

The Shepherd

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Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

FROM THE FATHERS

"THE RESURRECTION is an earthquake for the Faithful, a cause of dread for the ignorant; for the Faithful because the sluggish body bestirs itself from the sleep of death, for the ignorant because, disturbed by the trembling of the body and the movement of the earth, they depart from faith and belief in the Resurrection."

Saint Ambrose of Milan, 339 - 397 A.D.

By the frequent occurrence of His manifestations in the body, our Lord wished to show, as I have said, that He is present by His Divinity in every place to the desires of those who are good. He appeared at the tomb to those who were grieving; He will also be present to us when we are salutarily saddened at recalling His absence. He came to meet those who were returning from the tomb so that, having learned of the joy of the Resurrection, they might proclaim it; He will also be present to us when we rejoice in faithfully announcing the good things that we know to our neighbours. He appeared in the breaking of bread to those who, supposing Him to be a stranger, invited Him to share their table; He will also be present to us when we willingly bestow whatever goods we can on strangers and poor people; and He will be present to us in the breaking of bread, when we partake with chaste and simple conscience of the sacrament of His body, namely, the living Bread. He appeared in secret to those who were speaking of His resurrection; He is also present to us now, whenever we do this same thing by His gift; He will always be present to us when, free for a time from outside works, we come together in order to speak of His grace. He appeared when they were staying inside, with the doors closed for fear of the Jews; He appeared when this same fear abated and they sought Him with steps unconcealed on the top of the mountain. Formerly He was present in order to comfort His Church with His Spirit when it was oppressed by unbelievers and was prevented from coming out in public and being spread abroad; He is present to this same Church even now when royal personages in political power are well-disposed toward the Faith, the terror of persecution has died away, and the whole upper orders of this world are predisposed to follow in the Apostles' footsteps. He appeared to those who were fishing, and, by appearing to them, aided them by His Divine goodness; He will also be present to us when we are taking care of the necessities of our lives here on earth with an upright intention, and He adds His benevolent help to our righteous labours. He appeared to those who were reclining at table; He will also be present to us when, in accordance with the Apostle's suggestions, whether we eat or drink, or whatever else we do, we do all for the glory of God."

Venerable Bede of Jarrow, 672 - 735 A.D.

"THE SON OF GOD, Who in His compassion became man, died so far as His body was concerned, when His soul was separated from His body; but this body was not separated from His Divinity, and so He raised up His body once more and took it with Him to heaven in glory. Similarly, when those who have lived here in a godly manner are separated from their bodies, they are not separated from God, and in the resurrection they will take their bodies with them to God, and in their bodies they will enter with inexpressible joy there where Jesus has preceded us (cf. Heb. 6:20) and in their bodies they will enjoy the glory that will be revealed in Christ (cf. 1 Peter 5:1). Indeed, they will share not only in the resurrection, but also in the Lord's ascension and in all Divine life. But this does not apply to those who live this present life in an unregenerate manner and who at death have no communion with God. For though all will be resurrected, yet the resurrection of each individual will be in accordance with his own inner state (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23)."

Saint Gregory Palamas, 1296 - 1359 A.D.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Victory over Death

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST is the foundation of our faith. It is the first, most important and great truth, with the preaching of which the Apostles began their work of evangelisation. Just as the cleansing from our sins was achieved through the death of Christ on the Cross, so through His Resurrection we were granted life eternal. For this reason, the Resurrection of Christ is the subject of the Church's continual festivity, a celebration that cannot be silenced, and one that reaches its climax in the feast of the holy Christian Pascha.

The Events At The Resurrection of Christ

As the Evangelists tell us, the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross on Friday, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, on the eve of the Jewish Passover. On this same day, in the evening, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and noble man, and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus down from the Cross, anointed it with fragrances and wrapped it in linens in accordance with the Jewish traditions, and buried it in a tomb hewn out of the rock, which Joseph had prepared for his own burial (the tomb was close to Golgotha where Christ had been crucified). They closed the entrance to the cave with a large stone. The next day, the Saturday, on Pilate's authority, the chief priests and the scribes placed Roman soldiers at the tomb as custodians and they set a seal upon the stone which was closing the entrance to the grave.

On the third day after His death, on the Sunday, early in the morning when it was yet dark, Jesus Christ rose from the dead; His soul returned to His body, and the body came alive, being transfigured and becoming spiritualized. The Resurrected Christ left the cave, without rolling away the stone or breaking the seals. After this there was an earthquake; the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled away the stone from the door of the empty grave and sat upon it. His appearance was as of lightning, and his clothing was white as snow. The soldiers, standing guard there, fled from fear.

At the crack of dawn, Maria Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome and several other pious women came to the tomb with sweet spices, to anoint the body of Jesus. On the way, they discussed among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the sepulchre?" The stone was very large, but they knew nothing of the guard and the seals. The first to come to the grave was Mary Magdalene. Seeing that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, she ran back to the disciples Peter and John, and said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." As it became light, the other Ointment-bearing Women approached the grave. They saw within the tomb a youth, sitting on the right side, clothed in a white garment, and he said unto them: "Be not affrighted, for I know, that ye seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is risen! Go your way and tell His disciples, that they shall see Him in Galilee." They departed.

Meanwhile the Apostles Peter and John, hearing from Mary what had happened, ran to the tomb, but only finding therein the linens and the cloth that had been wrapped about Jesus' head, they returned home bewildered. After them, Mary Magdalene came again to the sepulchre and began to weep. This time, she saw two Angels in white garments, who sat, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. The Angels asked her, "Why weepest thou?" Having replied, Mary turned back and saw Jesus Christ, but thinking that He was the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if thou hast borne Him (Jesus Christ) hence, tell me where thou hast lain Him, and I will take Him away." The Lord said, "Mary!" She turned to Him, recognized Christ and cried out, "Master!" (Teacher). And she threw herself at His feet, so as to kiss them. But the Lord forbade her, and sent her to go to the disciples to tell them about Him.

After this, Jesus Christ appeared to the other Ointment-bearing Women, and greeted them, "Rejoice!" They then announced His Resurrection to the disciples. On the same day, the Lord appeared to Peter and to two disciples, Luke and Cleopas, who were journeying to Emmaus. In the evening He appeared to all the Apostles in a house in Jerusalem, where the doors were secured for fear of the Jews. A week later, the Lord even permitted Thomas, who had doubted His Resurrection, to probe His wounds. And in one day after His Resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to more than five hundred of the faithful.

However, the chief priests, on hearing of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the soldiers, were disturbed, and they took counsel, gave the soldiers money, and instructed them to spread abroad the rumour that Jesus' disciples had stolen His body by night when they were asleep.

After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ remained on earth for the course of forty days. Appearing to his disciples, He prepared them for the great task of propagating the Gospel among all peoples.

The Correlation Between the Old Testament and New Testament Paschas.

The Old Testament Law, according to the words of the holy Apostle Paul, was a "children's guide to Christ" and "a shadow of good things to come" (Gal. 3:24, Heb. 10:1); in other words, the purpose of the Old Law was to *prepare the Israelite people for the coming of the Messiah*. Therefore, as the Old Testament prophecies for the

most part speak of the Messiah, so the most important events were *foreshadowings* of New Testament events, referring to the life of the Saviour and of the Christian Church. In this regard the Old Testament feast of Pascha (Passover) has a particularly important significance. This feast was inaugurated at the time of the Prophet Moses (1,300 B.C), on the occasion of the deliverance through their Angel of the Israelite firstborn from destruction and of the saving of the Jewish peoples from slavery in Egypt. From Moses' time, the Jews counted the feast of Pascha as especially holy.

Thus, the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered, died on the Cross and rose from the dead during the festal days of Passover constitutes an indication from God concerning the deep, internal bond between these two great events. The Apostles pointed out this connection in their epistles, and especially the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that the Old Testament events which are commemorated by the festival of the Jewish Passover, indicated aforesaid the spiritual rebirth of mankind, which would come about as a result of the Resurrection of Christ. So that we can see the bond between the two Paschas, let us set the events of the Old and the New Covenants in parallel.

In the Old Testament, we have the sacrifice of the spotless paschal lamb and the anointing with its blood of the lintels of the doors of the houses, where the Israelites lived, as a consequence of which the Angel passed over these houses and the Jewish firstborn were saved (it is from this that we have the word Passover, which derives from "to pass over," Exodus, chapter 12); in the New Covenant, we have the sacrifice on the Cross of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, by Whose blood, the new firstborn, the Christians, are saved (1 Peter 1:19). In the Old: the miraculous crossing by the Jews of the Red Sea and their deliverance from slavery in Egypt; in the New: Baptism in water and deliverance from slavery to the devil. Furthermore, in the Old Testament: the granting on the fiftieth day after the exodus from Egypt of the Law on Mount Sinai and the conclusion of a covenant (a bond) between God and the Chosen People; in the New: the descent of the Holy Spirit on the fiftieth day after Pascha and the establishment of a new covenant between God and the faithful. In the Old: the miraculous provision of food by God as manna. In the New: the eating of the Heavenly Bread, the Body and Blood of Christ. In the Old Testament: the forty year wandering in the wilderness and the various experiences through which the Jewish people were strengthened in their faith in God; in the New Testament: the experiences which the Christian meets in his life and which strengthen him in faith and in the virtues. In the Old: the raising up of the bronze serpent, glancing upon which the Jews were saved from snake bite; in the New: by the power of the Cross we are delivered from the pangs inflicted by the spiritual snake, the devil. Finally, in the Old Testament: the Jews' taking possession of the Land of Promise; in the New Testament: the promise to the faithful of a new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness abides (2 Peter 3:13).

From this comparison of the paschal events, we see how the events of the Old Testament Passover foretold great spiritual changes in the life of mankind. The beginning of these saving events was laid by the death upon the Cross and by the Resurrection from the dead of the Saviour of the world. Therefore, the Apostles, celebrating the new Pascha, cried out: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us!" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Old Testament Prophecy Concerning the Resurrection of Christ

Many Old Testament prophecies bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ. Among these we must bear in mind those citations in the sacred Scriptures which speak of the Messiah not only as man but as God, and consequently, that *according to His nature He is immortal*; see, for instance - Psalms 2, 44, and 109, Esaias 9:6, Jeremias 23:5, Micheas 5:2, Malachias 3:1; besides this, those prophecies which speak of His *Eternal Kingdom* bear witness to the Messiah's Resurrection, for instance: Genesis 49:10; 2 Kingdoms 7:13, Psalm 2, Psalm 131:11, Ezekiel 7:37; Daniel 7:13. If the Messiah's kingdom is eternal, then, it follows, that the Messiah, the Head of this kingdom, is also immortal!

Among the direct foretellings of Christ's resurrection, the prophecy of Esaias, which fills the whole of the fifty-third chapter of his book, is manifest as the clearest of all. The Prophet Esaias lived more than 700 years before the Birth of Christ, yet wrote about the suffering of Christ with such exactness that it is as if he stood at the foot of the Cross himself, and he concludes his narration with the following words: "He made His grave with the wicked, but He was buried with the rich, because He did not sin, neither was any guile in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and He gave Him over to torment. When He hath made His soul a sacrifice of propitiation, *He shall see His seed long-lived, and the will of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall behold the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. Through His knowledge, shall He, the Righteous One, My Servant, justify many and He shall bear their iniquities on Him. Therefore will I divide Him a portion among the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.*"

The concluding words of this prophecy speak directly of the fact that, after His saving suffering and death, the Messiah shall live and be glorified by God (the Father). King David also foretold the Resurrection of Christ in the fifteenth psalm, in which he speaks in the person of Christ: "I beheld the Lord ever before me, for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken. Therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad; moreover, my flesh shall dwell in hope. *For Thou wilt not abandon my soul in Hades, nor wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, Thou wilt fill me with gladness with thy countenance; delights are in Thy right hand for ever*" (Ps. 15:8-11; see also Acts 2:25 and 13:25).

In this way, the prophets laid in the hearts of the people a strong foundation for faith in the Resurrection of Christ. This is why the Apostles had such success in propagating among the Jewish people faith in the Risen Messiah.

The Fruits of the Resurrection of Christ

"*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Cor. 15:22). These Apostolic words do not only speak of peoples' physical resurrection, but in the first instance they speak of spiritual rebirth. Just as death is double, spiritual and physical, so is the resurrection also double, spiritual and physical. The spiritual death of Adam, which consisted in the breaking of his communion with God, came before his physical death [see Genesis 2:17 & Genesis 5:5]. As a result of the spiritual injury, from Adam death came to all peoples. Christ's resurrection serves, in the first place, for our spiritual resurrection, for the encouragement of our spiritual strivings and unto moral rebirth. The Lord spoke of this spiritual resurrection of the faithful: "The hour is

coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). This is the "first" resurrection, which is written of in the Apocalypse (Rev. 20:5). It consists in this: that a person who believes in the Son of God should be born in the Mystery of Baptism for a new spiritual life. The Grace of God, working within man, helps him to come to perfection in all the virtues. For this very reason, the Apostles consoled the Christians with the recollection that they, in contradistinction to the unbelieving pagans, were already "risen with Christ" (Col. 3:1).

Secondly, on the last day of the existence of this world, by the power of the Risen Christ all peoples will rise from the dead. This will be the physical and general resurrection. Then the souls of those who have died will return to their bodies, and the bodies shall be made alive. The Lord prophesied concerning this general resurrection in these words: "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear" the "voice" of the Son of God, "and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

One must distinguish this general resurrection of the dead from those resurrections of the dead which the Lord Jesus Christ worked during His earthly life (for example, the raising of Lazarus the four-day dead). That was only a temporary granting of life, and after a known time those given life died again, as do all people. But the general resurrection of the dead will be an *eternal* resurrection, in which the souls of people will be united with their bodies for ever. At the general resurrection people will arise transfigured, spiritualized and immortal. This resurrection will be a great miracle of God. The First to be resurrected renewed in this way and with a spiritualized body was the Lord Jesus Christ, and for that reason the Apostle calls Him "the firstborn from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:13-22). "*Then (at the general resurrection) shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father*" (Matt. 13:43).

Already in this life, on special and paschal days, Orthodox people feel in themselves the power of the Resurrection of Christ, which gives rebirth and is life-creating, - that power, which puts down the princes of darkness, frees the soul from the gloom of Hades, opens the doors into Paradise, conquers the bonds of death, pours light and life into the souls of the faithful. This is exactly why they rejoice during the days of Pascha, and not just the deeply believing, churchly people, but even those Christians who are lukewarm and indifferent to religion. Everything, it seems, even irrational nature, experiences the all-conquering power for good of the Risen Saviour!

The Particularities of the Paschal Services

The services on Holy Pascha are distinguished by their especial festivity and splendour. It begins with a procession with the Cross around the church, with the congregation holding lighted candles, and singing, "Angels in the Heavens, O Christ our Saviour, praise Thy Resurrection with hymns, deem us also who are on earth worthy to glorify Thee with a pure heart." This procession commemorates the coming of the Ointment-bearing Women early in the morning to the tomb of the Saviour, that they might anoint His immaculate Body. The procession comes to an end at the church porch before the closed doors, and it is here that the priest begins the Mattins service with the usual exclamation, "Glory to the Holy, and Consubstantial, and Life-creating, and Indivisible Trinity..." Then, like the Angel who announced the Resurrection of

Christ to the Ointment-bearing Women, along with the other sacred ministers he chants the troparion of Pascha three times: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath He trampled down death, and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life." Then the chanters sing it three times. Next the priest intones the verses, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered...." After each of the verses, the chanters sing the troparion, "Christ is risen. After this, the clergy chant the beginning of the troparion, "Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath He trampled down death," and the chanters complete it: "and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life." [Ed. - *in the Greek usage, a Gospel lection is read at the church doors, and before the doors are opened the dialogue from the end of psalm 23, verses 6-10*]. At this point the doors of the church are thrown open, and everyone enters the church and they begin the Great Litany, which is followed by the festal chanting of the Canon, "It is the day of Resurrection...." (see Prayer Book for the full text). This canon was composed by Saint John of Damascus [C8th]. During the singing of the Canon, the clergy frequently cense the church and proclaim the "Christ is Risen!" To this, the faithful exclaim, "Truly, He is Risen!" During these paschal censings, the priest holds the Cross in his hands with a triple candle-stick, and as we are censed we should sign ourselves with the Cross and bow. At the end of the Mattins service, the inspirational and deeply succinct homily of Saint John Chrysostom, "If any be pious...." is read out.

The Hours are not read but sung according to the paschal chants.

The Liturgy follows immediately after the morning service. Instead of the usual psalms, special antiphons are chanted: concise prayers with refrains; instead of "Holy God," "All ye that in Christ have been baptized, Christ have ye put on." The Gospel which is read is about the pre-eternal begetting of the Son of God from God the Father and about the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1-17), which is manifested by His glorious resurrection. If several priests concelebrate, then the Gospel is read in several languages to indicate that the Apostles preached the Resurrection of Christ to various peoples in their native languages [Ed. - *in the Greek usage, it is the Gospel at vespers on the day of Pascha which is read in several languages*]. Instead of "It is truly meet to call thee blest," we have the special hymn: "The Angel cried unto her that is full of grace: O pure Virgin, rejoice, and again I say, rejoice; for thy Son hath arisen from the grave on the third day. O ye peoples, make glad! Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee; dance now and be glad, O Sion, and do thou exult, O pure Theotokos, in the arising of Him Whom thou didst bear."

After the "Prayer beyond the Ambon," the Artos [*Thomas bread*] is blessed - a special loaf which is topped by an icon of Christ's Resurrection. At a subsequent service [*either on the Saturday of Bright Week, or Thomas Sunday*] the Artos is cut into pieces and distributed to the faithful in remembrance of the appearance of the Risen Christ to the Apostles Luke and Cleopas (when he was recognized by them in the breaking of bread). On the this first day of Pascha, eggs, cheeses and butter are blessed, as well as kulich (a special paschal cake), which things have been prepared by the faithful. On the days of Pascha, the faithful greet each other with a brotherly kiss and the words. "Christ is Risen!" And they exchange eggs coloured red, which are symbols of the Resurrection. On every day in the week of Pascha, the Royal Gates are left wide open, as a sign that through Christ's Resurrection, access to Heaven has been opened to all.

From the first day of Pascha until Vespers on the feast of the Holy Trinity (that is for fifty days), prostrations to the ground [and kneeling] are not permitted.

*Protopriest Alexander Mileant,
now His Grace, Bishop Alexander of
Buenos Aires & South America*

There follows the text of the Paschal canon in a Russian translation from the Church Slavonic, so that those attending Slavonic language services may understand it. If anyone would like a photocopy of this, we will gladly send them one. In English translation, we have the full text of the Paschal Canon in our Prayer Books.

*Translated from "Word of the Church,"
the diocesan magazine of the Australia-New Zealand
Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, April 1989.*

FROM "AN ATHONITE GERONTIKON" SAYINGS OF THE HOLY FATHERS OF MOUNT ATHOS

A RESPECTED MONK from New Skete would say to me: "On every feast day of Pascha when we say 'Christ is risen we commemorate the angel's proclamation in front of the empty tomb of Christ. Those who leave the church immediately after 'Christ is risen' is sung are not Christians. The ones who remain to celebrate the Divine Liturgy are the Christians."

CONCERNING PRAYER

Its Inner Qualities and Outer Effects

Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)

*According to the Teaching of the Sacred Scriptures,
the Holy Fathers, and the Teachers and Writers of the Church
A Translation from a Booklet Published by the Russian Skete
of the Prophet Elias on Mount Athos.*

Translation by Mrs Valentina B. Merritt of Brookwood, Surrey

Continuation

4. Prayer's Greatness

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much - James 5:16

Let my prayer come before Thee - Psalm 87:2

Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee - Psalm 140:2

PRAYER should be preferred to everything. Martha gives hospitality to the Lord, and Mary sits at His feet. Wonderful zeal is seen in both the sisters, but you should distinguish their deeds. The Lord approved of the zeal of both women, but He preferred Mary to Martha. Martha is an example of active service to one's neighbour; Mary is an example of standing before God meditatively in prayer. You can imitate which you will, both ways bear the fruit of salvation, however the second way is higher than the first. *Mary hath chosen the good part* (Luke 10:42). If you wish to be one of

Christ's initiates, then sit at His feet and abide in prayerful contemplation of Him - *St Basil the Great*.

There is nothing stronger than prayer, nothing to equal it. The king decked in purple is not as splendid as the one who prays and is adorned with conversation with God. Furthermore just as anyone who, before the whole army, the war leaders and the commanders, approaches the king, and begins to engage him in conversation face to face, would attract the attention of everyone present and would at the same time be the subject of admiration and honour in everyone's eyes, so it is with those who pray. Just imagine what it means for someone, as a man, in the presence of the Angels, of the Archangels in attendance, of the Seraphim and Cherubim and of all the other Incorporeal Powers, to approach with great boldness and converse with the King Himself of those Powers! Does this not array him with honour? - *Saint John Chrysostom*.

What should one seek most of all? That a man might be enabled to remain unceasingly in prayer. Because as soon as he has achieved that, he will come to the height of the virtues, and will already be made a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit - *St Isaac the Syrian*.

Holy, great and soul-saving is the struggle of prayer. It is the main and the first of the monastic struggles. All the other struggles are struggles auxiliary to this one. They are all to make the struggle of prayer more of an achievement, that the fruits of prayer might be more abundant. "The summit of living piously," said St Macarius the Great, "the apex of every good deed is the constant abiding in prayer." - *Blessed Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov*.

O beloved Christian! taste and see *how good our Lord is* (Ps. 33:9). He not only allows us, the unworthy and sinful ones, to come to Him, but He draws us to Him, and not only draws us, but He teaches us how to draw near to Him and to pray. Thus He discloses to us the Lord's Prayer, of which Christ said: after this manner therefore pray ye (Matt. 6:9). And what is this "*after this manner*"? *Our Father!* That is, call upon God as Father. And who are we? Men, who have incurred His wrath, unprofitable servants, sinners, dust and ashes. Oh, our Most Kind-hearted God! Everywhere, wherever we turn, we meet Thy goodness towards us, and whatever we regard we find an occasion to marvel at the exceedingly great riches of Thy goodness. Without a doubt we are encouraged to pray by the promise that our prayer will be heard: *Amen, amen, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you* (John 16:23), says the Truth, Christ - *Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk*.

For beginners, prayer is like a fire of joy, fanning out from the heart; but for the perfect it is like a fragrant light active within him. Or again: prayer is the preaching of the Apostles, the action of faith, better yet it is spontaneous faith, the foundation of hope, the revival of love, an Angelic movement, the strength of the Incorporeal ones, their work and their joy, the Gospel of God, the heart's summons, the hope of salvation, the sign of sanctification, the symbol of sanctity, knowledge of God, the revelation of Baptism, or the cleansing in the laver of regeneration, the betrothal of the Holy Spirit, the rejoicing of Jesus, the joy of the soul, the mercy of God, the sign of reconciliation, the seal of Christ, a ray of the noetic sun, hearts' day-break, the confirmation of Christianity, evidence of reconciliation with God, the grace of God, the

wisdom of God, or better yet the beginning of self-wisdom, the manifestation of God, the work of the monks, the habitation of the hesychasts, the reason for quiet, a sign of the Angelic life. But why speak much? Prayer is God working all things within everyone, for one is the activity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which works all things in Christ Jesus - *Saint Gregory of Sinai*.

Praying is great! The holy Apostles refused to serve their neighbours in their bodily necessities for the sake of prayer and the ministry of the Word. *It is not reason, they said, that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables ... We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word* (Acts 6:2-4), that is, to converse with God in prayer and to converse about God with their neighbours, telling them of the Tri-hypostatic God and the incarnate God the Word - *Blessed Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov*.

What human condition can be higher, or can be compared with the state of the man who, through prayer, is permitted to converse with the King of kings, with the God of gods, with the Creator, with the Almighty Master of all things visible and invisible, or material and spiritual creation? - *Ibid*.

... to be continued with Part II, Prayers Inner Qualities.

FROM THE SACRED CANONS

"SINCE there are some persons who kneel in church on Sunday and on the days of Pentecost [i.e. the fifty days from Pascha until and including Pentecost-Trinity Sunday - ed.], with a view to preserving uniformity in all parishes, it has seemed best to the Holy Council for prayers to be offered to God while standing."

*Canon XX of the Twenty Canons
of the Holy First Œcumenical Council at Nicaea*

N.B. Kneeling is not permitted in church on Sundays, that is from the Entrance at Vespers on Saturday evenings until Vespers on Sunday evening, and throughout the fifty days of Pentecost, because these are days on which the resurrection of Christ is hymned, and our standing upright is symbolic of the Resurrection.

THE COMING MONTH

PASCHA falls almost exactly halfway through the month, and so divides April almost in two; the first half falling in the fasting period of Great Lent and *Holy or Passion Week*, and the last two weeks being the first weeks of Pascha the festival of *the Resurrection*.

These weeks, especially Passion Week (23rd - 29th n.s.) and Bright Week (30th April - 6th May n.s.) comprise the paramount celebration of the whole Christian Year: the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Saviour. In the Orthodox Church, for this period we have a wealth of liturgical observances and hymns which for centuries have been unequalled in any other denomination, and now in recent years, with the "dumbing down" of religious observance in the Western denominations, far excel

anything one will find elsewhere. The catch is, of course, that one has to participate in them. There is little nourishment to be gained from reading about a sumptuous feast. Furthermore, participation in these celebrations does not just entail attendance at church; it also requires that we should have tried to the best of our ability to use the fast to prepare for Passion Week and Easter, and that our church attendance should be attentive so that our minds and hearts can be enlightened by the holy mysteries which are being revealed to them.

Because of a host of considerations, physical and spiritual strength, family situation, commitments at work, distance from church, etc., each person will find his own level of observance, but the important thing is that each should strive to do the very best he can. That is something which each one will only know for himself, but watch lest you offer the Lord, Who has done so much for us, less than you could. He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, says the Apostle (2 Cor. 9:6) speaking of almsgiving, but his words apply more broadly to all our church observances. Is this not perhaps why, both as individuals and as communities, our church-life seems so often to be fruitless? And yet we seldom reflect on the Apostle's teaching or think to blame ourselves or to change our ways.

In this issue we have included teaching from Bishop Alexander on the Resurrection and the paschal celebration, and we are unable in any way adequately to cover the whole series of Passion Week and Bright Week services. Readers can see them listed in the calendar insert, and there is an excellent overview of them in the introduction to the *"Lenten Triodion."*

One particular observance this year is that the festival of the *Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer* (23rd April/6th May) falls on the Saturday of Bright Week and so the paschal hymns are mingled with those to the Saint in Vespers and Mattins, which are served separately (although, here at Brookwood, we shall serve both consecutively as a kind of Vigil on the Friday evening, because on the Saturday the celebration of the Divine Liturgy will be at Ryde, so that the Isle of Wight mini-mission will get a Bright Week service). For the Orthodox the feast of St George always has a paschal air, being the feast of our Champion and of one whose victory over the powers of evil manifests to us Christ's ultimate victory over sin, death and Hades.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"Under 'practical tip' in the latest Shepherd, you refer to Thomas Bread. While I think I have heard of it, I cannot recall what it is or find it in any reference books that I happen to have. Would you please tell me?" - C.J.N.B, Kea'au, Hawaii

Among the Russians, this is called Artos, which is, of course, simply the Greek word for leavened bread, and so we often use the popular Greek expression "Thomas Bread," to be more specific. It is a loaf of leavened bread, often tall and cylindrical in shape, which is baked and brought to church at Pascha. An icon of the Resurrection is placed on it, and it is put before the icon of the Saviour on the iconostas. It is carried in the Easter procession around the church, and at the end of the Divine Liturgy it is blessed with a special prayer and with the sprinkling of holy water. Throughout Bright Week, it is kept before the iconostas in church, and is reverently kissed by the faithful, because in the prayer of blessing it is asked that those who kiss it shall be partakers of a heavenly

benediction. In some monasteries, it is carried into the trapeza at meal times for the brethren and their guests to reverence it in this way. Properly on the Saturday of Bright Week, but often in practice on Thomas Sunday, another prayer of blessing is said over the bread, and it is then cut up and distributed to the faithful. They take their portion home, dry it and keep it (usually in their icon corners) to eat small portions in times of illness, so that through the power of the Resurrected Christ they be granted bodily and spiritual health. Presumably, it is popularly named Thomas Bread because of its being distributed on Thomas Sunday.

PAPAL HOLY LAND VISIT

MOST of our readers will probably have learned more about the Pope's visit to the Holy Land than we have, having seen TV coverage of the events and press reports. From the various cuttings that have been sent us, one is struck by the widening gulf between what one must loosely call "Western Christianity" and traditional Orthodoxy. Although at certain levels, there have been movements within the Roman Catholic Church and changes of emphasis which can only rejoice the Orthodox; yet an event like *Pope John Paul II's Holy Land* visit throws into clear relief the differences between us, perhaps best summed up as the gulf between a worldly spirit and an other-worldly understanding. As one visitor to our Brotherhood expressed it, "When the Pope was being treated as a celebrity; the Orthodox Christians were in church reciting the Prayer of St Ephraim."

We mentioned movements within the Roman communion which nonetheless rejoice us. Two small ones have recently come to light. "The Times" carried a report by *Richard Owen* in Rome that *Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, the Archbishop of Bologna*, had been speaking about the Antichrist, saying that he would promote "vague and fashionable spiritual values" rather than the Scriptures. The Cardinal was speaking at a conference on the work of the Russian philosopher *Vladimir Solovyov* (1853-1900), and although the press article gently poked fun at his views, and although he was obviously speaking from a RC standpoint, it is clear that his views have been nourished by the Orthodox understanding of the person and role of the Antichrist. Maybe his words will help some that Orthodox teachers could not reach.

Secondly, the newly installed *Archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy-O'Connor*, was asked by a pressman whether he thought his archiepiscopate would be a success. He replied with insightful and instructive wisdom, that he had not been appointed to be a success but to be faithful.

SYNOD ADDRESSES THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PEOPLE

On 18th February/2nd March, the *Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad* addressed a lengthy epistle to the Russian Orthodox people, seeking to clarify the disinformation spread about her position. The letter was prompted by a statement of the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate which officially declares that it looks upon "the property of the Russian Church Abroad as its own" - a theory which clearly permits them to take possession of ROCA church properties as has happened recently in the Holy Land, Italy and Canada, and attempts of which have been made elsewhere. The hierarchs speak of their hopes, at the collapse of Communism, for fraternal dialogue with the Patriarchate being dashed, and they set out their

objections to the path taken by the Patriarchal administration. They combat the accusation of being in schism, and most movingly admit that they have made mistakes themselves for which they ask forgiveness.

HIERARCH TO BE GLORIFIED

THE JOINT Canonization Commission of the *Orthodox Church in America* and the *Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America* is in the final stages of its preparatory work in glorifying *Bishop Raphael (Hawaweeny) of Brooklyn* as a Saint. The glorification ceremonies are likely to take place at Saint Tikhon's Monastery, South Canaan, Pennsylvania, a monastery consecrated by Bishop Raphael 95 years ago. Sunday 27th February, this year, marked the 85th anniversary of the death of Bishop Raphael.

PATRIARCH ACCUSED OF "LASHING OUT"

PATRIARCH ALEKSEI II of Moscow is said to have "lashed out" at the Roman Catholic Church in an interview with the magazine *Religions Info*, attacking their attempts to proselytize in Russia and lands that are traditionally Orthodox. The Patriarch is also reported as having opined in his interview with the Greek magazine, that there was no theological problem with making Moscow a "second pole of leadership" within the Orthodox Church along side the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Patriarch Aleksei has also accused the U.S. special services for fostering the rift between his Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad. He spoke of his church's collaboration with Soviet power as "alleged." It would seem therefore that he still denies the record of collaboration and refuses to see the objections that the faithful of ROCA have to his administration. One would have thought that if any rift is being unnecessarily maintained, the violent seizure of ROCA properties by his adherents would have also been on any list of contributing factors.

APPEAL TO ACTING PRESIDENT PUTIN

THE COMMITTEE for the *Moral Rebirth of the Fatherland* (i.e. Russia) addressed an appeal on 20th February to *Vladimir V. Putin*, then acting President of the Russian Federation, urging him to take steps to halt the spread of pornographic and salacious materials within Russia. They deplore the immense increase in such materials since the collapse of the Soviet regime, and speak of its degenerating effects on individuals and on the nation.

ARCHBISHOP MARK ISSUES AN APPEAL

ON 8th MARCH, *Archbishop Mark* issued a short appeal to his clergy in England and elsewhere regarding the *seizure of ROCA's church properties in the Holy Land*. In the light of the Moscow Patriarchate's stated position, claiming ownership of ROCA properties, the Archbishop has asked that letters be sent to Israeli embassies and to the representatives of other countries which were signatories of the Oslo accords, and which thus guaranteed the status quo in the Holy Land, asking that they take steps to remedy the wrongs done, and grant assurances that our monastics in the Holy land will be able to continue their life there unmolested when finally a political solution is found for the Holy Land.

ARCHBISHOP GREGORIOS PRESENTS ICCJ AWARD

LONDON JEWISH NEWS (17th March, 2000) reports that the *International Council of Christians and Jews* awarded this year's Interfaith gold medallion to *Brian Pearce OBE*, director of the Interfaith Network for the UK. The presentation itself was made by *His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain*, of the Greek Orthodox Church, at a ceremony "held recently by the Board of Deputies." The Interfaith Award was created in 1999 by the *Sternberg Foundation*. One is saddened by the thought that the Archbishop's involvement in such events indicates a further step, from commitment to ecumenism to involvement with interfaith, i.e. syncretical, issues.

BRITISH CONVERT TONSURED

ON THE DAY (16th/29th March) of the holy Apostle Aristobulus, the first Bishop of Britain and the brother of Saint Barnabas, a British convert to Holy Orthodoxy, the novice Olga Lord, was tonsured to the rason by *His Grace Archbishop Mark* at the *Gethsemane Convent Church of St Mary Magdalene* in Jerusalem. The ceremony took place just before the Vespers for St Alexis, and the new rasophor nun was given the name Vera. May the Lord grant *Sister Vera* the lowliness of His commandments, love and meekness, and that she remain steadfast in her profession till the end.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

AS PART of his new obedience as Dean of ROCA's English-language parishes, Fr Alexis visited the *missions of St Werburgh in Congleton* (on Sunday 13th February) and *Sts Felix & St Edmund at Felixstowe* (on Sunday 26th March), the Sundays nearest the festivals of their respective patron Saints. At both missions, the Vigil Service was served on the Saturday evening, and after the Sunday morning Divine Liturgy molebens were chanted to the missions' saints. At Felixstowe, after a buffet lunch, a Question & Answer session was held in the church hall, and then Fr Andrew and his matushka took Fr Alexis to see the new church building that the mission hopes to acquire for Divine worship.

OUR THANKS are especially due to all those who contributed to the celebration of the *Martyrdom of St Edward* on 17th and 18th March (30th & 31st n.s.) by joining us in prayer, by sending gifts and donations, and by helping to prepare for the feast and for the lunch afterwards, and for helping to clear up afterwards. May the prayers of Saint Edward ever bring you and your loved ones blessings.

WE APOLOGISE in advance in case your May issue comes later than usual. We usually try to get "The Shepherd" to *Greenprint and Design* on the last day of the month according to the civil calendar, and to despatch it on the 10th to reach you near the first of the Church Calendar month. Pascha falls on 30th April (n.s.) this year and so it may be that we are not able to achieve this. We will do our best and are sure Greenprint will too, but ask you not to worry and to excuse us if the next issue is a little later than usual.

PRACTICAL TIP

THE HOLY APOSTLE writes, "*If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain*" (1 Cor. 15:14), and, to emphasize the point, a few verses further on he says, "*If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*" (verses 17-19). The Resurrection and its celebration should therefore be vital to us. Every conscientious Orthodox Christian should do all that he can to ensure that he can attend as many of the services of Passion Week (particularly from Great Thursday onwards) and in Bright Week. If necessary plan ahead, alter work schedules, etc; plan to stay near a church for the few days from 27th April (n.s.) through to at least 30th April. If for compelling reasons, it is quite impossible for you to attend the Divine Services on these crucial days, then try to attend on the other days of Passion and Bright Week, read the services at home, and if you are housebound contact your priest well ahead of time to ask that, as near Pascha as feasible, the Holy Mysteries are brought to you, and prepare yourself for their reception.