



FROM THE FATHERS

“MANY of us feel remorse for our sins, yet we gladly accept their causes.”

VEN. MARK THE ASCETIC, FIFTH CENTURY

“THE MOON as it waxes and wanes illustrates the condition of man: sometimes he does what is right, sometimes he sins and then through repentance returns to a holy life. The intellect of one who sins is not destroyed (as some of you think), just as the physical size of the moon does not diminish, but only its light. Through repentance a man regains his true splendour, just as the moon after the period of waning clothes itself once more in its full light.”

VEN. JOHN OF CARPATHOS, DATES UNKNOWN

“A CHARACTERISTIC of those who are still progressing in blessed mourning is temperance and silence of the lips; of those who have made some progress - freedom from anger and patient endurance of injuries; and of the perfect - humility, thirst for dishonours, voluntary craving for involuntary afflictions, non-condemnation of sinners, compassion beyond one's strength. The

first are acceptable, the second laudable; but blessed are those who hunger for hardship and thirst for dishonour, for they shall be filled with the food whereof there can be no satiety.”

VEN. JOHN OF THE LADDER, + 649 A.D.

“WHEN the Lord drew near and stood by us, He immediately renewed our mind and raised it by His advent in the flesh. He did not, however, come to us in the beginning, but later, in the last times. The evangelist does not omit even this, saying, *The day after Jesus went* (Luke 7:11) - to raise the dead son of the widow and to transform her mourning into joy. I beseech you, brethren, to pay heed to what is being said. For if each one of you is aware of the dead man within him and laments over his sins, mourning and grieving over them in repentance, the Comforter will approach him too, bestowing eternal life and consolation.”

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS, + 1359 A.D.

“AS FIRE purifies gold, so the sorrow of longing for God purifies the sinful heart.’

VEN. SERAPHIM OF SAROV, + 1833 A.D.

“YOU NEED not be despondent. Let those be despondent who do not believe in God. For them sorrow is burdensome, of course, because besides earthly enjoyment they have nothing. But believers must not be despondent, for through sorrows they receive the right of sonship, without which it is impossible to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

VEN. BARSANUPIUS OF OPTINA, +1913 A.D.

Blessed Spiritual Sorrow

THE following question is often heard from our brothers in Christ:

“How is it possible, being in the world with so many distractions from people, work, children, disturbances, and temptations, to pray with contrition, to weep over our sins, and to find peace of soul?”

Truly, the world, our environment, has not only changed (and continuously changes) in relation to the past, but it has become alienated [from God]—it has literally become desanctified.

The godless functioning of the framework of society, every form of pollution and destruction of the ecological realm, the speed, the noise, the growth of the concrete jungle around us, eudaemonism, over-abundance, and the withdrawing of our neighbour into self-sufficiency and egocentricity all cause suffocation and put deadly pressure on the soul of the believer who wishes to live a life in Christ.

After an exhausting day, the believer tries to gather his mind at the hour of prayer, but in vain does he labour. All day long, the “world” has entered in through his senses and dominated his heart.

Over the course of the day, the enemy has been imperturbably sowing in the field of the soul and now hastens to reap—what else?—slothfulness, coldness, vain and sinful distractions, fanta-

sies, yawning, and a sense of being overwhelmed. And the poor soul remains dry, has no rôle, is not changed, does not overflow with the Grace and blessing of God.

What do our much experienced and perpetual spiritual instructors and teachers, the Holy Fathers, advise us?

“If he who lives among men cuts off his own will and does not pay attention to the sins of others, he will acquire spiritual sorrow.”

Blessed and godly spiritual sorrow is the resurrection of the soul. Whoever has tasted, albeit once, of the wondrous sweetness of spiritual sorrow in Christ and its transformational properties comprehends these God-inspired patristic words.

Living in an alienated world, let us force ourselves to cut off our will (in the narrow and the broad sense) and not to pay attention to the sins and weaknesses of others.

We should submit ourselves to the will of God, which reveals itself in our daily lives in various ways, and deny our own will, our own thoughts and likings, in order to maintain equanimity, peacefulness, love, and unity with our Lord and our neighbour.

Let us never judge or denigrate our brother. May our tender compassion cover our neighbour. Let us be forbearing and ready to say a prayer for him and a good word.

This spiritual training—that is, the continuous denial of our own selves and our own desires for the benefit of our neighbour and the avoidance of preoccupation with the faults of others—, when joined with and supported by the *Jesus Prayer*, surely will lead us to turn decisively to ourselves: to blessed introspection, to an awareness of our wretchedness, to self-knowledge, to self-reproach, and to blessed spiritual sorrow.

Then our thoughts will begin to be gathered and our heart will begin to revive and bear fruit. Then we will feel like Adam,

who mourned outside of Paradise for the loss of godly blessedness. Then godly sorrow will come, along with the blessed tears of joyful sorrow.

And these tears will increase humility, and humility will multiply the tears. Then the mind will be restored to health, will be illumined, and will ceaselessly remain lovingly attached to God. And it will fear to withdraw any longer from the Life-Giver, since it will know that the *“mind distanced from God becomes either bestial or demonic.”*

“Brother, embrace spiritual sorrow with your whole heart; it is a part of the good inner work. Force yourself to cut off your will on all occasions; this is reckoned for man as a sacrifice. And that is the meaning of the verse: ‘For Thy sake we are slain all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’”

***Ever-Memorable Metropolitan Cyprian I
of Oropos & Fili, + 2013 A.D.***

*Source: *Agios Kiprianos*, No. 224 (May-June 1988), pp. 285-287.



Q. “THE LORD said: ‘Blessed are they that weep’ (Matt. 5:4); but according to the word of the Apostle we should always be joyful (1 Thess. 5:15) and accessible for all (Rom. 12:10). Tell me what work is accounted to a man as weeping, and what work is accounted as being always joyful? And is it possible to remain in both of these, weeping and joyfulness, together?

A. “Weeping is sorrow according to God, to which repentance gives birth. And the signs of repentance are: fasting, psalmody, prayer, instruction in the word of God. Joy is cheerfulness according to God, which is revealed in an orderly way when meeting others, both in face and word. Let the heart preserve weeping, and the face and word a befitting cheerfulness.”

VEN. ELDERS BARSANUPHIUS THE GREAT & JOHN THE PROPHET

Without Repentance, there is no Salvation

EVER-MEMORABLE ARCHBISHOP AVERKY, +1976 A.D.

DO WE ALL sufficiently understand the meaning and power of this remarkable saying, which has long since become proverbial? In our times, do we all continue to remain capable of such genuine and saving repentance, in the same way as even the most hardened sinners were capable of it? And, generally, is there within us a consciousness of our sinfulness or any desire to repent?

These and like questions are naturally bound to enter our heads, especially now, at the very onset of Great Lent, in so far as that, while living in the diaspora, we have not completely lost a feel for churchliness, and in so far as we are not yet completely alienated from our Holy Church and her salvific prescribed orders.

If we go to church, and if we pay attention to what is read and chanted during the Divine services, then we cannot but turn our attention to the following particularities of the services. The lofty festive and joyous days of the Great Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and the Theophany had only just passed, when in our churches there was given a call from the Lord Himself Who, setting out after Baptism on His public ministry, in a sermon to the people sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, naturally addressed us as well: ***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*** (Matt. 4:17).

And just two weeks afterwards (sometimes this comes even earlier, and sometimes later, depending on the date of the celebration of Pascha), we hear in our churches a request to God offered in the name of every one of us, a tender yet mournful cry from the soul: ***Open unto me the doors of repentance, O Giver of life.***

What does all this mean? And why is it that days of joy, days of festive celebration, are so quickly and so unexpectedly turned to days with a resolute call to grieving over our sins, to days of lamentation, of penitential affliction and sorrow?

Of course, all this is not accidental, because in our wondrous and incomparable Divine services everything is filled with the most profound meaning and significance, with edification for our souls. It is thus instilled in us that not to participate in the feasts much means not to give oneself over much to joy, exultation and rejoicing, even if it be on the occasion of the feasts of Christ which are truly lofty and joyous. One must make one's own the grace-filled fruits of these feasts; one must join in with one's whole soul, with all one's being and its saving, spiritual powers. Only then will our keeping of the feasts be meaningful, rational and redeeming. To keep the feasts in any other way - this means, to be just like a light-minded lover of drunkenness, who senselessly squanders and wastes the riches of the inheritance which has come down to him, instead of drawing from it what would actually be to his benefit. Regarding such fruitless celebration, already in the Old Testament the Lord has spoken through the lips of the prophet: *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hath* (Esaias 1:14).

This is exactly why the Holy Church, in giving us to taste of the banquet of faith, in giving us to delight in the solemn great events, immediately thereafter forcefully calls us to repentance, for it is only through repentance that we might make our own the saving power of the great events, which have been commemorated during the days of the feasts of Christ's Nativity and Theophany.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The Lord has already come. Through our noetic and reverential gaze we have seen how He was born of the Virgin in a poor cave; we have seen how He was baptized in the waters of Jordan that He might crush the head of the ancient serpent and wash us in the laver of re-birth, clothing us with the vesture of incorruption. All this was

done by the Lord, for the sake of us men and for the sake of our salvation. He brought close to us sinners His Heavenly Kingdom, and He granted us entry therein. What is required from our side, that we might enter therein? **Repentance.**

Repent, the Lord calls to us, which means **change.** Become something other than what you have been until now, fundamentally change your way of life for the better, and not only your outward way of life, your behaviour, but all your inward disposition, your thoughts, your feelings, your tastes, your aspirations - **be renewed spiritually!** Everyone who crosses the borders into some earthly kingdom or state is obliged to abide by the laws of that country, otherwise he would not be granted permission to reside there. If the laws of that state are contrary to his customs and habits, then he has himself to adapt and force himself to lay aside those customs and habits, and it is exactly the same with everyone who desires to enter the Kingdom of Heaven: he must forcefully divorce himself from everything that is contrary to the laws of that Heavenly Kingdom, he must root out of himself his former sinful habits and usages and voluntarily submit himself to all the demands of the law of God.

It is precisely in this that repentance consists, and without it there is no salvation. **Repentance is the renewal of Baptism,** says the great preacher of repentance and of the ascetic life, John of the Ladder. **Repentance is a contract with God for a new life. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the former sins. Repentance is purification of the conscience** (Step 5:1). **Repentance is a second rebirth from God,** says another great exponent of repentance, the venerable Isaac the Syrian. From these words we see that one who has repented is like one who has been born anew, he has become as it were something other, a new man, unable to carry on with his former sinful life and resolved to adopt a life of virtue, in every way in accord with the law of God.

Alas! Many people in our times not only make themselves incapable of such repentance, but they are even far estranged from any right understanding of repentance. Almost the majority of contemporary Christians sincerely think that to repent means to go to confession before the priest, recount to him your sins, and hear the prayer of absolution, and then afterwards to leave the church and again continue your previous shameless and heedless sinful life, almost without even a twinge of conscience and without any self-correction. And some do not even recount their sins, but simply hear the priest and consider themselves to be alright having received from him the absolution of their sins, sins of which they have not repented. There are even numbers of obstinate, unreasonable people among us, who to every call to full repentance such as requires correction of life, persistently reiterate one thing: “No, leave off! I cannot change myself. As I was born, so will I die!” And some in justifying their stony lack of feeling (which is what the holy Church calls such a destructive condition) even dare to express blasphemous abuse against God Himself. “This is how God made me,” they say, audaciously laying the blame for their sinfulness on God, and manifesting thereby their complete ignorance, their alienation from even the most elementary understanding of the truths of their Faith, which so clearly instruct us concerning ancestral sin, concerning the inheritance of the corruption of sin, and concerning our redemption from the oppressive powers of sin through the suffering on the Cross of the incarnate Son of God.

But, may it be that such a complete rebirth for a man immersed in the sinful life is actually impossible? Indeed! ***With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible*** (Mark 10:27). And we know that the power of the grace of God, drawn by sincere tears of repentance, has worked great and wondrous miracles unto the complete inner rebirth of the souls of people which seemed hopelessly begrimed by the deepest forces of sin. How many striking examples of such renewal through repentance do we find in the lives of the saints,

which inform us of the fact that many greatly sinful men and sinful women became great righteous men and women like the angels.

And to draw to oneself that all-powerful grace of God, which grants re-birth, depends wholly upon us; it only requires that one desire it. But it is in this very thing that the misfortune of contemporary man consists, that he does not have that desire, does not wish to repent, does not feel his need of the grace of God which would grant him rebirth. **He is content with himself and does not see that he has any need to repent.** And even if he comes to confession to a priest, then that is just because of habit, just from established tradition. He comes and has nothing to say, and waits until the priest reads over him the absolution of sins. He does not apprehend how harmful the situation he is in is for him, even when, with the most exaggerated degree of condescension, he does acknowledge some sins. “I am sinful with all the usual sins of mankind,” many say when they come to confession, considering that thus the very “usualness” of their sins gives them full justification to be excused. Their absolution is a light thing, without any struggle, without any need of forcing their will upon themselves, which would commit them to a radical change of their whole life and of their inner disposition. And we are not yet even talking of the fact that a greater and greater number of people in our times are starting to consider that confession is superfluous for them, and therefore never participate in it.

Is it not because of this that there is more and more confirmed in the people a stony lack of feeling? Such is the natural consequence of the ever-strengthening grip of a satanic pride upon the souls of people, to heal which, by His Divine humility, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the Cross, came upon earth. In the process of the “falling away” which is allowed by God (2 Thess. 2:3), contemporary man, guided in the world by the agents and forerunners of the Antichrist who is coming, will depart further and further from the true teaching of the Church, will forget his Creator and Provider God and, relying

upon his own “cultural achievements,” will begin to consider himself to be like a god, making every sacrifice for himself, for his own fancies, his own sinful desires, for his own wanton passions. Besides this, in order to render God’s glory to the image of God which he himself bears, to all his strengths and abilities, which made him a king over creation, a lord over what was created by God and over nature wisely made by Him, the man who has departed from the Church puffs himself up with all this, taking the path of diabolical delusion, by which the Morning Star (Satan) who had fallen in love with his own perfections also fell, and they break the commandments of God, tempted, as were our forefathers in Paradise, by the serpent.

Egoism, self-opinion, self-love, self-admiration, contentedness with one’s self, self-praise, self-direction, and sometimes even shamelessness, are manifest in all their passions and vices which emerge from a deeply fundamental demonic pride in their hearts - all these characterize the governing disposition of contemporary mankind, who is animated by the process of the “falling away” itself. “Why must I repent and change myself, when I am just as good, and in many instances, better than many others?” Thus many contemporary false Christians, even if they do not express it aloud, think, displaying in this a pharisaical disposition of soul, one which is decisively denounced by the Holy Church before the approach of Great Lent, when She calls us to “humble ourselves with the sighings of the publican.” The position of the Christian pastor, when many of his flock now dispute his natural right to “reprove, rebuke and exhort” (2 Tim. 4:2) is now endlessly difficult. They bear malice against him and are indignant with regard to him, when he, carrying out his pastoral duties, points out to them their sins, their breaking of God’s commandments and the precepts of the Church. And many make so bold as to require of the pastor praise and to be extolled for the lawless things they have committed. Woe to that pastor, who submits his God-granted standing to such examples of man-pleasing, ruining his flock thereby and himself as well! (see Esaias 5:20, Ezekiel 33:7-9).

Now pay heed: Great Lent is upon us again, the time purposely set aside by the Church for repentance, for the cleansing of our souls from the sinful defilements which have nestled in our souls, for the correction of our lives, for grace-filled re-birth. Let us use this “acceptable time;” let us reflect upon the disgusting power of foul sin which inevitably draws us to perdition; let us come to know ourselves as prodigal sons; let us hasten to God’s churches, for it is good that they are still open and the Divine services are still freely served therein; let us do so with profound attention to the instruction and teachings of the Church, which call us to repentance and to offer sincere contrition for all our sins before the spiritual father appointed by God, and with a firm resolve not to repeat those sins.

And so, brethren! Let us remember that **neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor usurers, nor drunkards, nor those who speak evil, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God** (1 Cor. 6:9-10). For all those who persist in these and in similar sins there awaits an inescapable, dreadful, eternal perdition, for **without repentance there is no salvation.**

Translated from the Russian, published by the Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville in 1975.



“A SMALL SORROW mixed with joy, tears, and consolation in the soul is from the grace of God. Throughout our life, it guides us towards repentance whenever we err. A sin drives away boldness towards God, but repentance brings it back at once. Grace does not bring despair, but it continually brings to repentance a person who has fallen. On the other hand, the words of the demons bring despair at once; they light on him like hail falling upon the delicate little leaves that have just sprouted.”

ELDER JOSEPH THE HESYCHAST OF ATHOS, + 1959 A.D.

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 expanded on Fr Alexander's original text
to make things clearer for contemporary readers.*

The Priesthood

§ 100. In Apostolic times, as we observe from the Book of Acts, they ordained deacons, presbyters and bishops through prayer and the laying-on of hands. The very same thing is done even now.

The ordination to the diaconate and that to the priesthood are celebrated with identical rites, the only differences being the prayer which is read and the time during the Liturgy when the ordination is performed. A deacon is ordained after the consecration of the Holy Gifts, as an indication that he might only serve at the Mysterion but is unable to celebrate it. A priest is ordained immediately after the Great Entrance because he participates in the oblation of the Bloodless Sacrifice.

The ordinand is brought by two deacons from the centre of the church through the Royal Gates to the hierarch, who sits on the left side of the front of the Holy Table. He bows down before the bishop and receives his blessing, and then is taken three times around the Holy Table, kissing each corner thereof, and after each circuit kissing the hand and the omophorion or the epigonation of the bishop. This circuit, which signifies spiritual celebration, declares the ordinand's readiness to serve the Lord unceasingly, and his kissing the Holy Table and the hands and vestments of the Bishop shows his burning love for God and his firm intention to be obedient to his archpastor. During the first circuit, the chanters sing, *O holy Martyrs, who fought the good fight and have received your crowns, entreat ye the Lord that our souls may be*

saved. The holy martyrs are called upon in prayer before the Lord that they might act with the ordinand and that like them he will struggle in the sphere of his ministry selflessly and with unwavering firmness. During the second circuit, they chant: *Glory to Thee, O Christ God, praise of the Apostles, joy of the Martyrs, whose preaching is the Trinity one in essence.* This signifies that the ordinand is to be united with the choirs of God's elect, the Apostles and the Martyrs, and is obliged to serve God by word and deed, following their example. And at the third circuit, they chant: *Rejoice, O Esaias! A Virgin is with child and shall bear a Son, Emmanuel, both God and man; and Dayspring is His name, Whom magnifying, we call the Virgin blessed.* This is to call the ordinand always to bear in mind and in his heart the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His life and teaching, and to account that the main foundation of his ministry.

After processing around the Holy Table three times, the person being ordained deacon kneels before it on one knee, and one being ordained a priest would do so on both knees, as a sign that he is undertaking a more onerous ministry. They kneel to indicate that they surrender themselves to the Lord. They place their hands upon the edge of the Table, one over the other in the form of a cross, and rest their foreheads upon their hands, awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit. The bishop then rises from his seat and covers the head of the ordinand with the end of his omophorion, and thrice signs the candidate with the sign of the Cross. Then laying his hand upon the head he says in the hearing of all: *Grace divine, which always healeth that which is infirm, and completeth that which is lacking, elevateth, through the laying on of hands, N., the most devout subdeacon to be deacon (or deacon to be priest): Wherefore let us pray for him, that the grace of the All-holy Spirit may come upon him.* The chanters respond with the *Kyrie eleison* in Greek, chanted slowly. Meanwhile the bishop blesses the head of the ordinand three times and silently prays calling down the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon him, be-

seeking for him the gifts that he will require in the ministry to which he is being raised.

The protodeacon softly intones a litany while the Bishop reads a second prayer. At the end of this prayer, the Bishop concludes both the litany and the prayers with the exclamation, *For Thou art our God, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.* At the end of the prayers, the bishop blesses the ordinand to wear the vestments of his order, crying out as he gives him each one, *Axios* (Worthy). The other clergy respond by repeating this three times, indicating their assent to the ordination, and then the chanters also repeat it thrice. The newly ordained man then kisses the bishop on the shoulder and takes his place among his fellow ministers for the rest of the Liturgy.

When a deacon is ordained he is also given one of the liturgical fans, with which he fans the consecrated Gifts, thus indicating that he is taking up his ministry of service at the altar. When a priest is ordained, after the consecration of the Gifts, the Lamb is placed in his hand by the Bishop, who instructs him: *Receive this pledge, and keep it whole and unharmed until thy last breath, for concerning it thou shalt be demanded at the second and dread coming of our great Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ.* This is to impress upon the priest that he must go about his ministry with due reverence, always remembering that at the last a strict account will be required of him before the righteous Judgement.

... to be continued

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“IN THE STATE I find you, says the Lord, shall I judge you (Ezek. 21:30), either in repentance and compunction, or in negligence and merriment. Indeed there is no other consolation at the time of death than repentance and confession.”

VEN. JOSEPH OF VOLOKOLAMSK, + 1515 A. D.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“THIS IS a question for ‘The Shepherd’. Why do we make koliva and have pannikhidas? How should we pray for the dead?” - M.L., Missouri, U.S.A.

THIS question although a rather broad one, which I will not be able to deal with adequately, arrived at a rather apposite time, because during the Lenten Triodion period of the Church Year, we have four Soul Sabbaths: the day before Judgment Sunday and the three Saturdays during Lent which are otherwise free.

Primarily we pray for the departed out of love. They are our brothers in Christ, and so we pray for them as we do for those who are still in this world. Further, like us they face the Judgment of our Saviour on the Last Day and so we pray, as we do for ourselves several times during the services of each day, that there they, like us, might then have a good defence. And again we know from the teachings of the Church that after dying, their souls live on although the body dissolves, and that they face trials immediately after their repose, and then are assigned to a place which is appropriate to them to await the Judgment. We pray that there they may be delivered from suffering and oppression and may find rest with the Saints. And, remembering those who have gone before us brings to mind the fact that we are going to die.

In addition to the Soul Sabbaths mentioned above and the one the day before Pentecost, on most Saturdays throughout the year we particularly remember the departed. On Saturdays, the Seventeenth Kathisma of the Psalter (Ps. 118) is read at Matins, and this is also read at funerals. It is the Sabbath, the day of rest for Israel of old, and the day when we pray for the rest of the faithful departed. It is the day before Sunday, which is the day of Resurrection, and in our prayers we hope for them a good resurrection.

For each individual, it is customary to pray for them especially on the third, ninth and fortieth day after they die. On the third, because our Saviour rose from the dead on the third day, and so again we look for a good resurrection. On the ninth because we hope they will be numbered with the nine ranks of the Angels. And on the fortieth because on the fortieth day our Saviour ascended into Heaven, and our hope is that they will be with Him there.

The main service for individual Orthodox Christians who have died is the *pannikhida*. This may be served on the days we have already mentioned or on other particularly significant days for the person concerned, the anniversary of their death, etc. The word *pannikhida* literally denotes an “all-night” service, but the service now customarily served is far shorter than this. Undoubtedly a more important prayer for departed loved ones, if they are Orthodox, is commemoration during the Divine Liturgy.

Koliva, boiled wheat sweetened with honey, is often decorated with fruit and nuts, and is simply an offering made, a sign of our love for the departed - because we have taken time and effort to prepare this dish. The wheat represents the corn of wheat mentioned by our Saviour (Jn 12:24) which falls into the ground and dies, and the honey represents the sweetness of Paradise. Sadly nowadays often people commission *kolivas* from professional makers, which rather destroys its significance as an offering of our time, effort and love. The *koliva* is blessed with a special prayer and eaten in respectful memory of the departed.

It might be appropriate here to make a few remarks about current tendencies in church practice. One notices that converts to Orthodoxy often pay scant respect to the commemorations of the departed, perhaps because they have no close Orthodox relatives or friends who have died. But this is mistaken and wrong. All Orthodox Christians are our brothers in Christ and we are called upon to love them, and furthermore there will come a time when we will die, and then perhaps to our sorrow others will show a similar scant regard for us. Among those who grew up in Orthodox cultures and families, one often sees the opposite extreme. People who rarely darken the doors of a church, will turn up draped in black and bring enormous *kolivas* for the commemoration of a grandmother who died years ago. It is good that they remember the old lady and that they come, but it needs to be done in context. The commemoration of the dead is part and parcel of a complete and full church life, not an extraordinary celebration. There is little point in living our lives for our own enjoyment, pleasure and gain, without a thought of repentance, correction or living a Christ-pleasing life, and then expect to benefit some dead relative by a ritual or customary usage. The rituals and usages of our Church only have heart if they are an expression of our faith, a faith lived out day by day in our lives.

I remember when I was first ordained serving a Liturgy on a Soul Sabbath in a Russian church. The congregation was moderately large, and they were all awaiting the *pannikhida* at the end with lists of names to be commemorated therein. But at the Liturgy only one person received the Holy Mysteries. At the end I was bold enough to say that there seemed little point in their hoping their departed relatives would eternally participate in the love of God, when they had almost to a man, refused it. Fortunately in those almost long-forgotten days people had softer hearts, and the next day many of them had prepared themselves with prayer, fasting and confession and approached to receive the holy Mysteries and to participate in that love.

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NEWS from the Richmond Diocese of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece

A DELUGE OF BISHOPS!

IN JANUARY, we had **five Bishops** visit Saint Edward Brotherhood. Firstly, **Bishop Ambrose** came to England for the Orthodox celebration of the Nativity, serving the Vigil for the feast and the Liturgy at the Convent. After the festive meal which **Mother Vikentia** and her sisters arrange on that day, **Roxana Amarie** kindly brought the Bishop to Saint Edward's, where he arrived just before Vespers. On the second day of the feast, the Synaxis of the All-holy Mother of God, **Fr Borislav Popov** served Matins assisted by **Hierodeacon Sabbas**. Bishop Ambrose and the other two priests (**Archimandrite Daniel**, who though not feeling 100% had come from Germany for the feast, and Fr Alexis) joined them to celebrate the **Liturgy of St James the Brother of God**, it also being the Synaxis of the Kinsmen of the Lord on that day. During the service, His Grace explained the significance of this Liturgy which is only celebrated twice a year. On St Stephen's Day, the Brotherhood monastic clergy celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and Bishop Ambrose

assisted with the chanting and reading in the choir. After the breakfast, he left for London, planning to return to Greece on the Wednesday.

HIS EMINENCE, **Metropolitan Demetrius of America** visited us on Monday, 3rd / 16th January. Members of the brotherhood met him and **Hierodeacon Joachim**, who had accompanied him, at Gatwick and brought them to Brookwood. Our visitors were taken to the church and shown round the brotherhood. They joined us for breakfast and then had a rest period, before we set off for London, where they visited the sisters at the Convent. The Convent had of course been founded by St John of Shanghai and the Metropolitan's monastery in New York State is dedicated to the saint. Our guests returned to Brookwood and stayed overnight with us, before being returned to Gatwick to continue their journey to Greece, where they were to participate in the Theophany celebrations. While here, His Eminence kindly presented our church with portions of the sacred relics of the **Venerable New Martyr Raphael the Archimandrite of Lesbos, the Venerable Patapius of Thebes, and Saint Nifon of Novgorod**. For our part we gave his monastery portions of the vestments of Saint John of Shanghai.

On Sunday 9th / 22nd January, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** and **Archimandrite Nifon** from Romania celebrated the Divine Liturgy with our clergy. They were accompanied on this occasion by the **Monk Meftodie**, who assisted in the choir. The service was an exceptionally uplifting one, and although our parishioners seem only to express themselves to complain about things, that day two of them, a Russian and a Bulgarian, wrote to express the joy they felt at the service.

The following day, three Bishops arrived here! Their Eminences, **Metropolitan Gerontius of Piraeus** and **Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Attica** accompanied **Bishop Ambrose** to England from Greece. **Protopresbyter Michael Konstantinides** was also with them. They were squeezed into our car at Heathrow and taken straight to Winchester by Fr Sabbas. There they had lunch, and Bishop Ambrose, himself an Old Wykehamist, showed them around the Cathedral and Winchester College. In the evening they arrived at Saint Edward's, joined us for supper and stayed overnight, leaving at six in the morning to return to Heathrow, where they were to join up with the party from Romania, and fly to Nairobi to visit our Church's missions and monastic communities there.

AND A GENTLE SHOWER OF ARCHIMANDRITES!

ON THE SUNDAY of Zacchaeus, 16th / 19th January, **Archimandrites Veniamin and Meftodie of Galati in Romania** arrived during the chanting of Matins, and concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with our **Fr Borislav Popov**. So that the whole service did not go into Romanian, Fr Borislav intoned the Litanies.

FOUR BAPTISMS AT BROOKWOOD

DURING his Christmas visit, after the Divine Liturgy of St James on the Sunday after the Nativity and a quick lunch, His Grace Bishop Ambrose celebrated the Baptism of **Edward**, the infant son of **Ciprian and Mariana Barzu** from Plumstead. **Roxana Ioana Amarie** is Edward's godmother.

And after Bishop Sofronie's celebration of the Divine Liturgy here on the Sunday after the Theophany, Archimandrite Nifon celebrated the Baptisms of **Rebecca**, the daughter of **Dumitru and Adriana Ciobanu of Waltham Forest**, and of **Marina**, the daughter of **Vasile and Andreea Ignat of Luton**. The godparents of Rebecca are **Constantin and Elena Ungurianu**, and the godmother of Marina is **Lucia Ignat**.

On Zacchaeus Sunday, after the Liturgy, Archimandrite Meftodie baptised **Ilaria**, the infant daughter of **Daniel and Andreea Migra** of Foots Cray. The godparents are **Constantin and Nina Toma**. On these occasions the friends and relatives offered light refreshments to those who attended.

Please keep the newly illumined **Edward, Rebecca, Marina** and **Ilaria** in your prayers that they may remain steadfast in the Faith and win the prize of their high calling, and pray that the godparents and parents may conscientiously guide their charges and bring them up well instructed in Orthodox teachings and in the practices of our Church.

CHRISTMAS & THEOPHANY

OUR CHRISTMAS celebration was enhanced by having three priests concelebrating and the visit of Bishop Ambrose on the second day of the feast. After the Divine Liturgy we held our Parish breakfast at the **Lord Pirbright Hall**, and during the meal groups of parishioners, Greeks, Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, and English sang carols and folk songs from their home countries.

Theophany this year was sadly rather more low-key. After serving the services for the eve at the Convent, Fr Alexis fell ill, and so for the Vigil we only had a reader's service. On the day of the feast also we could not have a Liturgy, but read the Hours and Typica, and Father did manage to bless the waters in the church. We then made our way to **Abbey Bridge Farm in Chertsey**, where **Robin and Mary Haigh** offered us their customary warm hospitality. There we simply chanted the festal hymns at the riverside, and read the Epistle and Gospel, and then poured blessed water into the river. As usual townspeople had gathered with their dogs, whom they wanted sprinkled with the blessed waters, and this was done, before we made our way to the old Medieval Barn and enjoyed the welcome refreshments that Robin and Mary had provided. God bless them for their kindness.

A FOUNDER & BENEFACTOR REPOSES

WE HEARD from New York on Saturday, 28th January of the repose the previous day of the **Monk Joseph**, who was perhaps more widely known as **Brother Isaac** (Lambertsen). For many years he had lived at the old Synodal Residence of the Russian Church Abroad in NYC, and served there as a chanter and reader. He is perhaps best known in the wider Orthodox world for translating many of the service books from Slavonic and as the composer of numerous services to the Saints, particularly the Saints of the pre-schism West, and it was undoubtedly for this reason that when he was tonsured a few weeks ago, as his end approached, he was named after St Joseph the Hymnographer, having formerly been named for the Venerable Isaac the Syrian. He visited England on numerous occasions, making pilgrimages to holy places, and was a tremendous help to our community, especially in its

early years and during the long-protracted dispute in the Courts regarding the Sacred Relics of St Edward the Martyr. For this reason we have always considered him one of our principal benefactors and founders. Please remember Father Joseph in your prayers that he be granted rest with the Saints and *Memory Eternal*.

A MONASTIC VOCATION

IT IS with great joy that we can announce that one of our parishioners, **Boryana Gagova**, has left us to take up the monastic life at the **Holy Angels Convent, Afidnai, in Greece**. We ask prayers for her that she may remain steadfast, resist temptations and begin to make progress in the monastic life. Pray also that others may follow her example, so that our Church may be strengthened.

NEW ICON PAINTED

A NEW ICON has been painted for our church. It depicts our **Venerable Father Sabbas the Sanctified of Palestine** and was donated by one of our people. The sisters of the **Convent of St Philothei in Sweden** were asked to paint it, but passed on the commission to their mother house, the **Holy Angels Convent in Attica**. At the time of going to press the icon is being framed by **Easels of Chobham**.

MORTUARY RESTORATION

With the exception of the turret itself, the whole project, interiorly and exteriorly, is now nearing completion. We thank you for the support of your prayers during the period of disruption while the work has been in progress, and for the financial support that you have given the **King Edward Orthodox Trust Co Ltd**, which has made the work possible. To date we have spent **£245,407.64** on the whole project. When we started we had estimated that the cost would be in the region of £105,000 (!), but found more and more structural matters which needed

attention. Miraculously we still have some funds in hand, because our people have supported us so generously through the past nine months. Naturally any further contributions will be received with thanks, and you may give to this work by using the “**Donate**” button on our website. Go to the site: <www.saintedwardbrotherhood.org> Click on the *About Saint Edward Brotherhood and the schedule of services* page, and you will find the donate button about halfway down.

N.B. This button **only** functions to benefit the charity which administers our church, cemetery and property (KEOTCoLtd). Please do **not** use it to give donations to the monastic brotherhood itself or to the charitable causes we support. We are planning to provide a second “donate” button for this completely separate account in time.

APPEAL FOR BULGARIAN FAMILY

LATE in the evening of 25th January, we sent an appeal round on our email lists. It read: “One of our parishioners, **Evelin Dimova**, has asked for help for a family she knows who are in great need. They are from Bulgaria, like Evelin, but now live in Germany, a father, mother and four children, two of whom have cerebral palsy. The flat they have moved into has no furniture and no washing machine, and they are in desperate need of help to get established and look after their children, especially the twins with special needs.” At the time of typing up the last pages of this magazine, 31st January, we have received a total of **£3,364.73** towards this appeal, some in dollars, and some in Euros, - a truly amazing amount in such a short time, and a mercy from God. We thank Him and all of you who have contributed, and will ensure the money reaches the family in need.

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“THERE is no agreement whatever between the good of the Gospel and the good of fallen human nature. The good of our fallen nature is mixed with evil, and therefore this good has itself become evil, just as delicious and wholesome food becomes poison when mixed with poison.”

ST IGNATIUS OF THE CAUCASUS, +1867 A.D.

PRACTICAL TIP

HALFWAY through this month we shall enter the Holy and Great Lent: make some preparation for it. Ensure that the principal lenten services are noted in your diaries, and try and keep those times free so that you can attend church (or at the very least pray at home). Provide yourself with some spiritual reading materials to read during the fasting period, because without spiritual reading we become weaker and weaker. Simple food fasting and attending church is an essential baseline, but on its own will not benefit us much. However, do make sure that you have made provision to keep the fast, and ask advice if for medical reasons you are not able to keep it strictly. Avoid as many purely social contacts as possible, especially entertainments. Give some thought to spending time and effort in helping others - search out ways to do this. Perhaps dedicate some time to helping with tasks at your church: cleaning, tending the lamps, laundering, etc. Set aside time to prepare for confession and for Holy Communion. And check through your bank accounts, and make provision to give alms generously and not simply token alms.

I might share with you a rather amusing, but instructive and true story from the time when I was first Orthodox. Then in the old Russian church, there was a very elderly deacon. He and his wife invited Fr Mark (the priest, later Archimandrite David) and me to supper, and wanted to show us their new flat. One minor problem was that neither of them spoke English, and we lacked Russian. However, they proudly showed us around. We came to the bedroom. There seemed to be a double bed in the centre of the room. Diakonissa took pains to point out that in fact it was two single beds pushed together and treated as a double. "Now," she exclaimed, "Beds together! In *post* (fast) *NYET!*" And, throwing her arms wide, she showed how they pushed the beds apart, to the far sides of the room, during the fast periods. It was amusing but did also demonstrate that they took care to keep the ordinances of the Church. May they now both be finding rest for their souls. And may those of us in this generation show a similar care for our salvation.