

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

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FROM THE FATHERS

"WE MUST be with Christ. He who is with Christ becomes rich, but he who honours the things of the body more than the things of the spirit shall fall both from the former and from the latter."

Amma Eugenia, from "The Paradise of the Fathers."

"HE WHO IS RULED by earthly desires wants either good food, or the satisfaction of movements below the belly, or human glory, or riches, or something else following from these. And if the mind finds nothing better than these things, to which to transfer its desire, it will never to the end of its life be resolute enough to abandon them. But what is infinitely better than them is knowledge of God and of things Divine."

Venerable Maximus the Confessor, + 662 A.D.

"SHOW THE ENEMY that you are not a slave of your senses, but lord and king. Show that you are not only flesh and blood, but a rational mind, appointed by God to be leader and sole ruler over the irrational passions of the body. Repeat to yourself that wise proverb concerning bad habits: The best learning for man is to unlearn evil.' Now, if I have learned, wrongly, to give to my senses their sensual objects, and this wrong learning has brought about a bad habit, and this bad habit a still further bad condition, why can I not also learn to do the opposite? Let, therefore, the good learning become a good habit, and the good habit a good and permanent condition. If, in so doing, I am to experience difficulties and bitterness at first, let me experience them. Afterward I will be able to experience both ease and joy."

Venerable Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, + 7809.

"AS SOON as you turn away - however slightly - from God, and no longer place your trust in Him, things go awry; for then the Lord withdraws, as though saying: 'You have put your trust in something else - very well, rely on that instead.' And whatever it may be, it proves utterly worthless."

Saint Theophan the Recluse, + 1894 A.D.

EPISTLE OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

To All Faithful Children in the Homeland and in the Diaspora

FAITHFUL CHILDREN of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, beloved in the Lord!

Just as the holy Apostle Paul addressed an appeal to the Christians of the Church of Corinth, so do we, the archpastors of the Russian Church Abroad, address

ourselves to you: "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

From the Apostle's words it is apparent that the holy Church of Christ found it necessary from the very beginning to warn the Christians of the danger of divisions and schisms, and to call all to oneness of mind and love. We, the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad cannot remain silent when we see part of our beloved children falling under the pernicious influence of sowers of discord. We cannot fail to note how, through the wide dissemination of all manner of distortions and false interpretations -especially on websites formed for this purpose on the internet, which are full of all manner of slander against the hierarchy of our Church Abroad - ill-intentioned people are undermining the authority of the archpastors and the highest organ of its administration, the Council of Bishops.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the tumults among part of our flock are not so much arising because of a misunderstanding of the decisions adopted at the most recent Council, but are the result of a carefully planned and organized campaign, which has as its goal an attempt to destroy the unity of our hierarchs and our Church.

Several people of bad conscience have not even been ashamed to try to enlist the respected elderly Metropolitan in the "war" they have started, unconscionably taking advantage of his advanced age and abusing his trust. Given the complicated circumstances which have developed, we see that it is essential to convoke an Extraordinary Council of Bishops, which will meet from 10th/23rd October, 2001, in New York.

The most important act of the Extraordinary Council will be the election of a new First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. This has been occasioned by the advanced age and frail health of His Eminence, Metropolitan Vitaly, who, at the 27th June/10th July session of the Synod of Bishops, requested that he be allowed to retire. The Synod of Bishops received the request of the Metropolitan with sympathy and understanding, and has entrusted to Archbishop Lavr, the First Deputy of the First Hierarch and secretary of the Synod, the temporary conduct of the administrative affairs of ROCA until the convocation of the Extraordinary Council of Bishops.

During the pre-conciliar period, the name of the First Hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly, must be commemorated at the Divine services as before, without change. The name of Archbishop Lavr must be commemorated in all the parishes of ROCA after the name of the First Hierarch.

So as to avoid inaccuracy and possible future false interpretations, we, the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, declare before the whole world:-

1) Not one of the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is striving for a speedy unification with the Moscow Patriarchate. No "pro-Moscow" faction exists among us.

2) All the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad categorically condemn the heresy of Ecumenism and Sergianism.

3) There was no "change of course" for the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad at the most recent Council of Bishops. One need only attentively examine the Epistles

of the preceding Councils to be convinced of this. We advise those who desire to see more extensive extracts from these past Epistles to familiarize themselves with the "Appeal of the Pastoral conference of the Diocese of Western America and San Francisco." One ought also to familiarize oneself with the explanations of His Grace, Bishop Evtykhy to his flock in connection with the resolutions of the Council.

4) With regard to our relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church, we state that relations between it and our Church are special, conditioned upon our historical closeness to the Church of Serbia, which once took the Russian Church Abroad and a multitude of Russian refugees under its loving wing and cared for us like a loving mother. Now, the Church of Serbia itself is undergoing a grievous trial because of the attacks of global powers on Kosovo and other parts of Serbia. During this difficult time, we cannot turn our back on her.

In connection with the limited participation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the World Council of Churches, we have more than once addressed the Patriarch and other Serbian hierarchs with a statement of alarm and fraternal admonitions. One ought to note that the influence of the great theologian, Archimandrite Justin (Popovich), a strict opponent of Ecumenism, is very great among the Serbian bishops, and we hope that it will soon bear its own fruit.

5) Accusations are being made against the Synod of Bishops, that it does not endure any criticism of its actions and is raining heavy punishments down upon those who think differently. We declare that this is a slander originating from the enemies of our Church. The Synod of Bishops is not at all against the statement of other views by the faithful children of the Church Abroad, or even suggestions that it review one or another of the decisions adopted at the most recent Council.

However, when these expressions of disagreement take the form of an open call to rebellion against the Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority or incite the faithful to open schism, the Synod of Bishops is compelled to view this in a different way. When such statements are made by clergymen, who by virtue of their position have a greater influence upon the flock, and who are obligated by their oath, given by them at the time of their ordination, to remain in obedience to their hierarchy, the ruling bishops are forced to act more strictly. If admonition on the part of the ruling bishop does not bring to repentance the clergyman who is acting against his hierarchy, the bishop is obliged to take more decisive measures for the defence of the flock. Regarding the situation which has developed within part of the diocese of Western Europe, we state that the suspension imposed upon certain clergymen is not the result of their expressing their personal opinion, but only for their determined refusal to accept the ruling bishop appointed by the Council of Bishops, which is not allowed by Church order and the canons. Moreover, before such canonical suspensions were imposed, a whole series of steps and efforts were undertaken to convince these clergymen, who are waging an open rebellion against their Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority, to reconsider and repent.

6) The statement that the Council of Bishops is supposedly trampling on the concept of collegiality by not taking into consideration the opinions of the "broad masses," has no foundation. We, the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, always listen attentively to the voice of the faithful clergy and pious laity. However, it

must be remembered that the ultimate resolution of questions within the Church falls under the authority of the Council and Synod of Bishops, and not under the authority of public opinion, which is sometimes artificially manipulated by provocateurs. The Church of Christ is not a democracy, and questions of Church life are not decided by a majority vote of the people. To make decisions under the pressure of a vocal minority which is pursuing its own definite objectives would not be collegiality but coercion.

7) With regard to the reproaches addressed to the Council of Bishops, that it allegedly accepted too rosy a picture of the Church situation in Russia, we state that all of us know well both the positive and the negative aspects of life in our much-suffering homeland. Many of us have availed ourselves of the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the situation directly, and all of us correspond with clergy and faithful in the homeland and follow developments occurring in Church life. At the most recent Council of Bishops we listened with attention to a whole series of reports on contemporary life in Russia, which expressed various points of view.

We confirm the decision proclaimed at the Council of 1981, which set forth our approach to the situation in Russia: speaking of events in much-suffering Russia, we do not draw a veil over reality, but speak the truth. We permit ourselves to speak openly of all the negative phenomena observable there. However, we do not confine ourselves exclusively to the negative aspects, which would be utterly unjust, but respond with joy to all the positive aspects. To view reality in our homeland through rose-coloured glasses is a mistake; however, it is just as much a mistake to view Russia through dark glasses, seeing only what is negative.

8) As regards the yearning, expressed by the Council of Bishops, for unity in Orthodoxy, one must remember that the Holy Church prays for "the union of all" at every service. This yearning for unity is a direct fulfilment of the words of the Saviour, Who in His high-priestly prayer, which was directed to God the Father, prayed "that they all may be one" (John 17:21). This is also said in the Prayer for the Salvation of Russia, which is read at the Divine Liturgy: "that all in harmonious oneness of mind and unceasing love may glorify Thy most holy name..." And in the Prayer to the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, confirmed by the Council of Bishops in 1981, we quite openly express the prayerful request "that the schisms within our Church may be abolished."

The Holy Church has always yearned and striven to uproot all schisms and divisions and to establish unity unconditionally - unity in the Truth; for there can be no outward unity if there is no unity in the Truth.

It is for just this kind of unity in the Truth that we are striving. Living in the Church, we must be filled with the spirit of the Truth and reject even the least suggestion of the spirit of falsehood.

We will now address some words in particular to our faithful clergy and flock located in our much-suffering native land. We always feel ourselves to be one with you, with all believing Russian people. During these days of universal apostasy, which, through the pan-heresy of ecumenism, has even infected most Local Orthodox Churches, we must stand united, that the enemy of our salvation may not use our divisions to destroy the voice of our confession in the homeland and in the diaspora.

Duty-bound by our conscience, we again address a tearful appeal to the clergy who have departed from obedience to their lawful hierarchy: forsake your destructive path! May God soften your hearts and give you understanding!-----

In conclusion, we address again to all of you, our beloved children, the appeal of the Apostle: "I beseech you, brethren, mark those who cause divisions and offences... and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

Pay no attention to the various "Open Letters," "Statements," "Appeals," "Referendums" and "Pages for the collection of signatures," which are being disseminated on the internet and by electronic mail by various provocateurs, who sometimes even claim that their activity has received the blessing of the First Hierarch himself. Be careful, as the Apostle warns, "For those who are such ... by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18).

Be steadfast in our Faith and in loyalty to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and its hierarchy, which has been ordained by God. Our Church has successfully weathered many grievous trials over the eight decades of her existence, at the hands of enemies from without and enemies from within. We are certain that, with the help of God, we will also overcome those we are experiencing today.

We trust in the Lord and in the Mother of God, the guide of the Russian diaspora through her miraculous Kursk-Root Icon of the Sign; and we pray that peace and oneness of mind will again come to dwell among all of our faithful children.

"Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 1:2).

[Signatures appended:]

+ Metropolitan
Vitaly
+ Archbishop Lavr
+ Archbishop Alypy
+ Archbishop Mark
+ Archbishop
Hilarion
+ Bishop Kirill
+ Bishop Ambrose
+ Bishop Gabriel
+ Bishop Evtykhy
+ Bishop Alexander
+ Bishop Michael

From

"THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N.R. Antonov

Continuation

§ 15. The Sacred Symbolical Actions. These actions and rites comprise the third component of the Divine services. Why they are used in the services and why they are called symbolical is because in using them behind an outward, visible mode of expression there lies hidden a certain sacred significance, and because thanks to the sanctification effected through prayer even material and earthly things may be transfigured and given another, a religious, value. By symbolical actions, we understand: 1) the sign of the Cross, 2) bowing, 3) making prostrations and falling to the ground, 4) the priestly blessings, 5) the censuring of the icons and of the people, 6) the burning of candles and oil lamps, and 7) sprinkling with holy water.

The Sign of the Cross. To make the sign of the Cross, join three digits of the right hand (the thumb, the index finger and the middle finger) in honour of the Holy Trinity, One in Essence and Undivided; and the two others fold into the palm signifying the union of the two natures in Jesus Christ. Holding the fingers in this way, first touch the forehead, then the stomach, and lastly the right and left shoulders in turn. With this earnest but unhurried tracing of the Cross, we indicate that we are praying conscious of the fact that the Cross is close to us, that it touches our heart, that it is ever before our eyes, that our mind, our heart and our powers are sanctified thereby.

Bowing. In day to day life, we bow when we ask something of someone, or thank them, or greet them. We come to church to beseech God for something, to thank Him, or to glorify Him, and it is of the essence of the thing that these feelings are expressed in church by bows.

Prostrating and Falling to the Ground. The bending of our knees is an expression of our submission before God, and our falling to the ground an expression of the deepest humility and that we might call to mind that before God we are but earth and dust (Genesis 18:2).

Blessings. The priestly blessing is a sign of the imparting of God's blessing to the people. It is actually God's blessing, because: 1) the priestly minister during the course of the Divine service acts as an image of the Saviour; 2) the priest signs those who are praying with the sign of the Cross, which is the instrument of our salvation; 3) in the way in which the priest holds his hand, his fingers spell out the initial and final letters [in Greek] of the Saviour's name: IC XC. Our acceptance of the blessing of God thus granted through the ministry of the priest, or rather our prayer that we receive it, is indicated by our making a slight bow.

The Lighting of Candles. The use of candles and lamps in the Divine services existed in the Old Testament, and from the very beginnings of the Church of Christ in the New Testament. The candles are not only indispensable to light the church, which would otherwise be dark, but they add to the festivity and joy of the Divine services. Besides this, the flame acts as a sign of our flaming love for and burning faith in the

saint, before whose image we place our candles. The light is also a sign of the enlightenment we receive in emulating the life of the saint. The whiteness of the wax represents purity of our souls, and its softness goodness of character.

Censing. The censing of the holy icons expresses our reverence before the saints, who are depicted on the icons, and the censing of the people reminds those who are praying, that their prayers must needs be heartfelt so that, like incense, they may rise up to the heavens. Furthermore, the smoke from the censer, which envelopes those praying, signifies the grace of God which always similarly folds itself around us.

Sprinkling with Holy Water. All water lifts the spirits of man, and blessed water reminds the Christian of spiritual cleansing and spiritual good cheer, even as it grants this cleansing and good cheer to those who receive holy water with faith and are sprinkled therewith.

§ 16. **The Necessity of Rites and Symbolical Actions in the Divine Services.** The rites and symbolical actions are indispensable for the Divine services, not only because they are a natural expression of man's soul and because they express sacred thoughts, but also because of their ancient Christian derivation. The greater number of them have been sanctified by the example of Jesus Christ. From the various Gospel narrations it is clear that during His lifetime. Jesus Christ, when praying or imparting grace filled help to the people, repeatedly cast His eyes up to Heaven (e.g. when He satisfied the five thousand with the five loaves - (Matthew 14:19), and during His high-priestly prayer (John 17:1); He fell on His knees in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before His Passion (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:41-44); He stretched forth His hands to bless the disciples (before the Ascension - Luke 24:50), and to bless the children (Matt. 19:15); at the healing of the man born blind, He ordered him to wash in Siloam's holy water (John 9:11). In the shining of light, from the oil and lamps in the parable of the Ten Virgins, the celebration in the Kingdom of Heaven is depicted for us (Matt. 25:1-13). Likewise, during Apostolic times, Divine services were conducted with falling upon the knees (Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; Eph.3:14); lamps were burned (Acts 20:7-8); hands were raised (1 Tim. 2:8).... The very best Christians, the holy Martyrs themselves, did not curtail but rather enriched the liturgical rites and symbolical actions.

§ 17. **The Purpose of Studying Divine Services.** It is imperative to study the Divine services: firstly that one may understand the order and the correspondence between the various prayers, hymns, sacred rites which comprise the services in church; and secondly so that one can understand the meaning of these prayers, hymns, rites and actions; and thirdly so that one might establish firmly in one's heart a reverent love of God's house and of the Orthodox Divine services.

§ 18. **The Distinction Between Divine Service at Home and in Church.** Services may be served for the whole community of believers or at the particular request of individual Christians. The majority of the services may not only be served in church but also at home. However, more often than not our services, including those which may properly be served at home, are served in church, simply because the church is more suitable for the celebration of Divine services. In church, the faithful can more easily remember that they are children of the one Heavenly Father. Here it is easier to forget the various social distinctions and those that arise from our material wealth, and so

these communal Divine services better enable us to inflame in our hearts feelings of Christian love, brotherhood and kind-heartedness.

...to be continued with "Understanding the Church"

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF FATHER GEORGE CHEREMETIEFF

Thoughts on a Journey

Continuation from last issue

Concerning the Authorities and Concerning Coercion.

The holy Apostle Paul writes: "there is no power but of God" (Rom. 13:1), and "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (v.2). But he also gives an explanation of who these representatives of power are: "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Dost thou desire not to fear the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same ... for he beareth not the sword in vain; he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (vv.3-4). And in the Prophet Esaias it says: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil..." (5:20).

Here the Apostle gives an exact definition of the authority which is from God. This shows the difference between authority and force. For power which is not from God is not power but force. Such force, is like the "power" of highwaymen over travellers. When robbers like this take over a whole country, their activities do not just turn into authority, but remain just the same: violence, - merely organized now.

Authority encourages good and punishes evil. But force destroys good and encourages evil and unrighteousness. Free people must not surrender to such force, because force is only permitted by God as a punishment or sometimes that whole nations might be tested. One must only obey authority, not force, even though it has been allowed. Obviously such a choice can only be made by people who are living freely and not by those who have been dispirited by force.

One of our contemporaries has fairly commented that the words, "there is no power but of God" cannot be referred to a dictator, who has snatched power, and arrogated to himself the right to decide what is good and what is evil. The same applies to the "authority" of the Communists in Russia. Princess S.A.Volkonskaya, in her book "Woe to the Conquered," Wrote: "Everything was taken away from us. The majority of us were prepared to agree with that. But we couldn't agree with those who turned unrighteousness, tyranny and murder into a principle." Under the Soviet powers one has to conceal good because it is punished, in the same way as evil is punished in a normal state. Communist "authority" is an organized group of bandits from all over the world, supported by secret organisations from all over the world, which by means of tyranny and unprecedented terror, strive to grasp the whole planet into their hands and make everyone slaves of the Antichrist and of Satan, who himself directs them. It is sinful and inappropriate to succumb to such theomachistic violence.

The Autumn of Life.

One shouldn't be afraid of old age. Of course, at first it seems very sad that you are no longer able to do what before was so easy, both physically and spiritually. But if you find in yourself the strength to humble yourself and to incline before the will of God, Who has established firm physical laws, then you will find some comfort. You no longer rush to finish this or that business, because the wisdom of old age tells you that you can't finish everything. And the more you enter in on yourself, the more you come into inner communion with your Creator. And in such moments you come to feel the spirit of people, of animals, plants and even or soulless things.

And thus it becomes quiet in your soul. It, as it were, gradually leaves earthly cares, and can already see the Light that knows no evening, and in gratitude it glorifies God. These quiet moments are so much more radiant than the happy and cheerful aspirations of youth, which themselves were so good in their time. Spring flowers are wonderful and pretty. But the quietness and soundless sadness of the falling leaves is also blessed. They humbly fall to the ground, are united to it, thus yielding their life juices to the spring flowers. And their quiet reverie is offered up to God, as a soundless prayer, hallowing the wistful beauty of the autumn woods. For not even a single blade of grass is forgotten by God. For the spiritual ear, this quiet prayer is like a the tender harmony of nature, glorifying the Creator. It is called stillness, and it is a pity that some do not experience it.

Evening has come. The day, even though it be a bad one, is done. The heavy cares of life are left behind. And the soul thanks God, Who has given it strength and help on its life's journey. Quiet slumber draws nigh and peace until the radiant Resurrection ... May the name of the Lord be blessed, now and unto the ages.

On Receiving the Light.

The light of the sun gives light to man and warms him, and the healthy man rejoices in this. But a sick man cannot bear the sun's warmth, and a man with sick eyes cannot bear the light of the sun and attempts to hide from it.

When we receive Holy Communion, we take into ourselves spiritual light and life. If we are spiritually healthy and have cleansed ourselves of the filth of this life, this light, this life, will illumine us and warm us. If we are not prepared, if we are dirty and spiritually unwashed, then this light and this life will torment us because we were not prepared to encounter them, but nonetheless we cannot free ourselves from them. From this ensue many physical illnesses and more especially spiritual ones.

If we have not cleansed ourselves sufficiently, then it is better not to approach the Chalice. For then we place ourselves in the position of the man who came to the wedding banquet without a wedding garment. Wedding clothes must be clean, and he could have been clothed in the same. But he was too lazy to wash them, and came in the dirty ones that he had been working in. On account of his laziness, he was cast out into the outer darkness. Let us not be lazy in the work of our salvation.

To be continued in the next issue, with "On earthly life" ...

O LORD JESUS Thou art to Thy prophets the most glorious prophecy,
and the most glorious revelation to the faithful.
Open our minds, that the wonderful glory of Thy majesty may enter into them,
and open our hearts, that they may be filled with Thy life-giving love.
To Thee be glory and praise for ever.
Amen.

Prayer from Saint Nicolas Velimirovic's "The Prologue from Ochrid"

THE COMING MONTH

IN AUGUST we celebrate the last two Great Feasts of the Church Year: the Lord's Transfiguration (6th/19) and the Dormition of the All-holy Virgin Theotokos (15th/28th). The placing of the first of these in August is evidence of a calendar change. Originally the festival was kept forty days before the Lord's Crucifixion, because as the Gospel narrative tells us the Lord's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor was a preparation for "His decease which He should accomplish in Jerusalem." The hymns of the feast, inspired by the Holy Spirit, emphasize that the Apostles were permitted to see the glory of the Lord, so that when they should see Him crucified they would know that His Passion was voluntary, and that they would thus be strengthened for the coming trauma. Later, because the festival always fell in the penitential days of Great Lent, it was shifted to its present date, forty days before the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross in September. Thus the link with the Cross is unbroken, although the actual date of the festival has been changed.

In the fourth century, the Empress St Helen founded a church on Mount Tabor for the feast. When in the Middle Ages, the Crusaders entered Palestine they found a number of churches and monasteries on the holy mountain, and they commandeered them for Roman Catholic worship. After the Crusaders retreated from the Holy Land, the churches were either destroyed or fell into ruin. It was not until 1849, that the possibility of erecting a church there presented itself. In that year, the Patriarch Cyril II of Jerusalem began to petition the Ottoman authorities for permission to build there. Even so, it was only in 1860 that permission was granted and a new church was built on the foundations of the ancient Byzantine one. To this day, each year on the festival, a radiant cloud is seen to come and stand over the monastery there.

The Russians count three festivals of the Saviour in August. The first of these is the Procession of the Wood of the Cross on the first of the month, the second is the Transfiguration and the third is the translation of the Holy Mandilion, the icon not made by hands, from Edessa to Constantinople (16th/29th). Of these only the Transfiguration ranks as one of the Twelve Great Feasts.

The Dormition of the Mother of God is one of the Twelve and the last in the Church Year. Three days before her death, the Mother of God was again visited by the Archangel Gabriel, who foretold her demise. She prayed that the Lord's closest disciples, the Apostles, might be with her at the end, and her prayer was granted miraculously. The Apostles, who, in their teaching ministry, were scattered over the face of the earth, were wonderously brought to Jerusalem to be with her. On the icons of the festival, they are shown being borne on clouds. The Virgin ended her earthly

course in Sion, and her body was taken to Gethsemane to be buried. There her family had a family tomb, and there her parents, Sts Joachim and Anna, and the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed had been buried. The body was borne to burial accompanied by the Apostles and other eminent Church leaders such as St Dionysius the Areopagite and Saint Hierotheus, and by the company of the Christians in Jerusalem, as well as by a multitude of Angels. A priest of the Jews, Athonius, seeing the funeral procession, and being filled with wrath against her whom he thought to be the mother of a deceiver, rushed forward and attempted to overturn her bier. As he grasped it, an Angel appeared and severed his hands at the wrists. Immediately, he understood his sin and repented, the Apostles prayed that he should be healed, and he was. Later, he was baptized and joined the Christian community. Just as he had been chosen to confirm the Resurrection of his Saviour, St Thomas was allotted a special ministry at this festival. Alone among the Apostles he had not been present at the Virgin's death. He arrived on the third day, and the others opened the cave tomb for him to venerate the body that had borne God. The tomb was found to be empty. The Most Holy Mother of God had been taken body and soul into the Heavenly Mansions.

The tradition of the elevation of the Panagia (now usually confined to monasteries) refers back to this festival. Before the Dormition, the early Christians had established a custom of setting aside a portion of bread, which at their meal, they would lift up, intoning, "Great is the name of the Holy Trinity. O Lord Jesus Christ, help us." This was done in honour of the Risen Saviour. When on the third day after her Dormition, the Apostles were about to do this and elevated the bread, the Mother of God appeared in heavenly glory, assuring them and us that she would be always with us through her mediations and intercessions. The Apostles therefore raised the bread, chanting "Most Holy Mother of God, help us!" This little rite has been somewhat elaborated, but is still done on festivals of the Mother of God. The bread which is elevated is called the Panagia. It is usually cut in the form of a three-sided pyramid. The word Panagia means All-holy, and it is one of the titles accorded the Mother of God.

Another very important feast in August is that of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist (29th August/11th September). It is usually celebrated with a Vigil Service, and because Herod and those with him were feasting on that day, and through surfeiting and drunkenness were led into sin, Orthodox Christians always observe a fast on this day on whichever day of the week it might fall. Many Orthodox refuse to eat anything red or round on the feast, because of St John's head being impiously brought in on a platter; others will not use a knife to cut anything red or round in preparing their food, and by these pious customs they remind themselves of the Forerunner's martyrdom.

Among the Saints we have in August are:-

Our Holy Father Myron of Crete (8th/21st) was a farm labourer, who made it his practice to give of the produce of his fields to the poor. Such was his unpossessiveness that once he caught some thieves stealing grain from his threshing floor, and rather than stopping them or rebuking them, he helped them fill their sacks and load them up to take them away. Later, when they learned who he had been, they were brought to repentance by the example he had given them, and thereafter lived righteous lives. For his virtuous life and his kind-heartedness, Myron was chosen by the

townsmen to be their priest and was later consecrated Bishop. He cared assiduously for his flock, nurturing them in piety. At the time of persecution he encouraged the martyrs, and he was granted the gift of working miracles. He lived to be an hundred years old, and entered into rest in the year 350.

The New Martyr Christos of Ioannina (15th/28th): In August 1823, the Turkish militia in the region of Ioannina started a particularly violent suppression of the Christians there. The hieromonk Christos comforted and encouraged the suffering Christians, and for this he was arrested, beaten and, for refusing to give up his Christian confession, was condemned to death. The Orthodox Christians were celebrating the festival of the Dormition, and the Turks chose this time to execute the Saint. Furthermore, they deliberately chose to mock the Saviour's Passion in the way they devised to kill him. Father Christos was crowned with thorns, stripped and spat upon, and nailed to a cross, which was set up by the plane trees at Kalou Tzesme. As he expired on the cross, he prayed for his tormentors, but they sat around and taunted him. One of the Turks eventually pierced his side with a sabre and he gave up his soul. Even in death they did not cease tormenting him; they coated his body in tar and set it alight so that it was consumed in the flames.

The Venerable Martyrs Liberatus, Boniface and the five others with them (17th/30th) lived in the fifth century and were members of a monastic community. Liberatus was the abbot, Boniface the deacon; two others Servius and Rusticus were subdeacons, and the remaining three, Rogatus, Septimus and Maximus unordained monks. They were slain not by pagans but by people who claimed to be Christians. They lived in North Africa at the time when Huneric the King of the Vandals ruled there. Huneric was a fervent Arian, and instigated a persecution of the Orthodox Christians. Thus these seven monks were arrested and taken to Carthage. There they were required to embrace the heretical faith of the Arians, but they steadfastly refused. They were confined to prison, but certain Orthodox Christians bribed the guards to let them visit them so that they could encourage them in their ordeal. This came to the ears of Huneric, who ordered that they be put in an old boat and set out to sea, and then the boat fired. However, try as they might the persecutors were unable to fire the ship, and so the martyrs were returned to land and were done to death by having the brains brutally dashed out with clubs. They received the crowns of martyrdom in the year 483 and an authentic and contemporary record of their contest exists.

The Venerable Edbert of York (20th August/2nd September) succeeded his kinsman Ceolwulf as King of Northumbria. His brother, Egbert, was the first Archbishop of York to receive the pallium since the time of St Paulinus. Edbert ruled his kingdom wisely and justly for twenty years, and then abdicated in favour of his son, Oswulf. Such was the respect in which he was held that his allies and his noblemen tried to persuade him not to abdicate, however Edbert was resolved upon taking up the monastic life. He retired to York, where he placed himself under obedience to his brother the Archbishop, and spent the last ten years of his life as a monk. His brother predeceased him by two years, and his sacred relics were laid next to those of the Archbishop when he himself died in 768 A.D.

NEWS SECTION

ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE SEEKS AUTONOMY

THE ARCHDIOCESAN BOARD of Trustees of the Antiochian Archdiocese in America has recommended that, when the General Assembly of the Archdiocese meets in July, it petition the Holy Synod of Antioch for autonomy. This would mean that the Archdiocese would be self-governing, except that the Antiochian Synod would retain "certain authority with respect to the validity of the election of the Primate of the Archdiocese." A draft resolution to this effect was drawn up and circulated by the present leader of the Archdiocese, Metropolitan Philip, to all churches in the Archdiocese in preparation for the General Assembly. It points out that the North American Archdiocese has grown from a small mission [actually within the Russian Orthodox Church - ed.] to a vast Archdiocese of approximately 230 parishes and missions, over 350 clergy and approximately 500,000 faithful, "whose ethnic diversity approximates the rich ethnic diversity of North America itself."

JERUSALEM APPEALS FOR PEACE

FOLLOWING the murder of Hieromonk Germanos of the Sacred Monastery of St George, Hozeva, on 13th June the Synod of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem issued an Appeal for Peace in the Holy Land. The Appeal was issued at a special session of the Holy Synod of the Church of Jerusalem.

Readers will be aware that the last Patriarch of Jerusalem, Diodoros I, died in December last year. As yet no successor has been elected. The principal reason for this long delay is that the Patriarchate covers a territory which embraces Israel, the lands under the Palestinian Authority, and the Kingdom of Jordan. All three governments have certain rights with regard to the election of the Church leader. Of fifteen candidates for the Patriarchate, five have been vetoed by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. In a letter explaining this move, Israeli Justice Minister, Meir Shetreet, explained that the candidates were banned for "security reasons." The Church has responded by condemning the interference as "unwelcome and unlawful, "and as serving "undisclosed and suspicious interests." Neither the Jordanians nor the Palestinians have raised any objections to the candidates, although we hear that the King of Jordan has asked that there be Arabs among the candidates put up for election. For centuries previous Patriarchs of Jerusalem have been Greeks. Apparently, two decades ago, Israel also tried to prevent the election of Patriarch Diodoros, who was then seen as being too pro-Arab. Their objections were eventually overruled.

ROCA METROPOLITAN'S JUBILEE AND RETIREMENT

ON THE FESTIVAL of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul this year, His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his consecration to the episcopate. In the post-War years, Metropolitan Vitaly, then an Archimandrite, served in England and it was at the old Russian Cathedral on Buckingham Palace Road that he was consecrated Bishop in 1951. Many of our more senior parishioners recall the occasion. He was immediately appointed a Vicar Bishop in Brazil, and in 1957 was transferred to Canada as Archbishop of Montreal and Canada. In January 1986, after the righteous repose of

Metropolitan Philaret the previous November, he was chosen by lot from the elected candidates to be First Hierarch of ROCA.

A session of the Synod of ROCA was scheduled to be held in NYC this year, which was to culminate in the celebration of the Metropolitan's jubilee on Sts Peter and Paul. At this Synod meeting, on account of his extreme old age and infirmity, Metropolitan Vitaly announced his retirement and directed that it be entered in the minutes. The Synod accepted his resignation and appointed Archbishop Lavr of Syracuse and Trinity Monastery to conduct the administrative functions of the governance of the Church until the convening of a Council of Hierarchs in October this year, at which time a new First Hierarch is to be elected. Out of respect to the former First Hierarch, his name is to be commemorated in the Divine services with that of Archbishop Lavr and the diocesan Bishop until the successor is announced.

DOUBLE CELEBRATION IN MUNICH

ON 18th APRIL/1st May, the Glorification ceremonies for four newly recognized Saints: the holy hierarchs Philaret of Moscow, Theophan the Recluse, Ignatius Brianchaninov and the Blessed Feofil the Fool of Kiev, were celebrated at ROCA's Cathedral church in Munich. On the same day, Hegoumen Agapit of the St Job of Pochaev Monastery in the city was consecrated to the Episcopate. Bishop Agapit was born, Alexander Gorachek, in Frankfurt-on-Maine, in 1955. In 1979, he placed himself under the spiritual direction of the then Archimandrite Mark, and moved with him to Munich in 1980. In 1981 he was tonsured rasophor monk, and in March 1983 he received the Little Schema. In the same year, in December, he was ordained hierodeacon. In 1991 he was ordained to the priesthood and four years later made Hegoumen. He was awarded a jewelled pectoral cross in 1998. Archbishop Mark petitioned for his consecration at the October 2000 Council of Hierarchs and it was appointed that he should be consecrated at the festival of the newly glorified saints. Bishop Agapit was consecrated at the hands of Archbishop Lavr, Archbishop Mark, Archbishop Hilarion, Bishop Evtykhy and Bishop Ambrose. He bears the title "of Stuttgart" and the latest issue of the "Vestnik" (Herald) of the German Eparchy carries a picture of the newly consecrated hierarch with his flock there. To His Grace, Bishop Agapit: *Many years!*

UKRAINIAN GROUPS PROPOSE UNION

THE ORTHODOX in the Ukraine are presently divided into three jurisdictions. The largest of these, comprising 10 million faithful forms part of the Patriarchate of Moscow, as of necessity did the whole Church there until the end of the Soviet era. A second jurisdiction was formed when Metropolitan (now "Patriarch") Filaret broke from the Moscow Patriarchate in 1993. He now heads the "Patriarchate of Kiev," which comprises about three million adherents. A third group is headed by Metropolitan Mefody, and calls itself the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The second and third of these groups are not recognized by Orthodox Churches outside the Ukraine. However, now they are planning to unite and are hoping to gain the recognition of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Chief Ecumenical Affairs Officer for the Moscow Patriarchate, Father Nikolai Balashov, has warned that the Ecumenical Patriarch's involvement in this movement, would bring the Orthodox world to the brink of a schism "identical to that of 1054 (!?)." This is because he anticipates that it

would cause a break between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and Moscow. Father Balashov also said that the Pope's recent visit to the Ukraine, where he met the leaders of the two dissident groupings, had strained relations between Rome and Moscow and "widened the chasm that divides us." It is sad that, in these various inter-Church relationships, chasms seem to narrow and widen only because of considerations of jurisdiction and authority, and confessional considerations take a very poor second place.

BISHOP SAVA OF SUMADIJA REPOSES

ON 17TH JUNE, after a short illness, His Grace Bishop Sava of Sumadija, died. He was born, Svetozar Vukovic, in 1930 and completed his education with a doctorate from the Theological Faculty in Belgrade in 1961. On 3rd November, 1959, he had received the monastic tonsure at the hands of Patriarch German in the Monastery of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos. A month later he was ordained hierodeacon, and on 20th May, 1961, was appointed to be Bishop of Moravice. He was ordained to the priesthood, and on 23rd June consecrated as an auxiliary Bishop. During his episcopate he administered in turn the following dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church: Eastern America and Canada (1977-1978), Zica (1978), Banat (1980-85), Timisoara (1980-86), Central and Western America (1986-1988) and Backa (1988-90). He was prominent in publishing church magazines in both Serbian and English, and also wrote a number of books, mostly about Serbian Church history. May his rest be with the saints.

SAD NEWS FROM BULGARIA

A FRIEND in Bulgaria has written to tell us of the deaths of three churchmen in that country. Our correspondent is a member of the flock of His Grace Bishop Fotii, the Traditionalist (Old Calendarist) hierarch in Bulgaria. She writes that a priestmonk in her hometown of Shoumen, named Father Averkii, recently ended his own life. She says of him that he was moved with pity for all needy people and helped children everywhere. He was, however, a mental patient, and at the age of 30 on 10th February this year, hanged himself. Because of his mental condition, his hierarch, Archbishop Kiril (New Calendar hierarchy), permitted that he have a Christian funeral. Our correspondent adds, "Our Bishop Fotii very much loved Father Averkii," perhaps indicating the much saner and more compassionate way "jurisdictional divisions" are viewed by our co-religionists in Eastern Europe. She also writes of the death on 1st of May, of Archimandrite Kiprian and Mother Kipriana of the Old Calendarist following. They were killed as they stood at the side of the road by a drunken driver. May the Lord grant his servants rest with the saints and Memory Eternal!

MINSK CLERGYMEN SUSPENDED

TWO PRIESTS of the Minsk Diocese, Fathers Leonid Pliats and Vladimir Konovalchik, have been suspended from their priestly ministry for "misleading their flocks." The priests are reported to have referred to a memorial stone erected in their area by the Armenian Apostolic Church as "a heretical stone." They are also said to have objected that the Chambesy and Balamand agreements between the Orthodox and, respectively, the Monophysites and the Roman Catholics, were signed behind the backs of the people. They were suspended by Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and

Slutsk, the Exarch for Belarus of the Moscow Patriarchate. Although their expression regarding the memorial stone was intemperate and unnecessarily offensive, it seems that their objections to the Balamand and Chambesy agreements are substantially correct, and that they have been suspended for not endorsing the "New Orthodoxy" which embraces Ecumenism.

CONFLICT IN MACEDONIA

RELIGIOUS LEADERS in Macedonia (Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist (!), Moslems and Jews) issued a statement on 13th June strongly condemning the forced displacement of citizens in the Republic and the abuse of their rights. They insisted that their respective religious bodies were not involved in the conflict, and deplored "any misuse of religious symbols and language" to support the violence. Archbishop Anastasios, the primate of the Albanian Orthodox Church, chaired the meeting, and he said that in Macedonia the conflict was not the result of any religious conflict. He also stated, "any crime in the name of religion is a crime against religion," and said the religious communities were not willing to be manipulated. Echoing Talleyrand's famous dictum that "war is much too serious a business to be left to military men," the Archbishop stated that "peace is too important to be left to the politicians."

BROOKWOOD NEWS

TWO PRESBYTERAS were laid to rest at Brookwood on the same day on Monday, 23rd July. Matushka Iraida Svitch, the widow of the Archpriest Alexander Svitch (who is laid to rest in the cemetery at the Novo-Diveevo Convent, Nanuet, NY), died a few days before her 101st birthday in a nursing home in Bournemouth. She was visited from the Brotherhood on the Friday before her repose and on the day itself, Sunday 15th July, and her funeral service was chanted at the Funeral Home in Pokesdown. Her body was then brought to Brookwood and laid to rest in the Brotherhood section of the Orthodox cemetery. Matushka Stamenija Cekerevac, the widow of Archpriest Milan Cekerevac, a Serbian Orthodox priest, was laid to rest in the Serbian section of the cemetery after a funeral service in Saint Edward's church. To the Presbyteras Iraida and Stamenija: Eternal Memory and rest with the Saints.

BAPTISM: On the feast of St Vladimir, 15th/28th July, John Oliver, the infant son of Dominic and Elena Crask of Peterborough was baptized at St Edward's Church before the Divine Liturgy. He was named for the holy Prophet and Forerunner, John the Baptist, and his sponsors were his uncle, Dimitri Khudoroskov and Helen Brooks. At the Divine Liturgy he partook of the Holy mysteries for the first time. May the Lord, Who has already granted him such a great gift, bless him in the years ahead.

PRACTICAL TIP

IT IS AN ORTHODOX CUSTOM, and a perfectly acceptable one, to ask blessings of one's spiritual father for various enterprises in life. But it does seem that there is room for some practical guidelines in this respect. First of all, it must be remembered that in the West, particularly among English-speaking clergymen, one is most unlikely to come across a God-bearing Elder or *Staretz*. (Converts in particular seem to have an

unhealthy propensity for making people *starts*, and then basking in the light that they have just invented.) So, if you do this, do not expect a *staretz's* answer. Secondly, one should remember that lay-people are not bound by an obedience such as the monastics are. Monastics have freely promised obedience to their superiors. The "obedience," which a priest can expect of a parishioner is not of a like kind. The priest may be able to give you a different perspective on the matter in hand; he may have a little more learning or understanding of the spiritual repercussions; he may have a little more experience in life and will probably be able to indicate to you when you are putting worldly considerations above spiritual ones, but he is not an infallible director. He is not set over his parishioners, but is a guide, counsellor and teacher among them. By asking a blessing you do show your humility and confess that you cannot direct your life alone. You need help, and of course essentially God's help. You call down that help upon yourself by showing that humility. But some go to the opposite extreme, rather than idolizing their pastor or, more likely, their pretended obedience to him, they use him simply as a rubber stamp. This also is wrong. If you are going to ask advice, you must be open to accept it. Very often, people come in supposed submissiveness saying for example: "Father, do you bless me to go to Spain for my holidays this year?" when in fact they have booked the flight and the hotel, taken vacation time at work, arranged for the cat to be looked after, stopped the papers, packed their cases, and made all the arrangements. Parishioners are absolutely free to do this, but then just come and say honestly: "I am doing so-and-so, please pray that it is beneficial," "or that I be protected from evil or harm."