

# ***The Shepherd***

## ***An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine***

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### FROM THE FATHERS

"*THE HIGH MOUNTAINS are a refuge for the harts'* (Ps 103:20) because those who know already how to make the leaps of contemplation ascend the lofty summits of the Divine precepts, as the tops of mountains. And because the feeble cannot reach in truth to these summits, it is rightly subjoined: '*so is the rock for the hares,*' because their understanding does not sublimely exercise the feeble, but faith in Christ humbly keeps them in."

*Saint Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, + 604 A.D.*

"ACCEPT WITHOUT FAIL words spoken from experience, even if the speaker is unlearned; for the treasuries of the great kings of the earth do not despise the addition of a beggar's obol, and by brooks great rivers are filled and their flow is made mighty."

*Venerable Isaac the Syrian, seventh century*

"THESE VERY THINGS will be set before you ['at that universal gathering,' i.e. the Dread Judgment], you capricious ones and lovers of the world: your banquets, your feastings, your balls, your operas, your masquerades, your dances, your card games, your fox hunts, and the rest of your amusements will be set before you, since being attached to them you have turned your heart from God, Whom you confessed, and you have increased that vanity and have turned your desire not to God and His Kingdom, but to the beguilement of the world, and have found your enjoyment and comfort therein."

*Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, 1724-1783 A.D.*

"I SUPPOSE you began carrying out your prayer rule hurriedly - and haphazardly - just so you would finish it. Make it a rule for yourself from now on, that you will never pray haphazardly. Nothing offends the Lord more than this. It is better to recite a few of the set prayers with the fear of God and reverence than to recite all of them haphazardly. It is better even to fall down on your knees and recite one of the prayers or even to use your own words than to do the other thing. You began praying that other way and there are no results. Scold yourself thoroughly for such carelessness. Know that no one who prays attentively and diligently ever departs from prayer without having received its action. Oh, what good we deprive ourselves of when we permit ourselves to pray carelessly!"

*Saint Theophan the Recluse, 1815-1894 A.D.*

## WHY THE NATIVITY FAST WAS ESTABLISHED

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH prepares Her children that they might worthily greet the Nativity of Christ by means of the forty-day Nativity Fast, which lasts from 15th November until 24th December (on the Church calendar).

In addition to the reasons which are generally known, the Nativity Fast is observed by Orthodox Christians so that they might honour the sufferings and afflictions which, immediately before the all-holy event of the Nativity, the Most Holy Theotokos was made to endure from the scribes and Pharisees.

Sacred Tradition tells that some little time before the Righteous Joseph and the All-holy Virgin set off for Bethlehem, the following testing befell them. A certain scribe, Ananias, visited their house and saw that the Virgin was pregnant. He was scandalized by this, and he went to the high priest and the whole council of the Jews and said, "Joseph the Carpenter, who is considered righteous, has behaved unlawfully. Secretly he has corrupted and defiled the Virgin, who was entrusted to him from the Temple for safe-keeping. And now she is pregnant." Then servants of the high priest were sent to Joseph's house and finding the Virgin indeed pregnant, they took her and Joseph and brought them before the high priest, who began to accuse and shame the the holy Maiden.

However, in her deep affliction, the Virgin responded weeping: "As the Lord lives, my God, He is my Witness that I am pure and have not known a man." The high priest then accused the righteous Joseph, but with an oath he affirmed that he was not guilty of this sin. The high priest did not believe them, and subjected them to the testing that was used at that time (see Numbers 5:19-31). However, this testing only served to demonstrate the innocence of Most Holy Virgin and of Joseph. All those in the council wondered at this, for they were unable to understand how the Virgin could be pregnant and at the same time innocent.

Nonetheless the high priest let the holy couple go in peace. The Righteous Joseph, taking the Virgin Mary, returned to his home rejoicing and praising God (see "The service for the Feast of the Nativity with appendices" published in Russian by Holy Trinity Monastery, 1984).

But this was not the end of the things which the Most Holy Theotokos had to endure. With Joseph she shared the difficulty of the three day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. In Bethlehem no place could be found for the Immaculate Virgin either in the inn or in any of the houses, and the day was declining into evening. She and the Righteous Joseph had to find shelter in a cave which was used as a stable for domestic cattle. In this wretched shelter, the most blessed Virgin continued in prayer and in Godly thoughts. Here it was that she gave birth, without pain, to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

From what has been told above, we can see that the days immediately before the Nativity, were for the Most Holy Theotokos not days of peace and comfort. During these days she had to endure various afflictions and temptations, but through all this she remained steadfast in prayer and in thoughts upon God.

The Holy Church suggests to her children that they participate, even though it be to the smallest degree, in the All-holy Theotokos' struggle, that they constrain their flesh during the Nativity Fast, and that they nourish their souls with prayer. However, the Church also gives us advance notice that a merely outward fast is not sufficient. We must also keep an inner fast, which consists in restraining and estranging ourselves from evil, from falsehood, anger, vanity and the other vices. It is essential during the fast, as it is always, to manifest love for our neighbours, to do acts of mercy, increasing our help for those in need and in affliction. Then our fast will be a real one, and not hypocritical; it will be truly pleasing unto God and we shall approach the radiant festival of Christ's Nativity with joy.

*Translated from "Pravoslavnaya Rus" 1/14th November 1999*

From  
**"THE HOUSE OF GOD  
AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"**

By the Priest N.R. Antonov

*Continuation*

§ 25. Other Forms of Christian Churches. The basilica plan for Christian churches was the most ancient, but it was not the only one. When taste in architecture changed and techniques improved, then the outward form of the churches also changed. With the end of the period of persecution and the transfer of the Imperial capital from Rome to Byzantium under St Constantine the Great (324 A.D), there was an increase in building activity. From this period too the Byzantine style of church building developed.

Byzantine Style. The distinguishing features of the Byzantine style were the vault and the dome. Rudimentary domed structures, that is those in which the ceilings were not flat or just sloping but curved, had existed even in pre-Christian times. The most extensive use of such curved structures had been in the Roman baths or "thermae," but the most brilliant flowering of the use of the dome developed in the church architecture of Byzantium.

At the beginning of the fourth century, the dome would be low; it would cover the whole roof of the building, and would rest directly on the walls of the building; it had no windows. Later the dome began to be higher, and to be erected on special pillars. The walls of the cupola itself were not constructed solidly, but to reduce the weight of the structure, they were made of lighter pillars and pierced with windows. The whole cupola thus became a reminder of the broad dome of the Heavens, the place where the Lord abides invisibly. Interiorly and exteriorly, the sides around the cupola were adorned with columns with artistically carved tops or capitals, and with other adornments. In place of one cupola, there were sometimes several on a church.

The following plans were used in Byzantine churches: 1) circular;\* 2) in the form of a Greek cross - with four equal arms; 3) in rectangular form, almost square. The rectangular plan was the most common and the most widely used in Byzantium. Thus the usual structure of Byzantium churches depended on four massive columns, set in a square, and united above by arches on which the canopy or dome rested. From

the sixth century this particular style took over, and this remained the case until the end of the Byzantine Empire (at the midpoint of the fifteenth century), when, as we said above, there was a second period when the basilica style was employed.

In its interior arrangement, a Byzantine church was divided, like a basilica, into three areas: 1) the narthex, 2) the central area or nave, 3) the altar or sanctuary. The altar was separated from the central area by a low colonnade with a cornice, which developed into the present day iconostasis. The interior of the richer churches was richly adorned with mosaics and paintings. The magnificence of the various marbles, the mosaics, the gold and the paintings - all this was employed to lift the soul of the worshipping Christian on high. The use of sculpture was extremely rare. The most magnificent example of the Byzantine style in general and of the Byzantine use of the dome in particular is, of course, the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople.\*\*

The Byzantine style was used in the building of churches not only in Byzantium or Constantinople itself, but in the other towns of Greece (Athens, Thessalonica, and on Athos), in Armenia, in Serbia, and even in the cities of the Western Roman Empire, particularly in the cities of Venice and Ravenna. An example of Byzantine architecture in Venice is the Church of St Mark.

Romanesque Style. In addition to the Byzantine and basilica style churches, there appeared in the West a new style with a different outward aspect. It had derivatives from the basilica and Byzantine styles, but also differences, and it is called the Romanesque style. A church, built in the Romanesque style, is like a basilica, consisting of a long and wide nave, between two lateral aisles, which are less high and narrower than the central nave. Towards the east end, on either side of these aisles there are transverse sections, which are called transepts, which jut out from the main line of the building and give the plan the form of a cross. The transepts, like the aisles in a basilica form church, have apses, which provide accommodation for altars. At the back, at the west end of the church, there is a porch or narthex. The particular features of the Romanesque style were: 1) the floor paving in the apses and transepts was somewhat higher than in the main part of the church, and 2) the columns dividing the various parts of the church were joined at the top with semicircular arches and were decorated at both the base and at the top with carved, sculpted and overlaid depictions and figures. Romanesque churches were built on solid foundations, deeply dug out of the earth. At the entrance to the church on each side of the porch, they sometimes (from the eleventh century on) erected two majestic towers, similar to our bell towers.\*\*\*

The Romanesque style appeared in the tenth century, was widely used in the West in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and continued into the thirteenth century, when it was replaced by the Gothic style.

*... to be continued with "Gothic and Renaissance Styles"*

*Footnotes:*

\*) There are two opinions concerning the derivation of the circular Byzantine churches. According to some, circular churches followed the structure of the Roman baths, and they made their appearance so as to provide for the celebration of Baptism

at a time when the pagans were being converted to Christianity. For the celebration of the Mystery of Baptism, a supply of water was necessary, and for that reason in ancient times the Christian churches were sometimes provided with pools, in a way which corresponded to that of the baths. These churches were called baptisteries. The semi-spherical form of the baths was retained in these Christian churches because it was suitable and served as a reminder of the visible dome of Heaven. The adoption of the simple form of, and interior arrangement of, the Roman baths for these baptisteries did not of course fully correspond with the significance and majesty of a Christian church, and so characteristics from the basilicas were added. However from the *thermae* they adopted: 1) the circular plan (and as a consequence of this the basilicas themselves started to be built not in a simple rectangular form, but with apses); 2) the dome. From the basilicas they retained the columns, upon which they mounted the dome. Originally, the dome in Christian baptisteries was supported on a whole series of columns; later this was reduced to eight, giving the building an octagonal appearance, and finally they used four pillars (so that it drew closer to the rectangular plan).

Others are of the opinion that the circular plan churches derive from Greek memorials or rotundas, which were erected over the places where those who had done heroic deeds were buried. The Christians particularly adopted this circular plan as an expression of their own reverence for the dust of those who had fallen asleep.

\*\*) Among the Byzantine Emperors who were particularly noted for church building in their reigns are: St Constantine the Great (+ 337 A.D.), Theodosius I (+ 396 A.D.), and especially Justinian the Great (527-565 A.D). In the eighth century building activity was temporarily curtailed as a consequence of the religious dissensions. In the ninth and tenth centuries, under the Emperors Basil the Macedonian and Constantine Porphyrogenitus, it revived again. After the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders (1204 A.D.) and again after its capture by the Turks (1453 A.D.) the art of Byzantine architecture gradually atrophied, although it remained alive on Athos. Converting Christian churches into mosques, the Turkish rulers did not allow the Greeks to build new churches or they would lay down conditions such that the new churches could not be higher than normal dwelling houses, that they were not allowed to have any outward sign that they were indeed churches, such as domes, crosses or bell towers. It was natural in such circumstances that the Christians should return to a simple basilica type church. For this reason now in Constantinople and in the other places which were formerly Byzantine nearly all the churches are built in the basilica style with the old aisles and columns. *[This was written at the beginning of the twentieth century, and was probably even then not strictly true. In the last century or so, there has been another revival of Byzantine church building - ed.]* Only on Athos did the Byzantine style flourish after the fifteenth century. Thus we see that nearly all the Athonite churches are in the form of the Greek cross, with four equal arms, and have an apse at the east end for the altar.

\*\*\*) Other distinguishing features that certain Romanesque churches have include: 1) the continuation of the side aisles beyond the transepts, and the making of a circular way around the altar; the excavation beneath the altar and the transepts of crypts or underground chapels in which the builders of the church and notable persons were buried; 3) a horizontal narrowing or "waist" on the pillars on the north and south

sides, this feature is also found in some Russian churches of the Vladimir-Suzdal style, which derives certain features from the Romanesque. In general the Romanesque style was distinguished by a greater diversity and liveliness. It did not have the same typically characteristic marks as did the Byzantine, the Gothic and the Russian (tent shaped) style, or even the Renaissance style. One recognises Romanesque style churches by a process of elimination: that they are not Byzantine, Gothic or Renaissance in style.

## A VISIT TO AN ICON

By Mr John Harwood of Edmonton, Middlesex

MOST ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS living in the West have little opportunity to make simple local pilgrimages, which are a regular part of the lives of our brothers and sisters in traditionally Orthodox lands.

Kiev boasts several such pilgrimage centres and the writer was fortunate enough to visit one of the most popular city shrines: that of the miraculous icon of the Theotokos, "Regard my Lowliness" (cf. Luke 1:48). The original of this icon is located in Pskov and dates probably from the 15th century. The Kiev one, though obviously modelled on it, is a little different and in reproductions looks rather garish, with sentimental faces. It clearly dates from the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Baroque, Latin-looking crowns are on the heads of both the Holy Virgin and the Infant Saviour. As with many miraculous icons, an encounter with the original gives a very different impression.

The icon is now kept in the Meeting in the Temple Church in a quiet part of Kiev. Before the Revolution, the church was part of a monastery. Unfortunately only the church has been handed back to its rightful owners; all the other monastic buildings are in the hands of foreign companies whom the local authorities are unwilling to antagonize. So the church now functions as the centre of a small parish, and the monastery has not been restored.

One enters not from the west door (access to which is closed), but through a small candle and icon shop, and then a side door. This brings the pilgrim immediately before the icon of the Theotokos, which is kept in a place to the left of the iconostasis.

The first thing that strikes the pilgrim is that the icon appears huge. The faces are life-size and one feels a kind of embarrassed awe, as though one has intruded into some special and private residence. This is succeeded by a feeling of deep peace and presence.

One is conscious of a queue of visitors waiting their turn to venerate and kiss the icon. There are no protective barriers such as one sometimes finds and no officious minders. Everybody behaves quietly and patiently, awaiting their turn.

Next to the icon stands a curious sheet of glass, of equal size. This apparently once covered the icon and when it was removed it was discovered that the image of the Theotokos and the Saviour had somehow been etched (the impression is liked smoked glass) upon it. This icon is also venerated.

The icon is not well known. I could not find it mentioned even in the fullest calendar published in English. The Theotokos looks directly forward and is clothed all in a vivid crimson. The Infant Saviour stands on her left (right to the beholder) holding an orb in His left hand, and touching His Mother's face with His right. She is crowned and holds a sceptre. Her eyes are very large and penetrating.

The Orthodox who make this little pilgrimage (for the icon's fame is largely local) come with all the usual problems, sicknesses and sorrows of this life and of the special difficulties of life in a post-Soviet society: unemployment, lack of money for medicine, alcoholism and a feeling of hopelessness about the future. They pour out their prayers before the merciful Mother, asking her to regard their utter lowliness. The feastday of the icon "Regard my Lowliness" is 16th/29th September.

## THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF FATHER GEORGE CHEREMETIEFF

### Thoughts on a Journey

*Continuation from last issue*

#### About the Thoughts

Every thought, that even only flicks through the mind, leaves a trace in it. This is obvious from the fact that sometimes it is as if a valve opens up in your brain, and suddenly you can remember things forgotten long ago. The more good thoughts stay in one's mind, the less space there is left for bad ones, and the brain cells themselves become less responsive to them, for every thought gives birth to activity.

Therefore one should think good and pure thoughts, and think like this more often. Dirty and bad thoughts must be destroyed at their root. This will impart inner happiness to our life; it will draw you closer to God, the Source of happiness. One must correct one's thoughts even though this is difficult. You have no strength? Then you must beseech God for it with all your heart; you must pray.

"Sanctify our souls, make chaste our bodies, correct our thoughts, purify our intentions, and deliver us from every sorrow, evil and pain" (The Book of Hours). In another place we read: "I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts" (Jeremias 6:19).

Let us not forget the Bulgarian proverb: "God gives, but He doesn't bring it into the house; you have to go out to the gates to fetch it."

#### Emulating the Saints

It is not enough simply to try and copy the saints and those who have pleased God. This kind of external emulation will become nothing but hypocrisy.

In following the example of the saints, one should strengthen oneself spiritually through the Holy Mysteries, by the way of prayer, through almsgiving, humility, love and through warfare with one's baser instincts and with fear, and so elevate one's soul to such a height that there involuntarily flows from one's heart a desire to become like the saints and God-pleasers.

## Our Father

We normally say this prayer by heart, quickly and without attention, and we think that this will please God! I think that such prayer only upsets our Creator. It is easy to say this prayer without attention. But if we reflect upon each petition, this will seem wrong. It is always possible to be hypocritical, but one cannot deceive God.

Let us look at the petitions:

1. "Our Father, Which art in the Heavens!" Do we really behave like children of the Great Father and God? How do we dare to call Him Father without fear and trembling?

2. "Hallowed be Thy Name." How can we make His holy name holy? It is only falsely that we hallow it by hypocritical words, such as the Pharisees whom we condemn used. We can only really hallow the name of the Lord with a good life and chaste thoughts. How far we are from doing this!

3. "Thy Kingdom come." The Kingdom of God will only come when we all live according to God. Are we really preparing the coming of the Kingdom of God by our lives?

4. "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." In Heaven, God's will is fulfilled unflinchingly. And do we on earth really do God's will? No! We want to do our own will, and so in this prayer again we are being hypocritical.

5. "Give us this day our daily bread." Which means give us today that food which is indispensable for the life of the body. But then we think that this is too little. But we want a little more to spare, so that we can lay some up for the future, and not just enough for today. We do not have faith that the Lord will not abandon us, and we trust God less and less.

6. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This is what we read. But so that it should accord with our life in reality, we should say: "And do not forgive us our debts, because we do not forgive our debtors."

7. "And lead us not into temptation." We ask this, but we rush after temptations, like flies after honey. Sin seems so sweet before we commit it, but afterwards we see that we are left naked before the sin. And we still have no desire to mend our ways.

8. "But deliver us from the evil one." We ask to be delivered from him, and from all the evil which he creates and maintains. But we ourselves do evil and want to do our neighbour evil. And in this way we serve the evil, guileful tempter. So this our petition is hypocritical as well.

Looking at it honestly, there is reason for a man to be horrified. But it is not necessary to lose hope; one cannot be freed from it straightaway. But with God's help, through His holy Mysteries we can gradually be delivered from hypocrisy, defilement and deception.

One must only remember that by ourselves we can do nothing, and that there is nothing to be proud about. We must humbly beg God's help, and having received it bring and instill into our life one supplication after another. And each one will take

much time. And God grant that we might at least fulfil some of these petitions in our life. This is exactly how the Lord's Prayer should act in our life, transfiguring that life and illumining it. This is how we should work on ourselves, honestly and unceasingly. Only do not weaken; only do not get into temptations, and do not give up under the seductions of the dark powers. They seem so deceptively beautiful and enjoyable. And so we do not wish for a moment to understand what deception, what destruction and what filth is contained in them.

We have no strength to turn to God with the heartfelt prayer, "O Lord, be gracious unto Thy creation." "In our thoughts which have been taken captive," we can find no "word of appeal." If we make supplication for it, then often it is only with the lips. But inside we are thinking, "Oh, let it be today. Tomorrow, I will repent." And tomorrow again there is no repentance. And if sudden death were to come, then there would be no tomorrow. Then again, sometimes with the help of God, which is never sparing, we throw off a passion. But then we must again begin the ascent of the ladder of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer. And one day of warfare follows another. And, at the end, unremarked the sunset of life draws near, and the vision that has been enlightened by the struggle perceives the quiet light of evening.

If, with the help of God, the practice of the Lord's Prayer proceeds well, then we shall begin with faith to transcend even its last petition, and experience deliverance from the evil one. O Lord, let not the enemy disturb the quiet evening of my life. And then, crossing over from this earthly boundary, we shall be able joyously to glorify the Lord with all our soul, and with faith to cry out, "For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen. (The text of the Lord's Prayer is taken from the Gospel of Matthew).

*To be continued in the next issue with "The Spiritual Israel" ...*

## THE COMING MONTH

THE TWO MAIN EVENTS in the month of November are closely linked. The first is that in the middle of the month (15th/28th) we begin our preparation for the Great Feast of the Lord's Nativity, with the forty day fast. This fast is usually called the Nativity Fast, but is sometimes referred to as the Saint Philip's Fast because it begins on the day after Saint Philip's Day (14th/27th). The second principal celebration this month is the Great Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple. Liturgically these two things are linked, because at the Vigil for that festival we chant the katabasias of the Nativity for the first time, beginning with the Saint Cosmas of Maiuma's joyous exclamation: "Christ is born! Give ye glory!"

At a deeper level too the two events are linked, because the Virgin's entry into the Temple and her dedication to the Lord as a three-year-old child was itself a preparation for her giving birth to God Incarnate some twelve years later. Orthodoxy does not believe in the immaculate conception of the Virgin, and our Faith very carefully guards the biblically revealed truth that Mary freely consented to bear the Christ Child. Her sojourn in the Temple, her life there, her study of the Scriptures, her practice of prayer are seen as the ways in which she prepared herself to be the Theotokos. In the Nativity Fast, to a very small degree, we prepare ourselves to be

those who bear Christ - not in our case maternally in the womb, but in the heart. On many feasts of the Mother of God and of her icons we hear the Gospel reading proclaim: "A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked.' But He said, 'Yea of a truth, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.' The All-holy Theotokos received both of these blessings; that declared by the anonymous woman in the crowd, in that she bore Christ, and that which our Saviour Himself added. And she was deemed worthy of the first blessing because she had fulfilled the second. She is unique in all creation in that she has received both these blessings, but to the extent that we purify ourselves from the passions and prepare ourselves we can participate in the second blessing. The Mother of God's sojourn in the Temple was her preparation uniquely to receive this double blessing; our attempt to keep the fast is our struggle to receive the second blessing.

Among the Saints in November, we have:

Saint Marcellus of Paris (1st/14th) who lived in the fifth century. His parents were people of means and were thus able to provide their son with an education. He was ordained reader by Prudentius the Bishop of Paris, whom he served for many years. It is recorded that as a youth he had occasion to go to the locksmith, and as a tease the man asked him to take a bar of red-hot iron he was working and guess its weight. The Saint did so without suffering any harm. On another occasion Bishop Prudentius had appointed that a choir boy sing a special antiphon appointed for that day. However, ignorant of this, the archdeacon had another boy do it. The Bishop was furious and ordered the boy who had sung to be whipped. St Marcellus fearlessly rebuked the Bishop for his injustice and the cruelty that he had shown the innocent chorister. He thus brought the Bishop to repentance. When Bishop Prudentius died in the year 400, Marcellus was elected by the clergy of the city to be his successor. The Saint's ministry as shepherd of his flock continued until his death in the year 436. As his earlier life had been, it was also accompanied by many miracles. Venantius Fortunatus records one: a lady of rank, whose life had not corresponded with her position in society or her Christian confession, died and was buried in the cemetery outside the town. No sooner was she interred than a huge black serpent was seen to emerge from nearby woods, approach her grave and burrow into it, thus exposing her mouldering corpse. St Marcellus was called and when he approached the beast, it reared up and threatened him, but the Saint struck it with his pastoral staff and rebuked it, and wrapping his priestly stole around its neck he led it away. Because of this miracle, he is sometimes represented with the serpent.

Our Venerable Father Barlaam of Khutyn (6th/19th) was born in 1156 in Novgorod. His parents were well-to-do, and they named him Alexis. From his earliest years he had a desire to take up the monastic life, and after his parents' death, he distributed their wealth and properties to the poor, and joined the Lisich Monastery, where he was tonsured with the name Barlaam. When he had made some progress, desiring to lead a more solitary life than the monastery afforded, he built himself a cell at Khutyn some distance from Novgorod. There he continued in prayer and fasting. However, his ascetical life brought him to the notice of those seeking their salvation, and people began to resort to him for spiritual counsel. A number of disciples gathered and his hermit's cell became the nucleus of a monastic community. Saint Gregory, the

Archbishop of Novgorod, ordained Fr Barlaam to the sacred priesthood, and he was appointed abbot of the monastery which was dedicated to the Lord's Transfiguration. His renown as a spiritual counsellor spread, and princes and prelates came to him for advice and spiritual help. For his great purity and virtue, he was glorified by the Lord with the gifts of clairvoyance and wonder-working. He ended his earthly course in 1192 A.D, and in 1452 A.D. his sacred relics were uncovered. After more than two and a half centuries buried, they were found to be untouched by corruption.

## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*"It seems that the Fathers often give almost allegorical readings of the miracles or other incidents in the life of our Saviour. Are we to understand that our Saviour as it were selected and intended these events from the outset to be open to such interpretation and teachings, or is it simply that the Fathers use them as raw materials for the lessons they wish to convey? - J.M., Woking.*

I am not at all sure that people as spiritually immature as you and I can begin to conjecture what the Saviour intended, except perhaps that fundamental truth, revealed to us by the Scriptures, that He desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). We know that He foreknew that this use of the biblical record would be made, and we know that it is through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Who speaks by the prophets, that the Fathers give their allegorical interpretations. To that extent then, one can say that the Saviour "intended" it.

However, there is a worry here. I think that we would be going too far, if we ventured to suggest that for this reason the Saviour also somehow contrived His miracles to lay them open for later allegorical interpretation. This might seem to imply that somehow the incidents are not real. This is not what we believe. We believe that He gave sight to blind Bartimaeus, that He raised the son of the widow of Nain from the dead, that He fed the five thousand with the five loaves, that He knew the thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees, etc. These were real events and not simply theatre, not even theatre with a didactic purpose.

Perhaps, as so often happens to us in our stupidity, we begin at the wrong end of things. We have the thought that something is suspect here because all these incidents are also given an allegorical interpretation. But we forget the words of St John the Theologian, that "there are also many other things which Jesus did" (Jn 21:25). Is it unreasonable to assume that the Holy Spirit illumined the Evangelists to record those events and incidents which were particularly apt in bringing us to a "knowledge of the truth"? After all, the Gospels were written not as simple biography but with a purpose: "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (Jn 20:31).

## NEWS SECTION

### NEW ROCA FIRST HIERARCH

ON THE FEAST of the Holy Apostle Philip of the Seventy (11th /24th October), the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, meeting at the Synodal Residence in New York City, elected a new First Hierarch to succeed Metropolitan

Vitaly, who announced his retirement in July. At the first ballot, Archbishop Lavr of Syracuse and Holy Trinity Monastery received two-thirds of the votes and was thus elected.

His Eminence Metropolitan Lavr will bear the title "of New York and Eastern America," as have his two predecessors. Born in 1928, Metropolitan Lavr was consecrated to the episcopate in 1967. Since July this year he has been carrying out the duties of First-Hierarchy, in response to the growing evidences of Metropolitan Vitaly's infirmity. For several years he has also been the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, and since the repose of the Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky in 1976, he has been the Abbot of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville and Rector of the Holy Trinity Seminary there. He is of Carpatho-Russian extraction, and from his earliest years was a member of the St Job of Pochaev Brotherhood in Ladomirovo in East Slovakia. In the nineteen-forties, he was evacuated and was eventually settled with other members of the Ladomirovo brotherhood at the Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, in upper New York State, where he was one of the first graduates of the Holy Trinity Seminary established there. Vasillii Skurla in the world, His Eminence was tonsured a monk in 1948 and named after St Laurus of the holy Martyrs Florus and Laurus (fd: 18th/31st August). He was ordained hierodeacon in 1950 and hieromonk four years later. On his consecration to the episcopate he was appointed a vicar bishop of the New York eparchy, with the title "of Manhattan." In 1976, he became ruling hierarch of the Syracuse and Trinity Diocese, and in 1981 was raised to the rank of Archbishop.

To His Eminence, Metropolitan Lavr of New York and Eastern America, First Hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad: *Eis polla eti, Despota! [Unto many years, O Master].*

## LETTERS FROM MOSCOW AND OCA

ANTICIPATING the October Assembly of the ROCA bishops to elect their new First Hierarchy, and responding to their Epistle of October 2000, Patriarch Aleksii II of Moscow and his Synod addressed a "Fraternal Letter" to the ROCA hierarchs on 8th October this year. Saying that the land of Russia had been cleansed through the blood of the hundreds of thousands of New Martyrs, and that through their prayers the "yoke of militant atheism" had finally collapsed, His Holiness expressed his sorrow over the continued separation of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad, and his joy at the decision of the ROCA Hierarchical Assembly of 2000 to establish a commission on questions of the unity of the Russian Church. The Moscow Synod itself has responded by setting up its own commission, and anticipates brotherly dialogue so that difficulties still remaining can be addressed. The Moscow approach naturally does not address the issues that separate the two Churches in any depth, as it is obviously the simple offering of a hand of friendship. Bishop Evtikhy of the ROCA Ishim-Siberia Diocese within Russia has stated that the fact of the friendly approach has given him joy, although he expresses some misgivings about the failure of the Moscow hierarchs to address the historical reasons for the divisions, and soberly adds that "it is premature to say now that there must be an immediate unification."

Following Moscow ten days later, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) sent a similar letter to Archbishop Lavr, then deputy First

Hierarchy of ROCA. This letter, signed by their president, Metropolitan Theodosius and nine hierarchs of their Synod, spoke of the Russian heritage of the Church in America, of St Innocent of Moscow and the New Confessor St Tikhon of Moscow, both of whom did missionary work in America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### ARMENIAN CHURCH REACHES TWO WAYS

RECENT REPORTS indicate that, in celebrating the 1,700th anniversary of Armenia's adoption of Christianity, the Armenian Apostolic Church, has been seeking rapprochement with two other Christian denominations, both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic. During their celebration of the conversion of King Tiridates and his adoption of Orthodox Christianity as the state religion in 301 A.D., a new Cathedral dedicated to Saint Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia was blessed by the Catholicos Karegin II. The Russian Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow Aleksii II attended this dedication. Representatives of other Orthodox Churches were also present, as were delegations from the Western Christian denominations. A report by Ekaterina Fomenko (RRN Komersant Daily, 24/9/01) states that Patriarch Aleksii took part in the ceremony "of producing holy oil" [consecration of chrism?] which was being conducted for the first time in this century. It is not clear whether the Patriarch merely attended this ceremony as a mark of friendship, or participated in ecumenical joint-prayer.

A few days later, Pope John Paul II also visited Catholicos Karegin and in an apparently unprecedented move accepted hospitality at his residence. Reports state that Patriarch Aleksii was rather displeased with the warmth of the reception afforded the Pope, seeing it as an indication that the Catholicos has committed himself to closer union with Rome rather than with the Orthodox Churches.

The Armenians severed communion with the Orthodox Church in 451 A.D., and do not accept the Fourth Council (Chalcedon) and the subsequent three Œcumenical Councils. Traditionally they are thus numbered among the non-Chalcedonian or Monophysite churches, whose teaching is condemned as heretical by both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches. However, in 1996, the Armenian Catholicos signed a declaration with Pope John Paul II stating: "Christ is the Word of God made flesh, perfect God in His divinity, perfect man in His humanity." Whether this Orthodox statement of faith has been endorsed by his communion is not clear. Apparently hindrances to union with Rome hinge on the Papal claims. In ethos the Armenian Church would be closer to the Orthodox, but, despite the 1996 declaration, there are theological issues to be addressed. It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the excellent exhibition of Armenian ecclesiastical art which was recently shown at the British Library, a very clear statement was made by the promoters (presumably with the endorsement of Armenian church representatives) clarifying that the Armenian Church did not share a common doctrine with the Orthodox.

A series of talks between the Moscow Patriarchate and various non-Chalcedonian churches, which are sometimes confusingly referred to as Oriental Orthodox, has been in progress over the past months, and more talks are scheduled in early December, due to take place in Cairo if the international situation permits. One suspects that the Armenian Catholicos' closeness to Rome might be thought to prejudice these rather more serious exchanges. Naturally we must allow the

Armenians to follow their conscience, but their simultaneous pursuit of both Rome and Orthodoxy seems to indicate a lack of seriousness and it is little wonder that Patriarch Aleksii feels some bewilderment.

## NEWS FROM SERBIA

HIS BEATITUDE, Patriarch Pavle of Serbia has registered in the Belgrade municipality of Palilula as a displaced person. The Patriarch who lived in Pec, Kosovo and Metohija, for 34 years was eligible to register in this way and thus draw attention to the plight of the many thousands of Orthodox Serbs who have been driven from their homeland as a result of the NATO assault upon Kosovo and its aftermath.

Since the 1999 Kosovo conflict, about eighty Serbs have returned to the Osojane Valley from which they were then expelled, and a spokesman for the UN refugee agency, Astrid van Genderen Stort, sees this small influx as an "important symbol." In all, according to this spokesman, 2,000 Kosovan Serbs have returned in the past year, but this is still a small percentage of the 200,000 Serbs who fled their homeland there in the war and its aftermath. UN officials, who want to promote the return of the Serbs, claim that the Albanian residents have so far shown tolerance, although in the town of Istok 2000 of them held a rally to protest against the return of Serbs.

After fifty-five years of state-sponsored atheism, Serbia has reintroduced religious education in schools. This decision is a victory for the Serbian Orthodox Church which has been resisting political pressure to stop the re-introduction of a religious education programme. Other religious communities in Serbia, Roman Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Lutheran and other Christian denominations have stated that they support the decision.

The Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church issued a statement on 26th September deploring the continued regime of terrorism under which Orthodox Serbs are forced to live in Kosovo and Metohija. They cite the abduction of children and worries about the plight of other missing persons, and they call for the return of those people expelled from their homeland. They also testify to "the biased approach of representatives of UNMIK and KFOR and the wider international community toward the tragedy of a people stricken with misfortune, toward destroyed families, homes and holy shrines." And they protest against the concealment of criminals, terrorists and "every conceivable kind of felon." While expressing their deep regret over the catastrophic outbreak of terrorism in America (11/09/01) and condemning the acts of terrorism, they appeal to the free world to eradicate terrorism everywhere where the innocent are suffering, including Kosovo and Metohija.

## DESTRUCTION OF CHURCHES IN MACEDONIA

ALBANIAN TERRORISTS have demolished more than thirty churches and monasteries in the region of Tetovo, according to a report issued by the diocesan administrator, Mirko Stankoski. The list of desecrated churches is not yet complete because some churches and monasteries are not yet accessible because of security measures in the region. Besides the destruction of churches, the report notes that books, icons and documents have been stolen or destroyed.

## CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS AFTER 11/9/01

AS "THE WEST" tries to assure the world that its offensive is not directed against Islam but against terrorism, International Christian Concern issued an information release on 9/10/01 expressing concern about increased hostilities against Christians in Muslim countries. The report cited a number of incidents in Pakistan where reprisals against Christians have been taken for the "Christian" attack on Afghanistan. These incidents, which perhaps should not surprise us, include intimidation, beatings, arson and other attacks on property, and they have, since that I.C.C. release, been exceeded by the horrific massacre of believers in church at Bawalpur, widely reported in the press.

However, the news is not all bad. Information reaches us that in Qatar the Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, has donated \$3 million to relief agencies having seen the devastated World Trade Center, and that his government is to allow Christian churches to be built in a, special fenced-in compound near the Marriott Hotel in Ras Abu Abboud, a suburb of Qatar's capital city. Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches will be erected within the compound, and construction is expected to begin next year.

### CITY OF BARI OFFERS AID

LEARNING OF THE DESTRUCTION of the St Nicolas Greek Orthodox Church in Manhattan during the Twin Towers Attack of 11th September, the Italian city of Bari, in which the sacred relics of St Nicolas repose, has offered \$500,000 towards the reconstruction of the church. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, on hearing of this generous offer, immediately contacted the Italian Consulate to express his gratitude to the citizens of Bari.

It is also reported that the Italian authorities have returned 45 icons to Russia which were illegally taken to Italy in 1996. Another 850 Russian antiquities are soon to be returned. It is estimated that over the past five years over a quarter of a million pieces of illegally exported art have been returned to Russia.

### ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC DIALOGUES

THE NORTH AMERICAN ORTHODOX CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL CONSULTATION held their 61st meeting at St Paul's College in Washington, D.C, from 11th to 13th October. The session was co-chaired by the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh and R. C. Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee. Since June 1999, when it studied a Vatican clarification on the Filioque, the Consultation has concentrated its energies on considering this area of dispute between the two communions. "The members decided that the main lines of a possible future common statement are beginning to emerge," but that the question will have to be taken up again at another meeting. A 62nd (!) session of the Consultation has thus been scheduled for early June, 2002.

### STATISTICS!

SERVICE ORTHODOXE DE PRESSE (France) has published the following statistics about the number of Orthodox Christians in the European Union. Greece is the only country in the "Union" which is predominantly Orthodox and it numbers 9 million

faithful. It is followed by Germany with 900,000, the United Kingdom with 450,000, France 150,000, Sweden 94,000, Benelux with 67,000, Finland 58,000, Italy 32,000. Counting the other countries with even smaller Orthodox populations, it is estimated that in all there are 10,760,000 Orthodox Christians in the "Union." The candidate countries seeking entry into the "Union" will bring in many more: Poland 570,000, Cyprus 442,000 and Estonia 75,000. This would mean that 5.5% of the Orthodox in the world would be living within the expanded "Union." One assumes that these figures include all who are nominally Orthodox, and not the actual number of churchgoers! (Taken from "Nouvelles du monde orthodoxe," Bulletin du centre orthodoxe d'informations, No 38, October, 2001, ISSN 1143.9741).

## BROOKWOOD NEWS

**INFLUX OF INFLUENTIAL DEACONS:** On Saturday 30th September/13th October, Father Protodeacon Christopher Birchall of St Nicolas Church, Vancouver B.C., an English convert to Holy Orthodoxy, and the editor of the "Canadian Orthodox Herald," visited Brookwood and served at the Divine Liturgy with us. On the following day, the feast of the Protection, he served at the Annunciation Convent in Willesden.

On Wednesday, 4th/17th October, for the Memorial Liturgy for the late Archbishop Nikodem of Richmond and for the pannikhida served for him, we were joined by Father Archdeacon Andronik from the Cathedral of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow," in San Francisco. Of Russian descent, Father Andronik was born and raised in London, where his family still live. While in England, he also served at the Russian Church on Harvard Road, and, for the feast of the Optina Elders, at the Annunciation Convent, where as a child he had attended Saturday School. On Saturday 14th/27th October, he came to serve with us a second time at Brookwood, and afterwards kindly spent part of the day instructing Father Sabbas with points about serving as a deacon.

IN THE PAST YEAR, King Edward Orthodox Trust Company Ltd, was, as a registered charity, able to recoup a total of £3,072.94p from the Treasury on donations made by covenant and by the newer and much simpler system of Gift Aid. Our thanks to all donors who have contributed in this way, and thus helped to increase our income for the support of the mission here. If you are a tax-payer, please do consider this method of giving as it substantially increases our revenue. Gift Aid forms are available from the Brotherhood on request. Phone/Fax: 01483 487763.

## PRACTICAL TIP

DURING this month we start the Nativity Fast, the forty days of fasting in which we prepare for the Great Festival of Our's Saviour's Nativity in Bethlehem. Before it starts, take a little time to reflect and prepare to keep the fast. Often we blunder into the fasts without any forethought, and because we have made no provision for the journey that we are undertaking we gain nothing from our efforts. Indeed, often our efforts themselves fall well below what the Church enjoins at such times. Preparation needs to be made for the change in diet: simple things like using up non-fast products, making sure we have the proper foodstuffs to sustain a balanced but almost vegan

diet, etc. But spiritually provision needs to be made for the fast too, Make sure that you give as much time as possible to church observance, that you allow yourself time in daily schedules for prayer and for spiritual reading. Provide yourself with an spiritually edifying book to read during the fast. Have in mind, and make provision for, increased almsgiving, and not just token giving. Although it is difficult in this fast with family and social commitments often multiplying around the "Mid-Winter Festival," try to keep your diary as clear as possible of extraneous affairs, but always bear in mind the necessity at times to mitigate your observance to show love for others, particularly those who are not of our Faith. Remember in the fast to prepare for and go to confession. Take some time before the fast begins to schedule these things into your life, and you will find that you make a better start to the fast, and then perhaps will be better able to sustain it. More particularly bear in mind that the fast is not simply an observance; it is an exercise - you should expect to get something out of it, just as you would with a course of fitness exercises.