiring example of one of our parishioners from the **Saint Boniface Mission on the Isle of Wight**. To spare her blushes, let us call her Dolly. Wishing to attend the Divine Liturgy on her name day (*how many people pay no attention to their name days?*), a weekday, when the Liturgy is celebrated earlier at Brookwood, although she is now sufficiently well-stricken in years, a pensioner (*how many plead old age or infirmity?*), and her husband is not Orthodox (*how many people use their spouses as excuses especially if they are not Orthodox?*), she set out from home **at 4.10 a.m.** She has no children at home to use as excuses, but does have pets to look after. She prepared her own lunch package before starting, because she has dietary problems. She made her way to the pier at Ryde, caught the ferry, then the train, arrived at Brookwood when it was still dark and walked through the cemetery (*another excuse used by some*), and arrived just

before we began the Mattins service, so that she was here not just for the Liturgy (*how many people do that, even on Sundays, a day that should be devoted wholly to the Lord?*) but for the whole service, and thus heard the canon to her name saint read. Indeed, she would have received a blessing and has shown her love for the saint after whom she is named.

SURREY CHURCHES PRESERVATION TRUST

EVERY YEAR, the SCPT has a sponsored “*ride and stride*” event, and this year two of the cyclists from Howell Hill nominated our church for a share of the sponsorship money, which the SCPT treasurer, **P. John Harris**, has kindly sent on to us. We are grateful for this interest and help from the wider community in Surrey, and, as motorists, not a little surprised that any good can come from cyclists! You see, anyone can stand in need of correction and have to reassess their views.



PRACTICAL TIP

IF YOU are having your home blessed with Theophany Water by the priest, you should prepare a table in front of your icon corner, covered with a cloth, with a lighted candle, and a bowl (used only for holy things) for the Theophany Water. You should also try to arrange for the whole family to be there for the blessing, and, especially if your family is large, write down the names of the family members for the priest to commemorate. During the blessing, he should be taken round the whole house or flat, and any out-buildings or garages, and, if you have them, the grounds.



“Prayer is a remedy against sorrow and depression” - ST NILUS OF SINAI.