



FROM THE FATHERS

“JUST as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement, so that when we depart hence, having been careful of fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber (see Luke 14:15) with the Lord, to sup with Him, and may be partakers of the joy which is in Heaven. In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days.”

“HE who neglects to observe the fast of forty days, as one who rashly and impurely treads on holy things, cannot celebrate the Paschal festival.”

SAINT ATHANASIUS THE GREAT,
OF ALEXANDRIA, + 373 A.D.

“THE HOLY CHURCH cries out: fasting is not just avoiding food, but putting away all evil, controlling the tongue from idletalking and gossip, forbearing from anger, and abstaining from lust, falsehood and flattery. Whoever fasts in this way, his fast is pleasing to God.”

VEN. ANTONY OF OPTINA, + 1865 A.D.

A WORD ON THE FAST

SAINT PHILARET OF NEW YORK, THE NEW CONFESSOR

+ 1985 A.D.

IN THE NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

YOU and I are at the very doors of the fast. Strictly speaking it should not be necessary to explain to Orthodox Christians what the fast is and why it is necessary for man, because the fast is a churchly practice, and every Orthodox person, knowing the Holy Gospels, should recall the words of the Saviour which have great significance: *If a man neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican* (Matt. 18:17), which means that through the sin of not heeding the Church he, as it were, ceases to be an Orthodox Christian.

This is clear and simple. However, nowadays life itself shows us that Orthodox Christians frequently consider that they are faithful and devoted children of the Church while yet regarding the fast in an unchurchly and un-Orthodox way, and that it is just something that the ministers of the Church have to speak about and bring to remembrance.

Before all else, beloved ones, recognise and firmly bear in mind that the fast was not established by some individual minister of the Church, even by one that was a holy God-pleaser and a righteous man. The fast was established by the whole Church; the fast is a church precept. Therefore if we fail to fulfil this precept there should be some over-riding reason for this; if there is indeed such a reason in certain circumstances, then the Church is always ready to accommodate this. For instance, if an extremely sick person needs fortifying nourishment for the strengthening

of his enfeebled organism, the Church not only permits him to modify the fast, but in certain circumstances frees him from it altogether. Sometimes it happens that someone is found to be in circumstances in which he is deprived of the opportunity of choosing food in accordance with his own discretion; in such restricted circumstances the Church frees us from the obligation of fasting.

But unfortunately, it happens that we hear people say strange things, such as this: "It's all the same to God what I eat, potatoes or ham!" Of course, the Lord has no needs regarding whether we eat one thing or another, but bear in mind, irrational man, that the fast is not something needful to God, but to you yourself.

When the Son of God was incarnate on earth, according to the witness of the holy Gospel, at the beginning of His ministry He himself fasted for forty days and forty nights. And when later the Apostles asked Him why they had been unable to cast out the evil spirit from the possessed youth, the Lord replied: *This kind goeth not out* (that is, is not expelled) *but by prayer and fasting* (Matt. 17:21). With these words the Saviour places fasting on a par with prayer as the means of overcoming evil, demonic power.

Pay careful attention to what you see in this holy church. In it there are [icons of] many choirs of saints who pleased God. And show me in their midst just one, who held such an opinion as is now, unfortunately, held by many Orthodox Christians, who assert that the fast is not important, that to God it is all the same what we eat, and that fasting is wholly unnecessary. But, mark, the saints who pleased God, whom the Church has glorified, and consequently affirms that their way is the true, righteous and perfect way, - they all fasted, and they fasted to an extent that many of us would probably not have the strength to fast.

Show me, I repeat, just one of the saints who pleased God, depicted in the holy icons, who spoke of the fast in the same way as today the "wise ones" do, who consider that their own unhealthy arguments excel the precepts of the Church. The Venerable Sera-

phim of Sarov once demonstrated the meaning of the fast exactly. A certain woman came to him, a loving mother who had a daughter whom she must needs give in marriage. Naturally the heart of the mother was anxious about the fate and happiness of her daughter, and she desired to know whether her daughter would be happy with her future life's partner. This woman came to the Elder Seraphim with these questions. When he had heard what she had to say, Saint Seraphim told her: "Before everything else, if your daughter has a chosen one, then before all else, does he keep the fasts?" - "for (the Elder immediately went on to say) **he who does not keep the fast, such an one is not a Christian.**"

Take this to heart, Christian soul. On this subject, the Venerable Seraphim is an indisputable authority. He did not ever tell anyone to take on those incredible and super-human struggles and labours which he himself took on. He never commanded anyone to do this, but he required of the Christian unfailing obedience to the Church, and he made his teaching concerning the fast in the spirit of that saying of the Saviour regarding obedience to the Church, which we have given above (i.e. Matt. 18:15-17). If someone does not keep the fast, that means he does not hearken to the Church, which has enjoined the fast, and it follows that he ceases to be a son of the Church, he ceases to be an Orthodox Christian. It is impossible to escape this cast-iron logic. Therefore with regard to fasting, once and forever bear in mind that if you wish to be a faithful son of the Orthodox Russian Church, you are bound to keep the fasts.

Sadly, in this regard people are somehow extraordinarily feeble, even unconcerned as they say. Once, as if this justified him, one of the church workers said to the renowned Russian hierarch, Philaret the Metropolitan of Moscow, who is renowned for his holiness, life and his exceptional wisdom: "Master, what to do? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Shaking his head, Metropolitan Philaret said: "No, my friend, now it is more appropriate to say the opposite: *The spirit is weak, but the flesh is strong.* And it dictates its own rules and the spirit is unable to

withstand this and involuntarily submits to it, and a man fulfils every caprice of his body, his flesh.”

Nowadays they often say: “It is difficult to fast, it isn’t always possible to lay on a fasting meal.” But in my opinion, this is not right. In the circumstances of life in Australia, where I was until recently, and here in America [and of course here in England too - *transl.*] it is simply shameful to say it. It would be better to say straight-forwardly: “We don’t want to fast!” At the very least this would be open, and not another lying excuse.

I spent the last years in China. There, there was a literal famine; there, there was appalling need; there at times there was simply nothing to eat at all. There many people were far from eating every day; nonetheless there were people who wanted to keep the fasts, - they fasted and they did not die from hunger. The Venerable Seraphim told someone: “Bread and water never harmed anyone. From fasting not one person has ever died, but from over-indulgence many die.” Simple and wise instruction.

Beloved brethren who are listening! You and I are children of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad¹, and we must bear in mind that we must distinguish ourselves from the people who are not Orthodox among whom we find ourselves. Once the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in the town of Philippi, praising them that they *shine as lights in the world* (Phil. 2:16), in the midst of that pagan darkness which surrounded them. And how clear would the beauty and power of our Orthodox Church be, if her children were in all things and always strict in their adherence to her precepts, and especially with regarding to fasting. This always makes a great impression upon the non-Orthodox, upon the heterodox. The person who follows his own convictions and ways always deserves the respect of all.

And so, I repeat, you and I are at the eve of the fast, and I want to hope that everyone, when he hears the call of the Church, will apply himself to this fast, not like disobedient people, but rather like those who are obedient to Church teaching. And I hope that

all of us who are standing here will keep this fast, according to the measure of our strength, remembering that he who does not fast will never greet the feast of Christ's Nativity² in the way that one who keeps the church fast does. Amen.

Footnotes:

1. As First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Saint Philaret was naturally addressing his own flock, but his teaching applies to all conscientious Orthodox Christians.

2. This sermon was evidently given on the day before the Nativity Fast begins, but its message is, of course, equally, if not more, applicable to the keeping of Great Lent, which we are about to start on Monday 10th / 23rd February.



THE FREQUENCY OF HOLY COMMUNION

BY SAINT PACHOMIUS OF CHIOS

WHO WOULD NOT WEEP at the ignorance and wretched state of our contemporary clergy? Where has it ever been heard, that the Christians should go to Church, seeking to receive Holy Communion, and the priests hinder them, saying to them, "Is Communion soup? Forty days have not passed since you received Holy Communion, and you come to receive again?" In like manner, regarding the first week of the Great Lent, I know of many men and women who keep the three-day fast [an optional tradition of fasting completely from food and water], and they go to church on Wednesday for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, and the clergy do not allow them to receive Holy Communion, saying, "Just the other day you were eating meat, and today you come to receive Communion?"

“And secondly,” they say, “the Presanctified is for the priests and not for the laity.” Fie on our ignorance and lack of understanding! You, on the one hand, O ordained man, are eating meat the night before, and many times you are even drunk, and perhaps also irreverent, and you go to serve the Liturgy, and you hinder the one who has been fasting with so much reverence? And you deprive him of so much benefit and sanctification? Do you see what lack of learning our priests have? “The Presanctified,” say they, “is for the priests, and not for the lay people.” St Basil the Great says, “I commune my parishioners four times a week.” St John Chrysostom and the entire Church of Christ do likewise. They had this custom of Communion four times a week. And since the Liturgy is not served during the weekdays in Great Lent, the Holy Fathers in their wisdom devised to have the Presanctified, only so that the Christians might have the opportunity to commune during the week; and you say the Presanctified is only for the ordained? And observe, O reader, that as long as this discipline prevailed, and the Christians communed frequently, their hearts were warmed by the grace of Holy Communion, and they ran to martyrdom like sheep. Therefore, the priests who hinder the Christians from receiving the Immaculate Communion should know well that they sin greatly. I do not say that the people should commune simply and indiscriminately, but that they should approach with the fitting preparation. However, I have heard what some priests say: “I” (say they) “am a priest and I serve the Liturgy frequently, and I commune, but the layman does not have this permission.” In this matter, O priest, my brother, you are greatly mistaken. Because, in the matter of Holy Communion, the priest differs in nothing from the layman. You, O priest, are a minister of the Mystery, but this does not mean that you have the right to receive frequently, and the layman does not. In this matter I can bring you many proofs from the Saints, demonstrating that it is permitted equally to bishops and priests and lay people, both men and women, to partake of the Immaculate Mysteries continuously – unless they have been married a third time. As many as have

married three times commune three times a year. I have myriads of proofs concerning this issue, but which one should I present to you first? Chrysostom, Clement, Symeon of Thessalonica, David? As I said, which one should I mention first? In this matter, I can bring you so many proofs, I could fill a whole book! For this cause, I cut short what I am saying and tell you only this in brief. If you don't want the Christians to commune frequently, why do you hold the Holy Chalice, and display it to the Christians, and cry out from the Holy Bema, "With the fear of God, faith, and love, draw nigh, and approach the Mysteries that you may commune?" And yet again, you yourselves hinder them, and you lie openly? Why, on the one hand, do you invite them, and, on the other, do you push them away?...



Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

Explanation of the All-Night Vigil continued

§ 38. Understanding the Six Psalms. After the end of Vespers, during the Vigil we begin Mattins. Just as the Divine service of Vespers, as it progressed, represented the times of the Old Testament, so the Divine service of Mattins shows forth the time of the manifestation of the Saviour in the world. It begins during a Vigil with the Six Psalms, which in turn start with the doxology of the Angels who appeared to the shepherds at Bethlehem: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men.* The reader repeats this doxology three times, and then, to prepare

himself to be worthy to read, he twice exclaims: *O Lord, Thou shalt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.* Then follows the reading of the Six Psalms themselves.

The Six Psalms have been selected and are arranged to form a dialogue between the one who prays and Christ. In the first of them, Psalm 3, David laments the multitude of his foes and declares a strong hope in God: *But thou, O Lord, he cries out, art my helper, my glory and the lifter up of my head* (Ps. 3:3). In the second psalm, number 37, he grieves over the multitude of his sins and humbly begs the Lord for mercy, calling out at the very first verse: *O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, nor chasten me in Thy wrath.* In the third psalm, number 62, which was written in the untrodden and waterless desert of Judea, in which he had taken refuge from before the face of Saul, David sets forth the flaming striving of his soul for the house of God.

The first three psalms are separated from the last three by a triple, threefold *Alleluia*, and the short doxology, *Glory to Thee, O God.* At this point the priest comes out of the sanctuary and stands before the Royal Gates, silently reading the twelve prayers appointed at this time, which are called the Prayers of Mattins. In them, he gives thanks to God for the return of the light of day and beseeches various spiritual blessings for himself and for his flock.

In the fourth psalm, number 87, David portrays his poverty and affliction and asks the Lord to hearken unto his prayer. In the fifth psalm, number 102, he expresses thanksgiving recalling the benefactions of God, and exalts his soul to bless the Lord, while mentioning all the visible and invisible acts of God. In describing the majesty of God, David, in a lively manner, also depicts the nothingness of man before Him: *As for man, his days are as the grass; as a flower of the field, so shall he blossom forth. For when the wind is passed over it, then it shall be gone, and no longer will it know the place thereof* (verses 13 & 14). In the last psalm, number 142, David grieves for his son, Abessalom, pours forth his affliction before the Lord, expressing his hope in God, and beseeching that he

might come to know the way wherein he should go. Then again we have the threefold *Alleluia* three times and the short doxology. [During the reading of the Six Psalms, everyone who is able to do so should stand in church and not move about].

§ 39. On the Kathimas. After the Six Psalms, the Great Litany is intoned, and thereafter we have the joyous verses, *God is the Lord, and hath appeared unto us; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.* There follow the *troparia* appointed for the day. Then, according to the day, we have the reading of two or three *kathismas*, interspersed with Little Litanies. The word *kathisma* is taken from the Greek, and indicates that one may sit during the reading, listening to the teaching and spiritual instruction which is contained in the psalms. In fact, each *kathisma* is a section of the Psalter, and there are twenty in all, covering the 150 psalms. Each *kathisma* is divided into three sections, and these are separated by the thrice threefold *Alleluias* with small doxologies.

§ 40. The Polyeleos. This name derives from the Greek, suggesting “many mercies,” because it essentially consists of the chanting of Psalms 134 and 135, in which the refrain, *for His mercy endureth for ever*, is often repeated. [In present-day Russian usage, this portion is considerably shortened and only selected verses of these psalms are chanted. In the Greek usage, Psalm 44 is added to the *polyeleos* on feasts of the Mother of God. On the Sundays before Great Lent, Psalm 136 is also added]. Before the chanting of this portion of the service, the Royal Gates are opened, the candles are lit in church, and the choir starts, *Praise ye the name of the Lord, O ye servants, praise the Lord. Alleluia.* Then further: *Blessed is the Lord out of Sion, Who dwelleth in Jerusalem. Alleluia. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. Alleluia. O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. Alleluia.* During the time, when the *polyeleos* is being chanted, the priest censures the whole church, as a sign of the Church’s reverence towards God and His saints.

§ 41. The Resurrectional Troparia (The Evlogitaria of the Resurrection). After the *polyeleos*, if it be a Sunday, we chant the resurrectional *troparia*, as this day commemorates the Resurrection of the Lord from the tomb. This represents the coming of the Myrrh-bearing Women to the tomb, bearing their prepared spices, and their being greeted by the Angel who announced to them the Saviour's Resurrection. [In some churches to emphasise this, only the sanctuary is censed during the *polyeleos* itself, and the rest of the church during these *troparia* - the priest returning to the sanctuary to find the doors opened, just as the stone was rolled away and the tomb found open.] At the conclusion of these hymns all the faithful are called upon to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, one in Essence. Each of the *troparia* is prefaced by the verse: *Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.* [From this the name *Evlogitaria* derives.]

§ 42. The Magnification. [In the Russian usage], if the service is a festal one, but not a Sunday one, then the resurrectional *troparia* are not sung, but the clergy proceed to the centre of the church to be before a stand on which the icon of the particular festival is placed, and before it they chant a magnification to the Lord, His All-immaculate Mother, the Saint, or the Feast, as is appropriate to the day. To this the choir responds by chanting the magnification several times, using psalmic verses as a refrain.

§ 43. The Mattinal Antiphons. These follow the above and are often referred to as the **Hymns of Ascent**, because they derive their meaning from the degrees of ascent outlined in Psalms 119-132, the Odes of Ascent. During them we hear the characteristic verses: *From my youth do many passions war against me, but do Thou Thyself defend and save me, O my Saviour. Ye haters of Sion shall be shamed by the Lord, for, like grass, by the fire shall ye be withered. In the Holy Spirit every soul is quickened, and through cleansing is exalted and made radiant by the Triple Unity in a hidden secret manner.*

§ 44. The Reading of the Gospel, Veneration of the festal icon and anointing with oil. After the antiphons, we have [the appointed prokeimenon, an exclamation by the priest, and *Let every breath*, and the introduction of] the Holy Gospel. On Sundays the section of the Gospel read is always one of the eleven Resurrection Gospels, those sections which record the Saviour's Resurrection and His appearances as risen to His disciples. Over the period of eleven weeks, these are read one by one, and then the series is started again. [Usually this is read from the south side of the Holy Table, where the priest stands. The deacon stands opposite him on the north side, and thus they represent the Angels who were one at the head and one at the feet of where the body of the Lord had lain]. After the reading the Gospel is brought out onto the ambon and held aloft, while the reader reads or the choir chants the hymn, *Let us who have beheld the Resurrection of Christ worship the holy Lord Jesus, Who is alone without sin. We worship Thy Cross, O Christ, and we praise and glorify Thy holy Resurrection. For Thou art our God, and we know none other beside Thee, and we call upon Thy name. Come, O ye faithful, let us worship Christ's holy Resurrection, for behold, through the Cross joy hath come to the whole world. Forever blessing the Lord, we praise His Resurrection. He endured the Cross for us, and by death destroyed death.* This signifies the appearance of the Risen Christ. The Gospel Book is then placed on the stand in the centre of the church, so that we may come up and kiss it, meeting and greeting the Risen Christ.

On feast days, other than Sundays, a Gospel reading is appointed appropriate to the feast and is read either from the Royal Gates or in the centre of the church, but it is not put on the stand there, because the faithful come up to venerate the icon of the feast or saint being celebrated. When they do this they are anointed by the celebrant with the oil which was blessed earlier [at the *artoclasia*]. By doing this, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*, the priest expresses his desire that all the

faithful bear in their hearts the anointing of the love of the Lord, that they be fruitful through that spiritual anointing, that they be signed in the name of God and be freed from every evil.

.... to be continued with “*On the Canon*”



THE COMING MONTH

IN Mid-February this year we start **Great Lent**, the period of prayer and fasting which prepares us inwardly for the celebration of the **Lord’s Pascha**. It is important to remember that it is a period both of **prayer** and fasting. Many quite dedicated Orthodox Christians do try to keep to the fasting prescriptions for the seven week period, but neglect to pay more attention to their prayer-life, and continue to turn up at church only for the Sunday Liturgies and perhaps say a short rule of prayer at home when getting up and going to bed. Throughout the period the Church helps us and instructs us with a series of special lenten services (most notably the Great Canon, the Saturday and Sunday commemorations, and the Akathist services). To the extent that our circumstances permit, we should be assiduous in attending these services, or at the very least try to read them at home.

Almsgiving should not be neglected, lest our fasting becomes a self-obsessed period of self-improvement or fulfilment. Our fasting should be a purification and a cure of ills, so that we might love (both God and our neighbour); if it closes in on the self, it will be destructive.

We should also devote time to spiritual reading. Ignorance is one of the greatest foes of our Faith. How many lapsed and semi-lapsed Orthodox there are! - those who have relied on being of a certain ethnic background, nostalgic for a country they have never

known, knowing a few kindergarten-level points about the Church and enjoying some folk customs, but who have never delved deeper. Understandably, often they drift off, because they do not understand. Sometimes, it must be said, this shallow attachment does hold people, but almost invariably it seriously short-changes their children, who are lost to the Church. The fasting periods, when we should concentrate more on our spiritual lives, give us an opportunity to dispel our ignorance by spiritual reading, but opportunity has to be grasped!

The various lenten commemorations are listed in the calendar insert with this magazine, and there are many articles which explain them. In previous issues we have said something about them, and there is the excellent introduction to the English translation of *The Lenten Triodion* by the then Archimandrite Kallistos (now Metropolitan of Diokleia). Look up these things and learn, but above all try to participate in the commemorations.

One last guideline for the fast: do not neglect the sacramental life of the Church. Especially in the fasts we should have recourse to the Mysteries of Confession and Holy Communion. The Liturgies of the Church are not celebrated so that the lay people may attend and observe, but so that they may participate, that they may be lifted up unto the worship of the Church on earth, and thereby of the Church in Heaven. The Roman Catholics used to use the expression, “hear Mass.” We have no such concept in Orthodoxy. Our participation should not simply be passive, but prayerful, and at the Divine Liturgy we should, as often as we can prepare ourselves, receive the Holy Mysteries, and proclaim the Saviour’s great love for us, manifested by His death upon the Cross (see 1 Cor. 11:27). It is because of this important aspect of the fast that above we have included instruction on Holy Communion by the Venerable Pachomius of Chios.

In February we celebrate the **Great Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple** (2nd / 15th), which falls forty

days after the Nativity and through the prophecy of the Righteous Simeon the God-receiver links that former Great Feast to the coming Passion of our Saviour. Among the Saints celebrated we have:

The **New Martyr Antony of Athens** (5th / 18th) was the son of poor Christians from Athens. In order to help his parents, he entered the service of an Albanian Muslim at the age of twelve. In 1770, during the repression which followed a Greek uprising in the Peloponnese, his master sold him to some Turks, who tried in vain to convert him. He was then sold to a succession of five harsh, fanatical masters, but he remained unshaken in the Faith, and was bought at last by a Christian coppersmith in Constantinople. Having been warned one night in a dream that he would receive God's help to obtain the glory of martyrdom, he was recognized next day in the street by one of his former masters, who began shouting to the passers-by that the young Christian was his runaway slave and an apostate from Islam. Antony was dragged to the court amid much commotion. He confessed that he was willing to die a thousand deaths for the love of Christ. "You would become a Christian more easily than you could make me deny my Christ," he told the judge. Taking pity on his youth, the judge was yet unable to persuade the Saint to feign conversion in order to save his life, and under pressure from false witnesses, he reluctantly committed him to prison. Antony consoled the other Christian prisoners, gave away what little money he had to the poor, and wrote to thank his master for all his kindnesses and through him asked the forgiveness of all Christians and besought the prayers of the Church. As the vizier delayed passing sentence, the Saint's accusers made a complaint to the Sultan who, fearing a breach of the peace, ordered his immediate execution. The valiant sixteen-year-old went joyfully to the place of martyrdom. He offered his neck to the executioner, who struck him lightly three times to see if the pain would make him yield. Then, finding that he remained steadfast, he cut his throat like a slaughtered lamb, and so Antony received the crown of martyrdom, in the year 1774.

Saint Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople (25th February / 10th March) was of illustrious lineage. He was born and raised in Constantinople, where he received a fine education, and in time the saint attained the rank of senator. At that time the Church was agitated by the turmoil of the Iconoclast heresy. The holy Patriarch Paul (30th August), although he had formerly given some apparent support to Iconoclasm, later repented, resigned and withdrew to a monastery, where he took the schema. When the holy Empress Eirene and her son, the Emperor, came to him, St Paul told them that the most worthy successor to him would be St Tarasius, who then was still a layman. Tarasius refused for a long time, not considering himself worthy of such high office, but he then assented on the condition that a Council be convened to address Iconoclasm. Ordained through all the clerical ranks in a short while, St Tarasius was elevated to the patriarchal throne in A.D. 784. Three years later, the Seventh Council was convened in the city of Nicea, with St Tarasius presiding and 367 bishops attending. The veneration of holy icons was then confirmed. Those bishops who repented of their iconoclasm, were again received by the Church. St Tarasius wisely governed the Church for twenty-two years. He led a strict ascetic life, and spent all his money on God-pleasing ends, feeding and giving comfort to the aged, to the impoverished, to widows and orphans. He fearlessly denounced the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos when he slandered his spouse, the Empress Maria, the granddaughter of St Philaret the Merciful (1st / 14th December), so that he could send her to a monastery, thus freeing himself to marry again. St Tarasius refused to dissolve the marriage and fell into disgrace. Soon, however, Constantine was deposed by his mother, the Empress Eirene. St Tarasius died in the year 806. Before his death, demons examined his life from the time of his youth, and tried to get the saint to admit to sins that he had not committed. "I am innocent of that of which you accuse me," replied the Saint, "and you falsely slander me. You have no power over me at all." He was buried in a monastery he built on the Bosphorus. Many miracles took place at his tomb.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“DURING my reading I have come across the term ‘Publican’ in several quotes from Saints and also in the ‘Publican’s Prayer’. Obviously I am aware of the use of the word publican in the modern sense but is there a different meaning in the past? It could be that publicans were regarded as particularly renowned sinners as they seem to be grouped together with some interesting occupations by some of the Saints.” C.H. Farnham

THERE IS, of course, a difference between the modern English use of the word Publican and the Biblical one and that used by the Fathers (in translation). Now the word means a jolly man who draws you a pint of bitter or serves you scrumpy.

In the sense used in the Gospels, the publican was a tax collector, and so a public official, something akin to our “civil” “servants” but less euphemistic. So they were disliked intensely. Also the system of tax-collecting was somewhat different in Roman times. Sensibly they did not have such a massive bureaucracy as we have, and innumerable forms and accounts. The publicans were simply required to collect so much in a given period (cuts down paper work - why should the State be burdened with such things?). Quite how they went about that was up to them. Naturally they not only fleeced the weaker members of society, but they were not adverse to collecting much more than their quota and keeping the excess for themselves. Furthermore in the Holy Land they were Jews, and so were collaborating with a foreign occupying power, and betraying their own people. All this added to the disfavour in which they were held. I suppose the nearest equivalent in modern times would be lawyers!

This is why the conversion of Levi (Matthew) [feast day: 16th / 29th November], and the conversion of Zacchæus [feast day: 20th April / 3rd May], - that such fraudsters would convert, - were so remarkable. And why in the parable of the Publican and the

Pharisee, things were turned upside down by the Publican being humble and repentant, and the Pharisee, supposedly a paragon of religious rectitude, was shown to be unacceptable to the Lord.

The Prayer of the Publican is, of course, taken from that Parable: “Have mercy on me, a sinner.” And it forms the request in the Jesus Prayer.



News Section

ANCIENT GOSPEL TEXT FOUND

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN NEWS reported on 22nd January that a fragment of a first century copy of the Gospel of Saint Mark had been found in a mummy mask through a recently developed technique. The text, that may be the oldest copy of a Gospel known to exist, is a fragment of the Gospel of Mark that was written during the first century, before the year 90. At present, the oldest surviving copies of the Gospel texts date to the second century. OCN continues: “This first-century gospel fragment was written on a sheet of papyrus that was later reused to create a mask that was worn by a mummy. Although the mummies of Egyptian pharaohs wore masks made of gold, ordinary people had to settle for masks made out of papyrus (or linen), paint and glue. Given how expensive papyrus was, people often had to reuse sheets that already had writing on them. In recent years scientists have developed a technique that allows the glue of mummy masks to be undone without harming the ink on the paper. The text on the sheets can then be read. ... When the glue was dissolved, the researchers dated the first-century gospel in part by analysing the other documents found in the same mask.”

NEWS from the communities in England of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece

WINTER FESTIVALS

TO HELP US with our lack of priests, **His Grace Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** kindly arranged to visit England for the Orthodox celebration of Christmas, our Saviour's Nativity. He arrived in the country at Gatwick in the afternoon of 6th January (n.s.) and made his own way by public transport to Willesden, to the Convent of the Annunciation, where, with **Mother Vikentia and her sisterhood**, he served the Vigil Service that evening and the Festal Divine Liturgy the following morning.

At St Edward's, the Vigil was celebrated with the Brotherhood clergy, and for the Divine Liturgy **Father Borislav Popov** concelebrated with us. **Fr Stephen Fretwell**, due to his heart condition, felt unable to serve, but he helped us immensely by hearing confessions and then prayed in the sanctuary during the service, receiving the Holy Mysteries with us.

The Mayor of Woking, **Cllr Tony Branagan** and the Mayoress, his wife **Mary**, attended the Christmas Day Liturgy. They were met at the church door just before the service began, and later joined us for the **Parish Breakfast** in the Lord Pirbright Hall, at which **Anna Rotherham** and **Babushka** sang some Russian folk songs for us.

The next week Cllr Branagan put a short notice about his visit to our church in the **Mayor's Diary** column of the **Woking News and Mail**, noting: "The service was different to what we normally attend, with breakfast afterwards at Lord Pirbright's Hall. People had been fasting since midnight and now past mid-day, the refreshments were eaten with great gusto"! He also sent

us a letter later in the week, expressing his appreciation of the visit. We have posted this on the church noticeboard.

We were unable to celebrate the Liturgy on the Synaxis of the Mother of God, as we had to take the Holy Mysteries to Zinaida Baggallay; as it turned out the last time she partook of them. However, in the evening, Bishop Ambrose arrived, being met at Brookwood station, and he stayed with us overnight.

On the third day of the feast, the celebration of the **Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen**, His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St Edward's, assisted by Fathers Alexis and Borislav and Hierodeacon Sabbas. **Father Augustine** of the ROAC parish in Guildford also attended the service. Because the Bishop had to catch his plane and we therefore had the Liturgy early, for a great part of it we had a congregation of one, **Elena Golitsyn**, but still managed to serve according to the hierarchal typicon. By the end of the service, we had been joined by quite a congregation, mostly of Orthodox Romanians, who stayed with us for breakfast, kindly provided by **Vasileos Calcanteras**. After the breakfast, Father Augustine volunteered to take His Grace to the airport, so that he could have a talk in private with him. At the Liturgy, the Bishop had preached a sermon in which he exhorted us to delve deeper into the services, and not simply to be satisfied by their familiarity without seeking understanding. He also told us of a **New Martyr Markos**, a convert from Islam, who had been baptized by one of the Bishops of our Synod, and when he refused to renounce his faith in Christ had been beheaded by Islamist extremists for his "apostasy."

On the **eve of the Great feast of the Theophany**, Sunday, 5th/18th January, **Hieromonk Iustin** from Romania served the Divine Liturgy at Brookwood, along with our Fr Borislav and Fr Sabbas. On the following day, Fr Iustin served at the Convent.

On the feast day itself, after the Divine Liturgy, as has become our custom, we travelled to Chertsey to bless the waters at the **Abbey River** there. We were kindly offered hospitality by

Robin and Mary Haigh, who allow us to celebrate the blessing from their riverside patio. Several of the townsfolk attended and many of them brought their dogs to be sprinkled with the blessed river waters. Afterwards, in the medieval barn on their land, the Haighs and their helpers treated us to tea, coffee and foods to break our fast. The ***Surrey Advertiser*** had a photographer on the scene, and on 23rd January published seven photos of the ceremony with a short account of its significance. We are, as always, indebted to the Haighs for their kindness and hospitality; they are not members of our Church but always welcome us to their home, which stands on the site of the seventh century monastery, for the blessing. ***May God's blessings always be theirs.***

FIVE FUNERALS

THIS MONTH we have had five funerals:-

Marina Schwartz von Megyesi, who lived at Shepperton and fell asleep at her home, was laid to rest in our cemetery on Tuesday 31st December / 13th January, after the funeral in our church, served by the Brotherhood clergy. Marina had been a parishioner of the old **Russian Orthodox Church in Emperor's Gate**, but in her last years had been pastorally cared for by our Brotherhood. After the interment, in the Old Mortuary building her husband, **Tom**, and family provided a Mercy Meal in her memory which was professionally catered for by ***Baker's Dozen*** in Brookwood village. Enough was left afterwards to feed the Brotherhood for several days.

David Nicholson was laid to rest in our cemetery on Monday 13th / 26th January. The service was chanted at the graveside by **Archpriest Maxim Nikolsky of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens, London.**

Artur Artemi Marutin was also buried here by Fr Maxim, although on this occasion, Wednesday 15th / 28th January, the

funeral itself was held at the **Russian Cathedral in London** and only the interment took place at Brookwood. Artemi was of Armenian background. He converted to Holy Orthodoxy, taking the name Artemi, on his marriage to **Anna Krivsovna**, and died of cancer aged only nineteen. Many parishioners came to his interment from the Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens and held a Mercy Meal here after his burial.

Zinaida Baggally was, like Marina, one of the former parishioners at the Old Russian Cathedral at Emperor's Gate, who was latterly cared for by our clergy. She was laid to rest with her husband, **Charles**, and next to her mother, **Barbara Freshville**, in Gunnersbury Cemetery on Wednesday 15th / 28th January. The funeral itself was held in the Cemetery Chapel at Gunnersbury and was served by the Brotherhood clergy.

Irina Taratuchin, a third member of the Emperor's Gate "old guard," died at her home in Leyton on 10th January, n.s. By God's providence, our clergy were with her just hours before her repose. Her son, **Protopriest Michael Taratuchin** travelled from the United States to chant her funeral service in strict accordance with the Russian usage. Irina was laid to rest at Brookwood, with her late husband, **Michael**, Ataman of the Cossacks in this country, on Thursday, 16th / 29th January. The family brought a Mercy Meal with them, which was shared in the Old Mortuary after her interment.

May our Saviour grant rest with the saints and **Memory Eternal** to His servants Marina, David, Artemi, Zinaida and Irina.

... & A BAPTISM

MATEI STEFAN, the new born son (born 5th January, n.s.) of **Adrian and Ana-Maria Stefan of Chingford** was baptized at Saint Edward's Church on the Saturday, 18th / 31st January, the feast of Sts Athanasius and Cyril, the Archbishops of Alexandria.

His sponsor was **Elena Bicleanu**, and he is named after the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew. As they live some way away, the first-day prayers and naming prayers were read for mother and baby immediately before the Mysterion of Holy Baptism.

PRAYERS FOR THE NEW-BORN

ON THE FEAST of **Saint Seraphim of Sarov**, 2nd / 15th January, twin sons were born to **André and Tatiana Henderson-Stewart** at Saint Mary's Hospital, Paddington. The Brotherhood clergy attended that evening to read the first-day prayers for mother and babies. The following Thursday, they went to the family home in London, NW 10, to read the eighth-day prayers, to name the twins, and to bless the house with the Theophany waters. The boys were named **Nicolas**, after the **Tsar Martyr Nicolas II of Russia** (feast: 4th / 17th July), and **Alexander** after the Right-believing Prince Alexander Nevsky (feast: 30th August / 10th Sept.).

A CORRECTION

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** sent us the following email message on 15th January: "In the latest WOLF,* which I have just received, on page 18, there is to be found the following notice: 'The website of the Australia-New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Church Abroad posted the following article: The Bulgarian Orthodox Old Calendar Church under the omophorion of His Eminence Bishop Photios of Triaditza, has officially entered into full ecclesiastical communion with the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece. This unity was originally effected with the then existing Synod in Resistance, the Romanian Orthodox Old Calendar Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and has never been broken by any disagreement of dogmatic or ecclesiological character, however certain questions delayed the present statement.....' There follows the statement is-

sued by Bishop Fotii on 8/21 December 2014. Unfortunately, this is jumping the gun, as, despite this statement rather too hastily issued by the Bulgarian side, the ‘certain questions’ are still delaying any official act of communion, though indeed we do have ‘no disagreement of dogmatic or ecclesiological character.’ I have no idea where the website to which you refer ... got this news, but it is unfortunately incorrect. We are working in this direction, and pray for a good outcome, but all is not yet settled.” We apologize to our readers for this error, having copied the item in good faith. As soon as we heard from the Bishop, we informed those people we could by email, but include the Bishop’s explanation here for those of you whom we cannot contact in that way.

* *“The Wolf”* is our in-house name for this magazine. It was a welcome accolade given it many years ago, in the first years of our publication, by the late **Archimandrite Barnabas** (Burton) of New Mills, Wales. A subscriber, **Miriam Lambouras**, made a sketch of “The Wolf” which we have framed and keep on the window sill above the desk on which the magazine is typed.

VISITORS

CAMBERLEY STUDY WALKS visited the church on Tuesday 27th January (n.s.), led by **Bill Andrew**. The group of about twenty people, who were enjoying a cemetery walk, stayed in St Edward’s for about twenty minutes and were give a short explanation of the church.

PRACTICAL TIP

GREAT LENT starts relatively early this year, in February. Often the thought of it can depress people; some even dread its approach. This is, of course, a trick of the enemy of our salvation. It stems also from our wrong attitude to the fast. It is not punitive or an oppressive rule imposed upon us. It is a prescription to aid our cure, a tool given us to help effect the work of our salvation. Taken in this light, the discipline of the fast, which is extremely important for us, no longer seems onerous or harsh. It is a blessing and help. Take it that way.