

# FROM THE FATHERS

“TAKE HEED often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when you assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith.”

HOLY Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer  
of Antioch, + 107 A.D.

“WHY *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together* (1 Cor. 7:29)? He knew that much strength arises from being together and assembling together. *For where two or three (it is said) are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20); and again, *that they may be one, as We also are* (John 17:11); and: *they had all one heart and soul* (Acts 4:32). And not this only, but also because love is increased by gathering together, and love being increased, of necessity the things of God must follow also. *And let us consider one another, he says, to provoke unto love and to good works.* He knew that this also arises from *gathering together*. For *as iron sharpeneth iron* (Prov. 17:17), so also association increases love. For if a stone rubbed against a stone send forth fire, how much more soul mingled with soul!”

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM,  
ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE, + 407 A.D.

# FAITH AND WORKS

## *Saint Ignatius (Brianchaninov) of the Caucasus*

**REPENT YE, and believe the Gospel** (Mark 1:15), the Gospel itself proclaims to us.

This proclamation is simple, true and holy. It is necessary to repent, to abandon the life of sin, so that we may be made capable of starting on the Gospel. To accept the Gospel, it is necessary to believe in it.

The holy Apostle Paul holds the whole essence of every sermon in one sermon on repentance and faith. He proclaims **repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ** (Acts 20:21) to all, both the Jews and the Greeks.

The Gospel, being the Revelation of God, supremely more exalted than anything that can be comprehended, is beyond the reach of the mind of fallen man. However, the unattainable mind of God is compassed by faith, because faith is able to embrace all that is unattainable to the intellect. But only that soul is capable of faith which decisively and voluntarily renounces sin, and directs all its will and strength towards the Divine good.

**I am come a light into the world** (John 12:46), says the Lord concerning Himself. **This Light stood before the Jews, clothed in the flesh: He stands before us, clothed in the Gospel.**

Who is he that does not believe in the Son of God? It is not only he, who openly and resolutely denies Him, but it is also he, who, while calling himself a Christian, leads a sinful life, pursuing carnal satisfactions; he, whose god is the belly; he, whose god is silver and gold; he, whose god is worldly glory; he who defers to the wisdom of the world,

which is enmity with God, as if it were a god. **Every one that doeth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be reproved for they are evil. But he that doeth truth cometh to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God** (John 3:20-21).

Without self-sacrifice, a man is incapable of faith; his fallen understanding works against faith, audaciously demanding of God an account of His activities and proof of the truths that He has revealed to man. The fallen heart desires to live the life of fallenness, to the destruction of one who aspires to faith. Flesh and blood, despite the fact that the grave stands in front of them at every hour, also desire to live their own life, the life of corruption and sin.

For this reason the Lord tells all who desire to be numbered with, and to follow, Him through the life of faith: **If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it** (Matt. 16:24-25).

The fall has so made the whole nature of man its own, that the renunciation of this fall is made to be, as it were, the denial of life itself. Without this renunciation, though, it is impossible to lay hold on faith - the pledge of eternal, blessed, spiritual life. But he, who wishes to revive the passions of the heart or of the body, to be pleased by them, he who desires to revive his own fallen understanding, such a person falls away from **faith**.

**Living faith** is abidance in the spiritual world, in God's world. It cannot exist in one who bound to the lower life, where the flesh and sin dominate.

**Faith** is the door to God. There is no other door to Him: **Without faith it is impossible to please God** (Heb. 11:6). This door opens by degrees before those, who cleanse themselves with unremitting repentance. It is wide open before the pure of heart. It is closed to the lover of sin.

Only by **faith** can one come to Christ; only by faith can one follow Him.

**Faith** is a pre-eminent characteristic of the soul of man, planted therein through the kindheartedness of God at its creation (*from the writings of St Symeon the New Theologian, On Faith*). This pre-eminent characteristic was chosen of God before the redemption, like one branch from the branches of a tree, so that He might bestow Grace upon him. Justly was faith chosen of God for the armory of salvation for man. We were perishing, having given credence to the deceiving words of the enemy of God and of us. Once in Paradise the sound of words from the mouth of the evil-doer resounded; our forebears heeded them, and they were cast out of Paradise. Now in the vale of our exile, there resounds for their descendents the voice of the Son of God, the Gospel, and those who accept the Gospel and believe in it enter again into Paradise.

You unbelievers, turn away from your unbelief! Sinner, reject your sinful life! You wise ones, turn away from your false wisdom! Turn away! and by your guilelessness and lack of evil be made like unto children, who with childlike simplicity believe in the Gospel.

Dead faith, recognizing Christ only through a forced persuasion, may even be association with the demons! Such faith only serves the believer for his greater condemnation at the Judgment of Christ. **Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth?** - the unclean spirits cried out to the Lord, - **Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, Who Thou art, the Holy One of God** (Mk 1:24). **Faith** in the Gospel must be **living**; one must **believe** with mind and heart, confess the Faith with the lips, express it and show it in one's life. **Show me thy faith by thy works** (see James 2:18), says the Apostle to one who gloried in his dead faith, one stripped of the knowledge of God's existence.

“Faith,” says the Venerable Symeon the New Theologian, “in the broadest understanding of this word, means to contain in oneself all the Divine Commandments of Christ; it is sealed by the conviction that in the Commandments there is not one line that does not have its significance, that in them all, right down to the very last iota, there is life and the cause of life eternal.”

**Believe** in the dogmas, taught in the Gospel, understand and confess them according to the precise teaching of the Orthodox Eastern

Church, which alone has preserved the Evangelical teaching in all its purity and correctness.

**Believe** in the Mysteries established in the Church by the Lord Himself, and which the Eastern Church keeps in all their fullness.

**Believe** in the holy, life-creating, evangelical commandments, the correct fulfilment of which is only possible in the bosom of the True Church, the fulfilment of which comprises, as the Holy Fathers (*Sts Kallistos & Ignatios Xanthopoulos*) call it, **the active faith of the Christian.**

In the dogmas, there is theology, taught by God Himself. In the denial of the dogmas, there is that blasphemy which is called faithlessness. In the distortion of the dogmas, there is that blasphemy which is called heresy.

When the mind, still not cleansed by repentance, still abiding in the realm and murk of the fall, still not illumined and not guided by the Holy Spirit, dares by itself, by its own sickened powers, out of the murk of its pride, to reason about God, then it unflinchingly falls into delusion. This very delusion is a blasphemy. We can only know concerning God what He, in His great kindheartedness, has Himself revealed unto us.

Through the Mysteries (sacraments) of the Christian Church, the faithful are guided into union with the Divine; in this there is the essence of salvation, the sealing of faith by the deeds of faith, and the reception thereby of the pledge of eternal good things.

He who, for faith in Christ, renounces the devil, sin and the world, dies to the life of fallen nature, which he had lived hitherto in unbelief and sinfulness; being immersed in the font of Baptism he is buried unto that life. He comes out of the font already born to a new life, the life in Christ.

In Baptism the Christian is joined to Christ; he is clothed in Christ; in the communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ he is united with Christ. And so, by means of the Mysteries, he becomes all Christ's.

He who is baptized into Christ no longer lives according to his original nature, but as if the whole fullness of his life had been borrowed from someone else - from Christ. **Know ye not**, the Apostle says to the

Christians, **ye are bought with a price? Your bodies are the members of Christ. Glorify God in your bodies, and in your souls, for they are God's** (1 Cor. 6:20, 15).

The fulfilling of the life-creating commandments of the Gospel sustains the union of the Christian with Christ (See Jn 15:10). A member of Christ cannot abide in union with Christ other than by acting in accordance with His will, and according to His mind. And the will and mind of Christ are set forth in the Gospel commandments.

It is natural for every being to act, both inwardly and outwardly in accordance with its nature. And so it is that with one clothed in Christ, a new man, it is natural for him to think, to feel, to act just as Christ thinks, feels and acts. To associate with the thoughts and feelings of the old man, even though they may have the appearance of good, is alien to him.

The Guide of the Christian must needs be the Holy Spirit, just as the guides of the old man were the flesh, blood and the spirit of evil. **The first man Adam became a living soul; the last Adam became a life-creating Spirit** (1 Cor. 15:45). All the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the Christian should flow from the Holy Spirit, and not be typical of the nature of the old Adam, or from his emotions. You will achieve this, when you completely order life according to the Gospel precepts, in accordance with His most holy words: **The words that I speak unto you, says the Lord, they are spirit and they are life** (Jn 6:63).

The Orthodox Faith in Christ, sealed by the Mystery of Baptism, is alone, without works, sufficient for salvation, when a person has no time to do them [*i.e. because he dies immediately thereafter - transl.*], because **faith** changes a man in Christ. However, the good works of man are proper to those who are Christ's.

Moreover, if life should continue, good works are unfailingly necessary. Only those works in a Christian can be recognized as good works, which serve to fulfil the Gospel precepts, by which he is nourished, by which his **faith** lives, by which his life is sustained in Christ, because the only One acting within the Christian must needs be Christ.

One who is baptized does not have the right to act according to the allurements of those feelings of the heart, which derive from the influence on the heart of flesh and blood, just because these feelings appear to be good impulses: only those good deeds should be accepted, in whose fulfilment the Spirit of God and the Word of God inspire the heart, and which pertain to a nature renewed by Christ.

**The just shall live by faith** (Heb. 10:38). True faith in Christ is the only means of salvation, but it must needs be a living **faith**, expressed in the whole being of the man.

The holy Apostle James demands this **living faith** of the Christian, when he announces that faith without works is dead, that faith is made perfect by works (James 2:17, 22).

Opposed to the works of faith are other beliefs, which secretly and evilly nestle in the human heart.

When praising the exploit of the Patriarch Abraham, Saint James hymns his act of **faith**, in offering his son as a sacrifice in accordance with God's command, an action which runs clear contrary to that which pertains to the fallen nature, even to that which is called good. **Faith** provided the strength for him to perform this act, and the deed manifested the strength of that faith. Thus it is that the essence of Abraham's action is explained in the expositions of two Apostles, James and Paul (James 2:21-23; Romans 4:1-3).

Those people are blind, who place great worth on the deeds of fallen nature, which they call good. These works have their praise, and their value, temporarily, before men, but not before God, before Whom **they are all gone astray, they are altogether rendered useless** (Ps. 13:3; Rom. 3:12). Those who hope on the good works of fallen nature do not know Christ, do not accept the mystery of redemption; they are trapped in the nets of their own paralogism, which poses against their own semi-dead and shipwrecked faith the nonsensical proposition: "Is God really so unjust that the good works, done by the idolators and the heretics, are not rewarded by eternal salvation?" The unjustness and weakness of their own judgment, these judges thus transfer to the judgment of God.

If it were that those good deeds which accord with the heart's emotions achieved salvation, then the coming of Christ would have been superfluous, the redeeming human suffering and the death upon the Cross of the God-man would have been unnecessary, and the Gospel precepts would not be needed. Obviously, then, those who accept that salvation is possible through the deeds of fallen natures alone, annihilate the meaning of Christ, and deny Christ.

The Jews unlawfully set themselves against the Faith, demanding of the believers that they observe the rites established in the old law; and unlawfully do the sons of this world, which is at enmity with God and is caught up in strange fantasies instead of the essential recognition of Christ, demand of the faithful good deeds according to the understanding and feelings of fallen nature.

He who believes in Christ bares the sword of Christ against the heart's emotions, and he strengthens his heart, cutting off with the sword of obedience to Christ not only the manifestly depraved yearnings, but also those which are apparently good, but in actuality contradict the Gospel precepts. And thus also must all the activity of man [be excised] which attracts him to fallen nature.

The works of passing good, which draw one to fallen nature, expand his **ego** within a man, they destroy faith in Christ, and are inimical to God. The works of **faith** mortify selfishness in a person, let faith grow within him, and magnify Christ within him.

**If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, the Apostle teaches, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation** (Romans 10:9-10).

True living faith brings a man salvation, only if he confess it with his lips. It brought salvation to the Thief upon the cross; it has brought salvation, by means of repentance, to many sinners even in the very last moments of their life, just before death.

So crucial, so indispensable for salvation is **confession of the faith with the lips**, with heartfelt and mindful conviction, that in all the ages of Christianity, the holy martyrs, beginning with the Apostles of Christ themselves, were agreed that it was better to bear terrible and prolonged suffering, to pour out their blood like water, than to utter a denial of Christ, even if it were only said with the lips, without the consent of the heart.

God demands of man for his salvation only **living true faith**. As the pledge of salvation and of eternal beatitude, it must therefore be for the Christian dearer than life itself.

Martyrdom was the fruit of true God-knowledge, granted through faith. Martyrdom was an act of faith. This act was, and is, scoffed at by those who highly prize the works of fallen human nature. In their blindness, they call this generous, most sacred exploit, one given by God to mankind, a consequence of mental unbalance.

So crucial is every single thought in the God-granted dogmas, that the holy confessors, like the martyrs, sealed their Orthodox confession of the dogmas with exhausting sufferings and the shedding of blood.

Such is the importance of faith in the work of salvation, that sins against it weigh especially heavy in the scales of God's true judgment; they are all mortal, that is, with them death of the soul is entailed, and everlasting perdition, and eternal torment in the abysses of Hades follow them.

**Unbelief** is a mortal sin; it denies the one means to salvation, faith in Christ.

**Denial of Christ** is a mortal sin; it deprives the denier of living faith in Christ, which is manifest and sustained by confession with the mouth.

**Heresy** is a mortal sin; it sustains blasphemy within itself and makes its victim a stranger to the true faith in Christ.

**Despair** is a mortal sin; it is a denial of an active living faith in Christ.

The healing of all these mortal sins is holy, true, living faith in Christ.

Confession with the lips is of paramount importance in matters of faith; the great Law-giver of the Israelites, the God-seer Moses, who, even during an act of faith, only uttered a word with some shadow of doubt, was for this denied entrance into the Promised Land (See Numbers 20:10-12).

The disciple of a certain Egyptian desert-dweller (*See Life of Ven. Paisius the Great - 19th June*), in conversation with Jews, out of his simplicity, spoke an ambiguous word about the Christian Faith, and immediately thereafter the grace of Baptism fell from him.

Church history informs us that during the first period of Christianity, in the times of the persecutions, some pagans, by way of mockery and derision, in pretence pronounced the verbal confession of Christ, and immediately they were overshadowed by the Grace of God and instantaneously they were converted from dyed-in-the-wool pagans to zealous Christians, and they sealed that confession, which they had hitherto declared to be blasphemous, with their blood (*See the Passion of the Holy Martyr Philemon - 14th December*).

Suffering and death for the Gospel commandments - such is the work of a living faith in Christ, such is martyrdom (*See Ven. Simeon the New Theologian - the first of his 153 Practical & Theological Texts*). And it is the **holy monastics** who pre-eminently exemplify this martyrdom.

Inspired by a living faith, the saints, the monastics, like Abraham, leave their homeland and their parental home; like Moses they prefer to earthly delights suffering for Christ; like Elias, half-naked, they choose the deserts and the caves as the place to live, - but with the eyes of faith they behold the heavenly recompense.

In their deserts, far away from people, far away from distractions and corrupting occupations, they undertake the struggle against sin, they expel it from their activities, from their thoughts, from their feelings, and the Holy Spirit comes down into their pure souls, and He fills them with

the gifts of Grace. Living faith in Christ and in the Gospel gave the venerable ones the strength to sustain their struggle against sin; it made them vessels of the Holy Spirit.

**Faith** is the mother of patience, the mother of courage, the strength of prayer, the directress towards humility, the bestower of hope, the ascent to the altar of love.

**Faith** in Christ, manifested and confessed, visibly and invisibly, by the fulfilment of the commandments of Christ maintains unharmed the pledge of salvation, and those, who leave the world so that they might wholly consecrate themselves to evangelical activity, are led to Christian perfection.

In those who have achieved Christian perfection, by the action of the Holy Spirit, their strengthened faith looks with particular clarity upon the promises of God, as if it beheld, as if it touched, the eternal good things. And it becomes, according to the teaching of the Apostle, in the very fullest sense, **the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen** (Heb. 11:1).

He who is endowed with a living faith in Christ is changed in his relationship to the visible world and to earthly life. The law and determinations of corruptible things, the changes and endings of the corruptible matters of the visible world become, in his pure view, things evident; earthly pre-eminence, being short-lived, becomes as naught in his pure view.

He who is endowed with a living faith in Christ, as one with wings, soars over all afflictions; he flies through every burdensome happenstance. As if intoxicated by faith in almighty God, in difficulties he does not see difficulties; in illnesses he does not feel sickness. He sees only God's activity in the world; he becomes His by their living faith in Him.

He who believes in Christ, though he dies the death of the sinner, yet again he lives by repentance (John 11:25). Thus we see many of the Saints, who having fallen from the height of holiness into an abyss of grave sins, then, with the aid of faith and the repentance that it inspires, liberated from the stench and from the dark abyss, and raised up again to the height of purity and holiness.

Despair is the witness of the inroads within the heart of unbelief and self-centredness. One who believes in himself and hopes in himself does not arise from sin through repentance; but he who believes in Christ, the All-Powerful Redeemer and Physician, is raised up thereby.

**Faith is from hearing** (see Rom. 10:17); listen to the Gospels which speak to you, and the Holy Fathers, who explain the Gospel; listen to them attentively, and little by little, living faith will be implanted within you, such as will require you to fulfil the Gospel commandments, and for that fulfilment you will be recompensed with the hope of an undoubted salvation. It will transform you from a follower of Christ on earth, to a co-heir with Him in Heaven. Amen.



## **ON MONASTICISM**

**By the Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky  
of Jordanville**

*Continuation*

SO, the union of all peoples in God through Jesus Christ is the manifest and undoubted will of God, Who “desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” And this striving of man towards God was implanted in his soul from his very creation, as the Blessed Augustine says very expressively on the subject: **“Thou, O God, didst create us with a striving towards Thee, and our heart is disquieted until it find its rest in Thee.”**

So, after this, how can this striving towards God be called egotistical? Is this not simply a malicious slur on the very best, most exalted, most holy aspirations of the human soul?

And furthermore, **it is this striving towards God that is the paramount thing which determines the conduct and disposition of the monk.** It is precisely so that he might achieve the promised aim - union with God, - that all the monastic struggles are undertaken: renunciation of family life, keeping oneself in complete virginal purity, renunciation of all possessions, renunciation even of one’s own will. How can all this be called egoism?

Admittedly then, we cannot say that all this good is negative, but show us something positive! The person, who sets out for union with God, Who is the Fullness of every good, himself is joined to the Fullness of those good things and, being graced with the all-hallowing Grace of the Holy Spirit, is granted in abundance to be made himself a treasury of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are: **love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, kindheartedness, faith, meekness and temperance** (Gal. 5:22-23), and it is exactly this that the monastics undertake, accounting the crucifying of their flesh, with the passions and lusts thereof, the paramount concern of their life, and for the sake thereof they lay aside all other concerns and the cares of life.

Thus, we have established that the fundamental concept of monasticism, the striving of a man for union with God, can in no way be called egotistical. But is there nothing egotistical in the particulars, and in the means that the monks employ to realize this concept? In examining this closely, let us distinguish the ways of monastic life. There are two of them: **the communal life and that of the recluse.**

The most widely spread, most common and most recommended for all by the Holy Fathers is the way of the **communal life.** Let us look to see if there is anything in it which is egotistical, that is, which serves the sinful ego?

The common life together of a greater or lesser number of monastics means prayers in common, meals in common, a common obedience, possessions in common, having nothing of one's own, but all things in common, - everything obtained through their labour or otherwise acquired is for the common good. Can we possibly say that there is anything egotistical in such a manner of life? Furthermore can we say of those who enter a monastic community that they are leaving people because they do not want to serve their neighbour and do not want to work for the common good? It is true that they dissociate themselves from the broad plan of serving humanity, such as it is understood by liberal humanists, but, then, serving some sort of vague idea like humankind, is nothing more than alluring dream, a self-deception. True love for people and the desire to serve them and profit them does not consist in empty dreams about the means of benefitting all of human-kind, but in the genuine, heartfelt striving to do such good as is within one's powers to those people, with whom daily life places us in the closest and immediate contact. This is the work of Christian kindheartedness, both inwardly and outwardly (to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to comfort the sorrowing, to direct those who are going astray, and so on), and in the communal monastic life we have the broadest forum for this work, one in no wise less than that of life

in the world. Then, the enormous preeminence in this regard of the communal monastic life over contemporary secular life consists in the fact that it has exactly the same form as the life of the first Christians, of which the Apostle Luke tells us in Acts (4:32, 34-5): **And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.... Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.**

So the first Christians lived; and thus they live even now in the cœnobic monasteries of monks. May we condemn them for striving to live the life of the first Christians?

*... to be continued in the next issue.*



## **POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE**

*A THOUGHT-PROVOKING RESPONSE from the Rev'd Dr Nick Needham, who teaches Church History at the Highland Theological College, at Dingwall, to our reply in our May 2011 issue to an anonymous person who questioned the truth of Ever-Virginity of the All-Holy Theotokos.*

THANKS for the Shepherd “article” on the virginity of the Mother of God. In particular, if I may, well said - quite excellently correct - in technicolour! - that the early Protestant Reformers believed in the perpetual virginity of the Lord’s Mother. Here’s a couple of Calvin quotes:

*Let one thing suffice for us, that what happened after the birth of Christ is foolishly and falsely inferred from the gospel-writer’s words.... When Matthew says that Joseph had no intercourse with Mary “until she brought forth”, the word “until” applies only to the period before the birth, and does not say what followed after. We know quite well that this is Scripture’s normal way of speaking [when it says “until”]. We may be sure that no-one will ever raise questions on such a matter except from curiosity. Certainly only a contentious trouble-maker will press it all the way.*

*There have been certain strange folk who have wished to suggest from this passage (Mt. 1:25) that the Virgin Mary had other children than the Son of God, and that Joseph had then dwelt with her later; but what folly this is! For the gospel writer did not wish to record what happened afterwards; he simply wished to make clear Joseph's obedience, and to show also that Joseph had been well and truly assured that it was God who had sent his angel to Mary. Joseph had, therefore, never dwelt with her, nor had he shared her company. There we see that he had never known her person, for he was separated from his wife.*

The belief in Mary's perpetual virginity is (to my chagrin, which sounds painful even writing it) often condemned by Evangelicals today as a Roman Catholic error. But that's a historical mistake of the FIRST order. Almost all the Reformers – Luther, Zwingli, Calvin – accepted the perpetual virginity of the Lord's Mother, and in fact many distinguished Protestants after the Reformation era continued to accept it. Looks like it's only in our current age of enlightened wisdom that most Evangelicals, in an access of Romophobia & sex-worship, have reversed their own tradition on this one. Sometimes one feels like putting one's fingers on one's nose & just shouting out, "You're all ignoramuses!", except that it probably wouldn't minister to one's humility (or popularity).

At any rate, if your unknown correspondent gets back to you, you could play a nice trump card by saying that a scurvy old Protestant agreed with you thoroughly....



***A PRAYER FROM THE CANON  
TO ONE'S HOLY GUARDIAN ANGEL***

FROM GOD I have received thee as a defender and guide and helper and champion after God, O all-holy Angel; I beseech thee to cease not from chastising and admonishing, teaching me what I must do and enlightening my mind until thou presentest me unto Christ as one saved.



# READERS' SERVICES

## *Teaching from the Blessed & Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky of Jordanville, 1906 - 1976*

ACCORDING to our Typicon, all the Divine services of the daily cycle – apart, needless to say, from the Divine Liturgy and other Church Mysteries – may be performed also by persons not ordained to priestly rank. This has been widely done in the practice of prayer by all monasteries, sketes, and desert-dwellers in whose midst there are no monks clothed in the rank of priest. And, up until the most recent times, this was to be seen also, for example, in Carpatho-Russia, which was outstanding for the high level of piety of its people, where in case of the illness or absence of the priest, the faithful themselves, without a priest, read and sang the Nocturns, and Mattins, and the Hours, and Vespers, and Compline, and in place of the Divine Liturgy, the Typica.

In no way can one find anything whatever reprehensible in this, for the texts themselves of our Divine services have foreseen such a possibility, for example, in such a rubric which is often encountered in them: 'If a priest be present, he says: *Blessed is our God...* If not, then say with feeling: *Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.*' And further there follows the whole order of the Divine services in its entirety, except of course, for the litanies and the priestly responses. The longer litanies are replaced by the reading of '*Lord, have mercy*' twelve times, and Little Litany by the reading of '*Lord, have mercy*' three times.

Public prayer, as none other, firmly unites the faithful. And so, in all those parishes where there is no permanent priest, it is absolutely necessary not merely to permit, but indeed to recommend to the faithful that they come together on Sundays and feast days in church or even in homes, where there is no church, in order to perform together such public prayer according to the established order of Divine services.

# The Coming Month

JULY, as we have remarked in previous years, is one of the two months in the Church Year, when there are no Great Feasts and no fasting periods, although, of course, we maintain the Wednesday and Friday fasts throughout the month. It is, however, almost exactly wedged between the Apostles' Fast and that of the Dormition, which begins on 1st / 14th August. It also rejoices in the feast days of some of the most beloved saints of the Orthodox.

The **Holy Great Martyr Panteleimon** (27th July / 9th August) was martyred as a youth in the year 304 in Nicomedia, which at that time was the residence of the Emperor Maximian, a persecutor of the Christians. The saint's father was a pagan, but his mother Evbulla was a Christian, and is now numbered among the Saints. Called Pantaleon before his conversion, the saint was studying medicine under imperial auspices. He made the acquaintance of a Christian priest, Hermolaus, one of the few Christian survivors after the martyrdom of the **Twenty-Thousand Martyrs of Nicomedia** at Christmas the previous year (commemorated 28th December). St Panteleimon would visit the priest and receive instruction from him on his way to and from his studies. When asked at home by his pagan father, why he was not home on time, he would reply, "I was detained in the service of the Emperor." By this he meant Christ, but his father understood him to mean Maximian. When asked why he was often late for his studies, he would reply: "I was required at my Father's house," by which he meant God, but which they understood to mean his earthly father, and so he managed to keep his instruction in the Christian Faith secret from the enemies of the Faith. He was baptized by St Hermolaus, and his Christian confession was revealed when, in the name of Christ, he miraculously healed a blind man, whom the physicians had been unable to help. Out of envy they denounced him as a Christian, whereupon he boldly confessed his new-found Faith, and was put to a series of tortures. Hermolaus and two other priests, Hermippus and Hermocrates, were also apprehended, tortured and died as martyrs. St Panteleimon was eventually sentenced to be beheaded, and knelt to pray before he was executed. He was not permitted to finish his prayer before the swordsmen struck him. However, rather than killing him, the executioner simply broke his sword. When the Saint had finished his prayer, the executioner was then, and only then, able to strike off his head. When he did so, two further miracles happened: the olive tree under which he had been beheaded was suddenly seen to be laden with fruit, and instead of blood flowing from the saint milk came forth. St Panteleimon is honoured by the Church, as one of the great Unmercenary

Healers. On the icon in our church, painted for us by the sisters of the St Elizabeth Convent in Etna, California, there are depictions of the three hieromartyrs, the priests Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates (commemorated on 26th July) and of Saint Panteleimon's mother, St Evbulla (commemorated 30th March) in the margin.



## ***NEWS SECTION***

### ***ANTIOCHIAN BISHOP FOR LONDON***

THE SECRETARIAT of the Holy Synod of Antioch issues a statement from the **Patriarchal Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand** on 23rd June, 2011, announcing that the Holy Synod of Antioch had elected twelve new Auxiliary Bishops at its regular session convened on 21st June. One of the twelve, **Archimandrite Ephrem (Maalouli)** will, after his consecration, be appointed to their Western European Archdiocese to serve in London. The Antiochian Church has fifteen parishes and eight missions in the British Isles, and is presently organized as a deanery, with **Archpriest Gregory Hallam** as the dean.

### ***RELIGION IN RUSSIA***

POLLS and surveys can be notoriously inaccurate, but perhaps do give some idea of the state of affairs. According to **Frank Weir** of the **Christian Scientist Monitor** (11/5/11): “two decades after the collapse of the USSR, history's most atheistic state, the vast majority of Russians attest to a belief in God — more than in any other European country — according to a new opinion poll.” He tells that a survey was carried out in April by the independent Public Opinion Fund (FOM), and found that 82% of Russians say they are religious believers, while just 13% percent say they do not believe in any deity. But, he adds that “the powerful Russian Orthodox Church will find nothing to celebrate in the survey's details. The church claims 70% of Russians as its adherents and on the basis of that has successfully pressured the Kremlin to return most church property seized by the Bolsheviks almost a century ago, including vast tracts

of land, churches, monasteries, and thousands of religious artifacts formerly held by state museums.” However the poll indicates, just 50% of Russians say they are Orthodox, while 27% do not belong to any particular organized faith. Among young people between 18 and 24, the number of unaffiliated believers was 34%. Most Russians are said to lead overwhelmingly secular lives and pay little heed to the Orthodox Church’s increasingly frequent efforts to influence public morals. Weir’s article continues: “‘There is no doubt that Orthodoxy is the traditional confession in Russia, but only a small part of those who call themselves Orthodox actually go to church regularly, mark the festivals, or practice the rituals,’ says Vladimir Gurbolikov, deputy editor of Foma, a missionary magazine **published by the Orthodox Church**. ‘The problem is a lack of information in society. People do not have normal communication with the Church and are unable to establish it, and so they do not know the Orthodox Christian faith even if they identify themselves with it.’” Given our caveat at the beginning of this paragraph, one can nonetheless say that much of this seems to be borne out by experience of the Russians abroad, those who have left their homeland since the fall of the Soviet regime, not as refugees or DPs, but as “economic migrants.” One must not use this assessment to denigrate the church situation in Russia. No other Church has suffered so greatly as the Russian Church in the last hundred years, and one naturally expects recovery to take time and a great deal of labour. They do not need our criticism but our daily, fervent prayers. However, the FOM findings do rather pierce the bloated posturings of those who claim all is now well with the Church situation there.

## ***LITURGICAL LANGUAGE REFORM PROPOSED IN RUSSIA***

RIA NOVOSTI reported from Moscow on 20th June: “The Russian Orthodox Church is preparing for a reform of its liturgical language, and a draft document on the role of Church Slavonic in modern church life has been circulated among dioceses and is available for discussion on the internet. ‘Church Slavonic is a very important means to keep unity and traditions inside the Church. But on the other hand, understanding of liturgical texts written in Church Slavonic may be simplified,’ a senior Church official, Archimandrite Kirill, said on Monday. ‘It is proposed that more complicated words from Church Slavonic be replaced with simpler ones from the same language, and that syntactic constructions be made easier,’ he said. ‘The general tendency is to make the message that the Church is carrying to modern society more trans-

parent and understandable. This is the process of adaptation inside the Church Slavonic language,' said Kirill, who is a deputy head of the Church's education committee." Perhaps this is an attempt by the Patriarchate of Moscow to remedy the situation outlined by Vladimir Gurbolikov, cited in the item above.

## ***TRANSFERS TO TRADITIONALIST HIERARCHIES***

**THE Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery, Etna, California**, of the **Synod in Resistance of the Church of Greece** announced on 18th June that "by a unanimous decision of the Holy Standing Synod, on 3 June 2011 (Old Style) Hegumen Father Sofronije, a clergyman in good standing of the Church of Serbia, was been received, after an examination of his credentials and confession, into the Holy Synod in Resistance. He will serve a community in Canada, as a clergyman in our American Exarchate. Hegumen Father Sofronije was born in Serbia in 1975. He was ordained a Hieromonk in 1994 to serve his monastic community, just before graduating from the Holy Three Hierarchs Seminary in 1995, where he later taught English and Old Slavonic. He later graduated from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Belgrade in 2005. Father Sofronije also holds a certificate from the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program at Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem. The increasing ecumenical activity of the Serbian Patriarchate, and particularly with the Vatican, prompted Father Sofronije to enter into the resistance. He was encouraged in this decision by our Serbian-speaking communities in Australia and in Canada. He speaks Serbian and English and can serve in Greek."

On 30th May, our Sister Church, the **Russian Orthodox Church Abroad** announced: "A joyous event has occurred in our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Exactly 4 years after the signing of the Act of the union of a part of the ROCA with the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), the ROCOR(MP) Church of the Holy Resurrection in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, has rejoined our Church. During the week of the Samaritan Woman, the Right Rev'd Andronik, Archbishop of Ottawa and Canada, received the parish and served with its rector, Fr. Georgiy Sachewskiy, and Protodeacon Job Chemerov. ROCA members in Toronto, who did not have their own parish but had remained loyal to our Church Abroad, joined in the jubilant event. ROCA members from London, Ontario, who did not have a church or a pastor, were also present. The parishioners who had remained true to the ROCA for four years, but were left without a church or a priest, experienced much joy as they joined with the parishioners of the Resurrection parish. Everyone felt a great spiritual uplifting during the service and it was like the

joy felt on the first day of Pascha. Many remarked that the presence of God's blessing was strongly felt. After the celebratory Divine Liturgy, Archbishop Andronik welcomed Fr Georgiy and all the parishioners of the Church of the Holy Resurrection. Fr Georgiy then expressed his thanks to Archbishop Andronik. A festive lunch was held after the Liturgy for all the parishioners and guests."



# SIR-UK NEWS

## *SAINT BONIFACE DAY*

ON ST BONIFACE DAY, which this year fell on the Saturday of Pentecost Week, Frs Alexis and Sabbas went to the Isle of Wight, where through the kindness of the Anglican vicar, **Reverend Graham Morris**, we were allowed to hold a service of supplication, with the canon of the holy Hieromartyr, in the eleventh century **Church of St Boniface at Bonchurch**. A local tradition states that the Saint preached at this place, which is on the sea coast, when he visited the Island. After the service, Fr Alexis gave short address, expressing the hope that through the Saint's prayers, the mission would be able to pull through the present difficulties, caused through the loss of the former place of worship in Ryde Cemetery, and he particularly urged the mission members to pray for this together. Then we repaired to the **Smugglers Haven Tea Gardens** (which is well worth anyone's visit because of their friendly service) for some refreshments, kindly provided by parishioners **Ben and Elaine Waterhouse**. Our special thanks are due to **Martin Smith**, the mission secretary, for arranging the pilgrimage, and to **Chris Woodford** and **Melanie Swan**, who taxied us from the ferry to the church and back.

## *REPOSE OF PETAR BACKOVIC*

ON PENTECOST SUNDAY, a long time friend of our Brotherhood, **Petar Backovic**, reposed in the Lord. He was recovering from a kidney transplant operation, his new kidney have been donated by his father, **Marko**, but sadly he caught an infection and died shortly after the operation. At the time of his death, he crossed himself several times, and then looked up, raised his hands

as if greeting someone, and quietly reposed. Knowing that there was a possibility that he would die, he had earlier asked his family to ensure that he was commemorated at Saint Edward's for forty days. Although latterly he had lived in Sheffield, he and his brother, Adam, visited St Edward's three or four times a year and communed here. Petar had been baptized in an emergency baptism as an infant in Great Ormond Street Hospital in 1969, and had apparently lived his whole life with only 20% of one kidney healthy. The funeral service was chanted at the **Serbian Orthodox Church of St George in Leicester** on Thursday, 23rd June, and the burial took place at the municipal cemetery, where his grandparents are laid to rest. Over 250 people attended the service, which was chanted by two priests, and afterwards a mercy meal was provided for the mourners. Petar will be remembered for the fervour of his faith, his adherence to Orthodoxy, for his generosity and numerous acts of charity. Our prayers are with his parents, Marko and Stana, and his brothers Adam and George, and the rest of his family. May his rest be with the Saints and his *Memory Eternal*.

## ***CHURCHINGS***

ON PENTECOST SUNDAY, 30th May / 12th June, the forty-day prayers were read for **Daniela Costin**, of Hendon, at the Convent, and her infant son, **Flavian**, having already been baptized, was churched before the Divine Liturgy for the Great Feast.

ON ALL SAINTS SUNDAY, 6th / 19th June, the prayers were read at St Edward's for **Nellie Snelling**, of Ash, near Aldershot, although the formal churching of her infant daughter, **Isabella-Elizabeth**, was left until her Baptism.

## ***PUBLICATIONS***

THE BROTHERHOOD has just published two new icon prints, one of the **Saint Gregory the Great, the Pope of Rome** (from whose mission parish in London our community was founded in 1982) and one of **Saint Ambrose of Milan**. These are reproductions of original icons we venerate in our church, which were painted by the nuns of the **Convent of Saint Elizabeth in Etna, California**. The photography was done for us by **Mark Leuty**, and the printing by **Arrow Offset** in nearby Knaphill. The icon of St Ambrose has been printed in thanksgiving for the extraordinary Archpastoral care that **His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** has shown us over the past four and a half years.

ARROW OFFSET are also now in the process of printing a further thousand copies of our book, **The Ark of Salvation - A Young Adult's Guide to the Orthodox Church**, because the first run has already been sold out.

## ***INCENSE PRICES***

FOR THE FIRST TIME since 2006 we are revising our prices for incense. In the past five years, costs of materials have risen, and postage charges have gone up. A new price-list is available from the Brotherhood.

## ***VISITORS***

1st / 14th JUNE - the Tuesday of Pentecost Week, John Clarke brought a group of about eight **Infant School teachers from Odiham** to see the Church.

7th / 20th JUNE - Two coach loads of pupils from **Sir William Perkins School in Chertsey** visited. There were about 90 girls in all, mostly in their lower teens. As we have come to expect with visits from this school, they were all exceptionally well-behaved and asked numbers of bright and intelligent questions. They stayed well over an hour and a half, doing so, and their visit was, as usual, a joy to us.

8th / 21st JUNE - **seven walkers** unexpectedly visited the church. They were all friends and mostly **aroma therapists!** Having made a detour in their walk to see the church, they stayed about 45 minutes, and, perhaps as was to be expected, showed particular interest in our use of incense and fragrances.

NOT ONLY AROMA THERAPISTS, BUT AMERICANS TOO! The time around Pentecost seems to be the time pilgrims from America visit. This year, **Mary Labarge** came again, staying for just over a week. She stayed in Woking, and her son, **Julian**, stayed with us over the weekends. During the week, they visited Canterbury, Dover and Winchester. **Alejandro and Marina Soubotin** visited briefly on 9th / 22nd June, having supper with us and staying for Vespers. On Friday 11th / 24th June, **Gregory Soloviev** came and spent the greater part of the day with us, and on the Sunday at the Liturgy we were joined by **Mary O'Brien**, returning from visiting her mother, **Mother Pelagia**, at the **Lesna Icon Convent** in Normandy.

## ***BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY***

THE BCS held their AGM in the Brotherhood's Old Mortuary building on Tuesday, 28th June, chaired by **John Clarke**. After the necessary business and a break for refreshments, John showed us "slides" of various works in the cemetery and spoke about various improvements projects in hand. The cemetery owner, **Egg Guney**, was in attendance and he told us about the CCTV which they are hoping to install to increase security measures.



### **PRACTICAL TIP**

THIS IS NOT particularly a church tip, but one for life in general: always make a point of thanking people for whatever benefits they give you or whatever kindness they show you. In contemporary society, this seems now to be an almost forgotten courtesy. At most people seem to treat you to a casual "Cheers" instead of thanking you. For those of us who are Orthodox Christians, this practice is particularly important - it is not without significance that our principal act of worship is called the Thanksgiving, the Eucharist. Furthermore, if we neglect to thank those people around us who in various ways help us, it is a sure thing that we shall also be neglecting to thank the Angelic Hosts and the Saints for their benefactions towards us, and not them alone but also our greatest Benefactor, the Lord Himself. For a check, reflect for a moment on how many of your extemporary or personal prayers (as distinct from the set prayers we read every morning and evening) are of the "give me" category, and how few are thanksgiving to God.



**"THE CHURCH** can be subjected to outward misfortunes, to persecutions and to difficult situations; but it cannot renounce its spiritual freedom and dignity. On the contrary, in misfortunes it shines yet more within, and is constantly renewed."

EPISTLE OF 1927 OF THE CONFESSING BROTHER HIERARCHS  
ARCHBISHOP PACHOMIUS OF CHERNIGOV & ARCHBISHOP AVERKY  
OF ZHITOMIR, THE NEW HIEROMARTYRS