



*Christ is Risen!*  
*Truly, He is Risen!*



## FROM THE FATHERS

“IF ADAM DIED because of sin, it was fitting that He Who removed sin would also assume death. Even though it was said to Adam, *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Gen. 2:17), he did not die on the day he ate it, but he did receive a pledge of his death through his being stripped of his glory, expelled from Paradise and haunted daily by death. So too, in like manner, with regard to life in Christ, we eat His Body instead of the fruit of the tree, and we have His altar in place of the garden of Eden. The curse is washed away by His innocent Blood, and in the hope of the resurrection we await the life that is to come (see Rom. 8:23-25). Already we walk in a new life, for these [His Body and altar] are the pledges thereof for us.”

VEN. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN, +373 A.D.

“IS THERE SOMETHING more you want? By coming, He took up your death, by rising He gave you His life (Ps. 113:26-27). Do you want still more? He, the One Who was crucified for you, by rising on the third day, raised you above the heavens. He made you a son of God. Is there still something more you want? What will we give the Lord for all that He has given us? Before we existed He made us, gave us life, gave us a lifetime, gave us a free will, gave us worldly goods, gave us talent, gave us reason, gave us knowledge, gave all His creation that it might become yours. And we have used these things badly and have grown proud. With the recompense of sin, we have offended the Creator, Who gives us such good things freely. We were lost, He found us; we were taken captive, He helped us; we were being led to perpetual death, He freed us. How could He Who handed Himself over to death for you present you with any less? What will we give back to Him? If there is nothing that we can return to Him, let us receive from Him what we offer Him. What Christ asks from you is what he says to you: *What I have done for you, do this also for Me; I have laid down my life for you, now lay down your life for your brothers and sisters (John 15:13). Do not fear death, for, although you are not able to conquer it, I have died that you might conquer death, not through yourself but through Me. In fact, I died not for My sake, but for yours. Indeed you have known that you will die, but you have not known that you will rise again. I have shown you death, which you have known about; I have shown you resurrection, which you had not known about.*”

SAINT QUODVULTDEUS OF CARTHAGE, + C. 450 A.D.

“WHEN HE DIED on the Cross, He tore asunder the veil of the Temple and opened those secret places of the saints that had been covered up, and after the resurrection when He appeared to His disciples, he opened their understanding (Luke 24:45), so that they might understand these things and the other mysteries of the Scriptures spiritually, with their minds unveiled.”

VEN. BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

“LET us put on a splendid wedding garment, that we might become communicants of the Divine wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14). Let us become worthy of this calling, and let us partake of the fatted calf and the paschal lamb. Let us also take our fill of the new fruit of the vine, for now wheat and wine are ineffably and truly transformed into the flesh and blood of God by the *epiklesis* [the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgy], since He Who promised this does not lie (Matt. 26:26-28). Those who eat and drink with a clean conscience are purified by them sevenfold, like gold, and are cleansed of the dross of sin, for they are given life and freed from corruption. They are made to inherit incorruptibility and joined to God. They are deified and enjoy participation in God.”

VEN. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, + 754 A.D.

“LET NO ONE out of laziness or continuous worldly occupations miss these holy Sunday gatherings, which God Himself handed down to us, lest he be justly abandoned by God and suffer like Thomas, who did not come at the right time (John 20:24). If you are detained and do not attend on one occasion, make up for it the next time, bringing yourself to Christ’s Church. Otherwise you may remain uncured, suffering from unbelief in your soul because of deeds or words, and failing to approach Christ’s surgery to receive, like Thomas, holy healing. There exist not only thoughts and words of faith but also deeds and acts of faith - *Show me, it says, thy faith by thy works* (cf. Jas. 2:18) - and if someone abandons these and is completely distanced from the Church of Christ and given over wholly to worthless pursuits, his faith is dead or nonexistent, and he himself has become dead through sin.”

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS, +1359 A.D.



# Homily on the Holy Day of Pascha

ARCHBISHOP INNOCENT OF KHERSON AND ODESSA

WE have earnestly prayed throughout the forty days of Great Lent, and that which we have asked of our Lord is now granted to us by His grace: having passed through the most holy days of Christ's suffering, we are now venerating His holy and glorious Resurrection! Joyous, dear brethren, is this feast on earth; how even brighter and more triumphant must it be in heaven! O, if only we could all likewise attain that blessed day of final resurrection, partake of that unending Pascha in the kingdom of the Heavenly Father! But we will definitely attain that rapture if we look upon our entire life as a Great Lent, as a preparation for the great day of universal resurrection.

Who can now close to the Lord's faithful servants the doors of eternal life which He has opened? Who can snatch us from the hold of the Almighty? Has a great price not been paid for us? Has His entire blood not been shed for us on the Cross? Has He not given up His spirit to the Father? Now not only our Saviour's love, but His very glory demands that we be saved. Of course, we have many evil and powerful enemies, just as He had; but the forces of Hades were trampled upon and exhausted at Golgotha, and we, with the aid of grace, are left not so much with the need to combat enemies, as with the means of pursuing them, the vanquished ones, and gathering the fruits of victory.

Will the world stand up against us? It is conquered in the person of the prince of this world, and the victory that has vanquished the world – the death and atonement of our Redeemer

– has become our possession; with living faith in His Cross we are able to protect ourselves as with a shield against all the temptations of the world. Against mortal and sinful flesh and blood we now have the Divine Body and Blood with which we nourish ourselves in the Eucharist. Moreover, the Spirit of grace, sent down to us by the risen Christ, is a spirit of strength and force; if we do not extinguish it, we will be able to destroy the fortress of all lures of the flesh. Finally, will the prince of darkness himself dare to stand in our path to heaven? If so, he will stand to his perdition, for he is already wounded in the head by the Cross. He is now a dragon upon whom, in the words of the prophet Esaias, even a small child, an infant in Christ, may safely lay his hand. If he does not find anything of his own in us, just as he had nothing of his own in our Saviour, then all his fearful roaring around us will be like the voice of the animal who guards our homes.

The risen Saviour has granted us all the resources we need for a life of piety; has sent us all the necessary means for preserving ourselves from the flesh, the world, and the devil; and after that our salvation depends on us, on our faithfulness to our Saviour and His Divine teaching. We must only refrain from burying in the soil of indifference the talents of grace that were given to us, and we must work on our salvation, while He will fulfil His promise, He will instruct us in the truth through His words and His Spirit, He will vest us in strength from above, and He will send down into our hearts great solace amid all our worldly sorrows.

It is burdensome, brethren, and difficult for those who seek the heavenly city to proceed through the wilderness of this world, but the promised land teems with milk and honey! Shall we cast aside our ascent to heaven only because one must proceed there upon the ladder of the cross? And now, if in the land of exile and tribulations, it is a solace to sing the song of victory over death; how delightful will it be to celebrate the great day of renewal over there, in the new land of promise, where to the joyous cry of *Christ is risen!* the heavens and earth and all of creation will answer:

*Truly, He is risen!* Let us make haste, dear brethren, over there in spirit before we arrive in the flesh! Why sit idly on the shores of the river of Babylon and be content with solely remembering the celestial homeland? Behold! The royal doors are open, and the altar of grace is seen by all: this is an invitation to come home, this is an invitation to the feast! Let us make haste, dear brethren, let us make haste: the risen Saviour summons us! Amen. *Christ is risen!*



Since the report below was published in 2004, Metropolitan Chrysostomos has been recognized as a Saint by the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, and is now known as Saint Chrysostomos the New.

A Miracle of the Holy Great Martyr George

# The Sacred Struggle Receives Acknowledgment from Heaven

Stirring Pages from the Life of the Confessor-Hierarch,  
Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina

*THE ever-memorable Metropolitan Chrysostomos was confined at the Holy Monastery of Olympos until October of 1935,<sup>1</sup> when through the good offices of the then Governor, the late G. Kondylis, he returned to Athens.*

*However, he did not remain in Athens for long, because the godly zeal for the peace and unity of the Church that consumed his heart prompted him to undertake a journey to Jerusalem, and from there to Damascus, to meet and confer with the Primates of the Eastern Patriarchates. Hence, he departed from Athens at the beginning of December of that year, arriving in Jerusalem in*

*mid-winter. Both of the Patriarchs<sup>2</sup> welcomed the ever-memorable Hierarch, vindicating his endeavours and sacrifices and promising their support in convoking a pre-synodal conference, or a major Orthodox synod, to resolve certain outstanding ecclesiastical questions, chief among which was that of the Festal Calendar.*

*After making preparations to return to Greece, he was hindered by the Greek Consul, who, carrying out orders given to him from Athens, would not validate his passport; thus, he was detained there, remaining a “captive” for nearly five months.<sup>3</sup>*

*The Greek Consul, in accordance with his orders from Athens, fulfilled the duties of “prison guard” for Metropolitan Chrysostomos; but the Providence of God was at work to liberate the “prisoner.” Divine Providence selected as her instrument the “liberator of captives,” Saint George the Wonder-worker and Trophy-bearer. Until his last breath, the unforgettable Hierarch would recount with awe this truly astounding and moving miracle of St. George.*



“I was distressed by my captivity, because I did not have any information about the progress of our sacred struggle, and I did not know what the outcome of my arbitrary detention in Jerusalem would be.

“Under the weight of this intense brooding, I went the following day, 23<sup>rd</sup> April, to the Divine Liturgy. With sorrow and faith I begged Saint George to help me: ‘O Holy George, Great Martyr of Christ, thou who art the liberator of captives and the defender of the poor, work a miracle and deliver me from this captivity!’”

On the evening of that day, while he was in his room, and before he lay down to sleep, he heard a knocking on the door of his room.

“Come in,” said the Metropolitan. At once the door opened, and a noble young man entered and said: “You are free to leave. No one will notice you.”

“Please go and get my passport validated,” the ever-memorable Hierarch implored the young man.

The young man left promptly and, when he returned a little later, told the Metropolitan: “Everything is ready.” When the Metropolitan motioned to him to offer him a reward, the young man vanished. In astonishment, the Metropolitan asked himself what this was all about. His soul, however, was full of peace and confidence.

The following day, he went again to the church. As soon as his gaze fell upon the icon of Saint George, he remembered the vision of the previous night, because the young man in the vision was absolutely identical to the venerable figure of the Saint in the icon. He fervently chanted the *apolytikion* of the Saint: “As the liberator of captives and defender of the poor...” He then said to Saint George, as if conversing with his bosom friend: “Saint George, I am a prisoner. Now, since you have promised that no one will notice me, I am leaving. Watch over me.”

Immediately after leaving the Church, he went to the house where he had been staying and told the landlady: “I am departing for Piræus.”

“But, Your Eminence, where will you go? Your passport has not been validated.”

“Saint George will help me.”

When he reached Haifa, whence ships set sail for Piræus, he began to feel worried again, because he did not know the language and did not have anyone of his own nationality with whom he could talk. However, while walking on a hillock, he saw an unknown monk, who approached him, bowed to him, and said to him in Greek:

“Your Eminence, how may I be of service to you?”

“How may you be of service to me? I want to leave, and my passport has not been validated by the Greek Consulate.”

The monk took the passport to the ticket-counter, and al-



though it did not have the seal of the Greek Consulate, they issued him a ticket.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos passed unobserved through all of the checkpoints and embarked on a Romanian ship bound for Piræus, where he arrived under the protection of St. George.<sup>4</sup> After disembarking, he went straight to the Ministry of Religion, where the then Minister asked him in astonishment:

“How did you get here, Your Eminence?”

“On a Romanian ship,” the venerable Hierarch ingenuously replied.

The Minister’s astonishment was explained at once. The Metropolitan’s niece on his brother’s side, Melpomene Zacharia, had gone to the house of a friend, where Metropolitan Chrysanthos of Trebizond, of blessed memory,<sup>5</sup> was present.

“How is your uncle doing?” asked the Metropolitan.

“He’s fine, and he’s on his way.”

“That’s impossible! He’s supposed to stay in Jerusalem.”

“But my uncle is coming!” And she showed him the telegram that she had received a few hours before.

Metropolitan Chrysanthos crossed himself and said: “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave strict orders to the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem not to validate his passport in any way. So, how can he be coming?”

The monk who assisted the ever-memorable Metropolitan Chrysostomos was the late Hieromonk Evgenios of Jerusalem, whom the Germans executed during the Occupation because, they said, he had helped English prisoners escape to the Middle East.<sup>6</sup>

## **Notes**

1. The Confessor-Hierarch Chrysostomos (Kavourides) of Florina (1870-1955) was exiled by the innovators to the Holy Monastery of St. Dionysios in Olympos for joining the anti-innovationist flock of the Old Calendarists. He remained there for about three months, from June-October 1935.

- The “written disavowal” of the three Hierarchs Germanos of Demetrias, Chrysostomos of Florina, and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos “to the Ruling Synod” of the Church of Greece, entitled “Protest and Declaration,” was delivered on 14<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> May 1935 by a court notary. The “Decision of the Synodal Court of the First Instance Concerning the [Three] Hierarchs” was issued on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1935, imposing on them “the penalty of deposition from the Episcopal office, demotion to the rank of monk, five years of physical confinement in a monastery, and total deprivation of every Hierarchical title and rank;” and it appointed “monasteries for them to serve their sentences: for Germanos, the former Metropolitan of Demetrias, the Holy Monastery of Chozobotissa in Amorgos; for Chrysostomos, the former Metropolitan of Florina, the Holy Monastery of St. Dionysios (of Olympos) in the Metropolis of Kitros; and for Chrysostomos, the former Metropolitan of Zakynthos, the Holy Monastery of Rombos in the Metropolis of Akarnania.”

- The periodical *Ékklesia* devoted numerous pages to the affair of the three Hierarchs, in eighteen issues, through November of 1935. See also Archimandrite Theokletos (Strangas), *History of the Church of Greece From Reliable Sources (1817-1967)* (Athens: 1971), Vol. III, pp. 2035-2045 (“Hierarchs Join the Old Calendar Movement”).

- During his exile in Olympos, Metropolitan Chrysostomos finished a work consisting of eighty-seven closely-typed pages, entitled *The Church Calendar as a Criterion of Orthodoxy* (1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> July 1935).

2. At the time, the Patriarch of Jerusalem was Timothy I (Themelis), who served from 1935-1955. Born in Samos in 1878, he was an intelligent and capable Chief Hierarch, a veteran member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, an erudite clergyman, and a prolific author. On 27<sup>th</sup> August 1921, he was consecrated Archbishop of Jordan by Patriarch Damianos, assisted by Archbishops Sophronios of Gaza and Panteleimon of Neapolis, and also by the Russian Metropolitan Anastassy of Kishinev and Khotin (Bessarabia), a member of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, who succeeded Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) as First Hierarch in 1936 (he served as First Hierarch until his repose in 1965, when he, in turn, was succeeded by Metropolitan Philaret). The Patriarch of Antioch was Alexander III (Tahan). Born in Damascus in 1869, he was an energetic Patriarch, well-versed in the Greek language, and a philhellene.

3. Metropolitan Chrysostomos, finding himself detained in Jerusalem for five months, sent to the recently enthroned Patriarch Nicholas V (Evangelides) of Alexandria, who served from 1936-1939 (born in 1876 in Ioannina; ordained deacon and priest by Patriarch Photios of Alexandria; consecrated Metropolitan of Nubia in 1918, in 1927 he became Metropolitan of Hermoupolis; distinguished for his spiritual and administrative abilities, he was a noted author), a marvelous nine-page letter (10<sup>th</sup> April 1936), which demonstrates the anguished conscience of this genuine Hierarch and Pastor. One marvels, in this letter, at the beauty of its diction, the nobility of the writer, and the candour with which he confesses the Faith.

- We draw the reader’s attention to one particular paragraph of this splendid let-

ter, which adorns the golden pages of the martyric life of this Confessor and Hierarch:

“Let Your Beatitude not suppose that the expression of this reasonable doubt implies any disrespect towards your venerable person, for the writer of this letter, in spite of his being unjustly condemned by the Greek State to the ultimate ecclesiastical punishment for adhering steadfastly to the principles of Orthodoxy, and in spite of his being recently—and unfraternally—declared *persona non grata* by the former *locum tenens*, Metropolitan Theophanes of Tripoli, who forbade him to disembark from a steamship in Alexandria, has been accustomed from his youth to respect those who worthily represent the spirit and the Divine authority of the Orthodox Church.”

(For this letter of Metropolitan Chrysostomos, see *Memoranda, Letters, and Apologies in Relation to the Julian Ecclesiastical Calendar* [Athens: 1941], where the date of the letter is given as 10<sup>th</sup> April 1935. This is obviously a typographical error, since Nicholas V was elected on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1936, when Metropolitan Chrysostomos was in Jerusalem),

4. In the Life of the Holy Great Martyr George, two similarly astonishing miracles are mentioned, which involve Saint George miraculously conveying two captives to their homes: “The miraculous conveyance of the youth George to his home” and “The miraculous return of the widow’s son” (see Abbot Victor Matthaïou, *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church* [Athens: 1968], 3rd ed., Vol. IV, pp. 480-484).

5. Chrysanthos (Philippides), Metropolitan of Trebizond from 1913-1938. Born in Komotene, Thrace, in 1881; Archbishop of Athens from 1938-1941, he was a prolific author, an academic, and a prominent and active nationalist. He reposed on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1949.

6. For this great miracle of the Holy Great Martyr George, see Elias Angelopoulos & Dionysios Batistatos, *Chrysostomos Kavourides, Former Metropolitan of Florina: A Struggler for Orthodoxy and the Nation* (Athens: 1981), pp. 21-25.



“THROUGH the Resurrection the body of the Lord, which was previously susceptible to suffering, transcended suffering; the corruptible became incorruptible. The body that become through suffering and death without form or comely glory was now brightened and beautified and glorified with the same glory of the Divinity hypostatically united with Him.”

VEN. NICODEMUS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, + 1809 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.*

## Marriage

§ 102. Here Fr Alexander begins by setting out the conditions under which people may marry. Naturally he does so as they were observed in his time in Imperial Russia, and so they do not all pertain today in the West, and we shall cover them briefly in the next sentence as they apply today. In brief, the bride and groom must be male and female and must be of a legal and canonical age to marry, they must be of sound mind so that they understand the responsibilities that marriage entails, they must not be married to anyone else, they must not be closely related to each other by blood or by the bonds of god-parenthood. To this Fr Alexander adds: Besides this, entering into marriage requires that the couple do so freely and voluntarily, and, because marriage is not simply an agreement between the couple themselves they should have the blessing of their parents, guardians and spiritual fathers. Those desiring to marry should inform the priest and discuss whether they have any impediments to their intended marriage before they make any arrangements for the wedding.

The Orthodox do not celebrate weddings during the four fasts in the year (Nativity Fast, Great Lent, Apostles' Fast and Dormition Fast). Neither do they do so on the eves of the weekly fast days, Wednesday and Friday, nor days when one should be preparing to receive the Holy Mysteries, that is on Saturdays and the eves of the Great Feasts. The period between the Nativity and the Theophany, Bright or New Week, and Cheesefare Week are also

other periods when weddings are not celebrated. This is because during these fast days and days of preparation for spiritual celebrations couples are required to fast also from marital relations.

The marriage service itself falls into two parts: the betrothal and the crowning.

§ 103. **The Betrothal.** In the centre of the church is placed a stand with the Cross and Gospel Book upon it, in front of which the couple will stand, the groom on the right side and the bride on the left, during the crowning service. The betrothal rings (which have been blessed earlier), the wedding crowns and a cup of wine are usually placed on a table nearby.

As the bridal pair enter the church, the priest censes them three times, although this practice is often omitted nowadays. He signs them with the sign of the Cross, and also gives each one of them a lighted candle to hold to symbolise their purity. He then begins the service with the usual exclamation, *Blessed is our God*, and there follows a litany during which we pray that the couple may be granted children, that they be granted perfect and peaceful love, that they be preserved in concord and in steadfastness of faith, granted a blameless life, an honourable marriage and a bed undefiled.

The priest then reads a short prayer asking that they be blessed as were Isaac and Rebecca. He bestows the peace and prays that their betrothal be blessed. Then, taking the rings, the priest makes the sign of the Cross with each one of them over the heads of the bridal pair as he names them and betroths them, *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. He then places the rings on the third fingers of their right hands. Often he does this only lightly, and the bridal pair themselves swap them three times, the last time pushing them firmly on to their fingers. This is to indicate that they enter into their marriage voluntarily. The rings are placed on the right hand, so that thereafter every time they make the sign of the Cross they will see the ring and remember their responsibilities to each other and their family.

The priest ends the order of the betrothal, with a long prayer calling down blessings upon the newly betrothed couple, and recalling how in the Old Testament, and in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, so many times a ring signified the bestowal of a blessing or grace.

In ancient times, the betrothal was often celebrated long before the actual wedding, as was engagement in this country a couple of generations ago. Now, however this sacramental rite of betrothal is usually followed immediately by the Crowning, the completion of the marriage ceremony.

*... to be continued with “The Crowning.”*



## FROM THE SACRED CANONS

“FROM the holy day of the Resurrection of Christ our God until the next Lord’s day, for a whole week, in the holy churches the faithful ought to be free from labour, rejoicing in Christ with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and celebrating the feast and applying their minds to the reading of the holy Scriptures, and delighting in the Holy Mysteries, for thus shall we be exalted with Christ and be raised up together with Him.”

### CANON 66 OF THE SIXTH ŒCUMENICAL COUNCIL

The interpretation appended to this canon says: “Inasmuch as all of New [Bright] Week is reckoned as a single day devoted to the name of the Lord, therefore does the present canon decree that all Christians during this week ought to remain in the churches, rejoicing and celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, paying attention to the words of the divine Scriptures and partaking of the Divine Mysteries. For in this sort of way we shall be resurrected and exalted jointly together with Christ.”

# THE COMING MONTH

THE FIRST DAY of April this year on the Church Calendar is **Holy and Great Friday**, and so the first days of the month command the most beautiful and significant services of the whole year, the celebration of the **Passion and Resurrection of our Saviour**.

The Paschal festival continues for forty days until the Ascension, and so the greater part of the month falls within this most joyous period, wherein also each of the Sundays is dedicated to some aspect of the historical event of the Saviour's Resurrection or its significance for us, the Orthodox Christians.

Perhaps for those who have recently come to Orthodoxy one rather puzzling feast is that of **Mid-Pentecost**, which this year falls on 27<sup>th</sup> April / 10<sup>th</sup> May. The Great Feast of Pentecost itself falls fifty days after Pascha, after the forty days of the Resurrection and the ten days of Ascensiontide. So it would appear incongruous that Mid-Pentecost falls before Pentecost itself. However, the Great Feast of Pentecost is actually the culmination of the whole festal period, *the last [day], that great day of the feast* (John 7:37). Its name derives from the Greek word for fiftieth, because it falls on the fiftieth day after Pascha, but Mid-Pentecost is the midway point within those fifty days. The feast links Pascha with Pentecost, and from at least the time of St. John Chrysostom it has been celebrated by the Church. In the fifth century Anatolius of Constantinople, in the seventh the Venerable Andrew of Crete, in the eighth Saint John of Damascus, in the ninth the Venerable Theophanes the Confessor wrote church hymns for the Mid-feast. It reminds us of the approach of the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and refreshes us with its grace.

The troparion of the feast is:

*In the midst of the feast give Thou my thirsty soul to drink of the waters of piety; for Thou, O Saviour, didst cry out to all: Whosoever is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Wherefore, O Well-spring of life, Christ our God, glory be to Thee.*

The reference to water is a theme which is repeated through the fifty day period, first with reference to the “water of immortality” granted to thirsting souls by our Saviour’s Resurrection, and then increasingly with reference to the Mysterion of Holy Baptism.

In including the piece about the miracle granted to **Saint Chrysostomos the New** above, we have already indicated that in this month we celebrate the feast of the holy **Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer** (23<sup>rd</sup> April / 6<sup>th</sup> May), the patron saint of our country. As a preacher once remarked, such is the grace of this saint that even the mention of his name gives joy and assurance to the believing soul. His troparion is:

*Liberator of captives, defender of the poor, physician of the sick and champion of kings, O trophy-bearer Great Martyr George, intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved.*

Among the other saints celebrated in April we have:

Our **Venerable Father Theodore the Sykeote**, whose day (22<sup>nd</sup> April / 5<sup>th</sup> May) immediately precedes St George’s, and who all his life was devoted to the Great Martyr. He was born in the mid-sixth century in the village of Sykeon, not far from the city of Anastasiopolis in Galatia. The public highway of the imperial post ran through this village, and on the road stood an inn kept by a very beautiful girl, Maria, and her mother, Elpidia, and a sister Despoina. And these women lived in the inn and followed the profession of harlotry. Theodore was born out of wedlock, the son of Maria and one Cosmas, who had become popular in the Hippodrome performing acrobatic feats on camels. Despite his rather inauspicious parentage, when Maria conceived him she had a vision of a bright star overshadowing her womb. An Elder told her that this indicated the grace of God being poured forth on the infant. When the boy reached the age of six, Maria gave him a golden belt, because she wanted him to become a soldier. That night the Holy Great Martyr George appeared to her in a dream, and he told her not to consider military service for her son, because the boy was destined to serve God. Theodore displayed great aptitude in his studies, and was quiet, mild, and always knew how to calm his comrades. He never permitted fights or quarrels among them.



An Elder, Stephen, came to live near their house, and the young boy began to follow his example, beginning to eat only a small morsel of bread in the evening during Great Lent. When his mother tried to “correct” him, he would flee to the church of Saint George and take refuge from her corrections. At the age of ten, he fell mortally ill, and they took him to the Church of the Forerunner where he was healed miraculously. Saint George began appearing to the boy at night, and also leading him to his church to pray. His mother, fearing dangers tried to prevent this, but once when she followed him and forcibly brought him back, the Martyr appeared to her and commanded her not to hinder the child from going to his church. Theodore was also granted to see Christ enthroned, Who told him, “Struggle, Theodore, that you may obtain a perfect reward in the Kingdom of Heaven.” Thereafter he began to intensify his ascetic struggles. The evil one considered how to destroy him. He appeared to the Saint in the guise of one of his friends, and urged him to jump off a precipice, but he was saved by Saint George. The demons would also taunt him, calling him the son of a harlot, but he would boldly reply: “Yes, I am the son of a harlot, but I worship the Son of the Virgin!” On one occasion his prayer brought an end to a drought, and an Elder told him that the grace of God was upon him, and he blessed him to become a monk. So at the age of fourteen, he left home and lived near the Church of the Great Martyr George. He led an extremely ascetic life and was granted the gift of healing. However he fled human glory and withdrew into complete solitude. He dug a cave and persuaded a certain deacon to cover over the entrance with earth, leaving only a small opening for air. The deacon brought him bread and water but did not reveal his whereabouts. His relatives mourned for the Saint, thinking that he had been killed. The deacon finally revealed the secret, since he feared that the boy would perish in the cave, and they took Saint Theodore out barely alive. However he remained near the Church of Saint George refusing to return home. Word of the youth’s exploits reached the bishop Theodosius, who ordained him to the diaconate, and later to the holy priesthood, although the Saint was only seventeen years old at the time. Saint Theodore went to venerate the holy places in Jerusalem, and there at the Lavra of Hozeba in Palestine he received the monastic tonsure. On returning to his

native land, he again settled near Saint George's church. His grandmother, Maria, and a sister of his all took up the monastic life. The ascetic life of the young hieromonk attracted to him people seeking salvation, and brethren gradually gathered around him. To intensify his ascetic labour he commissioned a blacksmith to make him a narrow iron cage in which he stood in heavy chains from Holy Pascha until the Nativity of Christ. From the Baptism of the Lord until Holy Pascha he secluded himself in his cave, from which he emerged only for church services on Saturdays and Sundays. He was granted authority over wild beasts, who would come to him and take food from him. Through his prayers, many were healed, plagues were averted, and demons were cast out. When the military commander Maurice was returning to Constantinople by way of Galatia after the Persian wars, Saint Theodore predicted that he would become Emperor. This proved true and, as Emperor, Maurice (582-602) fulfilled the Saint's request and sent bread each year for a multitude of people to be fed. He also foretold of the Emperor's death and the tribulations which indeed followed, with long wars against the Persians. The Saint also built a beautiful new church to Saint George. At this time the Bishop of Anastasiopolis happened to die. The people of the city besought Metropolitan Paul of Ancyra to install Saint Theodore as their bishop. The people even dragged him out of his cell by force and carried him to the city to be consecrated. As bishop, he toiled much for the welfare of the Church, but his soul yearned for solitude and stillness. After some years he made another pilgrimage to Jerusalem and, concealing his identity, he settled at the Lavra of Saint Sabbas, where he lived in solitude from the Nativity of Christ until Pascha. However the Great Martyr George bade him return to his see. Secret enemies tried to poison the Saint, but the Mother of God miraculously delivered him. Theodore's sanctity was so evident that when he celebrated the Liturgy, the grace of the Holy Spirit appeared as a light, overshadowing the Holy Gifts. Once, when he was about to elevate the holy Lamb and proclaim "Holy things for the holy," the Lamb rose up in the air, and then itself settled again upon the diskos. In one of the cities of Galatia, a terrible event occurred: during a church procession the wooden crosses being carried began to strike each other by themselves, and, respecting his insight, the Patriarch Thomas be-

sought Saint Theodore for an explanation. The Saint gave this warning: “The trembling of the crosses foretells a multitude of misfortunes and perils for us. It forecasts fluctuations in our faith, and apostasies, invasions of many barbarian peoples, floods of blood scattered, ruin and captivity for everyone, the desolation of the holy churches, the halting of the Divine services, the fall and upsetting of the Empire, embarrassments without number and serious times for the state. In short, it announces that the coming of the enemy is nigh.” He was prophesying the impending heresy of the Iconoclasts. Grieved by this, the holy Patriarch begged the Saint to pray that he would soon die, so that he would not witness the coming woes. During Lent 613 A.D., the Emperor Heraclius asked Theodore’s blessing when fighting the Persians. The Saint blessed him and invited him to eat with him, but Heraclius refused. He was defeated in the Battle of Antioch, as the Saint had prophesied, explaining that it was because he had not accepted his invitation. Saint Theodore fell asleep in the Lord on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 613 A.D. His relics were brought to Constantinople to safeguard them from Persian incursions and for the protection to the city.



## **POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE**

*“HOW literally should an Orthodox Christian take the book of Genesis in regards to the number of days of creation? Are they seen to be literal days? Does the whole ‘big bang theory’ contradict Orthodox dogma? From what I read the days seem to be meant literally but there was at least one author that seemed to imply there was room for personal opinion in this matter.” - A.F. by email.*

YOUR QUESTION about Genesis is not an easy one to answer. A lot hinges on what you mean by literal. There are things in the whole of Scripture which are literal (“In the beginning God created...” “The battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him...” “Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar...” “John did baptise in the wilderness...” etc, etc.) There are other things which are

metaphorical: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net....” etc., and some which are simply stories which illustrate a teaching: “A sower went forth to sow....” This happens throughout the Bible and in Genesis too.

Regarding the six days of Creation, - some Fathers have suggested that they were six days as we know them. They could not all have been six days literally of course, because the sun was not created until the fourth day, and so perhaps anticipating the circle of days that would be introduced from day four on, the Lord made the other three the same length. I do not think that we can or need to know. However, whatever their duration, the six days were evidently very short. Romans 5:12 tells us that death was brought into creation through sin and so the pre-fall period must have been quite short. But what is important here is not the “science” but the fact that “death reigned from Adam..... sin hath reigned unto death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (see Romans 5:12-21).

Regarding the Big Bang theory, it is just that: a theory, and not a particularly intelligent one, it seems to me. What banged? What caused the bang? How was everything in creation able to derive from that? Usually, as you would probably know better than me, stationed as you are there in a war zone, bangs cause dreadful destruction, and do little to create. So why was this one different? Also if one accepts the Big Bang it is almost a requirement to believe that the theory (again!) of evolution is true, but except in micro-evolution (different breeds of dog, types of horse, or ornamental fish, etc.), there is very little evidence of this. There are no inter-species, and no evidence of any that I have heard of.

Of course the primary purpose of Genesis is not to give us a scientific resumé of the coming into being of the natural order of things - if it were the Prophet would have spent much more than two pages on it, - but rather to set in context our spiritual condition and the reason why we need to be saved. Hope these mutterings help.

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

## ***VISIT OF BISHOP SOFRONIE***

AT THE END of the second week of Lent, **His Grace, Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** visited England to attend to the pastoral needs of the Romanian-speaking flock here and hear their confessions. On the Saturday, he served the Mysterion of Holy Unction at the Convent, and on the Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas, 27<sup>th</sup> February / 12<sup>th</sup> March, he and **Father Deacon Nicolae Capitanu** joined our **Fr Borislav Popov** in celebrating the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward's Church. For the celebration, the church was exceptionally packed with members of the faithful.

## ***BAPTISMS AT BROOKWOOD***

After the Divine Liturgy on St Gregory Palamas Sunday, Bishop Sofronie also celebrated the Mysteria of Holy Baptism and Chrismation and imparted the Holy Mysteries to two new members of our Church. Those baptized were **Victoria**, the infant daughter of **Vasile and Elena Balan** of Hendon, and **Anastasia**, the daughter of **Mihai and Adriana Catrina** of Edgware. Victoria's Godparents are **Nicolae and Iulia Ursache**, and she is named after the holy Martyr Victor. Anastasia's Godmother is **Iustina Dumitreasa**, and she is named after the holy Great Martyr Anastasia. God grant the Godparents patience, strength and understanding in the ministry they have undertaken, and grant that Victoria and Anastasia will remain faithful communicants of the Church until their end.

## ***VISIT OF METROPOLITAN HILARION***

ON FRIDAY, 4<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> March, **His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of New York** (Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia - Moscow Patriarchate), visited Saint Edward Brotherhood. He was accompanied by three clergymen of their diocese in the United Kingdom, **Archpriest Peter Baulk**, **Archpriest Vitaly Serapinas** and **Archpriest John Diulaj** and the layman, **Victor Ovchynnykov**. The full itinerary of the Metropolitan's visit to Britain, published on their diocesan website, reported that after celebrating the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on that day His Eminence would stay in London. However, instead he came to venerate the sacred relics of St Edward and visit us. Over the years, he has visited Brookwood on several occasions both as a priest and as a hierarch, and has known our Fr Alexis since the late nineteen-sixties. The visiting party were first taken to the church and then offered refreshments in the main hall of the mortuary. Afterwards they visited the candle factory and before leaving went round the cemetery attached to our community, where the Metropolitan very attentively read the names on the memorial crosses.

## ***NEW VESTMENTS & HANGINGS***

AN ELDERLY LADY, **Ariadna (Dina) Rogers**, to whom for many years we used to take Holy Communion and who lived near Hastings, died in May 2013. Her funeral was chanted in Saint Edward's Church and she was laid to rest in Brompton Cemetery. Part of her estate was left to a close friend, **Muriel Eldridge**. This lady, given her own advanced age, decided to disclaim her legacy, and on the advice of Ariadna's closest relative, **Matushka Katherine Lickwar**, wife of **Fr Vasily**, the rector of the **Dormition of the Virgin Mary Church, Cumberland, Rhode Island**, that part of the legacy was made over to our Brotherhood. At the request of Matushka and of Miss Eldridge, we spent the funds on

augmenting our library and in buying something for the Shrine Church. We commissioned an icon of St Ariadne, in memory of Mrs Rogers, and we ordered a set of coverings in lenten purple for the Holy Table, prothesis and icon stands, with a veil for the Royal Gates and vestments for the clergy and servers. After the now obligatory tussle with customs officials, we took delivery of the beautiful vestments and hangings, which were sewed by the sisters of the **Convent of St Elizabeth, Etna, California**, on 9<sup>th</sup> March, and they already adorn our church. Our thanks to Matushka Katherine Lickwar and Miss Eldridge for making this possible. May they ever find mercy, and may our benefactress, Ariadne, find rest with the Saints and *Memory Eternal*.

### ***MORTUARY RESTORATION***

WORK on the Mortuary has been at a standstill for the last six weeks. Marshels have had difficulties in obtaining ridge tiles to complete their work, and the stove people appear to be unable to obtain a necessary part. However, on a more optimistic note, the team working on the restoration of the now gutted turret are taking professional advice, have been helped by **Andrew Plumridge**, a trustee of the **Surrey Churches Preservation Trust**, and are getting set to put that final piece in order. Please keep praying for the progress of this work and that funds continue to come in.

### ***AN UNUSUAL BUT USEFUL GIFT***

FRIENDS of parishioner **Costas Lambrianides, Tony and Karen Townsend of Coulsdon**, who kindly brought Costas to the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Forty Holy Martyrs, have given us a wheeled chair-cum-walking frame, which is helpful if people with disabilities need support when in church.

## ***VISITORS***

*Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> March:* A group of the **Friends of the Imperial War Museum**, led by **Sue Morris**, visited us.

*Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> March:* A group of about twenty five **P & G Associates**, who were being taken on a walking tour of the cemetery in the pouring rain by **Margaret Hobbs** and **Kim Lowe** of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society**, visited the church, staying for about half-an-hour.

On the same day, just as we ended the Presanctified Liturgy, **Anne Roberts**, a former Mayor of Woking, and **Julie Burnett**, who had been her mayoral consort, visited us and, after visiting the church, stayed with us and our parishioners for our breakfast.



## ***PRACTICAL TIP***

WE FAST for seven weeks before the celebration of Pascha. It is a rather strenuous period because it not only entails fasting from certain foods, but longer services and prayers, prostrations, abstinence from marital relations, spiritual sobriety and the more dedicated practice of the virtues. Then, do not throw it away immediately! After Pascha, our church disciplines are more relaxed, but this does not mean that we should immediately give ourselves over again to all the passions, to gluttony, drunkenness, laxity of church observance and carelessness about the spiritual life. If we live in such a way we shall spend our lives continually climbing up and tumbling down, and who knows when the end will come: when we are up or when we are down? Rather, use each fast, throughout the year, and throughout your whole life, as another step on a ladder, so that by continuing soberly and carefully after the end of the fast, you will meet the next fast stronger, and make another ascent. Of course, few of us will achieve anything like this, for various reasons good and bad, but we can and should all make an effort and try to work towards it.