



FROM THE FATHERS

“BE HEEDFUL, and you will genuinely see that just as soon as you place a beginning, the enemy immediately presents to you a good-seeming pretext, and you destroy what you have begun. Then again you make a beginning, and again all the sooner destroy it. And you do not remember that *he that endureth to the end will be saved*” (Mark 13:13).

VEN. BARSANUPIUS & JOHN, SIXTH CENTURY

“IF everything that exists was made by God and for God, and God is superior to the things made by Him, he who abandons what is superior and devotes himself to what is inferior shows that he values the things made by God more than God Himself.”

VEN. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, +662 A.D.

“THE foolish man loves himself and cannot love his brother or God, he can neither refrain from pleasure nor from the desires that give him satisfaction, nor can he endure pain. Sometimes he gets what he wants, and then he is filled with pleasure and elation; sometimes he does not get it and, completely dominated by the pain which this engenders, he is cast down and dejected, experiencing a foretaste of hell.”

VEN. PETER OF DAMASCUS, ELEVENTH CENTURY

“SPIRITUAL LIFE does not consist in enjoying peace and consolation but the spiritual cross: that is, gladly enduring the taking away of consolations.”

VEN. MACARIUS OF OPTINA, + 1860 A.D.



THE following sermon was preached on the Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt, which, because Pascha is late this year falls during April, but it is such an excellent instruction on the keeping of the fast that we have included in this month's issue, as a guide and help to those of you who are serious about keeping Great Lent.

A SERMON FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

BY ST. JUSTIN (POPOVIĆ) OF ĆELIJE
CONFESSOR OF ORTHODOXY

*(Translated by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna from
a Greek text of the original Serbian sermon, delivered in 1965)*

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

Behold the fifth Sunday of the Great Fast—sealing a week of great vigils and ascetic works, a week of great lamentation and sighing—the Sunday of the greatest Saint among the female Saints, that of our Holy Mother, Mary of Egypt.

She spent forty-seven years in the desert, and the Lord bestowed on her that which is only rarely given to certain Saints. For whole years, she tasted neither of bread nor water. To the question of Abba Zosima, she responded: *Man shall not live by bread alone* (Matt. 4:4). God nourished her in a special way and guided her in the eremitic life, in the desert of struggles.

And what was the result? The Saint passed from the nether world into Paradise. She conquered the devil and ascended on high to God. How? With what? With prayer and fasting, by prayer and fasting. For fasting, fasting together with prayer, is a force that conquers all. A wondrous hymn from the Great Fast says: *Let us follow, through our fasting, the Saviour of our souls, Who showed us victory over the devil.* By fasting, Christ showed to us victory over the Devil... To that end, there is no other weapon, no other means.

Fasting. Therein lies the means of victory over the devil, over every devil. Saint Mary of Egypt was an example of such victory. What a Divine power fasting is! Fasting is nothing other than the crucifixion of the body: to crucify the body, to crucify the very self.

As long as there is a Cross, victory is assured. The body of the former prostitute from Alexandria, of Mary, had been given over to the work of the devil. However, when she embraced the Cross of Christ, when she took this weapon into her hands, she conquered the devil. Fasting is the resurrection of the soul from among the dead. Fasting and prayer open the eyes of man, such that he might confront and truly know himself, to see himself. He then beholds that every sin in his soul is his grave, his sepulchre and his death. He understands that the sin within his soul does nothing else but to transform to dead remains all that is of the soul: its thoughts, its feelings, and its intentions; a succession of tombs. And then..., then there pours forth from him a wailing cry: *Before I perish utterly, save me.* That is our cry during this holy week: *Lord, before I am totally lost, save me.* It is thus that we have prayed this week to the Lord; such prayerful cries our Holy Father, Saint Andrew of Crete, has bequeathed to us in his Great Canon.

Lord, before I perish utterly, save me. This cry applies to everyone, everyone who has sins. And who does not have sins? It is impossible to gaze on yourself and not to find somewhere, in some corner of your soul, not to locate in some deep place, some perhaps

hidden sin. And... every sin for which you have not repented is your grave; it is your death. And you, in order to be saved and to resurrect yourself from your grave, must cry out with the prayerful wail of the Great Fast: *Lord, before I perish utterly, save me.*

Let us not deceive ourselves, brothers, let us not be misled. Even if one single sin should remain in your soul, and you do not repent and do not confess it, but tolerate it within yourself, that sin will lead you to the kingdom of Hell. There is no place for sin in God's Paradise. There is no room for sin in the Kingdom of Heaven. To be worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven, take care to banish from within you every sin, to uproot from within you, through repentance, every sin. For nothing survives the repentance of man. Such was the power given by the Lord to Holy Repentance.

Take heed! If repentance could save so fallen a woman as Saint Mary of Egypt once was, how could it not save other sinners, every sinner, and even the greatest sinner and wrongdoer? Yes, Holy and Great Lent is the battlefield of our fight, on which we Christians defeat the devil by fasting and prayer, defeat every sin, defeat all of the passions, and secure for ourselves immortality and eternal life. In the life of holy and true Christians, there are numberless examples demonstrating, indeed, that only with prayer and fasting can we Christians conquer the demons, all of those who beset us and wish to drag us down to the kingdom of evil, to Hell. This is Holy Fasting! It is a fasting in our holy virtues. Every holy virtue raises my soul and your soul from among the dead!

Prayer! What is prayer? It is the great virtue that resurrects you and me. Have you had occasion to rise up in prayer, calling upon the Lord to purify your soul of sins? If so, your tomb and my tomb open, and all that is dead is raised up. All that is sinful flees from one, all that draws one to evil disappears. Holy prayer resurrects each of us, when it is sincere; when it carries one's entire soul into Heaven; when you say to the Lord with fear and trembling: *Look upon my graves, numberless are my sepul-*

chres, O Lord! Within each of these graves, behold my soul, look upon my dead soul, far from Thee, O Lord! Say the word and resurrect my dead remains. For Thou, Thou O Lord, gavest us many Divine Powers to raise us up by Thy Holy Resurrection, by which we are lifted up from the grave of indolence.

Indeed, by our sin, by our passions, we die spiritually. The soul expires when it is separated from God. Sin is a force that tears the soul from God. And when we love sin, when we love sinful desires, in truth we love our own death, our sepulchres, our fetid graves, in which our souls are decomposing.

Contrarily, when we are restored, when the thunderbolt of repentance strikes our hearts, then..., then our dead members are resurrected. Then our soul conquers all of those who are killing it; it defeats that creator *par excellence* of all that is sinful, the devil, conquering by the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Thus, for us Christians there is no sin is stronger than we. Be assured that you are ever stronger than any sin that might beset you, always more powerful than any passion that might assail you. How? you ask. By virtue of repentance. And what is easier than this? You can always within you, within your soul, cry out: *Lord, before I perish utterly, save me.* The help of God will never fail you. You will resurrect yourself from the dead and you will live in this world as someone coming from that world which has been resurrected, living a new life, the life of the Resurrected Lord, wherein one has all of the Divine Powers within one, such that no sin can ever again kill you. If you should perhaps fall again, you already know, you know the weapon, you know the force by which you can be resurrected from among those dead. If fifty times a day you sin, if fifty times a day you bring shame on yourself, if you should dig fifty graves for yourself, simply cry out: *Lord, grant me repentance. Before I perish utterly, save me.*

Our Good Lord, who knows the illness and weakness of the human soul and the human will, said: *Come, brother. Even if seventy times a day you should sin, still come and say: I have sinned*

(cf. Matt. 18:21-22). This is what the Lord commanded to us ill and weak humans. Forgive sinners. For this reason, He said that there is great joy in Heaven, even if one sinner should repent on earth (see Luke 15:7). All of the heavenly world looks upon you and sees how you live on earth, brother and sister. Do you fall to sin and not repent? The moment that you begin to repent, see how the Angels in Heaven rejoice and, as your heavenly brothers and sisters, dance...

See today's great Saint, Mary of Egypt. Such a sinner! Out of her, the Lord made a holy being like unto the Cherubim. By repentance, she became an equal of the Angels, by repentance she was brought up from the Hell in which she lived and rose up all the way to the Paradise of Christ. No Christian is powerless in this world, even if he is assailed by the most horrific worldly sins and temptations. It is enough for a Christian simply not to forget his weapons: repentance, prayer, fasting; to give himself over to every ascetic work, to some virtue appointed in the Gospel, be it fasting, evangelical love, or mercifulness. Let us call to mind the great Saints of God; let us call to mind the great Saint who is celebrated today, the Holy Ascetic Mother, Mary of Egypt; and let us rest assured that the Lord will be an occasion of aid to us. Saint Mary experienced such wondrous help from the Most Holy Theotokos and was saved from her fearful Hell and from her fearful demons. The All-Holy Theotokos both now and at all times aids us in all of our evangelical virtues: in prayer and in vigils, in love, in tender mercy, in patience, and in every other virtue.

Therefore, never grow weary in your struggle and your war with your sins... In all of your difficulties and all of your falls, remember that cry of this week, which has the power to lift you up: *Lord, before I perish utterly, save me!*

Taken from the website of the Metropolis of Oropos & Fili



Our Lady the Theotokos as a Teacher of Asceticism and Noetic Prayer

Practical and Theoretical Virtue

AS IS WELL KNOWN, in the very extensive writings of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite (†14 July, 1809) there are innumerable laudatory references to the Grace-filled, most revered, and most beloved name of the All-Holy Mother of our Lord.

However, the Saint's "encomion" (encomium or laudation) to the Immaculate Maiden, as it emerges with unrivalled lyricism, rhetorical power, and theological depth in the nearly forty pages of his commentary on the *Ode of the Theotokos* [generally known as the Magnificat in English, from its first word in Latin - ed.], indisputably reveals him as one of the foremost Mariologists in the Orthodox Church.



The Ode of the Theotokos, in which Mary, the child of God (Θεόπαλις), glorifies and magnifies our Lord during her visit to Saint Elizabeth after the Annunciation by the Archangel Gabriel, is "in truth admirable, most sweet, and most beloved," and more so than all the Odes of the Saints from all the ages, because it is an **Ode** "of her who is holier than all the Saints," "the author of which was Queen of all and Mother of the Creator of all." "It is the product, composition, and exclamation of that most godlike mind, that most pure heart, and that most holy mouth, that of the Ever-Virgin Mary, and that of the very Mother of God."

This marvellous and admirable **Ode**, which is divided into six verses, has been designated by the God-bearing Fathers to be chanted towards the end of Matins, along with the most sweet refrain and most beloved Troparion, "More honourable than the

Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, thee who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, thee do we magnify.”



In this brief text, we shall cite just a few edifying passages by the great Athonite Mariologist from his commentary on the ***Ode of the Theotokos***, as a humble offering of some morsels of gratitude for, and exaltation of, the extraordinary and incomprehensible majesty of the Virgin Mother, since “the Theotokos renders blessed those who unceasingly and reverently bless her.”

So great and such is the awe of Saint Nicodemos before the spiritual gifts of the Queen of all, that he suddenly breaks into an impetuous torrent of *encomia* in her honour: “O sweetest in deed and name, Mary, what emotion is this that I feel within myself? I cannot be satiated by praises of your majesty! The more I praise it, the more I long for it, and my yearning increases without end, my desire becoming unappeasable; wherefore, again I desire to praise it!”

The Saint then goes on to enumerate all those engaged in “the logical arts and sciences,” who, each in his own manner, aspires to extol the Most Pure one: grammarians, logicians, rhetoricians, mathematicians, geometers, musicians and chanters, astronomers, moralists, opticians, engineers, physicists, metaphysicians, authorities on the Divine Scriptures, theologians...!



What makes the deepest impression is that the Theotokos, even though “she surpasses the Angels and Archangels and all the choirs of Heavenly Hosts, not comparatively, but incomparably so”; even though “she became the ornament of the whole world, and the adornment of all creation, and the beauty of the Angels and of man”; even though “she alone stands on the boundary between Creator and creation”; and even though she was “the treasurer and dispenser of the wealth of Divinity” and “steward and

guardian [and provider] of all the treasures and gifts of God, the Heavenly King”—for all that, she lived as an **ascetic!**

The toilsome **asceticism** of the Mother of God, who, after the Ascension of our Lord, struggled “in fasting, in prayer, in prostrations, and in every sort of ascetic practice,” must be associated also with the activity of **noetic prayer**, of which the Panagia is considered to be the **teacher**, because throughout her life—and, to be sure, especially during the twelve years that she spent in the Holy of Holies—, she “was occupied in and dwelt on nothing other than *theoria*, in other words, the vision of God,” “alone, beholding God alone, and alone, being beheld by God alone.”

She who is full of Grace “by herself found and practiced” “noetic activity (*praxis*) and vision (*theoria*),” through which the mind (*nous*) “rises above all creation and beholds the Glory of God,” which, thereupon, the Most Pure one “transmitted” and taught “to those who came after” this “new path to the Heavens.”



Saint Nicodemus reminds us that “the heart of man was created by God always to return to God and behold its Creator.” This “**return**” involves the following two stages:

In the **first stage**, we must become “**Jacob**” (“supplanter”), which is to say that we must become supplanters of the **passions**, of the **devil**, and of **sin**, by means of “**practical virtue**,” that is, “through fasting, vigils, prostrations, sleeping on the ground, prayer, hardships, and other bodily exertions.”

In the **second stage**, we must become “**Israel**” (“mind that beholds God”), by means of “**theoretical virtue**”; that is, “through noetic prayer practised in the heart, we must ascend to what is called the illumination of Divine Grace, which acts and exists in the heart, and, thereby, raise ourselves—or, rather, be raised—by Grace to supernatural and immediate *theoria*, or, more precisely, to the vision of God.”



Therefore, through “*praxis*” and “*theoria*,” through asceticism and prayer of the heart, with the Theotokos—who is the Mother and bestower of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit—as our constant and unfailing **guide** and **teacher**, let us struggle unremittingly for the purification and cleansing of the five senses, of the imagination, of the mind, and of the heart, for only “the pure in heart shall see God.”

Source: *Agios Kiprianos*, No. 313 (March-April 2003), pp. 214-215.



Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

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

§ 71. The Last Appearance of the Holy Gifts. At the end of the hymn, the priest, having censed the Holy Gifts, taken the chalice and made the sign of the Cross with it over the anti-mimension, quietly saying, *Blessed is our God*, finishes that sentence as he turns to the people and blesses them with the chalice, saying, *Always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.*

Then the Holy Gifts are taken from the Holy Table to the table of preparation, where They are reverently consumed by the deacon, or, if there be no deacon, by the priest after the Liturgy.

The last appearance to the people of the Gifts, described in the paragraph above, represents the Ascension of the Lord, and the words addressed aloud to the people then remind them of the Saviour's promise to abide in the Church unto the consummation of the age, (see Matt. 28:20), and the words also inspire the faithful to glorify Him constantly. The faithful, who have not received the Holy Gifts, bow down before them as the Apostles did before the Lord was taken up, and we chant: *Fill my mouth with Thy praise, O Lord, and fill my lips with joy, that I may hymn Thy glory and Thy majesty all the day long. We thank Thee, O Christ our God, that Thou hast deemed us worthy to partake of Thy Body and Blood unto remission of sins and unto life everlasting. Preserve us without condemnation, we pray, since Thou art good and the Friend of man.*

§ 72. Thanksgiving for Communion, the Distribution of the Antidoron and the End of the Liturgy. When the Holy Gifts have been transferred to the table of preparation, the deacon intones a short litany, calling those present to give thanks for Communion. The priests folds the antimension, and makes the sign of the Cross over it with the Gospel Book, as he brings that litany to a close with the exclamation, *For Thou art our hallowing, 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.*

Then, with the words, *Let us depart in peace*, he permits the congregation to leave the church, and to this the chanters respond, *In the name of the Lord*, because no one should leave the church except with the blessing of God, and to emphasis this in many churches no one does leave until the priest himself leaves, lest they seem to be hurrying away from God's presence. Then the priest, descending from the ambon, reads the "Prayer Beyond the Ambon," in which he beseeches the blessing of the Lord for those praying with him and for all the members of the Church.

At the end of this prayer, during the reading of Psalm 33, *I will bless the Lord at all times*, he distributes the antidoron to

those in church who, for a cause worthy of blessing, have not received Holy Communion. This is exactly as the name antidoron implies - it means in place of the Gifts. It consists of small portions of blessed bread, and is the divided up remains of the prosphoras which were used in the preparation. [Often in many churches, Psalm 33 is omitted, and the antidoron is given out after the final dismissal]. The practice of giving out antidoron recalls the Agape meals that were held by the first Christians, using the remains of the offerings made by the faithful. It also serves as a sign of the spiritual unity between the communicants and those who were unable to receive Holy Communion at that particular Liturgy. As the Apostle says: *We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread* (1 Cor. 10:17).

When this is finished, the priest bestows God's blessing upon the people, and ends the Liturgy with the appointed dismissal. Then the Thanksgiving Prayers for the Reception of Communion are usually read before the faithful leave the church.

... to be continued with "Short Note about the Liturgy of St Basil the Great"



“THE CHRISTIAN has great, spiritual, divine enjoyments. Fleshly delights must always be subjected to these higher delights; and when they hinder the latter they must be checked or suppressed. It is not to afflict man that food and drink are at certain times and seasons forbidden him by the Church, not to limit his freedom, as worldly people say. It is done to afford him true, lasting and eternal delights; for this reason meat or flesh food, and wine and spirits are forbidden during Lent, so that the heart of man, who is very dear to God, should cling to God alone, and not to anything perishable, to anything unworthy of Him.”

RIGHTEOUS JOHN OF CRONSTADT THE WONDERWORKER, + 1908 A.D.

THE COMING MONTH

GREAT LENT begins on 1st March according to the Church calendar, and so we begin the month with the five strictest days of the fast. Many of the faithful do not eat at all until they have received the Holy Mysteries at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on the Wednesday. However, each one should receive a blessing to undertake this especially if they are elderly, infirm or have to be involved in worldly affairs.

The course of the fast and its significance is explained beautifully by the then Archimandrite Kallistos (now **Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia**) in the introduction to the English translation of *The Lenten Triodion*. Above we have included a sermon by **St Justin of Chelije** to flesh out this instruction, and, as a crumb from our meagre table, read also the *Practical Tip* at the end of this month's magazine.

Besides the lenten observances, we have the **Great Feast of the Annunciation** (25th March / 7th April) the dedication festival of our **Convent in Willesden**. For our community at Brookwood the day of the **Martyrdom of St Edward** (18th / 31st March) is particularly important, although we keep the September festival as our principal feast, because it does not fall within the fast. The day of the Martyrdom will this year fall on a Thursday, and so it will not be celebrated with a full Liturgy, but with the **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts**.

Among the other Saints celebrated in March, we have a number of those who were from the West before the Patriarchate of Rome fell away from the true Faith: St Gregory the Great (12th), Venerable Benedict of Nursia (14th), Ven. Alexis, Man of God (17th), and the holy Martyrs Chrysanthus & Daria (19th). There are also many great ascetic Saints; the venerable fathers

Gerasimus of the Jordan, Simeon the New Theologian, and John of the Ladder among them. Among this great cloud of witnesses we have:

Our Venerable Father Paul the Simple (7th / 20th) was a peasant farmer of a guileless and simple life, and he had taken a most beautiful woman for a wife who nevertheless was of very lax morals. One day he came back from the fields unexpectedly and found her and a man sinning together. “Fine, fine,” he said. “This means that she is no longer any responsibility of mine. In Jesus’ name I acknowledge her no longer. Go, take her with you, for I am leaving to become a monk.” Thereupon he made the eight day journey to the holy Antony the Great and knocked on his door. “What do you want?” asked the Elder when he came to the door. “To become a monk,” replied Paul. “You must be at least sixty. You can’t become a monk,” said Antony. “Live in the town, work for your living, trusting in the grace of God. You would not be able to endure all the trials of the solitary life.” “Whatever you tell me to do I will do it,” Paul assured him. “I have told you,” said Antony. “You are old and cannot be a monk. Go away. Or if you do really want to be a monk, go to a cœnobium where there are many brothers to support you in your frailty. I am here all by myself, fasting for five days on end.” With these words he tried to drive Paul away. Antony shut the door and for three days did not go outside. But the old man stood his ground. On the fourth day Antony simply had to go outside, but when he did so he saw Paul still there and said, “Go away, old man. Why do you keep bothering me? You can’t stay here.” “I don’t intend to stay anywhere else except here,” said Paul. The Saint looked at him and saw that he had nothing with him to sustain life, no bread, no water or anything else, and he had now been fasting for four days. “He is so unused to fasting he might die,” thought Antony, “and I will bear the guilt.” And so he took him in. “If you can be obedient and do what I tell you,” said Antony, “you’ll be all right.” “I will do whatever you say,” Paul replied. In order to test Paul’s mettle he said

to him, "Stay here and pray, while I go in and fetch something for you to work with." He then went into his inner room and watched Paul through a hatch. For the rest of the week he stayed there without moving, even though scorched by the heat. At the end of the week Antony brought some palm branches which he had soaked in water. "Take these and weave a rope as you see me doing," he said. The old man wove until the ninth hour, completing fifteen arms-lengths with great difficulty. Antony inspected what he had done and expressed dissatisfaction with it. He said. "Undo it and do it again." It was now the seventh day that this elderly man had been fasting, but Antony was treating him severely like this to see whether he would give up and abandon the life of a monk. But he humbly took the branches and reweave them, and with great labour righted any unevenness. Antony saw that he had neither grumbled, nor been downcast, nor turned aside, nor become resentful to the slightest degree, and he began to feel pity for him. As the sun set he said, "Well shall we break some bread together?" "If you think that right, Abba," replied Paul, thus leaving the decision to Antony without becoming eager at the mention of food. "Prepare the table then," he said. And he did so. Antony put the bread on the table, four six-ounce rolls. He put one to soak for himself and three for Paul. Antony sang a psalm, and when he had repeated it twelve times he also said a prayer twelve times. This he did in order to test Paul further. But the old man prayed too, as promptly and eagerly as the great Antony himself. "Sit down," Antony said to Paul after the prayers, "but we won't eat until Vespers. Wait till the bread is well soaked." The time for Vespers came and Paul still had not eaten, when Antony said, "Get up. We'll pray and then sleep." They left the table and did so. Half way through the night Anthony woke Paul for prayers and continued with them right through to the ninth hour. But finally when Vespers came and the table had been prepared and they had sung and prayed, they sat down to eat. Antony ate one roll and did not pick up another one. The old man was eating more slowly and still had the roll which he had started. Antony waited till he had finished and

said, "Come, eat another roll." "If you have another one, I will," said Paul, "but not if you won't." "I've had sufficient for one who is a monk," said Antony. "Since I want to be a monk," said Paul, "that's enough for me too, then." And he got up and said twelve prayers and sang twelve psalms. After the prayers they slept a little for the first part of the night, then rose and sang psalms again till dawn. He then sent him out to wander in the desert for three days. This he did. When brothers came to visit he paid close attention to Antony and did whatever Antony wanted. He told him to say nothing and not to eat until they had left. At the end of the third week in which Paul had not eaten anything the brothers asked him why he kept silent, to which he replied nothing at all. "Why keep silent?" said Antony. "Speak to the brothers." So he spoke. Once when Antony was given a jar of honey he told Paul to break the jar. He did so and the honey spilled. "Now scrape up the honey with this shell," he ordered, "but don't get any dirt mixed up in it." Once he ordered him to draw water all day. When his garment got tattered, he told him to just bear with it. In the end the Saint had grasped such firm hold on obedience by the divine Grace given him, that he was able to command the demons. When the great Antony saw that he had promptly carried out everything he had asked him to do, he said, "See if you can keep on doing this day after day, brother, and stay with me." Paul replied: "I do whatever I see you doing, quite easily and without any strain, the Lord being my helper." Once Antony admitted in the name of Jesus that Paul had indeed become a monk. The great and blessed Antony had become convinced that the soul of this servant of Christ had become almost perfected in all things, even though he was somewhat simple. Thereafter Antony was moved to build a cell for him three or four miles away from his own cell, and told him, "See now, by the help of the grace of Christ you have become a monk. Now live by yourself, and even take on the demons." Within a year after Paul came to live with Antony he had become experienced in the ascetic life and was given power over the demons and over all kinds of diseases. Once a young man, vexed by one of the most

powerful and savage demons, who railed against heaven itself with curses and blasphemies, was brought to Antony. He said to those who brought him, "This is not a task for me. I have not yet been given the grace to deal with this very powerful type of demon. Paul the Simple has the gift of dealing with this one." The great Antony went to Paul, that most excellent man, taking them all with him. "Abba Paul," he said, "Cast out this demon from this person so that he may return home cured and glorify God." "Why not you?" asked Paul. Antony just said: "I have other concerns." And he left the boy there and returned to his cell. The humble Elder poured forth a strong prayer to challenge the demon and said, "Abba Antony says, 'Depart from this man'" "I will not, you disgusting, pompous old man," said the demon, with many curses and blasphemies. Paul continued "'Go out,' Abba Antony says." The demon abused both Paul and Antony with curses, saying, "You are disgusting old men, lazy and greedy, never content to mind your own business. What have you got in common with us? Why are you browbeating us?" "Either go now," said Paul, "or I will call upon the power of Christ to bring destruction upon you." Even so the unclean demon railed against the Saviour as well with curses and blasphemies. "I am not going," he shouted. Paul went outside. It was midday - when the Egyptian heat bears comparison with the furnace of Babylon. The holy old man stood up straight, like a statue, on top of a rock, and prayed, "O Jesus Christ, You Who were crucified under Pontius Pilate, take note that I will not come down from this rock, nor will I eat or drink even if I die, until you hear me and cast out this demon from this man and liberate him from the unclean spirit." And even as the simple and humble Paul was praying, before he had even finished, the demon cried out, "I'm going, I'm going, driven out by force, overcome by tyranny. I'm getting out of this man and won't come back any more. It is the simplicity and humility of Paul which has driven me out, and I don't know where to go." The moment he went out he changed into an enormous dragon, which crept off towards the Red Sea. Thus were fulfilled the words of Holy Scrip-

ture, *On whom shall I look, saith the Lord, if not on him who is gentle and humble and trembleth at my words?* (Es. 66:2). Such were the miracles of the humble Paul the Simple, and there were many others he did, even greater than these. Such too was his obedience and his resoluteness, something we can barely comprehend in our own lax and self-pleasing times.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“WOULD you have a simple explanation of the theological implications of the Filioque that a young person could understand (without all the historical controversies, etc.). X’s 17 year old grandson was asking about it, and we wanted to find as clear an explanation of why this was such a key issue in splitting the church. I understand it as having to do with it violating the integrity of the Trinity, but need a clearer statement. - L.D., Bristol.

OF COURSE, a lot depends on how theologically astute this 17 year old is.

I think the clearest condemnation of the *filioque* is in St John’s Gospel (15:26) where Christ Himself, Who is God the Son, says clearly that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, and does not add “the Son.” If God Himself taught us this about Himself, how can we modify it?

Secondly the Fathers say that it destroys the monarchy of the Father within the Godhead. And it makes the Spirit subservient to the other two Persons in the Trinity.

Thirdly, it was not in the original Creed of Nicaea, which we believe was God-inspired, and composed by Fathers illuminated by the Grace of God.

St Photios the Great gives (I believe it is in the region of) 160 reasons why the *filioque* is wrong, but I suspect that would be too much for this poor young man.



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

BISHOPS' VISITS

ON the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, 15th / 28th February, His Grace, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** celebrated the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward's Church, assisted by **Fr Borislav Popov** and Hierodeacon Sabbas. Fr Alexis was consigned to the Convent.

His Grace, **Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** will be celebrating the **Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward's Church on Forgiveness Sunday, 13th March n.s.**, during a brief visit to England. He will be returning to England on the eve of the **Annunciation** (6th April, n.s.) to preside at the Vigil for the Great Feast at the Convent in the evening, and to celebrate the feast itself the next day with **Mother Vikentia** and her sisters. The following Sunday (10th April n.s., St John of the Ladder Sunday) both **Bishop Ambrose** and **Bishop Sofronie** will be concelebrating with our clergy at Brookwood.

PRAYERS FOR THE NEW BORN

THE first day and eighth day prayers for new born babies in our Romanian Traditionalist community were read at their homes by the Brotherhood clergy on the following dates:

Wednesday, 28th January / 10th February: For **Lucas**, the newborn son of **Liviu and Larisa Croitoriu of Ruislip**, and later that day, after negotiating the North Circular, for **Octavian**, the infant son of **Marius & Dana Alexandru of Woodford** on the far side of London.

Friday, 6th / 19th February: the feast of St Photius the Great, for **Elisea**, daughter of **Mihai and Cassiana Visanu of Bumbles Green**, near Nazeing in Essex.

Tuesday, 10th / 23rd February: For **Nicolae**, son of **Gheorghe and Andreea Grigoras of Edgware**, Middlesex.

BAPTISMS AT BROOKWOOD

ELISABETA, the baby daughter of **Constantin and Nina Toma of Harrow, Middlesex**, was baptized at Saint Edward's Church on Saturday 17th / 30th January, the feast of Saint Antony the Great of Egypt. **Father Marcel Tofan** from Romania came to celebrate the Mysterion, and **Paula Rogojina** was the godmother of our new sister in the Faith, who is named after the Righteous Elizabeth, the mother of the Forerunner. The next day, the Sunday, with the blessing of **Mother Vikentia**, Fr Marcel celebrated the Divine Liturgy in Romanian at the **Convent of the Annunciation** in Willesden.

XENIA ANTONOVA, the daughter of **Antans Dijoks and Ludmila Dijokiene**, was baptized on Saturday, 31st January / 13th February, at Saint Edward's. **Archimandrite Serapion** from Cucova, Romania, happened to be in England at that time, and concelebrated at the Mysterion with the Brotherhood clergy. He had been the first priest that Xenia, a former Roman Catholic, had discussed conversion to Orthodoxy with, using mobile phones to aid translation as Fr Serapion speaks Romanian and Xenia's first language is Russian. The Mysterion was celebrated immediately after Matins and before the Divine Liturgy, so that Xenia, who is named for St Xenia the Blessed of Petersburg, could partake of the Holy Mysteries for the first time on that day. At her Baptism, **Ecaterina Rogojina** was her sponsor. After the services, a generous breakfast was provided by friends, and by Xenia and her god-

mother. The next day, again with the blessing of **Mother Vikentia**, Fr Serapion, who had earlier been visiting Old Calendarist Orthodox families in **Ireland**, served at the Convent, and later in the week he visited **Fr Gabriel Lawani** in Droylsden, Manchester, and Traditionalist Orthodox Christians in the North. Xenia returned on the next Saturday for the prayer to be read for the removal of her chism robe.

AND THREE MORE IN ONE DAY!

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Sofronie** baptized three infants at Saint Edward's Church on Saturday, 14th / 27th February: **Emanuell**, son of **Mihail Kavulych** and **Dina Caraiman** of Greenford; **Nectarie**, son of **Petru and Andreea Arcalianu** of Dagenham, Essex, and **Ghideon** (the former Lucas), son of **Liviu and Larisa Croitoriu** of Ruislip. Emanuell's godparents are **Dumitru Guleac** and **Corina Caragacean**; Nectarie's **Ioan Tamasanu** and **Daniela Tamasanu**; and Ghideon's **Teodor Vornicu** and **Mihaela Vornicu**. Pray that the five newly-illumed and their godparents ever find mercy from our Saviour and continue steadfast in the Orthodox Faith until the end.

SCHOOL VISIT

FATHERS Alexis and Sabbas spent part of the morning at the **Children's Trust School at Tadworth** on Friday, 26th February, following an invitation from **Jules Shipton**, a teacher there, who had earlier visited us to discuss the idea. The school is one of the few in the country that cares for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. All the children were wheeled into the assembly hall; none appeared to be able to speak and some could not see, but they were cared for in a way which shames our lack of care for others by a team of helpers almost on a one-to-one basis. They had dedicated the day to **Saint David of Wales**, and had decorated the hall with Welsh dragons and daffodils, and as the children were brought in, to give them some idea of who we were, they screened **Fr Anders Åkerström's** video of the consecration of St Edward's Church. After introductions, one of the staff

read a short life of St David, and then Fr Alexis spoke to the children. Then each class had brought vegetables to give the Brotherhood so that we could cook a Welsh stew, and these were shown to all the children, who were encouraged to touch them and recognise them. Then the fathers showed each of the children icons of the Mother of God and of St David, and our chalice veils. Then, for “health and safety reasons,” we had to go out into the garden, where we lit a censer, told them a little about its use and allowed each one to smell the incense. The visit ended with the fathers being asked to say a prayer and give a blessing. Besides the vegetables, we were given bunches of daffodils for the church and homemade Welsh cakes to bring home. Seeing the infirmities of the children and the dedicated care of the staff was a humbling experience. We are sure that we were benefitted much more by the visit than the children. How we all complain about the slightest infirmity or indisposition! How little we do to show love and care for others! Perhaps each week we all should reflect for a moment whether we have done anything to help those around us, outside our own immediate family circle, or whether on the contrary we have spent all our concern worrying about our image, our pleasure, our advancement, our well-being and our enjoyment.

PRISON VISIT

AFTER receiving a letter from an inmate of **H.M.P Send**, we paid a visit to the prisoner, **Andreea**, on Thursday, 18th February. We ask our readers to remember her and her family in your prayers; she is a Traditionalist Orthodox Christian.

OLD MORTUARY RENOVATION

FOR several years we have been anticipating the re-roofing of the Old Mortuary Chapel at Brookwood, which serves as our parish hall, exhibition room and guest accommodation. This project was held up because of the temporary loss of funds caused by the court case against us, but this has proved to be providential. We have since found that there are more serious structural repairs needed, and so now will be able to

undertake the two projects in one. With the help of our architect, **Irina Aldersley**, we are in the process of having this work assessed. However we will need funds so please give generously **NOW** to our **Charities Aid Foundation** building fund account, **number 89278**. You may send donations to the Brotherhood, made out to **King Edward Orthodox Trust Co Ltd**. Alternatively, you may go on to our website, <*www.saintedwardbrotherhood.org*> click on the “**About Saint Edward Brotherhood**” page and then on the “**Donate**” button there. This will go into the general KEOTCoLtd account, but still may be used for the building work. God bless you and reward you generously for all the help you give.

VISITORS

Thursday, 4th February: **Thomas Ward**, an Orthodox Christian who lives in West Yorkshire, brought a group of **five trainee railway signalmen** to see the church, and after being shown round the church and the exhibition room, they stayed for the first part of our daily Vespers service.

Monday, 8th February: **Brother John of Saint Nectarius Greek Orthodox Church in Battersea** (Thyateira Archdiocese) came with the Rev'd Rod Sanders, the Anglican chaplain of **H.M.P. Wandsworth** to visit the Brotherhood, and attended Vespers before returning to London.

Tuesday, 9th February: **Hieromonk Calinic** from Bacau in Romania, visited us, accompanied by **Vasile Dabija**, a spiritual son of his, who acted as his driver and translator. They visited the church and exhibition, and Fr Calinic, who is a clergyman of the Patriarchal Church in Romania, kindly brought us gifts from his home country.

Saturday, 20th February: **Father Timothy Pearce**, the parish priest of the **Orthodox Church of the Three Hierarchs and Saint Cybi in Lampeter, Wales** (Thyateira Archdiocese) visited us with his presbytera, **Sue**. They had been visiting their daughter at Surrey University and took the opportunity to come and see our church.

Tuesday, 23rd February: **Hieromonk Haralambie** (Romanian Patriarchate) and some of his spiritual children from Romania visited us. Although Father is on the new calendar, he was pleased to see that on the church calendar he had come on St Haralampos's day, and that we had the icon of his name saint on the central stand in our church.



PRACTICAL TIP

THE WHOLE MONTH of March this year falls within Great Lent and there is a trap which we often fall into in observing the fast, and that is to keep it only in outward conformity to the disciplines we have received. This in itself is a first step and, as such, is good - certainly better than not trying to keep the fast, - but it is only a first step. Just abstaining from certain foods, attending the services of the Great Canon, or the Laudations of the Mother of God on Friday evenings lays a necessary foundation. But we must take further steps. We must also of course pay more attention to our prayer-life, engage in spiritual reading, and the practice of the virtues, aiding this with confession and the reception of the Holy Mysteries. And again we can go further. The Gospel readings, which are appointed for the Saturday (Matt. 6:1-13), and Sunday (Matt. 6:14-21) immediately before Lent begins, map a course for us, which will prevent us from mere outward observance: almsgiving, avoidance of seeking glory, prayer, inner prayer, forgiveness of others, and seeking forgiveness for ourselves, avoiding a pretence of piety and religiosity, lack of concern for worldly enrichment or advantage, and seeking that which is heavenly. It would be good for each of us to read through those twenty-one verses at least every week during the fast, to mark again and again whether we are on course. Also, something we often forget: we must keep account of the spiritual profit or loss we are making. Our venerable father, John of the Ladder, says of psalmody - but it applies to all the practices of true piety: *When the day is over, the vendor sits down and counts his profit; but the ascetic does so when psalmody is over* (Step 20:18). Otherwise we are in grave, and profitless, danger of simply following empty forms and usages.