



## FROM THE FATHERS

“AS THE LAW leads them [*the Israelites leaving Egypt with Moses*] along the royal highway, they deviate from it in no way at all. It is easy for a traveller to turn aside. Suppose two precipices form a high narrow pass; from its middle the person crossing it veers at his peril in either direction (for the chasm on either side swallows the person who turns aside). In the same way the Law requires the person who keeps in step with it not to leave the way which is, as the Lord says, narrow and hard, to the left or to the right. This teaching lays down that virtue is discerned in the mean. Accordingly, all evil naturally operates in a deficiency of or an excess of virtue. In the case of courage, cowardice is the lack of virtue and rashness is its excess. What is pure in each of these is seen to lie between these corresponding evils and is virtue.”

SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, + 395 A.D.

“IN SPRING, the gardener first of all clears the ground of all unwanted weeds, and then plants vegetables in clean soil. Soon the weeds come back again, and continue to do so throughout almost the entire Summer, and the gardener must carefully weed and clear away all the unwanted plants several times until his crop of vegetables is strong enough to survive. Our body is created from the same earth, and no matter how much a man tries to cleanse himself of the passions, the passion appear again, just like weeds. Let us turn again to the garden which, if

poorly attended, will suffer damage from goats and swine. Also, birds can fly through fencing. The gardener must be vigilant against all of these enemies and guard his crop. The Christian must guard his spiritual crop from the mental birds, which are sometimes transformed into other beasts. Our Forefather Adam was told: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return unto the ground; for of it wast thou taken*" (Gen. 3:19).

VEN. AMBROSE OF OPTINA, + 1891 A.D.



# HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

**By St. Justin of Chelije, Serbia, + 1979 A.D.**

THE BIBLE is in a sense a biography of God in this world. In it the Indescribable One has in a sense described Himself.

The Holy Scriptures of the New Testament are a biography of the incarnate God in this world. In them it is related how God, in order to reveal Himself to men, sent God the Logos, Who took on flesh and became man—and as man told men everything that God is, everything that God wants from this world and the people in it.

God the Logos revealed God's plan for the world and God's love for the world. God the Word spoke to men about God with the help of words insofar as human words can contain the uncontainable God.

All that is necessary for this world and the people in it—the Lord has stated in the Bible. In it He has given the answers to all questions. There is no question which can torment the human soul, and not find its answer, either directly or indirectly in the Bible.

Men cannot devise more questions than there are answers in the Bible. If you fail to find the answer to any of your questions in the Bible, it means that you have either posed a senseless question or did not know how to read the Bible and did not finish reading the answer in it.

### ***What the Bible Contains***

In the Bible God has made known:

what the world is; where it came from; why it exists; what it is heading for; how it will end;

what man is; where he comes from; where he is going; what he is made of; what his purpose is; how he will end;

what animals and plants are; what their purpose is; what they are used for;

what good is; where it comes from; what it leads to; what its purpose is; how it is attained;

what evil is; where it comes from; how it came to exist; why it exists—how it will come to an end;

what the righteous are and what sinners are; how a sinner becomes righteous and how an arrogant righteous man becomes a sinner; how a man serves God and how he serves Satan; the whole path from good to evil, from God to Satan;

everything—from the beginning to the end; man's entire path from the body to God, from his conception in the womb to his resurrection from the dead;

what the history of the world is, the history of heaven and earth, the history of mankind; what their path, purpose, and end are.

### ***The Beauty of the Bible***

In the Bible God has said absolutely everything that was necessary to be said to men. The biography of every man—everyone without exception—is found in the Bible.

In it each of us can find himself portrayed and thoroughly described in detail; all those virtues and vices which you have and can have and cannot have.

You will find the paths on which your own soul and everyone else's journey from sin to sinlessness, and the entire path from man to God and from man to Satan. You will find the means to free yourself from sin.

In short, you will find the complete history of sin and sinfulness, and the complete history of righteousness and the righteous.

If you are mournful, you will find consolation in the Bible; if you are sad, you will find joy; if you are angry—tranquility; if you are lustful—contenance; if you are foolish—wisdom; if you are bad—goodness; if you are a criminal—mercy and righteousness; if you hate your fellow man—love.

In it you will find a remedy for all your vices and weak points, and nourishment for all your virtues and accomplishments.

If you are good, the Bible will teach you how to become better and best; if you are kind, it will teach you angelic tenderness; if you are intelligent, it will teach you wisdom.

If you appreciate the beauty and music of literary style, there is nothing more beautiful or more moving than what is contained in Job, Isaiah, Solomon, David, John the Theologian and the Apostle Paul. Here music—the angelic music of the eternal truth of God—is clothed in human words.

The more one reads and studies the Bible, the more he finds reasons to study it as often and as frequently as he can. According to St. John Chrysostom, it is like an aromatic root, which produces more and more aroma the more it is rubbed.

### *Prayerful Preparation*

Just as important as knowing why we should read the Bible is knowing how we should read the Bible.

The best guides for this are the holy Fathers, headed by St. John Chrysostom who, in a manner of speaking, has written a fifth Gospel.

The holy Fathers recommend serious preparation before reading and studying the Bible; but of what does this preparation consist?

First of all in prayer. Pray to the Lord to illumine your mind—so that you may understand the words of the Bible—and to fill your heart with His grace—so that you may feel the truth and life of those words.

Be aware that these are God’s words, which He is speaking and saying to you personally. Prayer, together with the other virtues found in the Gospel, is the best preparation a person can have for understanding the Bible.

### *How We Should Read the Bible*

Prayerfully and reverently, for in each word there is another drop of eternal truth, and all the words together make up the boundless ocean of the Eternal Truth.

The Bible is not a book, but life; because its words are spiritual life (John 6:63). Therefore its words can be comprehended if we study them with the spirit of its spirit, and with the life of its life.

It is a book that must be read with life—by putting it into practice. One should first live it, and then understand it.

Here the words of the Saviour apply: Whoever, is willing to do it—will understand that this teaching is from God (John 7:17). Do it, so that you may understand it. This is the fundamental rule of Orthodox exegesis.

At first one usually reads the Bible quickly, and then more and more slowly, until finally he will begin to read not even word by word, because in each word he is discovering an everlasting truth and an ineffable mystery.

Every day read at least one chapter from the Old and the New Testament; but side by side with this put a virtue from each into practice. Practice it until it becomes a habit for you.

Let us say, for instance, that the first virtue is forgiveness of insults. Let this be your daily obligation. And along with it pray to the Lord: “O gentle Lord, grant me love towards those who insult me!”

And when you have made this virtue into a habit, each of the

other virtues after it will be easier for you, and so on until the final one.

The main thing is to read the Bible as much as possible. What the mind does not understand, the heart will feel; and if neither the mind understands nor the heart feels, read it over again, because by reading it you are sowing God's words in your soul.

And there they will not perish, but will gradually and imperceptibly pass into the nature of your soul; and there will happen to you what the Saviour said about the man who casts seed on the ground, and sleeps by night and rises by day, and the seed sprouts and grows, while the man does not know it (Mark 4:26-27).

The main thing is: sow, and it is God who causes and allows what is sown to grow (I Cor. 3:6). But do not rush success, lest you become like a man who sows today, but tomorrow already wants to reap.

### *Seed in Our Souls*

By reading the Bible you are adding yeast to the dough of your soul and body, which gradually expands and fills the soul until it has thoroughly permeated it and makes it rise with the truth and righteousness of the Gospel.

In every instance, the Saviour's parable about the sower and the seed can be applied to every one of us. The Seed of Divine Truth is given to us in the Bible.

By reading it, we sow that seed in our own soul. It fails on the rocky and thorny ground of our soul, but a little also falls on the good soil of our heart—and bears fruit.

And when you catch sight of the fruit and taste it, the sweetness and joy will spur you to clear and plough the rocky and thorny areas of your soul and sow it with the seed of the word of God.

Do you know when a man is wise in the sight of Christ the Lord?—when he listens to His word and carries it out. The beginning of wisdom is to listen to God's word (Matt. 7:24-25).

Every word of the Saviour has the power and the might to heal

both physical and spiritual ailments. Say the word and my servant will be healed (Matt. 8:8). The Saviour said the word—and the centurion’s servant was healed.

Just as He once did, the Lord even now ceaselessly says His words to you, to me, and to all of us. But we must pause, and immerse ourselves in them and receive them—with the centurion’s faith.

And a miracle will happen to us, and our souls will be healed just as the centurion’s servant was healed. For it is related in the Gospel that they brought many possessed people to Him, and He drove out the spirits with a word, and healed all the sick (Matt.8:16).

He still does this today, because the Lord Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever, (Heb. 13:8).

### ***Beware***

Those who do not listen to God’s words will be judged at the Dreadful Judgment, and it will be worse for them on the Day of Judgment than it was for Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:14-15).

Beware—at the Dreadful Judgment you will be asked to give an account for what you have done with the words of God, whether you have listened to them and kept them, whether you have rejoiced in them or been ashamed of them, the Lord will also be ashamed of you when He comes in the glory of His Father together with the holy angels (Mk 8:38).

There are few words of men that are not vain and idle. Thus there are few words for which we do not mind being judged (Matt 12:36).

In order to avoid this, we must study and learn the words of God from the Bible and make them our own; for God proclaimed them to men so that they might accept them, and by means of them also accept the Truth of God itself.

### ***Words of the Word***

Great is the mystery of the word—so great that the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Christ the Lord, is called “the Word” or “the Logos” in the Bible.

God is the Word (John 1:1). All those words which come from the eternal and absolute Word are full of God, Divine Truth, Eternity, and Righteousness. If you listen to them, you are listening to God. If you read them, you are reading the direct words of God.

God the Word became flesh, became man (John 1:14), and mute, stuttering man began to proclaim the words of the eternal truth and righteousness of God.

### ***The Grace-Filled Word***

In every word of the Saviour there is much that is supernatural and full of grace; and this is what sheds grace on the soul of man when the word of Christ visits it.

Therefore the Holy Apostle calls the whole structure of the house of salvation the word of the grace of God (Acts 20:32).

Like a living grace-filled power, the word of God has a wonder-working and life-giving effect on a man, so long as he hears it with faith and receives it with faith (I Thess. 2:13).

Everything is defiled by sin, but everything is cleansed by the word of God and prayer—everything—all creation from man on down to a worm (I Tim 4:5).

By the Truth which it carries in itself and by the Power which it has in itself, the word of God is sharper than any sword and pierces to the point of dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12). Nothing remains secret before it or for it.

### ***The Birth-giving Word***

Because every word of God contains the eternal Word of God—the Logos—it has the power to give birth and regenerate men. And when a man is born of the Word, he is born of the Truth.

For this reason St. James the Apostle writes to the Christians that God the Father has brought them forth by the word of truth (James 1:18),

and St. Peter tells them that they have been born anew ... by the word of the living God, which abides forever (I Peter 1:23).

*From: [orthodox-christianity.com](http://orthodox-christianity.com) - an excellent resource site*



## THE NEW MARTYR EUGENE THE SOLDIER

RECEIVED HIS MARTYR'S CROWN  
10TH / 23RD MAY, 1996, HIS 19TH BIRTHDAY

EUGENE was born 23rd May, 1977, in the village of Kouilovo, near the town, Podolsk, just outside of Moscow.

He was an only child, and was baptised an Orthodox Christian as an infant. His mother's name is Lioubov (Love) Vasilievna.

In 1989, his grandmother took him to church to confess for the first time and to commune the Holy Mysteries. The priest noticed that the child was not wearing a cross, and during confession he placed a cross around his neck. The young Eugene never took it off; he made a thick cord and hung the cross on it.

When his mother noticed that he was wearing a cross, she advised him to take it off because his school friends would make fun of him. Eugene did not answer, but neither did her obey her.

He finished his studies in 1994 and was then employed as a cabinet-maker, which gave him a good income. He joined the army on 25th June, 1995, and after his basic training (on 13th January, 1996) was stationed for guard duty at the border of Chechnya-Ingushetia. On 13th February, 1996, exactly one month later, he was captured. Here is how it happened.

Four soldiers were sent by the army service (Eugene being one of them) to check vehicles which came from a particular road. Unfortunately, the officials sent the soldiers without any previous organization or preparation; there wasn't even lighting or any type of security.

Chechens would frequently pass along that road transporting weapons, prisoners and drugs. That night an ambulance passed along the road. When the soldiers stopped it for inspection, suddenly more than ten heavily armed Chechens jumped out of it. A brawl followed and the four soldiers were taken prisoner by the Chechens. It was 3 a.m. At 4 a.m., other soldiers arrived at the road for guard duty, to relieve Eugene and his companions. When they did not find them, they immediately realized what must have happened. A few days later, the army service informed the soldiers' parents of their disappearance.

Eugene's mother understood that they had been captured and, placing her life in danger, went to Chechnya to find her son. After many attempts, she came in touch with the leaders of various rebel groups in Chechnya, trying to find the whereabouts of Eugene. She knew that the Chechens do not kill their prisoners immediately, but wait to see if they can get a ransom and only then set them free.

The Chechens told her that her son was alive but was a prisoners. They motioned to each other and then became silent trying to approximate the amount of money they could get from her. At that time, the price for an imprisoned soldier was 10,000 dollars, while for an officer 50,000 dollars. When they realized that they would not get much for Eugene they decided to kill him.

His mother went everywhere searching for him, she went past villages, roads with mines, battle fronts, and met many Chechen officers. As she herself says, "I went through all the circles of Hades."

From the first day of Eugene's imprisonment (which lasted 100 days), the rebels noticed that he was wearing a cross. They tried forcing him to deny his Faith, to take off his cross and become a Muslim, with the intention of making him an executioner and thus a murderer of other Russian prisoners.

Eugene refused all their proposals and, despite continuous beatings, many tortures and promises (that he would live if he took off his cross), they couldn't manage to make him deny his Faith.

Later, the same rebel leaders said to his mother: "If you son had become like one of us, we would not have been unjust to him."

On 23rd May, 1996, (the day of his birthday), the four imprisoned soldiers were taken to be executed. First they killed his three fellow prisoners. Then they asked Eugene for the last time to remove his cross, saying: "We make an oath to Allah that you will live." Eugene refused again, and thus went through his horrifying martyrdom. They cut off his head completely with a knife, but they did not dare take the cross off his neck. They buried him with the cross, but without his head.

Finally, after nine months, Eugene's mother found him. The Chechens wanted 4,000 dollars in return for his body. They gave her a video of he son's martyrdom and told her about his imprisonment and torture.

Eugene's mother sold her apartment and everything else she could - even clothes - in order to be able to give the ransom and also pay for the exhumation, a suitable coffin, transportation, etc., which was not a small amount.

Finally, on 20th November, 1996, she transported the relics to their village and buried them in the cemetery. A few days later, Eugene's father died next to the grave from his sorrow.

Immediately, the Holy martyr Eugene began appearing and performing miracles in different areas of Russia. Below we mention some testimonies and miraculous interventions.

A little girl who lived in an Orthodox orphanage said that once a tall soldier with a red cloak appeared to her and told her that his name was Eugene. He took her by the hand and directed her to the church. The little girl said: "I was startled when I saw he was wearing a red cloak, because soldiers don't wear cloaks like that, and I thought to myself that it must be the cloak of a Martyr."

In many churches people have seen a soldier with a flaming red cloak who helps prisoners in Chechnya escape from their captivity and from every other danger, such as mines, etc.

In a hospital with war casualties, the wounded soldiers testify that a Holy Martyr with the name of Eugene helps them, especially when they are in a lot of pain. When some of them went to the church dedicated to the saviour in Moscow, upon seeing the icon of the Martyr, they immediately recognized him as the one who had helped them. Even prisoners recognize the soldier with the red cloak. He especially helps those who are very weak and spiritually down because of their imprisonment.

In 1997, with the blessing of Patriarch Alexis, a book was published with the title “New Martyr of Christ Soldier Eugene.” A priest by the name of Vadim Skliarensko from Dnipropetrovs K sent a report to the Patriarchate where he mentions that the cover of the book with a photograph of the Saint sends forth fragrant myron.

Three years and three months after Eugene’s martyrdom, the leader and all the members of the rebel gang (Eugene’s killers) were themselves killed in a confrontation with their fellow Chechens.

Many faithful visit Eugene’s tomb throughout the year but mostly on the day of his martyrdom (10th / 23rd May). On that day one can hear of many miracles worked by him. He has not yet been glorified as a saint, so as to avoid any misunderstanding.

*THIS ACCOUNT was sent us by **Abbess Taxiarchia** and the sisters of the **Sacred Convent of the Holy Angels in Afidnai, Greece**, along with a beautiful icon print of the New Martyr in his red cloak. Sister Myrofora of the Convent writes: “The article on St Evgenios was published on [the] internet in Greek. Someone sent it to one of the brothers in the Monastery [Fili] and then they passed it on to us. The icon which we sent to you of St Evgenios was painted by one of the sisters in our Convent.” In view of the current cross-wearing controversy in Britain, the witness of St Eugene is particularly instructive for Orthodox Christians. May his holy prayers strengthen us in our confession of the Faith.*



**TEACHING**  
**OF THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV**  
**ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS**

THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT of every good assiduous undertaking and the source of all success is firm continuance in prayer, which together with supplication can gain other benefactions from God, for thereby the worthy become communicants of God's holiness and acquire an introduction to spiritual activity and the uniting of the mind with the Lord in ineffable love, for he who compels himself to continue in prayer is inflamed by spiritual love in care for the Divine and with a flaming desire to behold God, and in a certain measure receives the grace of a sanctified perfection (See St Macarius of Egypt - instruction 40).

In essence, prayer is the abiding with, and the union of, a man with God, but by its activity it is the establishment of the world, reconciliation with God, the mother of tears and also their daughter, the propitiation for sins, a bridge to trials, a barrier to sorrows, the destruction of warfare, an Angelic activity, the nourishment of all the bodiless beings, the future rejoicing, an endless activity, a source of benefactions, a source of gifts, an unseen progress, food for the soul, enlightenment of the mind, a cutting off of despair, a signpost to hope, the resolution of sorrows, the riches of monastics, the treasury of the hesychasts, the disparagement of fury, the mirror of success, the manifestation of peace, the establishment of expression, the proclaimer of the future, the seal of glory. Prayer is indeed the judgment seat for the one who prays, and the Lord's throne of judgment before the future Throne (see St John of the Ladder, step 28).



# The Coming Month

DURING Bright / New Week this year, one of our fathers was asked by a cradle Orthodox - (the man is middle-aged, intelligent, educated, cosmopolitan, multi-lingual, apparently quite successful in life, and attends church frequently if not regularly) - at what age our Saviour died. He replied, "Thirty-Three." To which his interlocutor responded that that was when He also rose again, but when did He die the second time! This sad exchange uncovers the appalling ignorance about our Faith of many of its adherents. One should be thankful that they do, but one wonders sometimes why such people continue to adhere to a Faith about which they know so little, and much more worryingly why they are not concerned to learn more about their Faith. Would you join a cricket club and not bother to know what a wicket was, how to bowl, or how to bowl a maiden over? Perhaps because his church observance was limited to the occasional Sunday, and usually in a language he did not readily understand, this poor man had not heard of the **Ascension of our Saviour into the Heavens**. This event is one which we celebrate this month, and this year it falls on Thursday, 11th /24th. It is observed as one of the **Twelve Great Feasts of the Church Year**.

Perhaps we should spell this out in the simplest of terms, Our Saviour, unlike others who have been raised by His power from the dead (St Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain, Jairus' daughter, the man resurrected when his corpse was thrown into Eliseus' grave and touched his sacred relics, St Drithelm of Melrose, St Winifred, Saint Athanasius the Recluse of the Kievan Caves, the infant restored to life by St Spiridon and many others), did not die again. He had conquered death, and He later (on the fortieth day after His Resurrection) ascended bodily into Heaven, giving us the sure hope of sharing, body and soul, in the glory of the life of Heaven. The Blessed Augustine says: "He did not put off this garment [the flesh] He had willed to put on here below. Had He put it off all men might then despair of the resurrection of their own bodies. He but raised it to Heaven." And St John Chrysostom says on this feast: "To

what nature did He say, *sit thou at my right hand?* It was to that which had heard the words: *Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.* Did He not so raise it above the heavens? Did He not upraise it to stand amid the Angels? Was this not honour without measure? It ascended above the heavens, it ascended above the Angels, it passed beyond the Archangels, above the Cherubim; it soared above the seraphim, higher than all the Powers of Heaven, and it came to rest only before the Throne of the Lord.” He speaks of our nature, assumed by our Saviour, the Conqueror of death.

The second Great Feast we celebrate this month is that of **Pentecost**, the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues. St Leo the Great, the Pope of Rome, says of the Spirit that it by Him “the whole Catholic Church is sanctified and every rational being instructed,” and that He is “the Inspirer of Faith, the Teacher of Knowledge, the Fount of Love, the Seal of Chastity, the Cause of All Virtue.” On this day, at Vespers on Sunday, we have three Kneeling Prayers, so called because while they are read by the priest, all the faithful prostrate on the ground, during which we beseech the Three Divine Persons of the Most Holy Trinity to pour forth blessings upon the whole Church, both those still struggling in this life and those who have reposed before us. And from this day - having stopped at Pascha - we begin our daily prayers at home, and almost every service in church, with the prayer to the Holy Spirit, that He might grant us those blessings which St Leo enumerates:-

*“Heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, O Treasury of every good and Bestower of life: come and dwell in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.”*

The Monday after Pentecost Sunday is kept as a special festival of the Holy Spirit, and the whole week is kept as fast-free in honour of the solemnity. The following Sunday is observed as the **Feast of All the Saints**, and then we enter the **Apostles’ Fast**, which this year lasts for 31 days, ending with the **Feast of the Martyrdom of the Holy Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul**, on Thursday, 29th June / 12th July.

# POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“I am writing with the following questions:*

*“1) I sometimes use the exclamation ‘Oh my God’ and X tells me that I should not be saying that. A friend of hers who is a son of an Anglican vicar said that this hurts God’s feelings. Please tell me what the Orthodox view is.*

*“2) I do not understand well the last verses of Psalm 50: Do good, O Lord, in Thy good pleasure unto Sion, and let the walls of Jerusalem be builded. Then shalt Thou be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with oblation and whole-burnt offerings. Then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar. Would you be able to explain it to me?”  
- E. M. Newbury.*

MANY THANKS for your message and questions. Regarding “O my God” - of course we have a commandment not to take the Lord’s name in vain, and so it should not of course be used as a way of swearing or irreverently. Having said that, in most Orthodox cultures, people do use religious exclamations. I think the best “advice” I ever received on this was in an incident at the Monastery in America when I was there. A monk, Greek, got frustrated with something and exclaimed, “Kyrie, eleison - Lord, have mercy!” A visiting priest corrected him gently by saying: “It is important that you look up when you say that, and not down.”

Re the last verses of Psalm 50, there are several ways that one can interpret them. Most verses in Scripture have different depths, but if you understand by “Jerusalem” either your soul or the Church (both are fitting), you will see that in the first case it means that when you (with God’s help) get your soul in order then you will be able to worship Him fittingly; and in the second case, it is a prayer that the Church be established so that He can be fittingly worshipped by the whole Christian community.

# NEWS SECTION

## *ARSON ATTACK ON CHURCH IN SIBERIA*

THE WEBSITE of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, under the presidency of **His Eminence, Metropolitan Agafangel**, published this short report: “According to information from Barnaul, the Church of the Ascension parish of Ishim, Siberian diocese, survived a fourth attempt of arson, which happened on the night of April 25, 2012. At this time the flames broke out and destroyed all the outbuildings of the church. By the grace of God, the altar and chapel room survived the fire, although it was damaged with the water.” The parish there has been under constant attack, as the fact of a fourth arson attempt bears witness. It is believed that these attacks are motivated because the faithful there will not submit to the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, and have chosen to follow the course of the confessing ROCA under Metropolitan Agafangel.

## *FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY SPEAKS OUT FOR “VILIFIED CHRISTIANS”*

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH published an article on 14th April stating: “Christians are being ‘persecuted’ and ‘driven underground’ while the courts fail to protect their religious values, a former Archbishop of Canterbury has claimed. Lord Carey said Christians were excluded from many sectors of employment because of their beliefs, ‘vilified by state bodies’ and feared arrest for expressing their views. The former archbishop’s claims are part of a written submission to the European Court of Human Rights, seen by the Daily Telegraph, ahead of a landmark case on religious freedom. The hearing will deal with the case of two workers forced out of their jobs after visibly wearing crosses, the case of a Relate therapist sacked for saying he may not be comfortable giving sex counselling to homosexual couples, and a Christian registrar who wishes not to conduct civil partnership ceremonies. In the submis-

sion, Lord Carey said the outward expression of traditional conservative Christian values has effectively been ‘banned’ under a new ‘secular conformity of belief and conduct’. The former archbishop argued that in ‘case after case’ British courts have failed to protect Christian values and urged European judges to correct the balance. He said there was a ‘drive to remove Judeo-Christian values from the public square’ and argued UK courts have ‘consistently applied equality law to discriminate against Christians’ as they show a ‘crude’ misunderstanding of the faith by treating some worshippers as ‘bigots’. In his submission, Lord Carey, who was archbishop from 1991 to 2002, wrote: ‘In a country where Christians can be sacked for manifesting their faith, are vilified by state bodies, are in fear of reprisal or even arrest for expressing their views on sexual ethics, something is very wrong. It affects the moral and ethical compass of the United Kingdom. Christians are excluded from many sectors of employment simply because of their beliefs; beliefs which are not contrary to the public good.’” One has the impression that either **Lord Carey**, or the *Telegraph* in reporting him, has somewhat over-stated the case. One cannot deny that some who claim to be expressing conservative Christian beliefs do so in a way which is bigoted and offensive. However, with that modest caveat, one can rejoice that at long last one of the leaders of the broader Christian community in this country has spoken out. Until this statement was published, one had the impression that, among religious leaders, only the **Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks**, was concerned to speak up for traditional moral values in this country.

### ***M.P. SPOKESMEN RECOMMENDS INTRODUCTION OF SHARI’A LAW IN RUSSIA***

IN HIS WEEKLY COLUMN, **Konstantin Eggert**, a commentator and host for **Radio Kommersant FM**, Russia’s first 24-hour news station, reported on 27th April: “A few years ago the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams suggested in an interview that ‘elements’ of shari’a law could ‘possibly’ be incorporated into the juridical prac-

tice of the UK, with its substantial Muslim population. Despite being uttered while the politically correct Labour party was in power, Williams' words created a furore that for a brief moment united conservative Anglicans, Catholics, Jews, atheists and even some Muslims in opposition. Introducing religious dogma into what is essentially neutral civic law can have far-reaching consequences – and tear society apart. Now the Russian Orthodox Church seems to have landed in a situation similar to the one the Archbishop of Canterbury found himself in – but in a much more difficult context.... Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, who is chairman of the Synodal Department for Relations Between the Church and Society, said in an interview that he supports introduction in Russia of shari'a law and of laws drawn from other faiths. He said that in fifty years' time this will be the norm in Russia and the EU. Chaplin was reacting to incendiary statements made on a TV talk show by Dagir Khasavov, a Chechen Muslim lawyer, who happens to work as a legal advisor for the Russia's upper house of parliament. 'If shari'a is not introduced, we'll make the streets of the cities run with blood,' Khasavov shouted during a heated exchange in the studio. For a Christian cleric to support shari'a is a bizarre thing to do at the very least. It flies in the face of Christian practices and ideas (acceptance of polygamy in Islam is but one major difference). Many Russians are generally suspicious of Islam and Muslims, despite having lived side by side with them for hundreds of years. The church's official stance is that Islam is its natural ally in a fight against 'godless liberalism.' However, it is one thing for the patriarch and the bishops to state that all of Russia's 'traditional' religions share their views on abortion, pre-marital sex and euthanasia. It is something else entirely for a leading church representative to call for a radical overhaul of Russia's legal system. In a twist of irony, one of Russia's best-known imams criticised Chaplin's suggestions. He said that religiously neutral law ensures everyone's equality before the law. Chaplin's musings on the usefulness of shari'a follow a previous proposal to introduce an 'Orthodox dress code' for Russia and assertions that Mozart was a mediocre composer. This could have been written off as one eccentric's views. However, he is one of the most famous priests in Russia (if 'fame' is an appropriate word here) and in the eyes of the public he speaks for the whole church."

# SIR-UK NEWS

## *BISHOP AMBROSE'S VISIT*

AWARE of the acute shortage of clergy we have in this country, **His Grace Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** came to England for Holy Week and the first days of Pascha. He arrived at Heathrow on 4th April, and was met by members of our Brotherhood, because he had very kindly brought us a huge package of church things which we had bought from Greece. On Friday 24th March / 6th April, he celebrated the **Vigil for the Annunciation at the Convent**, and afterwards gave a short sermon in Romanian for the Romanian faithful there, reserving his sermon in English for the next day. After the service **Mother Vikentia and her sisters** provided a supper for the clergy and some of the parishioners. The next day was both **Annunciation and Lazarus Saturday**, both feasts beloved of the sisters because the one is their dedication festival and the other centres on Bethany where they attended the Russian school. A festive meal was provided by the Sisters afterwards. His Grace stayed at the Convent serving there also, but now without other clergy, for the Vigil and Divine Liturgy of Palm Sunday.

On the Tuesday of Holy Week in the afternoon he came to Brookwood, and was with the Brotherhood for Compline that evening, for the Bridegroom Service, and for the Hours, during which the remaining three sections of the Gospels were read. He presided at the celebration of the **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts** on that day, the last in the year, and in the evening, after Little Compline, at the **Mysterion of Holy Unction**, which he served with the Brotherhood clergy. After this, he returned to London to lead the services at the Convent for the last days of Holy Week and for Pascha.

On the Day of Pascha Bishop Ambrose came to Saint Edward's a second time to preside at the **Agape Vespers** on Sunday afternoon. This year, the Gospel reading of the doubting of Thomas was read in ten languages, the Bishop leading with a reading in Greek. At the end of Ves-

pers, we made a procession round the church, and then in the Mortuary building we had light refreshments for those who had attended and His Grace stayed for about two hours more to mingle with our parishioners.

His Grace was hoping to visit his brother, who has been very ill, the next day, before leaving to return to Greece on Bright Tuesday. Later in the week, he set off, via Moscow, to visit the flock in South Ossetia on yet another pastoral visit.

We owe thanks to **Baroness Anne von Bennigsen**, to **Wim and Anne van der Lee** and to **Matias and Liggy Fagerlund** for taxiing the Bishop during his stay in England between the Convent, the Brotherhood and his mother's home in London. God bless you for your help.

## ***SAINT EDWARD'S DAY & PASCHA AT BROOKWOOD***

ON 18th / 31st MARCH, we celebrate the anniversary of the Martyrdom in 979 A.D. of our heavenly intercessor, Saint Edward the Martyr, which, as it always falls in Great Lent, we keep as our secondary feast, observing the day of the enshrinement of his sacred relics here, 3rd / 16th September as the primary feast. This year the day of the Saint's Martyrdom coincided with the **Saturday of the Akathist Hymn**, on which feast in 1982, the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in our church at Brookwood. Among those who joined us on this day were a group of women parishioners (with one boy) from the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens, London**. After the Divine Liturgy, during the Parish Breakfast they took the opportunity to ask many questions about the saint, to tell us of heavenly help they had received through his intercessions, and to ask about our community. The young boy they brought, Arsenii had come from Russia for medical treatment for leukemia, and so they had brought him to the saint's relics. They then asked if they could go back to the church so that they could chant the canon to Saint Edward in Church Slavonic before his shrine, and thereafter asked even more questions. To see such zeal and such love for the Saint was an encouragement for us and very uplifting. May Saint Edward's prayers ever help them and Arsenii.

At our **Paschal Midnight Service** this year, we seemed to have more people than ever before, and miraculously the weather held for us. After the heath fire a few weeks before in the cemetery, we were rather apprehensive about having the usual bonfire after the service. But from the day the hose pipe ban was introduced we had rain every day, right up to the morning of Holy and Great Saturday, so the ground was wet and it was safe to have the bonfire. We also checked this with the local fire brigade. For the day of Pascha and Bright Monday, we had no rain, and then again, during this much publicized “drought,” we had rain again - freeing us from having to water the vegetable gardens in a very busy period. The English weather is indeed a blessing! This year after the services and the **Bonfire Parish Breakfast** in the early hours of Sunday morning, we had no disturbances and we awoke in the morning to find that our guest, **Thomas Garland**, and **Androniki Handover** had very efficiently and completely cleaned everything up. Usually the Brotherhood spend a couple of hours on Pascha morning cleaning up the mess. This was all done and splendidly too. Our thanks to **Elena Holden** also for chivvying people up to bring paschal foods for the feast, and to all those of you who did so. There was more than enough, and we had to add very little to the surplus to provide the second meal after the Agape Vespers.

This year we had one of the most exhausting Bright Weeks, not only having the daily celebration of the Divine Liturgy as usual and a Liturgy at the Convent on the Friday, the feast of the Life-giving Spring, but also new-born babies to visit and bless in Colindale, North London, - **Stefan, the son of Nicolae an Iuliana Ursache**, - and in Nazeing, Essex, - **Iustina, the first baby of Mihai and Cassiana Visanu**, - and a hospital visit in Redhill - a week in which we saw a great deal of the M25 and in which we saw parts of the world never visited before. However it did give us the opportunity on the way to Nazeing to visit the grave of King Harold at Waltham Abbey.

### ***CHURCH FLOWERS, &c***

USUALLY we have no collections in our church, believing that freewill offerings put in the alms box at the candle stand are of more

value, but on the last Sunday in Lent, 1st April n.s, we had a previously unannounced **retiring collection** to raise money for the church flowers over Pascha. In addition to that already given in the alms box, we raised £250.67 at the door for this purpose, and within the next week parishioners made this up to £400. Having not had spare cash with them on the Sunday, they sent in donations. **Vasileos Calcanteras** drove up to London to buy the flowers, and he and his wife, **Evphi**, organized the decoration of the Epitaphios and the rest of the church, helped by a number of volunteers. This year they got people to help with preparatory work on Palm Sunday during the “social hour,” and this gave work for idle hands to do and also made things easier in the week. In the event, as flowers were cheaper this year, we raised too much money, and so the surplus will be put to buying the pot pourri for next year’s Holy Saturday Liturgy. Our thanks to all those of you who, in various ways helped to clean and decorate the church for the festival, and to those who came after Thomas Sunday, to remove all the flowers and restore the church to its usual appearance, to get the candle wax off the floors, and to clean yet again. God bless you all.

### ***MEMORIAL CROSS BLESSED***

AFTER the forty-day *pannikhida* at the grave of **Anna Turceni-off**, on Friday 24th March / 6th April, we blessed the grave cross of **Grace Magdalene Meeking**, who for many years was a faithful parishioner at Saint Edward’s and a trustee of the King Edward Orthodox Trust Co Ltd. Grace had left the trust a bequest in her will, and as she had no living relatives, the Brotherhood donated the cross for her grave.

### ***THE WESTCOTT LOCAL HISTORY GROUP***

Brought by **John Clarke**, during a walk around the cemetery, the **Westcott Local History Group** visited Saint Edward’s Church on 25th April n.s. The group numbered about fifteen people, and came on a day when the weather was anything but suitable for a walk through the cem-

etry, but they were shown around the church and stayed to ask questions about the church itself and our Faith.



## **PRACTICAL TIP**

UNFORTUNATELY, this practical tip will benefit no one, because if you are reading this you will probably not need to know. It is the people who are not reading the magazine that most need to know, but perhaps something will percolate down to them through gossip and rumour or the efforts of well-intended friends. But given the appalling lack of basic understanding of the Faith which we cited above in our “Coming Month” section, our tip would be to use every opportunity to learn as much about your faith as possible. Spend some time each and every day in spiritual reading. Nowadays there can be no possible excuse for ignorance: we have books, magazines, websites all readily at hand. Furthermore, you may always come and ask the clergy for answers, or for guidance in your studies. Some time ago, I was speaking to someone, who excused their ignorance of the Faith by explaining that they had grown up in a Roman Catholic country and only rarely got to an Orthodox Church, and so received very little instruction. When I asked when they came to England, the answer was 1965, a year before I first contacted the Orthodox Church. In the intervening 47 years, I have tried (not altogether successfully) to learn a little about the Church and her teachings (and have failed to apply most of it disastrously), but this poor soul seemed to have stopped even trying to learn when the opportunity opened out to them. Never stop trying to receive more instruction and greater enlightenment. This is especially important if, as a parent, you have responsibility for others.

*“BECAUSE we put ourselves out of the sight of God,  
we are led captive by the passions of the body.”*

- Abba Theonas.