



## FROM THE FATHERS

“HE WHO was not in the ark of Noah could not be saved by water, so neither can he appear to be saved by Baptism who has not been baptized in the Church.”

HOLY HIEROMARTYR CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE, + 258 A.D.

“LET HIM [one who opposes the truth] read again that there is one hope of our calling and one Baptism, and one Faith, if, after that he oppose himself to the preaching of the Apostle, he, being accursed because he framed strange doctrines of his own device, is neither called, nor baptized, nor believing, because in one God the Father and in one Lord Jesus Christ there lies one Faith of one hope and Baptism. And no alien doctrine can boast that it has a place among the truths which belong to one God and Lord and hope and Baptism and Faith.”

SAINT HILARY OF POITIERS, 367 A.D.

“AS our Saviour passed three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, so you also [at Baptism] in your first ascent out of the water represented the first day of Christ in the earth, and by your descent the night; for as he who is in the night no longer sees, but he who is in the day remains in the light, so in the descent as in the night you saw nothing, but in ascending again you were as

in the day. And at the selfsame moment you were both dying and being born, and that Water of salvation was at once your grave and your mother. And what Solomon spoke of others will suit you also, for he said: *There is a time to bear and a time to die* (Eccles. 3:2). But to you it is in the reverse order; there is a time to die and a time to be born, and one and the same time effected both of these, for your birth went hand in hand with your death.”

SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, + 386 A.D.

“THE Faith too is said to be one, because we believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And there is one Baptism, for it is in the same way that we are baptized in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and we are immersed three times so that the Mystery of the Trinity may be made manifest.”

VEN. JEROME OF STRIDONIUM, +420 A.D.

“YOU Christians have not believed in Christ and have not been baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity in order to see shows, but to carry out the Lord’s commandments: that is, to love God and your brother, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to look after strangers, and to visit the sick and the imprisoned. You Christians do not have permission from Christ and the Gospel to live a frivolous life, a life devoted to entertainment, a life like that of the pagans.”

VEN. NICODEMUS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, +1809 A.D.

“THE Christian life is life in the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer puts on Christ and lives through Him.”

SAINT THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE, + 1894 A.D.

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS,  
ARCHBISHOP OF THESSALONICA  
+ 1357 A.D.

**On the First Resurrectional Gospel**  
(Mat. 28:16-20)

In which it says that Divine Baptism is not sufficient for the salvation of man, if therewith zeal in keeping God's commandments is not also manifest.

HE WHO EXISTED before all things came into being and Who, through grace, created all that exists out of non-being, is present in all things though He is higher than all things. It follows that He was in the world before He appeared in the flesh, but the world did not know Him, because it did not wish to know, because those who desire it are those who do know. Thus it is that those who recognized God are those who were joined to Him; and those who did not recognise Him fell away. So it was with Paul, who desired, who strongly desired, and assiduously sought to know; and he writes, speaking of the Greeks [*i.e. the pagans*] and of the cause of their being judged by Christ our Lord: *Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind* (Rom. 1:28). Thus it was with such as had no desire and did not recognise God, and so it is with all who are like them. But who were those who, even before the Divine Incarnation recognized Him? There were many of them, and, possibly, pre-eminent among them all, and more exalted than all, were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because justly God accepted them. And not only them, but the whole race descended from them, so that they started to be referred to as the people of God, and thereafter - O the inexpressible

greatness of the gift! - they even became His kinsmen because He deigned to reveal Himself to the world in the flesh. And He not only received that [*the flesh*] from them, but He came pre-eminently for their sake, as the Lord Himself says in the Gospel: *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Matt. 15:24). This was because seeing that they had fallen away from the piety and virtue of their fathers, and had fallen away from the knowledge of Him, for the sake of their pious forebears He did not allow Himself to disdain them, but bowing the heavens, He came down and, being in the likeness of man, He lived among men, speaking of and working what was Divine. And not only speaking and working, but consonant with God's benefactions He mercifully granted them gifts: He cleansed the lepers in their midst, He enlightened the blind among them, He invigorated the paralytic, straightened those bent double and crippled, He cast out demons from those possessed of them, and, in a word, healed every sickness, every infirmity and every mental disorder, and by His command alone He brought back the dead to life.

But they not only rejected Him, their very own Benefactor, Who had come to them, but, to tell this fully, they delivered Him to death, and that, the death of the cross. Alas, what mindlessness! What a profanity! For their sakes God had come unto them in the flesh, and so it was with justice that He Who had been abandoned and rejected by them said unto them: *Behold, your house is left unto to you desolate* (Matt. 23:38), but the rejection of them inaugurated the reconciliation of the world, and thanks to their defiance we were shown mercy, besides which - *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and understanding of God!* - again we are told through the words of the Apostle: *God hath concluded them all in defiance, that He might have mercy upon all* (Rom. 11:33, 32). So, as we have just heard, as the Evangelist Matthew proclaimed saying: *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted,* but when the Lord drew near and conversed with them,

then were they confirmed in faith, for it says further on: *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations* (Matt. 28:16-17, 18-19). Thus it was that for this reason, we, who were of little account before, were called by the word of the Apostles mentioned above, that indeed the apostasy of the Jews ushered in the reconciliation of the world and that we were granted mercy thanks to their defiance, for He Who had said to His disciples earlier, *Go not into the way of the nations, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Matt. 10:5-6), now says: *Go ye therefore and teach all nations* (Matt. 28:19). For, when in former times, we were unbelieving, and though living in the world had no desire to come to know, through the beauty and order of the universe, the God which was thereby proclaimed, then, leaving us, the Lord justly regarded those who, both directly and through His prophets, humbly recognized Him (i.e. the Jewish people). Now when they have become unbelieving, there is no impediment to the righteous judgment of God to show us mercy and through the sacred Apostles to teach us about Himself. For this reason there immediately follows, *All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*, that we, whom the righteous judgement of God did not formerly accept, for we were unbelieving, are now made one with the believing, granted mercy and called to the heavenly good things.

Now as far as concerns those who were earlier and those who were later, both the one and the other, and indeed all who have condemned themselves in unbelief, God, by His authority, given through His righteous judgment, has mercy upon those whom He desires to. He desires to have mercy even upon us, who were from among the pagans, or better to say [He desires to have mercy] upon everyone, for He is the God of all. Wherefore it was that God desired to make a start with regard to His mercy *with us*, and not with those who have remained obstinate even until now, nor yet with those who completely turned away, because it is through us that, should they so desire it, the door of salvation might be opened

for them, and those of them that come to our Church He receives with joy, because they have stumbled not so that, through their falling or as a consequence of their errors, salvation might come for us, who formerly were unbelievers, but that their zeal might be enflamed and call them to a like salvation, if only they not intentionally close their eyes, and block their ears, lest they see, hear and believe, and achieve salvation. And it comes about something like someone having a vessel, containing within it a source of oil, designed in such a way that when it is inclined over other vessels, the abundant stream, flowing forth, fills not only that original vessel but other vessels as well, each in their turn, to the very brim. This is because the abyss of the Divine compassions, contained within the worshipful Divine Body, inclining with regard to the pagans, at that time when the Jews had as it were rejected them, caught in its embrace those who came to belief, not only from the number of the pagans, but also from among the number of the Jews. *All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*, - this must be understood with regard to the human nature (of the Godman), because that same power, which, as God, He possessed from eternity, and the strength and glory, the exaltation higher than the heavens, and the worthiness, He now receives even as Man. Concerning this He says: to Me, risen from the dead, *all power is given in heaven and in earth*. At this point death does not reign over the body, because its mortality has been swallowed up by the life, which is in Me. At this point death no longer is manifest as the last and final fate of man, for the immortal life within Me has replaced it, and through Me all mortals cross over unto life. Already death does not hold in the earth the bodies of the dead, because I have seated My earthly Body upon the throne in the heavens, reigning with it over the heavens, and I shall come and will judge all the earth as King of the universe, and those deserving the earth I shall leave to it, and those who are found to be righteous I will raise up with their bodies to heaven, and grant them the heavenly kingdom. And so, *Go ye*, it says, *and teach all nations*, baptizing and teaching them. And this pertains to the authority which He had received, that He did not simply say *teach*, but actually *make disciples* of all nations

[*Translator's note*: this is apparent in the Greek original, but not in most English translations]. Simply to teach would refer to the Apostles, who fulfilled His commandments, but to make disciples and baptise both those from among all peoples and from the generations in the whole assemblage, is manifest as a work not simply of learners, but of the proficient, and even more than that, one of Divine grace and of the power of Him Who gave the commandment, as is shown when Paul says: *Unto me grace is given for the hearing of the faith among all nations* (see Eph. 3:8). *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 28:19). Do you not see that here the Nature and the Worthiness of the Three worshipful Divine Persons is clearly proclaimed? For one is the name of the Three; one the sanctification which is from Them; one the Faith in Them.

Often in the Gospels it speaks of Them, but not so distinctly. At the time of the Lord's Baptism, the Trihypostasis was clearly shown, but Their one Nature and one dignity not so clearly. Now, however, the Lord commands that this be preached unto all, and impressed upon the hearts of the believers from the very beginning, because without this fundamental dogma and faith in this truth it is not at all possible to lay the foundation of piety. Not only baptise, but also *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you* (Matt. 28:20). On the basis of this it is evident that Baptism alone is not sufficient to make a man a disciple of the Gospel but there must also be within the person an observance of the commandments of God, and furthermore of all the commandments, because Christ says *teaching them to observe*, not some of the commandments, but rather *all things whatsoever I have commanded you*. James, the Brother of God, says: *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* (Jas 2:10), because after every sin, which one falls into even though not desiring to, one must rise by the way of repentance from the pit, being otherwise one who offends against the law of grace. And so it says, *So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty* (Jas 2:12),

because the law of Christ is the law of liberty, for through Divine Baptism He delivers us from the law of sin and of death. So, if we do not strive to safeguard until the end the liberty granted us, doing this by means of irreproachable deeds and words, of, if we lose it on account of sin, do not restore it by means of repentance, we shall be judged by that very law which set us at liberty, for not having maintained the liberty granted us. It is for this reason that the divine Paul says of himself: *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway* (1 Cor. 9:26-27). And he prompts us to a like zeal: *Know ye not, he says, that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize* (v. 24). He did not say this meaning that only one person would receive the victory palm of salvation, but meaning that those who manifest great endeavours would receive the reward, whether it be one man only or many. For this victory award of the high calling is inexhaustible and is burdensome for all whose devotion is not undiminished. Wherefore again, speaking to everyone, he adds: *So run, that ye might obtain* (v. 24). But, showing the technique of this running, he says: *Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things* (v. 25), wherefore we should not give ourselves over to any of the forbidden pleasures. Then, lest anyone baptized consider and affirm that on the basis of that Baptism alone, and without any deeds accompanying it, they might become pleasing to God, he [St Paul] on the basis of examples taken from the Old Testament shows and persuades us that no one may be pleasing unto God, unless accompanying firm faith there also be desistance from coarse passions, words, and deeds. For he says: *I would not have ye be ignorant, brethren, how all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well-pleased* (1 Cor. 10:1-5).



All these things were images of the sacred Mysteries, which are celebrated among us. The cloud mystically from above represents the over-shadowing of the baptized by the Divine Spirit; the food and the drink are the Body and Blood of Christ, which we receive every day, it may be said, in communion; but wherefore does Paul call a soulless and unfeeling material, namely rock, *spiritual*? Because, just as a body might be called animate, which is clothed upon by the power of, and moved by the rationality of, the soul, so too that body can be called spiritual which, above all others, is found to be under the action of the Divine Spirit. Thus inasmuch as the rock mentioned was found in a wondrous manner to be under the action of the Spirit, it bore within itself a source of waters, and poured this forth so abundantly from itself that with justice it was called *spiritual* by Paul, and was therefore taken as an image of the Body of Christ, because It also has an activity through the indwelling within it of the fulness of the Divinity, and it abundantly bestows a source of eternal life upon those who approach with faith.

But let us return to our theme today! The Divine Paul, saying that the people before us were all participants in the image of the Mysteries which were to be introduced, adds this: *But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted* (1 Cor. 10:5-6). By this he clearly says that, just as with them [the Old Testament Jews] who were susceptible to evil desires, the types of the Mysteries presented were in no way a help and they did not escape being abandoned by God, for which cause they perished outside, and were not saved within the Promised Land, so it is with us, if we prefer a life of sin, for neither Divine Baptism, nor the holy Mysteries subsequent thereto will deliver us from eternal condemnation. But like those who were deprived of the Promised Land, so shall we, if we live without repentance and without obedience to the commandments of God, be deprived of the heavenly inheritance. For this reason, speaking to us again, the Apostle adds

that we should not be contrary, brethren, nor harden our hearts as it was with them in the day of temptation in the wilderness (see Ps. 94:8). For thus, verbatim, the Apostle says: *With whom was He grieved...? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose bones fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that would not be persuaded? And we see that they could not enter* (Heb. 3:17-19). *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, - by disbelief in His promises and opposing His commandments and ordinances, - as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the one that destroyeth all* (1 Cor. 10:8-10). Wherefore it is within our means to see those deeds which are evil and those which bring horrifying calamities, and we are capable therefore of reaching the conclusion that, on account of our sins, we must needs struggle hard, and this because they incur perils for us. Because who is he that does not observe that the fire of cupidity (love of money) blazes in our midst, and that its flames rise high and are likely to consume everything, social conversation, and the gatherings of the people, the affairs of the country people, and contractual business and trade? It has already percolated through to institutions that are sacred, and has encroached upon the festival days, and with its intensification has even, on the majority of occasions, bound up with fraud and frenzy for profit and vanity, the days that are festive for us, making them un-festive. What distinguishes this from the serpent once whispering to Eve and from those people who were bitten in the wilderness by snakes, who by their murmuring and their perfidy raised up internecine civil strife? And how many of our citizens completely scorn chastity, are dissatisfied with lawful marriage, and have recourse to debauchery and unlawful cohabitation?

For this and for the like many of our citizens have already become fodder for the sword or victims of robbery, and others are

still standing if only that they might repent; and although here one might escape that wrath which is to come, after death there will be no escape from the inevitable wrath for those who lived without repentance. For the Apostle says: *Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience* (Eph. 5:6), wrath now and wrath to come. Wherefore, brethren, everyone of us must turn away from our wicked deeds; do not do evil, and evil will not befall us, but let us learn to do good. And those sins which we have committed let us, through confession and a corresponding repentance, cast from us. And if we are unable to continue in virtue until the end, then by our humility before God and by our sharing with the poor in those good things of which we have an abundance, our guileless treatment of those who have offended us, let us win forgiveness from on High, and thereby, through the love of God for mankind, let our insufficiency in good works be replenished, that the Lord, in accordance with His promise, might constantly abide with us, because when He instructed His disciples to baptise and to teach, He added: *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20). And so it was that those who heard this with their ears, through obedience to the will of God in their own time, departed from this world; so it is that this promise of Christ falls to us, who believe in Him from birth until the end of the age, and manifest this faith through deeds, that on the basis of our present life we might already have the Lord with us, and through Him take possession of the good things both of the present and of the future, to His glory, and that of His Unoriginate Father and of the Co-Eternal Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages, Amen.

***From a translation into Russian by the late Archimandrite Ambrose (Pogodin), published in 1975 by the Brotherhood of the Ven. Job of Pochaev in Montreal.***



# Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

**Note:** *In what follows we have added substantially to Fr Alexander's original text to make things clearer for contemporary readers.*

**§ 67. The Commemoration of the Members of the Church in Heaven and on Earth.** During the offering to the Lord of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the Church prayerfully commemorates all Her members, both the departed and the living. Firstly She remembers the Forefathers, the Prophets, the Apostles and the Orthodox saints of God. In the hearing of all those in the church, the priest begins this commemoration with the words: *Especially our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed, glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.* While the priest then goes on silently to commemorate the saints, the choir responds to his exclamation by chanting: *It is truly meet to call thee blest, the Theotokos, the ever-blessed and all-immaculate and Mother of our God. More honourable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, thee who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, thee do we magnify.* On some feast days, this hymn is replaced with another addressed to the Theotokos but particularly appropriate to that feast. The Church thus commemorates the saints, not with the aim of calling God's mercy upon them, but so that through their prayers and intercessions, our supplications before Him for the living and the dead might be strengthened. Wherefore as he finishes remembering the saints, the serving priest ends, *through whose prayers do Thou visit us, O God.*

Having commemorated the saints of God, the Church prays, first of all, for all those who have fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection and life eternal, remembering as many as is possible by name, that the Lord forgive them their sins, and grant them rest in a place of light, whence all pain, sorrow and sighing have fled away. And secondly She prays for the members of the Church still in this life, for the Archbishop, the Bishop and the other clergy, for benefactors and helpers, for those with special needs and those who have cause to celebrate on that day particularly. In fact, he makes special reference to the Bishop of the diocese, who has a care for all the souls there, saying: *Among the first, remember, O Lord, our Bishop Ambrose, whom do Thou grant unto Thy holy churches in peace, safety, honour, health, length of days, and rightly dividing the word of Thy truth.* To this the deacon adds: *And all whom each hath in mind, each and every one.* Thus the people may also here silently remember the Orthodox members of their families and those dear to them. To the deacon's exclamation, the chanters respond, *Each and every pious and Orthodox Christian,* or in some usages simply, *Everyone and all.* Thus in her prayer the Church embraces all the Orthodox believers, living and departed, male and female, those in the ministry and those whose priestly ministry is to be laymen. The Church prays thus for all Her members at this point because the supremely holy Eucharist is not only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but also one of propitiation and of purification. This central part of the celebration of the Mysterion is brought to an end with the priest praying that all those members of the Church may with *one mouth and one heart* glorify and hymn the Name of the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. This should remind us why it is that the Orthodox Church does not have what is now called "open communion." It is a celebration of those who *with one mouth and one heart*, and thus with one Faith, glorify God. And at the very end, as the minister of Jesus Christ, the priest blesses the people present, *And the mercies of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ shall be with you all.* To which with a reciprocal love, they reply, *And with thy spirit.*

**§ 68. The Preparation of the Faithful for Communion.** After the consecration of the Gifts, the Church prepares the faithful for Communion. This preparation begins with a Litany of Supplication, but one which begins unusually with the petition, *Calling to remembrance all the Saints, again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord.* It continues with a second petition, *For the precious Gifts offered and hallowed, let us pray to the Lord.* This prayer is extended in the third petition, *That our man-befriending God, Who hath accepted Them upon His holy and noetic altar above the Heavens for an odour of spiritual fragrance, will send down upon us Divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit, let us pray.* The litany then continues in the usual way. During these petitions, the priest prays silently in the sanctuary that the Lord will deem him and all the faithful worthy to partake of the Holy Mysteries. In place of the last petition, in which we normally call to remembrance the All-holy Theotokos and all the Saints, we have a special one, which again underlines the fact that it is only in unity of Faith, and therefore as Orthodox Christians, that we may partake of the sacred Mysteries. It runs: *Having asked for the unity of the Faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God.* The priest then breaks in, *And vouchsafe, O Master, that with boldness and without condemnation we may dare to call upon Thee, the Heavenly God, as Father, and to say.* The faithful together then recite the Lord's Prayer, or in some usages it is chanted. In this prayer, as ones reconciled to God through the sacrifice of Christ, the faithful call upon Him as their Father, and in asking to receive their "daily bread" they beseech that they may be communicants of the Body and Blood of the Lord. After the prayer, the priest bestows the *Peace* upon the flock and calls them to bow their heads to the Lord, while he silently prays that the Lord will mercifully regard those that have done so and will grant unto them such good things as are needful for them. He ends his prayer aloud with the exclamation, *By the grace and compassions and love for man of*

*Thine Only-Begotten Son, with Whom Thou are blessed, together with Thine all-holy and good and life-creating spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.* As the chanters respond with the *Amen*, the priest reads a second prayer, asking that we might be cleansed and thus partake of the Holy Mysteries. He then raises the consecrated Lamb slightly from the diskos, holding It with the fingers of both hands, and exclaiming, *The Holies are for the holy.* The chanters respond, *One is holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.* This is done in all humility, because, of course, among us none may consider themselves holy, and yet we are holy in that we have received holiness from the Lord, the One Who is holy, being united to Him through our Baptism as Orthodox Christians, our Chrismation, and our unity with Him in His Church.

After the elevation of the Lamb, which represents Christ being raised upon the Cross, the priest represents the Passion which He suffered thereon by dividing the Lamb into four parts and placing them on the diskos in the form of a Cross. He next takes one portion, and places it within the Chalice, and pours hot water into the Chalice. The union, thus effected, of the Body of Christ with the Divine Blood represents the Resurrection of Christ, just as the flesh of man only becomes living when united with blood. The pouring of the hot water into the Chalice makes for a vivid portrayal of the true Blood of the Resurrected Christ.

*.... to be continued with "The Communion of the Priestly Ministers"*

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“A BROTHER asked Abba Poemen: ‘Some brothers live with me; do you want me to be in charge of them?’ The Elder said to him: ‘No, just work first and foremost, and if they want to live like you, they will see to it themselves.’ The brother said to him, ‘But it is they themselves, father, who want me to be in charge of them.’ The Elder said to him, ‘No, be their example, not their legislator”

THE SAYINGS OF THE DESERT FATHERS.

# THE COMING MONTH

THE HOLY THEOPHANY, the feast of our Saviour's Baptism by John in the Jordan is the principal festival in January (6th /19th), and is particularly marked by the Blessing of Waters both inside the church and outside, at a stream, lake or by the sea. Icons of the event show our Saviour standing, as it were, in front of the waters of the Jordan, in a way which would in practical terms be impossible. This is so that the waters of the Jordan are seen to be all around Him, indicating His immersion in the waters. Under western influence, from the nineteenth century particularly, one finds "icons" showing Him simply standing in the water in a realistic way, with John the Baptist tiptoeing forward rather effete to pour a little water over His head from a sea shell! Such a depiction fails to be iconographic, because it does not impart a spiritual teaching which is essential. It must be remembered that our Saviour was baptized not to be cleansed of any sin or defilement, but to inaugurate our Baptism. The inauguration of necessity must clearly demonstrate what is to be inaugurated, and so show, as the word Baptism itself indicates, that the candidate is immersed in the waters of Jordan.

After the feast of the Saviour's Baptism we have many commemorations of some of the greatest ascetic saints of the Church, those who went out into the deserts to struggle. This also should be instructive for us. How many, even of those of us who were blessed to be baptized in adult years and thus fully aware of its significance, sink back after our conversion to Orthodoxy into living just as we did before, perhaps with a few minor condescensions to Church practice. Rather after our Baptism, we should as those ascetic fathers did, take up our Cross and follow Christ.

Among the Saints we celebrate in January, we have the **New Martyrs of Russia**, whose feast day is kept either on 25th January / 7th February or the nearest Sunday, because it is the



anniversary of the execution of the first Hierarchy of the Church in Russia to be granted the crown of martyrdom under the Soviet persecution of the Church, **Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev**. In fact in 2016, that date falls on a Sunday, and among the New Martyrs we also have the **Holy Hieromartyr Peter of Krutitsa, Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne of Moscow**. The following account from his life was published in the magazine, *Agios Kyprianos*, in 1994: “Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa (in the world, Peter Feodorovich Polyansky) was born in 1863. In 1920 he was consecrated Bishop. In the will of the most saintly Patriarch Tikhon (†1925), he was designated as one of the three Hierarchs who were in turn to become Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne after his repose. On 12th April 1925, Metropolitan Peter assumed the governance of the Russian Church, which was being put through terrible hardships by the atheists. From the very first, Metropolitan Peter made no concessions to the Soviet State. After several months, on 10th December of the same year, he was imprisoned and was successively sent to prisons in Vyatka, Perm, Ekaterinburg, Tiumen, and Tobolsk (in Siberia). From there, they exiled him to the village of Khe, near the Ob River, two hundred kilometres from Obdorsk. According to Metropolitan Peter’s own account, which we know from many sources, one night he was inhumanly thrown off the train conveying him to Tobolsk. It is known that many Bishops and Priests died in this manner. The Metropolitan fell on the snow as if onto a pillow. He got up and looked around: snow, forest, not a sign of life.... He walked a long while through the snow and finally grew tired. The bitter cold pierced his bones. He was wearing only an old *exorason* [outer cassock—*Trans.*]. Understanding that his end was approaching, he began to pray more intensely before he should die.... Suddenly, he saw an enormous bear approaching him! What was it doing there, seeing as how those animals sleep all winter long, and when for some reason they do wake up, they become terribly wild, aggressive and dangerous to people? Aghast at the thought that he would be devoured, the Metropoli-

tan did not have the strength in his weariness and exhaustion to flee. The bear approached, sniffed him, and peacefully lay down at his feet, coiled up with his belly towards the Metropolitan, and, having stretched out, began to snore! From his massive body emanated heat and life! The Metropolitan hesitated a bit, but then lay down on the bear's fur, changing sides a number of times towards her. At daybreak, he heard a distant cock-crow, something which signified an inhabited area! Then, with great care not to wake the bear, he got up. But the bear, as if it had not slept at all, got up, shook himself, and calmly headed towards the forest! In a short while, the Metropolitan reached a small village in which he sought hospitality, saying that his sister, who lived not far from there, would pay the expenses. He was received in a house where he lived for half a year. He wrote to his sister and she came to the village. But, shortly after, some other "politicians" arrived—that is, agents of the secret police, the fearsome "Cheka" (precursor of the KGB). Twelve years of inconceivable tortures followed: imprisonments, punishments, and exiles to the frozen, Northern Arctic regions. Dozens of times, the Soviets offered him the "opportunity" to abandon his Confession and to work together with them, with the office of Locum Tenens, or even the Patriarchal Throne as bait; but Metropolitan Peter remained faithful to our Holy Church. He was executed on 10th October 1937 in Magnitogorsk for the Faith and love of Christ, without, of course, having seen earthly freedom, but having been vouchsafed that holy Freedom that is granted by the Divine Comforter to the children of God, in Christ and in His Church. Amen!

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“LET US REMEMBER the contract by which we have sworn allegiance to the Cross, buried with Christ through the grace of Baptism, so that we may not deal with the world under the illusion that we live, and so that Christ within, and not we ourselves, may live.”

SAINT PAULINUS OF NOLA, +431 A.D.

# POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“I WOULD LIKE to take the opportunity to ask you a question that, quite frankly, could determine my Orthodox Christian life. I read the article you sent me, and to be honest, I am all stirred up already with regards to ecumenism! My parish here in XXX is, as you know, that of Russian Orthodoxy ... I was given enlightenment regards to Orthodoxy as having the full truth. So my point being, if my parish here follows the old calendar, but is part of ecumenism, are they in your opinion ‘Heretics?’” - G.S. by email.*

I THINK that we must realize that the calendar is not the only issue which conscientious Orthodox Christians must reflect upon in our times. It is a deviation from the Tradition of the Church, and, more deeply important, it was introduced to promote ecumenical relations with the heterodox denominations of the West. So, ironically, a split was caused within the Church community to promote union with people of other faiths.

Your church being with the Moscow Patriarchate will be on the old calendar, I presume. This means that in that respect it is being more faithful, and one is able to keep the annual cycle of feasts and fasts as our Fathers have in generations before us.

However, the issue of Ecumenism remains. The Moscow Patriarchate is an organic member of the World Council of Churches, membership of which presupposes an un-Orthodox understanding of the Church. In the first instance under the Soviets the Patriarchate was forced to participate as this gave the Soviets a voice in the West and aided their propaganda programme. However the Soviet regime has ostensibly fallen - I say ostensibly, because it appears that the present regime is heading back in the same direction - and churchmen there claim that their church administration is free, and yet they have continued that membership of the WCC and engage in other ecumenical activities. So now,

presumably this is done not under pressure but because it reflects their confessional stance. The Moscow Patriarchate is also in full communion with other national Churches whose commitment to Ecumenism is even more marked than their own, and when we receive the Holy Mysteries together we confess that we are of “one mind and one heart” with those we commune with. So one must presume that, for instance, they are of “one mind and one heart” with those who commune with Monophysites.

And with regard to Moscow there is the question of what we call Sergianism - the collaboration of the Church through most of the Soviet period with a state whose intent it was to destroy religious belief. Such a collaboration, which involved betraying faithful Christians to the Soviet authorities and sending them to the camps and to their death, gives us reason enough to doubt that the church administration is canonical and true.

It was for these reasons that, when the majority of the hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad opted to subject itself to the Patriarchate in 2007, we left to join the Traditionalist Orthodox in the Church of Greece.

However, it is not for me to say, as a member of a very insignificant, small and unimportant semi-monastic community, whether or not the Patriarchate is in heresy. The old Russian Church Abroad would only “wall herself off” from its administrations and await the decision of a free and cleansed Church of Russia after the fall of the regime. Sadly, so far such an opportunity has not been granted us, because the present administrators of the Patriarchate are the same persons, many ex-KGB agents, who ran the Church for the Soviets.

All I can say is that for our community there was reason enough not to place ourselves under the Patriarchate. It remains largely faithful about the calendar, but is engaged in Ecumenism and has not been cleansed of its Sergianist past. It is therefore involved in heresy and its canonical status is certainly questionable. By canonical, I mean in the fundamental and true sense - following

the canons. Nowadays the term is often used (as a smokescreen) to mean official, established, accepted by all the other churches whose adherence to the canons is also worth questioning. Whether the time has come to say outright that it is heretical, is something for which we must wait for true Orthodox hierarchs to declare. I hope this helps you, inadequate though it is.

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## NEWS from the communities in England of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece

### *BISHOP SOFRONIE'S VISIT*

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** visited England in mid-December. On Saturday 12th, n.s, he celebrated the **Mysterion of Holy Unction** at the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden**, and stayed for a great part of the day to hear the confessions of the Romanian-speaking faithful. On the next day, he joined us at **Saint Edward's Church** and was the proto-celebrant at the Divine Liturgy, assisted by the Brotherhood clergy, **Father Ecnomos Stephen Fretwell** and **Father Borislav Popov**. As usual during his visits the church was packed to overflowing, and at the end of the service, **Ioan Turcu** gallantly translated the Bishop's sermon, phrase by phrase, into English (and once even putting it back into Romanian!). While the Parish Breakfast was in progress for the majority of the people, Bishop Sofronie, without a break, celebrated the **Baptism of Maria**, the infant daughter of **Andrei and Roxana Alexa of Basildon, Essex**. The Godparents are **Ioan and Simona Casian**, and Maria was named after the All-holy Theotokos. May she remain steadfast in Orthodoxy throughout her life. After the Mysterion, His Grace again stayed in the church to hear yet more confessions, leaving us for London later in the afternoon.

## ***PRAYERS FOR THE NEW-BORN***

BECAUSE of a communications failure, the Brotherhood clergy read the first-day prayers for **Gabriella Grigoras** and her new-born baby a day late, and so it was that they were read on 2nd / 15th December at **Barnet Hospital**. On the following Monday, having got the day right this time, they read the eighth-day prayers at the family home in **North Watford**, and the baby was given the name **Sava**, after the **Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified of Palestine**, feast day 5th/18th December.

## ***TWO INTERMENTS AT SAINT EDWARD'S***

**Christina Yianni**, who, before infirmity prevented her, often used to come to Saint Edward's, and who latterly lived in a Nursing Home in Finchley, was laid to rest in our cemetery on Thursday, 3rd December, n.s. Her funeral had been chanted at the **Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition in Wood Green** by **His Eminence, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira** with assistant clergy. **Archimandrite Vissarion (Kokliotes)** of the **Archangel Michael Church in Margate**, and **Father Constantinos Theocharous** of the Wood Green church (both Œc. Patr.) accompanied her to Brookwood and laid her to rest in the cemetery. After the interment, at our invitation, those participating partook of a Mercy Meal in the main hall of our Mortuary building.

**Leonid Gromov**, husband of **Ludmilla**, and father of **Anna Rotherham**, was laid to rest in our cemetery on Wednesday, 23rd December. The funeral and interment were conducted in Slavonic by **Father Constantine Litvinenko** of the **Orthodox community in Guildford** under the **Archdiocese of Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe** (Œc. Patr), with his Matushka being the chantress. After the burial, the family provided a generous Mercy Meal, yet one keeping to our fasting disciplines, for the many people who had attended.

May God grant His mercies to His departed servants, Christina and Leonid, making their memory to be eternal.

## ***ICON DONATED TO THE CHURCH***

A VERY beautiful icon of the **Holy Hieromartyr Haralampus, Bishop of Magnesia**, feast day 10th / 23rd February, has been donated to Saint Edward's Church by **Stavros Apostolou & Chrisoula Mihelakou** from Greece, the parents of **Alex and Katerina**, parishioners here. God bless them for their kindness towards us.

## ***FATHER STEPHEN AND PRESBYTERA***

**Father Stephen** and **Presbytera Joanna Fretwell** will be moving away from Woking immediately after our Christmas. They will not be too far away but in the Reading area. They emphasise that they are not deserting us but feel the time has come for them to move nearer their family. They aim to be at Brookwood on those weekends when Fr Alexis serves at the Convent, that is for Vespers, Matins and Liturgy and for major weekday Feasts. This will help with the hearing of confessions. Please keep them in your prayers at this time of change, and pray God to protect and keep them. Had they not joined our parish community when they did and come with us when we placed ourselves under the spiritual care of the Traditional Hierarchs of the Church in Greece, we would have been severely hampered, and so we owe them a debt of gratitude.

## ***VISITORS***

**John Childs**, of the **St Nicholas Church Walkers from Shepperton**, brought a group of about a dozen of his walkers to visit St Edward's Church on Friday 27th November, n.s. They spent well over an hour with us, asking numerous questions about our Church, and later wrote to thank us for receiving them.

**Matthew Dell** of **St Peter's Catholic Church, Guildford**, brought a group of six trainee Religious Education teachers to visit the Brotherhood on Wednesday 11th December, n.s. Earlier in the day the students had visited a mosque and a synagogue. Their visit here includ-

ed the church and the exhibition room, and they were with us for about two hours.

**Ann Harrington**, the renowned columnist on the *Woking News & Mail*, visited us on Wednesday, 16th December. In one of her recent columns she included in full the piece we sent round to the people on our email list, which was entitled "Politics."



## PRACTICAL TIP

OFTEN when reading the teachings of the Holy Fathers, their precepts seem impossibly high for us who are grovelling on the ground, but this is as it should be; we have the injunction from our Saviour, *Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect*, - nothing less! So we should not be alarmed, nor should we become despondent. There are two things to bear in mind. Firstly, the teachings apply at different levels. Some are relatively easy to implement, some require struggle and application. Thus when, as above in the "From the Fathers" section, it is clear that we should be baptized by total immersion that is just something which must be done. Keeping the fasts, saying our prayers daily and spiritual reading all require a little more application and attention. Then some things are incredibly difficult for us, who are not well motivated: guarding the eyes, ceasing to judge people, curbing anger and irritation, murmuring, ingratitude, and so on. But the second thing to bear in mind is that even though this is difficult, we should not therefore just ignore it and assume if cannot be done or is not for us, but we should try as far as we can, and keep trying however little we might achieve, and be assured that the prayers of the Saints will help us, and the mercy of the Lord will fill up what is lacking in our efforts.