



FROM THE FATHERS

“IF WOMEN who have the care of a home will on certain days wash with water the garments that are soiled, should we not also make ready for the Birth Day of the Lord, cleansing with our tears the stains of our conscience? And they, should they find the garments so soiled and stained that they cannot be made clean with water alone, add to the water the softening of oil and the acrimony of soap. We likewise, should we have committed sins that are not washed away by repentance alone, let us add the oil of almsgiving and the bitterness of fasting. There is no sin so grave that abstinence will not cleanse, that almsgiving will not blot out.”

SAINT MAXIMUS OF TURIN, + 465 A.D.

“HE BY WHOM man was made had nothing to gain by becoming man; it was our gain that God was incarnate and dwelt among us, making all flesh His home by taking upon Him the flesh of One. We were raised because He was lowered; shame to Him was glory to us. He, being God, made flesh His residence, and we in return are lifted anew from the flesh to God.”

SAINT HILARY OF POITIERS, + 367 A.D.

“I WOULD that you would reflect with me how in the midst of this lowliness the marks of His Divinity are revealed. For when the angel said *fly into Egypt*, he did not promise to journey with them, either in going there or returning, letting them see in a veiled manner that they would have a mighty Fellow Traveler, the new born Child, Who, as soon as He appeared changed all things, so that His enemies in a manner should serve His design for man’s redemption. For the Magi and the Nations, putting away the superstitions of their fathers, come to adore Him; Augustus rendered service to Him at His birth in Bethlehem, when he commanded that a census be made; Egypt receives Him and preserves Him when a fugitive and sought for by treachery, and through this achieves a certain bond of friendship with Him, so that afterwards when she would hear Him preached by the apostles, she would glory in this - that she had been the first to receive Him.”

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, + 407 A.D.

“UNLIKE this Holy Nativity is that of which we read of all men: *Who shall be pure from uncleanness? Not even one, even if his life should be but one day upon the earth* (Job 14:4). But of the concupiscence of the flesh, nothing has been transmitted in this unique* generation; nothing of the law has descended. A royal virgin of the house of David is chosen as the bearer of the sacred Fruit, who had conceived her Divine and human Offspring in her soul, before she conceived Him in her body.”

SAINT LEO THE GREAT, POPE OF ROME, + 461 A.D.

* **Observation:** *this Orthodox Pope of Rome, whom modern Roman Catholics still laud as the “supreme witness and teacher of the incarnation” would appear from the teaching quoted here to refute their false and modern doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception of Mary.” The whole paragraph also refutes the insouciant modern perception that the Mother of God was just some simple peasant girl adventitiously picked to bear the Saviour, an idea which contradicts Scriptural and Orthodox teaching.*

ON THE NIGHT OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Venerable Isaac the Syrian

O, THIS present pure night, during which the Pure One appeared, Who came to make us pure! Let our hearing be pure and the glance of our eyes chaste, and let the feeling of our hearts be holy, and the words of our lips sincere.

The present night is a night of reconciliation, so let no one be angry with his brother and let no one offend him. This night bestowed peace on the whole world, so let no one threaten. This is the night of the Most Gentle One, let no one be cruel. This is the night of the Most Humble One, let no one be proud. Now is the day of joy, let us not take revenge. Now is the day of good will, let us not be cruel. In this day of peace, let us not be conquered by anger. Today God came to sinners, therefore, O righteous one, do not exalt. Today the Bountiful One impoverished Himself for our sake, therefore, O rich one, invite the poor to your table. Today we receive a Gift, for which we did not ask, therefore let us give alms to those who implore and beg. This present day cast open the heavenly doors to our prayers, therefore let us open our door to those who ask forgiveness. Today the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of our humanity, that humanity might be adorned with the seal of Divinity.

Blessed is the Infant, Who brought joy to Bethlehem! Blessed is the Child, Who gave youth to mankind! Blessed is the Fruit, Who bowed Himself down to the hungry! Blessed is He Who is Rich, Who has suddenly enriched our poverty! Thanksgiving to the Spring, Which flowed for our cleansing! Thanksgiving to the Benevolent One, Who bore our hardheartedness. Praise to

Him, Who has no need of our praises, but Who thirsts for them because He Loves us! He requires that we glorify Him only that He might reward us afterwards.

O Kind One, Who demandeth not of us what is above our strength! Thou art an Ocean of glory, which hath no need of our glorification, but, through Thy great kindness, receive Thou this drop of glorification, in that, through Thy kindness, Thou didst move my tongue to praise Thee.



THE START OF GOLGOTHA

Holy New Hieromartyr Joseph of Petrograd, + 1937 A.D.

A homily published in 1904.

*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace,
good will toward men (Luke 2:14).*

THUS did the angels hymn the heavenly, glorious birth of our Lord from the Most Holy Virgin. But what of the people? What of those for whom He was born, for whom He came to give peace and good will? They met the eternally blessed day of the birth of the Lord, by besmirching this their greatest feast, a feast for all the earth, with terrible, bestial blood-letting: *Herod... sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men (Matt. 2:16)* - thinking that the New-born Divine Infant would perish with them. So the Lord, even while still in His cradle as an

infant, revealed that the task for which He had come was suffering, and all His earthly life, from the cradle to the grave, from the cave at Bethlehem to the hill at Golgotha, was one unbroken suffering, taken on for the sake of our salvation. The people did not provide Him with a cradle that as an Infant He might rest, only the cave which served as a night shelter for cattle, gave its manger to Him for His rest. The people did not give Him peace, but instead immediately after His birth threatened to destroy Him: only Egypt, a foreign country, gave Him refuge and shelter. And so throughout all His life the Lord granted benefactions to the people while subject to constant severe deprivation, animosity, persecution and all manner of suffering until that final dreadful end on Golgotha.

Why was such a path, the path of suffering, necessary for Him? Because He is the King of those who suffer, and He had to take upon Himself all that suffering and deprivation from which He had come to relieve earthy sufferers. How would those sufferers have always found Him easily accessible and an aid, had He been born and lived in royal apartments? Then even the very first people to see Him, the most humble shepherds, would not have been deemed worthy to do so; then the lowly Galilean fishermen would not have been able to gather round Him; nor would the sinners and sinful women have been able to wash His feet with their tears as did the Magdalene; nor would all the unfortunate, those who labour and are heavy laden, the sick of every kind, the suffering and the leprous been able to receive such quick and easy consolation; nor would the publicans have had Him as their Saviour, and thieves would not have known His attention to them and His tenderness.

Glory to Thee, Lord of the Angels and of men, for everything that Thou didst endure for our sake! Glory to Thee for the cave, for the manger, for Golgotha, for the Cross, for all Thy life, which was full of wondrous consolation for all who suffer and all the unfortunate upon the earth! Amen.

Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

by Archpriest Alexander Rudakov

Published in 1890 in Saint Petersburg

§ 13. **The Sacred Vestments.** By the sacred vestments, we should understand both those articles of clothing worn and those used by the clergy exclusively during the Divine services. There are two types: those which cover the sacred ministers during the sacred services, and others which cover various things used during the Divine services. Both sorts are usually made of brocades and other fine fabrics. This is required by the dignity and holiness of the Divine services.

The vestments worn by the priestly ministers of our Orthodox Church during the Divine services are the following: the sticharion, orarion, cuffs, priestly stole (epitrachelion), cincture, nabledrennik (among the Russians only), palitsa, phelonion, sakkos, omophorion and mitre. Naturally each of these has its own form, and on the one hand they each remind the ministers of the Church of the spiritual valour and good dispositions which their calling demands of them, and on the other hand they inform the faithful of the significance of the priestly ministry.

1) **The sticharion** is the principal vestment of a deacon, and the under-vestment for a priest or hierarch. [It is an ankle length, sleeved tunic. In the diaconal form it is usually made of heavier material and has wide open sleeves. For priests and Bishops, as it is worn under other vestments, it is usually made of a light material, and the sleeves are narrow and are bound with cords at the wrists under the cuffs.] Usually the sticharion is of light, bright colour to indicate the immaculateness and purity of heart that is

required of those in priestly orders.

2) The **orarion** is a long, narrow strip of material, which is worn by the deacon attached to his left shoulder. [It falls to the hem of his sticharion both at the back and front, and at times is wrapped crosswise across the chest and back.] It is the peculiar vestment of the diaconate, and is held by the deacon to indicate to the people the need to pray and to the chanters the times to sing. In that the deacons, during the liturgy, recall by their ministry that of the Angels in heaven, the orarion takes on the significance of angelic wings.

3) The **cuffs** are included in the list of vestments by the Church and are used by the ministers to hold the sleeves to facilitate the actions required by the sacred rites. When worn by the clergy, on the one hand they represent the bounds with which the hands of the Saviour were bound when He was brought before Pilate, and on the other hand they remind the sacred ministers that in celebrating the Mysteries of the Faith of Christ, they should not trust in their own strengths and abilities, but should entrust themselves to the power of God.

4) The **priestly stole** (epitrachelion) is the vestment worn by priests and Bishops. As the Greek name implies it is worn around the neck and it falls over the sticharion over the chest to the ankles. This is the fundamental priestly vestment, and according to church usage without it the priest cannot perform any liturgical function, just as a deacon cannot without his orarion. In fact the priestly stole derives from the orarion, being in effect a double orarion, and so indicating the greater portion of grace poured out upon the priest.

5) The **cincture** or belt represents the Divine strength which strengthens the sacred ministers in their conduct of the services.

6 & 7) The **nabedrennik** and **palitsa** are vestments

which hang below the belt over the thigh. The first [which seems only be found in the Russian usage] is a rectangular cloth usually slightly elongated; the second is a lozenge shaped hanging. Both are worn by priests of some seniority and represent the spiritual swords, with which the clergy must be armed against faithlessness and impiety. [They are said to derive from cloths worn by soldiers in classical times to prevent their swords from chaffing against their thighs. In the Russian usage the nabredrennik is awarded to a priest simply as an honour, and then subsequently the palitsa. In some local churches, the wearing of the palitsa indicates that the priest has a blessing to hear confessions].

8) The **phelonian** is a long, encompassing cloak-like vestment. [In the Russian usage the back is stiffened and raised at the neck and the front cut short. In the Greek usage it is fitted naturally to the shoulders and the front is longer.] It represents the robe in which the Saviour was clothed when the soldiers mocked Him, and it also represents for the priests the garment of righteousness, wherewith, as ministers of Christ, they must be clothed.

9) The **sakkos** is a vestment something like the Old Testament ephod of the High Priest or the dalmatic of the Emperor. It is worn only by hierarchs in place of the phelonion, and it has the same significance as the phelonion.

10) The **omophorion** is worn folded around the shoulders of the Bishop, and represents the lost sheep found by the shepherd. The omophorion is the peculiar vestment of the hierarchs, and without it they do not celebrate any of the Mysteries.

11) The **mitre** is a crown-like head piece worn by the Bishop [and in the Russian usage by some archimandrites and archpriests]. It serves as a symbol of pastoral authority. [Again in the Russian usage various liturgical items of headgear are awarded to priests and deacons for the same purpose].

.... to be continued with "The Pectoral Cross"

THE COMING MONTH

FOR THE FIRST twenty-four days of December we continue the **forty-day fast** in preparation for the Nativity of our Saviour, as outlined in the teaching of Saint Maximus of Turin in the quotes from the Fathers at the beginning of this issue.

In the Great Lent, we have various commemorations, particularly on the Sundays, to help us through the course of the fast and, as it were, to hold us on course. This fast is less strict with regard to the dietary prescriptions, but we are not denied some help in the same way. The month begins with three feasts of Old Testament Prophets, Saints Naum (1st), Abacum [Habbakuk] (2nd) and Sophonias [Zephaniah] (3rd) as if to point us to the coming of the Messiah.

Furthermore, on the second Sunday before the feast itself, we have the commemoration of the **Holy Forefathers**, those Old Testament righteous ones who by their lives and their teachings in various ways prepared the way for the coming of Christ. On this Sunday, which this year falls on 16th/29th December, the day of yet another Prophet, St Aggaeus [Haggai], we have two canons appointed during Mattins. The one to the Forefathers was composed by St Joseph the Hymnographer (+ 883 A.D.), and there is one to the Three Holy Children, composed by St Theophanes the Branded (+ 845 A.D.). The Three Holy Children along with the Holy Prophet Daniel, yet more Old Testament righteous ones, also have their festal celebration in December (17th/30th).

The Sunday immediately before Christmas Day, which falls this year on 23rd December / 5th January, is called the **Sunday of the Genealogy** because the Gospel reading for the Liturgy itself is the first chapter of St Matthew's Gospel. It more particularly commemorates those Old Testament righteous ones, who were forebears of our Saviour according to the flesh.

In addition to these commemorations which point the way for us, from 20th December (2nd January - civil calendar) until 24th (5th Jan.), we have special services appointed for the **Fore-feast of the Nativity**, which is kept for those five days. The last of those days, **Christmas Eve**, is kept with special solemnity, but depending on which day of the week Christmas Day falls the order of the services varies. This year Christmas Day falls on a Tuesday, and thus not over the weekend, and so on the day before we have the more usual order: **Royal Hours, Vespers and the Liturgy of St Basil** are appointed on the 24th. The Vigil Service that evening begins with Great Compline, and on the feast day itself we have the **Liturgy of St John Chrysostom**.

The feast itself is kept until the end of the month, and throughout it (and indeed for the first four days of January as well) no fasting is enjoined. We might note that this means that Orthodox Christians do not have the Twelve Days of Christmas made famous by the carol. Instead on 1st January, we have the feast of the **Circumcision of our Saviour**, and then begin the pre-festival for the next **Great Feast, that of the Saviour's Baptism, Holy Theophany**. However, all these days are kept as holy days.

Among the Saints celebrated in December, the pre-eminent are **Saint Nicolas the Wonderworker** (6th/19th) and **St Spiridon of Trimythus** (12th/25th). Both were hierarchs and wonderworkers in their lifetimes, and both have continued their ministry of working miracles throughout the centuries since their translation from this life to that of Paradise. Both are hymned as defenders of Orthodoxy: St Nicolas for his denunciation of the heresiarch Arius, and St Spiridon because his incorrupt relics are enshrined, not in his native Cyprus, but on the island of Kerkyra (Corfu) in the Adriatic, and he is thus seen as defending the Orthodox world from the encroachments of the heterodox West.

The **Holy Hieromartyr Eleftherius of Illyria and his mother, the Martyr Anthia** (15th/ 28th). Saint Eleftherius

(Eleutherius) was born in Rome, where his father was in imperial service. His mother, Anthia, heard the Gospel from the great Apostle Paul himself, and was baptized by him. When she was widowed, she entrusted her young son to the Bishop of Rome, Anacletus, that he might be brought up in the Faith. Seeing how greatly Eleftherius was gifted and illumined by the grace of God, the bishop ordained him deacon at the age of fifteen, priest at eighteen and consecrated him Bishop at twenty. Such an advancement was extraordinary, but endowed by God with wisdom, the Saint made up for what he lacked in years. He was appointed bishop in Illyria, with his seat at Valona in present-day Albania. He guided his flock like a good shepherd, adding to their number from day to day. The Emperor Hadrian, a persecutor of Christians, sent a commander, Felix, with soldiers, to seize Eleftherius and take him to Rome. When Felix arrived in Valona, he heard and saw God's holy hierarch preaching, and his heart was suddenly moved and he became a Christian. Eleftherius baptized him, but insisted that nonetheless they returned to Rome as the Emperor had ordered. Hadrian put the gently-born Eleftherius to harsh torture, flogging him, burning him on an iron grid, boiling him in pitch and burning him in a fiery furnace. But, by God's power, Eleftherius was delivered from all these deadly torments. Seeing all this, Choribus the governor proclaimed that he himself was a Christian. Choribus was tortured and then beheaded, and so also blessed Felix. Finally, the imperial executioners cut off the honoured head of St Eleftherius. When his mother, holy Anthia, came to mourn over the slain body of her only son, she was apprehended and later also beheaded. They received the crowns of martyrdom in the year 120. Because of his name, which indicates deliverance, St Eleftherius is prayed to by the faithful for aid in giving birth.

Our **Holy Father Maughold** (28th December / 10th January) is the Patron Saint of the Isle Of Man, and his name is often Latinised as Maccaldus. He was Irish, and had been a murderer and a vagabond. Hearing of the work of Saint Patrick, he thought to mock him. He pretended that one of his men was dead and called

for Patrick. He came and touched the “corpse” which was wrapped in the shroud, then left. Maughold and his men laughed thinking they had tricked Patrick, but when they opened the shroud the man was actually dead. In repentance they begged Saint Patrick to return; he blessed the dead man who returned to life. At that time Maughold and his men converted and were baptized. The Saint then sent him to the Isle of Man where he was to stay with two Bishops, Saints Romulus and Conindrus, be instructed more fully in the Faith and learn the errors of his ways. Maughold did indeed repent deeply and progressed in the spiritual life under their guidance and, following the death of the Bishops, was consecrated Bishop for the island himself. Maughold blessed a well there, said to be near where he first landed on the island, and this gave it healing properties. He reposed in the Lord in about the year 400. Sts Romulus and Corindrus, the first two Bishops of the Isle of Man, are commemorated on the same day as St Maughold.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“A FRIEND of my son’s told me that the ‘far right’ people are enamored of Putin because of his laws punishing homosexuals. How do I explain the Orthodox view as opposed to Putin’s view? Last week, I was asked how to explain that we don’t follow the idea that homosexuals can be united in Holy Matrimony. (That is an oxymoron, I think.)” - S.M., Missouri, U.S.A.

I AM NOT expert on these questions, but it seems to me that we have to distinguish between the laws of a secular state, which presumably in “liberal democracies” are determined in the final analysis by public opinion, and the constraints which Orthodox Christians place themselves under voluntarily by joining, or at least remaining in, the Church. The secular West now widely

allows same-sex “marriages;” Putin’s Russia does not - but both these are following public opinion. [Putin’s Russia is, of course, nothing like a liberal democracy, but because it makes some pretence to be such, it too is drawn into following public opinion to some extent].

The Church does not permit same-sex marriages, not because she has an animus against homosexuals, but because She loves them as She loves all peoples and therefore she does not wish to lead them into sin. The Scriptural and Traditional teaching of the Church is crystal clear, that we were created male and female and that marriage is a bond between a man and a woman. Any other sexual relationship (and indeed many between men and women) is harmful for the participants and therefore the Church cannot bless such unions.

I think two problems arise though in our present circumstances. First of all, it must be admitted that people who would call themselves homosexuals today (especially males) have often been treated with something far short of Christian love (even by people who call themselves Christians), have been discriminated against and even persecuted. They have understandably reacted against this; and the situation has become politicized. So one has “gay rights” and “gay pride” and the like, and on the other hand you have similarly ugly and ungodly movements that are anti-gay. This politicization creates a clamour, and it is often difficult for the still, small voice of Christian love to be heard.

The other problem is one for you and me, as individuals. I think we should be careful not to be drawn into this clamour. We cannot hope to change the world around us to any appreciable extent; we can, and often neglect to, change ourselves. As a nun once wrote to me about something completely different from our present topic: all we can do is light a candle in our small corner, and hope others will be lit. Those candles may be small and far distant from each other but they will be witnesses for those who desire to see of the Light of Christ.

News Section

THE DIALOGUE

Between the Holy Synods of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece and the Orthodox Ecclesiastical Community in Resistance

Ninth Joint Communiqué

On Thursday, October 18/31, 2013, the ninth Joint Deliberation of the Committees for Dialogue Between the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece and the Orthodox Ecclesiastical Community in Resistance took place at the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle, Athens.

All the appointed members of the committees were present.

The deliberation commenced with a review of the course of the Dialogue to date. Next, the discussion revolved around the procedure for rapprochement between the two sides, on the basis, on the one hand, of the proposals submitted by the committee of the Orthodox Ecclesiastical Community in Resistance at the preceding deliberation, and, on the other hand, of the detailed counter-proposals submitted by the committee of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece during the interval between the two deliberations.

In the wake of their lengthy and extremely edifying discussion, the two sides jointly formulated a “Schedule of Steps in the Union Process,” which encompasses, in general terms, the following points:

a. the completion of talks, on the basis of the established agenda, for the purpose of reaching agreement on ecclesiological issues;

b. the need to deal candidly with the canonical nature of the impediments between the two sides; and

c. the convening of a General Synod from among the local anti-innovationist Orthodox Churches, to the end that such a Synod might, by virtue of its augmented authority, issue declarations concerning the calendar innovation and the heresy of ecumenism.

The question of a critique of ecumenism from a theological standpoint was tabled until the next general deliberation, which it was agreed should be held on Thursday, November 22/December 5, 2013, in Galatsion, Athens, in the hall of the Church of St. Spyridon.

*From the Joint Secretariat of the Committees for Dialogue
Galatsion and Phyle; October 18/31, 2013*



PATRIARCH OF SERBIA SPEAKS OUT AGAINST ABORTION

HIS HOLINESS, **Patriarch Irinej of Serbia**, during a visit to the “People’s Front” obstetrical and gynaecological clinic in Belgrade, called upon the medical staff to dissuade women intending to make abortions from taking this step. “It cannot be justified, when for the benefit of some kind of a ‘better life’ and ‘standards’ such a sin is committed. There is no greater event than a birth of new life,” stressed the Serbian Patriarch. A report on **Pravoslavie.ru** (27/11/13) states: “According to the head of the Church of Serbia, by helping infants to come into this world doctors of this clinic do a great and holy work, while the crying of babes is the best music in the world. ‘We are living in an epoch when many values are not taken in the way that they deserve. One of these values is life. We see how easily we refuse the lives of these little creatures,’ noted the Serbian Patriarch, stressing that the tough word ‘abortion’ means something human nature rebels against.” On ecumenical matters His Holiness has taken a course deleterious to Orthodox piety, but in this instance we can rejoice that he is upholding Orthodox teaching.

JERUSALEM RELIC OF THE HOLY CROSS VISITS BRITAIN

A PORTION of the Holy Cross of Our Saviour is being brought to England from Jerusalem and will be taken to a number of churches in this country between 28th November and 12th December n.s., when it will be returned to the Holy City. It will be taken to the Greek Archdiocese of Thyateira Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom in Bayswater and to twelve other churches in that diocese, and to the Russian Orthodox Cathedral at Ennismore Gardens and to three other churches of the Moscow Patriarchate. At each of these churches services will be held in the presence of the sacred relic and there will be opportunities for the faithful to approach and venerate the Cross.

PARIS EXARCHATE ARCHBISHOP ELECTED

THE WEBSITE of the **Deanery of Great Britain and Ireland of the Exarchate of Orthodox Parishes of Russian Tradition in Western Europe** (Œcumenical Patriarchate) reports that on Friday, 1st November, 2013, **Archimandrite Job** (Getcha) was elected as the new Archbishop by the General Assembly meeting in Paris. Their press release says: “The list of candidates which was proposed by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was not the same as the one originally put forward by the Archdiocesan Council. Nevertheless, Archimandrite Job received a sufficient number of votes, and is now bishop elect. His title will be Archbishop of Telmessos. He will be consecrated bishop in Constantinople on 30 November 2013, and his enthronement will follow in Paris on 5 December on the feast of St Alexander Nevsky.” The report does not explain why the list of candidates was changed. In this country the deanery lists 23 parishes and communities and two monastic houses. The new Archbishop, born Ihor Wladimir Getcha in Montreal, Canada, in

1974, will have the oversight of these communities. In 1996 he was tonsured rasophore monk by Metropolitan Basil of Winnipeg at the Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Sophia, Montreal, and later ordained deacon by the same hierarch. On 27th May 1998, he was tonsured a monk of the small habit by Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) at the Monastery of St Anthony the Great, Saint-Laurent-en-Royans (France). And in June 2003 he was ordained priest by Archbishop George of Comana, whom he now succeeds as the head of the Paris Exarchate.

ANCIENT SYRIAN CHURCH DESTROYED

MILITANTS have razed the **ancient Christian Church of Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus in Ma'loula** and have stolen or destroyed its world-famous icons. The church, which was the oldest in the Middle East, had been built in the early 4th century. The Church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus came under attack because of the "Safir" hotel building near it, where Muslim extremists had taken their position. The Syrian army had almost levelled the hotel to the ground, but the militants were still taking cover in its cellars and in neighboring grottoes, converted into cells, where monks used to live in ancient times. In retaliation the extremists destroyed the church. A unique icon of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus painted in the 13th century, which was situated just at the entrance, has been lost forever. The iconostasis and its central icon, painted in the 13th century, have been destroyed together with the icons of the Mother of God and Christ the Chief Shepherd. The main cross fell from the dome, wall paintings were destroyed, shot down and slashed by debris, while the walls themselves were either destroyed or disfigured by shell holes. According to a report given by an ITAR-TASS correspondent, one icon was rescued, though it was damaged by debris as well. It is currently at the house of a Syrian serviceman, and

the government bodies are aware of it. Information taken from the *Pravoslavie.ru* website.

On 25th November, *Interfax Religion* reported that rebels have **destroyed over sixty Christian churches and monasteries in Syria**, and that over half of the Orthodox residents of Aleppo have left their homes, according to a statement made by the **Syrian Ambassador to Russia, Riyad Haddad**. The report continues: “Over fifty mortar shells have recently been fired at the Damascus districts of Kasaa and Bab Tuma, where the Christian population is predominant.”

ANCIENT MONASTERY RUINS TO BE MADE A MOSQUE

WRITING in the *Greek Reporter*, on 30th November, **Nikoleta Kalmouki** reports: “The Turkish government plans to turn the Monastery of Stoudios into a mosque. The monastery is one of the most important Byzantine monuments of Constantinople. The restoration of the building will end in 2014, and then it will be converted into a mosque. The monastery would be [*have been?*] used as a museum but the Turkish government has already de-classified the monument. During the last years many Byzantine churches in Turkey have [*been*] turned into mosques, such as Agia Sofia in Nikaia and the Byzantine church in Trapezounta; there has been recent pressure for the operation [*sic*] of Agia Sofia in Constantinople as a mosque. The monastery of Stoudios, also known as the monastery of the “sleepless monks,” was one of the greatest monasteries of the Eastern Roman Empire, built on the seventh hill of Constantinople. Its contribution to the religious, political and cultural life of the city was significant. For centuries it was the spiritual centre of the Empire and the Orthodox world. It was probably founded before 454 AD. In 1481 it was converted into a mosque. In 1782 it was burned, in 1894 it was hit by an

earthquake and in 1920 it was burned again. Today, only the ruins of the monastery have been salvaged. The unique mosaic floor of the 13th century with the geometrical shapes and the representations of animals has no protection against the damages of time and the weather. The remnants of the huge building that were spread around the temple, have been used thoughtlessly by neighbours as building materials, especially after the great fire of 1920.”

R.O.C. & ROME GROW CLOSER

EVEN before the recent reception of **President Putin** by **His Holiness Pope Francis I** at the Vatican, and the meeting of **His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk**, head of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department of External Church Relations with the Pope, **RIA Novosti** reported that **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow** and “a powerful Roman Catholic Church cardinal on Tuesday voiced readiness for collaboration.” The report continues: “We live at an epoch when many of our historic differences should stop playing the critical role they have played in relations between our churches. We have very many common commitments and common goals,’ Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill said at a meeting with **Milan Archbishop Angelo Scola....** Patriarch Kirill also said at the Moscow meeting that both churches have been concerned about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, as well as in Europe, where ‘pressure is exerted on Christians under the mottoes of tolerance and multiculturalism.’ ‘Today the issue of preserving a Christian Europe – preserving the origins of the Christian civilization – is our common goal,’ he said, adding that the Moscow Patriarchate welcomed Pope Francis’ position on many such issues.” Although this represents something of a warming in the “Cold War” between Moscow and Rome, we should in all fairness point out that the matters reportedly under review concerned not doctrine or faith, but simply social or political issues.

BIBLICAL TOWN UNCOVERED

THE WEBSITE *LiveScience* reports that a town dating back more than 2,000 years has been discovered on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. According to **Dr. Ken Dark**, of the **University of Reading**, it may be the ancient town of Dalmanutha, mentioned in St Mark's Gospel (Mk 8:10). The evidence suggests the town was prosperous in ancient times and that the Jews and those following a polytheistic religion lived side by side in the community. In addition, the researchers found that the southern side of the newly discovered town lies only about 500 feet away from another ancient town known as Magdala. Dr. Dark is not certain the newly discovered town is Dalmanutha, but there is evidence to support the idea. From the remains found, researchers can tell the newly discovered town would have been a sizable, thriving location in the first century A.D., and the name Dalmanutha has not been firmly linked to a known archaeological site.



GREETINGS

WE greet all of our readers, parishioners, helpers and supporters on the approaching festivals of the Nativity of our Saviour at Bethlehem and of the Holy Theophany, hoping that the celebration of these sacred festivals will grant you confirmation in the Faith and a deeper understanding of that Faith to sustain you spiritually in the Coming Year. May His blessings ever be yours!

SIR-UK NEWS

BAPTISM AT SAINT EDWARD'S

OLIVIA, the infant daughter of **Nicolas and Yordanka Kalnakov of Southall** was baptized and chrismated at Saint Edward's Church on Saturday, 3rd / 16th November. Her sponsors at the font were **Father Deacon Borislav Popov** and his **diaconissa Marina**. It was also the first time that Fr Borislav had served as a deacon at a Baptism. It being exactly forty days since Olivia's birth, at the end of the Mysterion, the forty-day prayers were read at the church door for Yordanka, so that she could be admitted to the church again, and Olivia herself was churched. Then the family provided a celebratory meal in the Old Mortuary. On the following day, for the first time, the newly-illuminated Olivia partook of the Body and Blood of our Saviour at the Divine Liturgy.

BABY NAMED

ON TUESDAY, 12th November (n.s), **Elizabeth (Liggy) Fagerlund** gave birth to a baby son at the family home near Bungay. It being impossible to arrange a visit to those parts which almost protrude into the depths of the German Ocean on the eighth day itself, the Brotherhood clergy visited on Friday 22nd November and read the first and eighth day prayers. The baby was named **Emmanuel** in honour of the **Holy New Martyr Manuel of Crete**, whose feast day falls on 28th October / 10th November. After enjoying a meal prepared by **Matias**, we travelled on to visit and read prayers for Emmanuel's grandmother, **Valentine Meade**, in the **Spire Hospital at Norwich**, where she was recovering from a hip replacement operation. Then we returned swiftly to the South, arriving home just before midnight.

BURIAL AT SAINT EDWARD'S

ARCHPRIEST VADIM ZAKREVSKY of the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral Church on Ennismore Gardens, London**, laid his parishioner, **Taisa Mitiaeva**, to rest in Saint Edward's Cemetery on Tuesday 26th November (n.s.). Taisa had reposed on the previous Saturday at the Trinity Hospice in Clapham. After the interment, the mourners had refreshments in the Old Mortuary Hall here.

VOLUNTEER

JAMES HARRIN of Swindon kindly brought his rotovator up to Brookwood on Wednesday 20th November, and spent the day rotovating the kitchen garden plots, preparing them for the next planting. God bless him for helping us in this way.

NEW ICONS PAINTED

THE SISTERS of the **Convent of St Elizabeth in Etna, California**, have painted two new icons for our church, which arrived while we were celebrating the Divine Liturgy on the feast of the Holy Archangels. The one icon depicts the **Venerable Penitent Pelagia, the former courtesan**, and **St Nonnus of Heliopolis**, who led her to repentance, and we asked for it to be painted in memory of **Mother Pelagia of the Lesna Icon Convent in France**, who was in so many ways a foundress and benefactress of our Brotherhood. The other icon depicts the **Seventy New Venerable Martyrs of Prevlak in Serbia**, relics of whom were deposited under our Holy Table at Brookwood, along with those of **St Edward the Martyr** and the **New Venerable**

Martyr Elizabeth, the former Grand Duchess of Russia, when our church was consecrated in August, 2010. Not only did their icon arrive at Brookwood on the feast of the Holy Archangels, but the Prevlak Martyrs were monastics of a house dedicated to that feast, and they were slain on the feast of the Archangels, sometime in the fifteenth century.

VISITORS

Monday 28th October, n.s. - The **Priest Edward John and his Preotesea Veronica** visited our church. They had flown specially to England to venerate the relics of Fr Edward's name saint. Father is a priest of the Patriarchate of Romania and has a parish near Bucharest. After visiting the church and praying at the shrine, he and Preotesea were offered hospitality in the Exhibition Room.

Thursday, 31st October, n.s. - **Nicolas Merritt**, one of our regular parishioners, brought three of his fellow pupils at **Winston Churchill School** to see the church. They showed a lively interest in the church and in the displays in the Exhibition Room. If more teenagers followed Nicolas' example, understanding of the Orthodox Church might be better appreciated in this country.

Friday 8th November, n.s. - **Margaret Hobbs** of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** brought a group of about eighteen people to visit Saint Edward's. During their half-hour visit, they asked many questions of Fr Nippon who showed them round.

MORTUARY ROOF FUNDING

A generous donation from America of \$1,000 has boosted our roofing fund this month. Our thanks to this donor and to all who are contributing to the fund.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

THE CHARITY COMMISSION have posted on their website, <<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk>>, the annual accounts for the **Convent of the Annunciation** (registered charity number 1120545) and for the **King Edward Orthodox Trust Company Limited** (registered charity number 284929). These are the two registered charities which administer the holdings of the communities loyal to the Synod in Resistance in the United Kingdom.



PRACTICAL TIP

FOR FAMILIES with small children getting over the “Western Christmas” can be a trial, but perhaps we can take a leaf out of the books of the Dutch (even though they were the last people to effect a regime change in our country!) or even the Americans. In the Low Countries, the feast of St Nicolas is kept as a special festival for children with giving of gifts, etc. And in America, the Russian Churches started the practice of having young people’s camps and conferences over St Herman’s Day - this way the young were given church-centred activities during the “Western Christmas” festivities. We can hardly invent traditions, and perhaps Saint Herman does not mean so much to Orthodox in the British Isles as he does to those in North America, but parents could make the double feast of Saint Spiridon of Tremythus and St Herman of Alaska (25th December on the civil calendar) a day of special celebration, attend the Divine Liturgy together and have a festal family meal, while keeping our fasting prescriptions. Those who have non-Orthodox relatives, could invite them to this celebration. Another and even more useful thing one can do is to help with voluntary work in the community around us to free someone who is celebrating Christmas from the necessity of working then.