



Christ is Risen!
Truly, He is Risen!



FROM THE FATHERS

“IT IS GOOD that the women who came to the tomb early in the morning are reported to have been carrying with them the spices which they had prepared. Our spices are our voices in prayer, in which we set forth before the Lord the desires of our hearts, as the Apostle John attested in describing mystically the purest inmost longings of the saints, saying, *They had golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints* (Rev. 5:8). What in Greek is called spice (*aromata*), in Latin is called incense (*odorama*). We bear spices to the tomb of the Lord early in the morning when, mindful of the passion and death which He underwent for us, we show our neighbour outwardly the light of our good actions, and are inwardly aflame in our heart with the delight of simple compunction. We must do this at all times, but especially when we go into church in order to pray, and when we draw near to the altar in order to partake of the Mysteries of the Body and Blood of the Lord.”

VENERABLE BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

ENCYCLICAL

FOR THE ALL-GLORIOUS RESURRECTION OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR

The Mind of the Risen Christ,
Purification of the Heart, and the Vision of God

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Let us keep feast yet again with the whole of creation, which, renewed, endows its fragrance upon all that surrounds us.

Let this Feast be unceasing and perpetual, for our Lord Jesus Christ is risen, and death and Hades have not only been vanquished and trampled, but have also ceased any longer to tyrannize and dominate man, the Image and Creation of God.

“Today spring gives forth fragrance and the new creation danceth. . . .” “Today all creation exulteth and rejoiceth, for Christ is risen and Hades is despoiled. . . .” “Today, the Master hath harrowed Hades, lifting up those whom it held captive in grievous bondage from ages past. . . .” “Let the things of Heaven make glad and let the things of the earth rejoice. . . .”!

On this radiant and all-gladsome day, we sense that our being is permeated by the all-joyful tidings of the Holy Apostle Paul:

Brethren, “God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”¹

Since God is rich in compassion, “He stooped down to earth and retrieved His Image.”² He vivified it, resurrected it, and exalted it; He made it sit upon the Throne of the Lamb that was slain.

Glory to Thy compassion, O Lord! Glory to Thine Economy, O Thou Who alone lovest mankind! Glory to Thee, O God, O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee!



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The words “A great thing is man,” resound from the depths of the ages from the wise author of the Old Testament Book of Proverbs.³

A great thing is this creature of God which is called man. The most beautiful creature, the apogee of creation, the Image of God. It is precisely because of this greatness that it behooves man—now revived, liberated, and renewed—to recover his ancient glory, his primordial beauty amid the glory of the Holy Trinity, and to behold God.

The Resurrection of our Lord inaugurates the era in which the vision of God becomes possible. This charism of beholding God will assuredly be given to us in its fullness at the End of the Age, in the newness of creation, when “we shall see Him as He is.”⁴ Then the servants of God “shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”⁵

Yet our Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen Lord and God regards as fortunate—and these, indeed, are the truly fortunate ones—those men and women who have purity and chastity of soul in this life, for they shall see God: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”⁶



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The vision of God requires, as we all know, a change of outlook: from self-interest and concern for ourselves to adopting and embracing the Mind of the Risen Christ; that is, the mindset of magnanimity and selflessness, the mindset of humility and obedience to the point of sacrifice.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Apostle Paul exhorts us: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”⁷

God became man in order to instil His Mind in us. This Mind will lead us to love and compassion and will give us purity of heart. And then we will be granted the great charism of the vision of God.

“Purity of heart,” says St. Isaac the Syrian, “is love for the weak who fall.” And he continues: “If you see your brother sinning, throw the garment of your love over his shoulders.”⁸

A love of such radiance flows only from the Mind of the Risen Christ. This love is truly purifying, creative, and efficacious, since “it alters the nature of things,”⁹ as the Divine Chrysostomos assures us, and leads us unerringly to the vision of God within the Light of the Resurrection and the glory of the Holy Trinity.

“A great thing is man,” therefore, but a merciful man is greatly valued: “And precious is a merciful man.”¹⁰



My brothers and sisters, may the inestimable prayers of our much-revered Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian, and the intercessions of the Theotokos, with the Grace of the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, strengthen us in the struggle for a change in mind, in order that we might become truly compassionate, so that our hearts might be purified and we might be vouchsafed the vision of God, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

† The Holy Resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, 2013

Your humble supplicant before our Risen Lord,
† *Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi*
Acting President of the Holy Synod in Resistance

Notes

1. Ephesians 2:4-6. 2. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *Concerning the Life in Christ*, Discourse I, §18, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CL, col. 504B. 3. Proverbs 20:6. 4. I St. John 3:2. 5. Rev. 22:4. 6. St. Matthew 5:8. 7. Phil. 2:4-5. 8. Cf. St. Isaac the Syrian, “Discourse LVIII,” in Ἄπαντα τὰ εὐρεθέντα Ἀσκητικά [The complete extant ascetical discourses] (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis Bas. Regopoulou, 1997), p. 239. 9. St. John Chrysostomos, “Homily XXXII on I Corinthians,” §6, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXI, col. 273. 10. Proverbs 20:6.

HOMILY FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

**by our Father Among the Saints,
Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica
(1296 A.D. - 1359 A.D.)**

THE RESURRECTION of the Lord is the regeneration of human nature. It is the resuscitation and re-creation of the first Adam, whom sin led to death, and who because of death, again was made to retrace his steps on the earth from which he was made. The resurrection is the return to immortal life. Whereas no one saw that first man when he was created and given life—because no man existed yet at that time—woman was the first person to see him after he had received the breath of life by divine inbreathing, for after him, Eve was the first human being. Likewise no one saw the second Adam, who is the Lord, rise from the dead, for none of His followers were near by and the soldiers guarding the tomb were so shaken that they were like dead men. Following the resurrection, however, it was a woman who saw Him first before the others, as we have heard from Saint Mark’s Gospel today. After His resurrection Jesus appeared on the morning of the Lord’s Day [Sunday] “first to Mary Magdalene.”

It seems that the Evangelist is speaking clearly about the time of the Lord’s resurrection - that it was morning - that He appeared to Mary Magdalene, and that He appeared to her at the time of the resurrection. But, if we pay some attention it will become clear that this is not what he says. Earlier in this passage, in agreement with the other Evangelists, Saint Mark says that Mary Magdalene had come to the tomb earlier with the other Myrrhbearing women, and that she went away when she saw it empty. Therefore, the Lord had risen much earlier on the morning on which she saw him. But wishing to fix the time more exactly, he

doesn't say simply "morning," as is the case here, but "very early in the morning." Thus the expression "at the rising of the sun," as used there, refers to that time when the slightest light precedes from the East on the horizon. This is what Saint John also wants to indicate when he says that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb in the morning while it was still dark and saw the stone rolled away from it.

According to Saint John, she did not come to the tomb alone, even though she left the tomb without yet having seen the Lord. For she ran to Peter and John, and instead of announcing to them that the Lord was risen, told them that He had been taken from the tomb. Therefore, she did not yet know about the resurrection. It is not Mary Magdalene's claim that Christ appeared to her first, but that He appeared after the actual beginning of the day. There is, of course, a certain shadow covering this matter on the part of the Evangelists that I shall, through your love, uncover. The good news of the resurrection of Christ was received from the Lord first, before all others, by the Theotokos. This is truly meet and right. She was the first to see Him after the resurrection, and she had the joy to hear His voice first. Moreover, she not only saw Him with her eyes and heard Him with her ears but with her hands she was the first and only one to touch His spotless feet, even if the Evangelists do not mention these things clearly. They do not want to present the mother's witness so as not to give the non-believers a reason to be suspicious. In that now my words about the joy of the Risen One are directed to believers, the opportunity of this feast moves us to explain what is relative to the Myrrhbearers. Justification is given by Him who said: There is nothing hidden that shall not be made known, and this also will be made known.

The Myrrhbearers are all those women who followed with the Mother of the Lord, stayed with her during those hours of the salvific passion, and with pathos anointed Him with myrrh. After Joseph and Nicodemus asked for and received the body of the Lord from Pilate, they took it down from the Cross, wrapped it in a cloth with strong spices, placed it in a carved out tomb, and closed the door of the tomb with a large stone. The Myrrhbearers were close by and watched, and as the Evangelist Mark relates, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated opposite

the grave. With the expression “and the other Mary” he means the Mother of Christ without a doubt. She was also called the mother of James and Joses, who were the children of Joseph, her betrothed. It was not only they who were watching the entombment of the Lord but also the other women. As Saint Luke relates: “And the women, also, who had come with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre and how His body was laid. These women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who were with them.”

He writes that they went and bought spices and myrrh; for they did not yet clearly know that He is truly the perfume of life for those who approach Him in faith, just as He is also the odour of death for those who remain unbelievers to the end. They did not yet clearly know that the odour of His clothes, the odour of His own body, is greater than all perfumes, that His name is like myrrh that is poured out to cover the world with His divine fragrance. For those who wanted to remain close by the body, they contrived an antidote of perfumes for the stench of decomposition and anointed it.

Thus they prepared the myrrh and the spices and rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. For they had not yet experienced the true Sabbath, nor did they understand that exceedingly blessed Sabbath that transports us from the confines of hell to the perfection of the bright and divine heights of heaven. Saint Luke says that “on the first day of the week, very early in the morning,” they came to the sepulchre bearing the spices that they had prepared. And Saint Matthew says that those who came “late on the Sabbath towards the dawn of the Lord’s day” were two in number. Saint John says that it was only Mary Magdalene who came, and that it was “morning, even though it was still dark.” But Saint Mark says that three women came very early in the morning on the first day of the week. By “the first day of the week” all the Evangelists mean the Lord’s Day [Sunday] and they use expressions like “late on the Sabbath,” “early dawn,” “early morning,” “morning,” and “even though it was still dark” [to refer to the Lord’s Day which is Sunday]. They mean the daybreaking hour when the darkness fights with the light and the hour when the eastern part of the horizon begins to be-

come light as it presages the day. Observing from afar, one sees the light changing colours in the East at about the ninth hour of the night, which colours remain until the fulfilment of the day three hours later. It seems that the Evangelists disagree somewhat concerning both the time of the visits and the number of women [that are involved]. This is attributable to the fact that, as we said, the myrrhbearers were many; that they did not come to the sepulchre once only but two and three times, and not always in the same groups; that all the visits were at dawn but not at exactly the same hour. Mary Magdalene also came by herself without the others and stayed longer. Each of the Evangelists, therefore, relates one journey of some of the women and leaves the others. Consequently, by comparing all the Evangelists - and I said this before - I conclude that the Theotokos was the first who came to the grave of her Son and God, together with Mary Magdalene. We are informed of this by the Evangelist Matthew who said: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre" (Matthew 28:1).

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary – who was, of course, the Mother of the Lord - went to look at the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake: for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the tomb and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightening and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards did shake and become like dead men.

The other women came after the earthquake and the flight of the guards, and found the grave open and the stone rolled back. The Virgin Mother, however, was there when the quake occurred, when the stone was rolled back, when the grave opened, and while the guards were there, even though they were completely shaken with fear. That is why the guards immediately thought of fleeing when they came to from the earthquake, but the Mother of God rejoiced without fear at what she saw. I believe that the life-bearing grave opened first for her. For her and by her grace all things were revealed for us, everything that is in heaven above and on the earth below. For her sake the angel shone so brightly so that, even though it was still dark, she saw by means of the bright angelic light

not only the empty grave but also the burial garments carefully arranged and in an orderly fashion, thereby witnessing in many ways to the resurrection of the one who was entombed. He was, after all, that same angel of the Annunciation, Gabriel; he watched her proceed rapidly towards the grave and immediately descended. He who in the beginning had told her “fear not, Mary, you have found grace with God,” now directs the same exhortation to the Ever Virgin. He came to announce the resurrection from the dead to her who, with seedless conception, gave Him birth; to raise the stone, to reveal the empty grave and the burial garments, so that in this manner the good news would be verified for her. He writes: “And the angel answered the women and said: fear not. Do you seek the Christ whom they crucified? He is risen. Here is the place where the Lord was placed. If you see the soldiers overcome with fear, do not be afraid. I know that you seek the Christ whom they crucified. He is risen. He is not here. For not only can He not be held by the keys, the bars, and the seals of hell, of death, and of the grave, but He is even the Lord of the immortal angels of heaven, and the only Lord of the whole world. See the place where the Lord lay. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.” And they departed, he says, with fear and great joy. At this point I am of the opinion that Mary Magdalene and the other women who had come up to that point were still frightened. For they did not understand the meaning of the angel’s powerful words, nor could they contain to the end the power of the light so as to see and understand with exactitude. But I think that the Mother of God made this great joy her own, since she comprehended the words of the angel. Her whole person radiated from the light in that she was all pure and full of divine grace. She firmly appropriated all these signs and the truth and she believed the Archangel, since, of course, he formerly had shown himself to be worthy of trust for her in other matters. And why shouldn’t the Virgin understand with divine wisdom what had occurred in that she observed the events at first hand? She saw the great earthquake and the angel descending from heaven like lightening, she saw the guards fall as dead men, the removal of the stone, the emptying of the tomb, and the great miracle of the burial garments which were kept in place by *smyrna* and aloes, even though they contained no body. In addition to all of these

things, she saw the joyous countenance of the angel and heard his joyful message. But Mary Magdalene, in responding to the annunciation, acted as if she had not heard the angel at all - he had not in fact spoken directly to her. She testifies only to the emptying of the tomb and says nothing about the burial garments, but runs directly to Peter and to the other disciples, as Saint John says. The Mother of God went back to the tomb again when she met the other women and, as Saint Matthew says, behold Jesus met them and told them to rejoice.

So you see that even before Mary Magdalene, the Mother of God saw Him Who for our salvation suffered and was buried and rose again in the flesh.

And they approached, touched His feet and worshipped Him.

Just as the Theotokos alone understood the power of the angelic words – even if she heard the good news of the resurrection together with Mary Magdalene – when she met her Son and God with the other women she saw and recognized the Risen One before all the other women. And falling down, she touched His feet and became His apostle to his apostles. We learn from Saint John that Mary Magdalene was not with the Mother of God when, on her return to the sepulchre, she encountered the Lord. He writes: “She runs to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved and tells them: they have taken the Lord from the tomb and we don’t know where they have put Him.”

If she had seen and touched Him with her hands and heard Him speak, how could she say the words “they have taken Him and placed Him elsewhere, and we don’t know where?” But after Peter and John ran to the grave and saw the burial clothes and returned, Saint John says that Mary Magdalene was standing near the tomb and crying.

You see that not only had she not yet seen Him but neither had she been informed of the resurrection. And when the angels that appeared asked her “why are you crying, woman,” she again answered as if she thought that He was dead. Thus when, upon turning, she saw Jesus and still did not understand, she answered His question “why do you weep” in the same manner. Not until He called her by her name

and showed her that He was the same did she understand. Then, when she also fell down before Him wishing to kiss His feet, she heard him say: "Touch Me not." From this we understand that when He appeared previously to His mother and to the women who accompanied her, He allowed only His mother to touch His feet, even if Matthew makes this a common concession to all the women. He did not wish, for the reason we mentioned in the beginning, to suddenly introduce the appearance of the mother into the issue. It was the Ever-Virgin Mary who came to the grave first and she was the first to receive the good news of the resurrection. Many women then gathered and they also saw the stone rolled back and heard the angels, but they were separated on their return. As Saint Mark says, since they were afraid, some of the women left the tomb in a frightened and ecstatic state without saying anything to anyone. Other women followed the Mother of the Lord and because they happened to be with her they saw and heard the Lord. Mary Magdalene left to go to Peter and John, and with them was returning to the grave. And even though they left, she stayed and she also was made worthy to see the Lord and to be sent by Him to the apostles. Thus, as Saint John says, she again comes to them crying out to all that she had seen the Lord and that He had told her these things.

And Saint Mark says that this appearance happened in the morning, the indisputable beginning of the day, when the dawn had passed. But he does not contend that the resurrection of the Lord occurred at that time, nor that it was His first appearance. Therefore, we have information concerning the Myrrhbearers that is exact and the general agreement of the four Evangelists as a higher confirmation. But even with all that they had heard on the same day of the resurrection from the Myrrhbearers, from Peter, and even from Luke and Cleopas, that the Lord lives and that they had seen Him, the disciples showed disbelief. That is why He castigated them when He appeared to all of them gathered together. When, however, He showed them many times through the witness of many that He was alive, not only did they all believe but they preached it everywhere.

Their voice poured out on all the earth and their words spread to the ends of the earth; and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his

word by signs that accompanied it. For until the teaching is preached to all the earth, the signs were indispensable. Exceptional signs were needed to represent and certify the truth of the message. But excellent signs are not needed for those who accept the word through firm belief. Who are these [who have firm belief]? They are those whose deeds bear witness [to their faith]. “Show me your faith in your deeds,” He says. “Who is faithful? Let him manifest it with the deeds of his good life.” For who will believe that he who commits wicked acts and is oriented to the earth and material things has a true, exalted, great, and heavenly understanding which is, so to speak, exactly what piety is? Brethren, what does it profit a man to say that he has divine faith if he does not have deeds analogous to the faith? What did the lamps profit the foolish maidens when they had no oil, in other words, the deeds of love and of compassion? What did it profit that rich man who, when he was burning in the unquenchable flame because of his indifference to Lazarus, invoked Abraham as father? What did it profit a man to accept an invitation to the divine wedding and that incorruptible bridal chamber when he did not have a suitable garment of good deeds? Of course, insomuch as he believed anyway, he received an invitation and went to sit amongst those holy ones who were at the banquet. But he also received the examination and was ashamed because he was clothed in the wickedness of his attitude and works, through which his hands and feet were tied and he was lowered to Gehenna where wailing and gnashing of teeth reverberate. May no one who has the name of Christ experience [such a thing]. Rather let us all manifest a life analogous with the Faith and enter the bridal chamber of unstained joy and eternal life with the saints, which is the resting place of all who perceive the true joy.

Translated by Hierodeacon Photios Touloumes from MIGNE P.G. vol 151, pp 236-248 on the Feast of the Holy Annunciation, 1976, and reprinted with some minor alterations.

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“AS MEMORY of fire does not warm the body, so faith without love does not produce the light of knowledge in the soul.”

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

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE OLD CALENDAR ORTHODOX CHURCH OF BULGARIA

*Continuation from the April issue
and completion of the Position Paper*

THE QUESTION OF GRACE IN THE MYSTERIES (SACRAMENTS) OF THE OFFICIAL LOCAL CHURCHES

The Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria has no communion with the official local Churches. Walling oneself off from such communion does not require an unequivocal affirmation that these Churches have completely fallen away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and that the Mysteries performed in them are deprived of Grace. Sufficient grounds for the cessation of ecclesiastical communion is the fact that the episcopate of these churches preach heresy or allow its dissemination through their passivity and, therefore, abide in ecclesiastical communion with bishops preaching or tolerating heresy. Clergy, monastics, and laity who break ecclesiastical communion with bishops “preaching heresy publicly and openly in the Church” are worthy of “honour befitting the Orthodox”, since not only do they *not* destroy the unity of the Church, but, on the contrary, they show diligence in protecting the Church from divisions and schisms.⁸

Currently, the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria refrains from a definitive answer on the question of whether the Mysteries performed in the official local Churches are valid or not. Indeed, the heresy that is propagated or is being allowed to spread—mostly by bishops—ultimately leads to a falling away from the Orthodox Church of individuals, groups of people, or even of entire local Churches. This can also happen gradually, in the course of a shorter or a longer period of time. For instance, such is the case with the Roman church. It deviated from the “correct and salvific confession of Faith” in stages, and only

after a fairly lengthy period of time did it completely fall away from the Catholic Church.

Unfortunately, from a theological perspective, it is precisely the question of the presence or absence of Grace in the Mysteries of the official local Churches that came to be the main rock on which the unity of the True Orthodox Christians crashed. In the tense atmosphere of decades of disputes, undue theological absolutism was reached on a question, the answer to which was not formulated dogmatically by the conciliar consciousness of the Church. This is why it should be addressed with special caution in the light of the theological consensus of the Fathers, and also in the light of the conciliar pastoral experience of the Church of Christ. This precludes debate which uses one-sided quotations gleaned from the Holy Fathers, and also precludes the absolutism of the theological opinion of specific persons or groups.

THE PROSPECT OF A CONCILIAR CONDEMNATION OF ECUMENICISM

It is well known that only the conciliar mind of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church can ascertain and proclaim the final falling-away from Orthodoxy (Catholicity) of a local Church (or Churches) which was Orthodox but ceased to be so in essence, regardless of the fact that it continues to call itself Orthodox (i.e. Catholic). For example, with regard to the Roman Catholic Church, the voice of this conciliar mind was manifested in the testimonies of many of the Holy Fathers: from St. Photius of Constantinople, St. Gregory Palamas and St. Mark of Ephesus to the Venerable Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, St. John of Kronstadt, St. Nectarius of Aegina and the Venerable Justin of Serbia, as well as in the decrees of several Councils of Constantinople (1170, 1450, 1722 and 1838) and in the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848.

The realities of the modern Orthodox world do not provide sufficient grounds to assume that the example of the Seventh Ecumenical Council is applicable to our epoch. In keeping with this example, we should be seeking the testimony of the Orthodox Church in the hope that

the way out of the crisis of apostasy would be a “Council of Unity,” which will condemn ecumenism (and probably other contemporary manifestations of apostasy as well), will unite all Orthodox Christians in the “correct and salvific confession of Faith,” and will declare the excommunication from the body of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of all those who continue to confess the heresies and misbeliefs condemned by the Council. Unfortunately, comparatively recently just the opposite event occurred. Through the union of the larger part of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia with the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007, those who had abandoned Truth did not join the Orthodox; on the contrary, the Orthodox renounced their long-standing witness of Faith and united with the ecumenists and Sergianists whom they used to denounce.

Taking into account the current trends in the development of Church life (in its broadest sense), it can be assumed that in the future, favourable conditions for holding a Unifying Orthodox Council will be even less likely to arise. Moreover, it is not impossible that the present crisis in the Orthodox world will sink even further into apostasy. This, in turn, could lead to emendations of our ecclesiological assessment of the developments within the official local Churches, such an assessment being determined by an analysis of variables, not constants. Ultimately, the road of apostasy that official Orthodoxy continues to follow leads outside the Church of Christ.

No less disturbing is another fact: the lack of agreement and cooperation among the True Orthodox Churches. What is needed are goodwill and patient long-lasting labour, in order to overcome the tragic divisions among us and to create conditions for convening a Pan-Orthodox Council, which would condemn ecumenism and provide an assessment of the entire spectrum of the apostate processes of our times.

THE VALUE OF THE CONCILIAR PASTORAL EXPERIENCE OF THE CHURCH

The conciliar pastoral experience of the Church of Christ regarding the manner (rite) by which penitent heretics and schismatics were

received in Her bosom is reflected in the works of various of the Holy Fathers and, above all, in the acts and decisions of a number of Œcumenical and Local Church Councils.

The variety of ways of accepting various repentant heretics or schismatics does not in the least signify relativism or ecclesio-political pliancy in this practice of the Catholic Church, but reveals the spiritual depth of Her conciliar pastoral experience. In receiving penitent heretics and schismatics, the Œcumenical and Local Councils very often apply the principle of *oikonomia*. The pastoral canonical principle of *oikonomia* does not imply a compromise determined by conjuncture, neither does it represent ordinary leniency, but reflects in large measure a responsible pastoral action in extremely difficult circumstances, with the nature of this action being determined exclusively by its desired beneficial consequences (religious, spiritual and moral). *Oikonomia* is a canonical and pastoral act in which the letter of the canon can be broken, however without contradicting its spirit. Yet, *oikonomia* can never, under any circumstance, allow the exoneration of any sin or of any compromise whatsoever in the “correct and salvific confession of Faith.”

The application of the principle of *oikonomia* in receiving heretics or schismatics in ecclesiastical communion does not mean at all that the Church recognizes the validity of their Mysteries. A classic example of this is the 95th Canon of the Quinisext Council, according to which the followers of heresies condemned by the Church — Nestorians and Monophysites — were received in ecclesiastical communion only through the renunciation of their heresy and their confession of the Orthodox Faith.

Considering the specifics of the ecclesiastical situation in Bulgaria, the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria strives to approach with careful attention those clergy and laity willing to join Her. What is most essential in pastoral work with them is to help them make their choice freely, consciously and responsibly. To date, the laity who have faith and ecclesiastical awareness, and have been participating in the church life of the Bulgarian Patriarchate, are received into communion through repentance during the Mystery of Confession. Monastics

and clerics submit a written request and are received into communion by following a brief repentance rite, composed especially for such cases.

According to the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, every single True Orthodox Church has the pastoral freedom to determine—based on the specific nature of the church life in the respective country or region—the manner of receiving bishops, clergy and laity from the official local Churches who wish to join Her. The Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria does not insist on a standardization of the practices of reception into ecclesiastical communion, and in doing so is guided by the words of St. Cyprian of Carthage: “In this matter we do not coerce or impose a law on anyone, since every prelate has freedom of will in the administration of the Church and will have to account for his actions before the Lord.”⁹

† *Bishop Photiy of Triaditza*

FOOTNOTES:

8. Canon 15 of the First-Second Synod in Constantinople.
9. “Letter to Pope Stephen”, in *Concilia ad regiam exacta*, Vol. I (Lutetiae Parisiorum: Impensis Societatis Typographicae Librorum Ecclesiasticorum iussu Regis constitutae, 1671), col. 741.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“I WAS WONDERING which version (or versions) or source in English of the Life of Saint Helena the Empress you would recommend. You had helped me previously with some comments on Saint Joseph of Arimathaea (especially traditions regarding his presence in Britain), so I was hoping you might have some helpful comments regarding Saint Helena.” J.R., Iowa, U.S.A.

THERE does not seem to be a life of St Helena as such, because she is always included with her son, St Constantine, but I suspect that you are wondering whether we accept the tradition that she was British and from Colchester.

I think the answer is that we simply do not know. Some sources claim she was born in Drepanum in Bithynia and was of a lowly background. Two facts would support this view: first, that her son renamed that town after her; and secondly that St Ambrose, no less, said she was a stable maid. Other early sources suggest she was the daughter of an inn-keeper, who, of course, might also have been a stable-maid.

The Colchester tradition suggests she was from that city and was the daughter of “Old King Cole” of nursery rhyme fame. It could be that she was from Colchester - after all her husband the Caesar Constantius Chlorus, was stationed in Britain, and subsequently became Emperor. Colchester in those days was one of the greatest military centres in the country, and doubtless he would have visited it.

But there are difficulties with this story. First of all, it is not quite clear whether Helena was truly his wife or simply a common-law wife. More substantially, the association with Old King Cole (Coel?) with Colchester does not appear to pre-date the twelfth century. If such a person existed, he was more likely to have reigned in what are now the borderlands between Scotland and England, and not in the Colchester region. Colchester itself was named after the Celtic war god, Camulus.

Further, in reading up on this a little to answer you, I have found one writer claiming that if St Helena came from Colchester she must have been a Christian from her infancy, because the Christian Faith was well established here in those times. This is, in fact, arguable. It was established here, but how well is open to question. Another writer says she came from Colchester, but only converted to Christianity in deep old age. So it appears that, in the vacuum left by a lack of clear historical data, everyone feeds in their own interpretations.

Also, of course were she the daughter of some British king (Old King Cole or some other) that would contradict what St Ambrose says of her and he was born within ten years of her death and would probably have known members of the Constantinian dynasty.

It is true that today Colchester honours her memory. There is a statue of her on the town hall, and the first (post-schism) Orthodox parish

there is dedicated to her, but this association with her may not be strictly historical. It may be that, even if she came from Bithynia, she visited or stayed at Colchester with Constantius Chlorus, and thus became loved there. I think it is safest to say, we simply do not know.

However, the important thing about the Empress St Helena (as with all of us) is not where she originated from, or into which class she was born, but the fact that she ended her life as a faithful Christian. Her love for the holy places associated with our Saviour's earthly life is something that our hearts and minds should concentrate on and something that we should try to emulate. Her finding of the True Cross was, of course, a thing which we can never replicate, but it manifests that her love for Christ was such that she uniquely was granted this great blessing. These are the important things about the Saint.

I hope that I have not been too negative about the Colchester legend - as you know, I am something of a curmudgeon, - but I am wary of these traditions which seem only to boost some nationalistic or local feeling of superiority, when our real admiration of the Saints should be for their love for Christ.



NEWS SECTION

INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP AMBROSE

AN INTERVIEW with **His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni**, Director of Missions for the Holy Synod in Resistance, appeared in the religious periodical, *Vatican Insider*. Published under the aegis of the Italian daily, *La Stampa*, whose editors include such well-known American Roman Catholics as **Mary Ann Glendon**, the Harvard Law Professor and President of the Pontifical Institute of Social Sciences, and the philosopher and theologian **Michael Novak**. The article thus serves

to bring our Synod's witness and theological positions to the attention of a wider international audience. It was published on April 8, 2013, under the title "*Ortodossia e Modernità.*" The interview, conducted in Italian, can also be found on the periodical's website in Spanish and English. The Synod in Resistance website carries an English translation of the interview, and this can be found on <<http://www.synodinresistance.org/pdfs/2013/04/18/20130418aVaticanInterview.pdf>> If anyone would like to read it, but does not have internet access, we can send them a print-out of the interview.

REPOSE OF ARCHIMANDRITE JOHN

ARCHIMANDRITE JOHN (Maitland Moir) reposed on 17th April at the age of 88. He was a pioneer of Orthodoxy in Scotland, and, although he only was able to visit our community once, he was someone we counted as a friend of Saint Edward's. The **Thyateira Archdiocese website** carried the following obituary: "Fr John Maitland Moir was born in Currie, a village in the outskirts of Edinburgh, on 24/06/1924. His parents Henry (the local doctor) and Rose were very devout Christians and gave him a very good upbringing. They both belonged to noble Scottish families (Maitland Moir and Ochterlony). Fr John had a very good education first at the Edinburgh Academy and then Edinburgh University and Christ Church, Oxford where he studied Classics and later Theology. He taught Classics at Cargilfield Boarding School in Perthshire and Theology at St Chad's College, Durham. As his heart was always with Orthodoxy (as he himself put it once) he went to Chalki, Constantinople, where he studied Orthodox Theology between 1951-1952. He was ordained a deacon in the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1952 and a priest the following year. He served in Broughty Ferry, Edinburgh and Inverness. In 1981 he went to the Holy Mountain where he was received into the Orthodox Church at the Monastery of Simonos Petra. Then he came to Britain where he was ordained Deacon (12/07/81) and Priest (13/07/81) within the Archdiocese of Thyateira and G. Britain. His first parish was Coventry. He came to Edinburgh in 1984 where there was a small Orthodox community consisting of Slavs and Greeks which was served by

Archpriest John Sotnikov (and occasionally by the Greek priest from Glasgow) and was under the Œcumenical Patriarchate. Fr John Maitland Moir united the Orthodox of the city in one community, that of St Andrew the First-Called, under the Archdiocese of Thyateira and the Œcumenical Patriarchate. Not only did he serve in the Edinburgh Church (he introduced daily services), but also started communities in Eastern, Central and Northern Scotland (Aberdeen, Dundee, St Andrews, Highlands, Perth, Bridge of Allan). He became spiritual father of many people not just in Scotland but around the world. When he died he was the longest standing Chaplain to the University of Edinburgh. He was also Chaplain to other major Universities in Scotland. He was much revered as a holy man not only in Church but also in Scottish society. He died peacefully surrounded by his spiritual children at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh on Wednesday, 17th April.” May his rest be with the Saints and his *Memory Eternal.*



SIR-UK NEWS

BISHOPS' VISITS OVER ANNUNCIATION

FOR THE GREAT FEAST of the Annunciation, the dedication festival of our Convent in Willesden, **His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** came to England. On Thursday 4th April n.s., he was met at Heathrow on arrival in the country by members of the Brotherhood, and stayed the night at Saint Edward's, being with us for Great Compline. On the Friday morning with the monastic clergy from Brookwood, he served the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at the Convent, at the end of which he gave an instruction on the development and significance of that Liturgy, speaking of the contribution of Saint Gregory the Great, the Pope of Rome, whom, of course, we revere in this country as the Apostle of the English. His Grace returned to Brookwood for the Akathist service in the evening, and again, never missing an opportunity to give spiritually

beneficial instruction, at the end of the service he spoke eloquently about the Akathist. The Saturday was both the forefeast of the Annunciation and a Soul Sabbath, and His Grace attended Mattins, praying in the altar, and then celebrated the Divine Liturgy with our clergy, during which he ordained **Subdeacon Borislav Popov to the diaconate**. When Borislav was presented for ordination, the Bishop gave an edifying and uplifting address on the significance of the ordination, for Borislav, for his family, and for the church community. He spoke at some length on this, and also on the responsibility he himself was taking on in ordaining a new clergyman for our Church. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His Grace preached to all the people who had joined us for the Liturgy. In the evening, the Vigil Service was at the **Convent of the Annunciation**, and on the day of the Great Feast, Sunday 25th March / 7th April, His Grace, the other clergymen attached to Saint Edward's, and the newly ordained Fr Borislav served at the dedication festival Liturgy at the Convent. On this occasion, **His Grace, Bishop Sophronie of Suceava** of the Traditionalist Hierarchy of the Romanian Church, concelebrated with Bishop Ambrose. So many were the people there that most of the rooms on the ground floor of the convent were packed, and apparently some had to listen from the kitchen area. The Apostle reading was read in English, Slavonic and Romanian, and for the Gospel Greek was added as well. His Grace preached in English at the end of the Liturgy, stressing that in being incarnate God the Word took on human nature and not a human person, so that in Him all might be saved. After the service, **Mother Vikentia and her sisters** treated us to a festive meal in the *trapeza*. His Grace stayed in England until the Tuesday, before flying back to Greece. Bishop Sofronie was also in London for several days, and spent the time hearing the confessions of the Romanian-speaking faithful and attending to their pastoral needs. While in London, the two Hierarchs took the opportunity to have talks between themselves on matters of pastoral concern.

We should also add a little more about our new deacon. Father Borislav, who, in his native Bulgaria, was a faithful member of the Traditionalist Orthodox Church under the omophorion of **His Grace, Bishop Photii of Triaditsa**, started attending services at Brookwood when he settled in this country, though he lives some distance away in Chatham,

Kent. He and his wife, **Diaconissa Marina**, have four children: **Marina, Sophia, Paul and Anna**. The youngest, Anna, was baptized at Saint Edward's. For a picture of the family visit our blog: <<http://brookwoodblogger.blogspot.co.uk>>. Fr Borislav's sister, **Diaconissa Kalina**, is married to **Father Deacon Nikolai Petrov**, who serves in Sofia, and she came to England, with some of the other faithful from Bulgaria, to be at the ordination. To Fr Deacon Borislav, Diaconissa Marina and their family: *Many Years!*

TWO FUNERALS AT SAINT EDWARD'S

ANN SCRIBNER, who reposed at Southend University Hospital, Southend-on-Sea, on 24th March, and whose son had earlier been laid to rest in our cemetery, was buried at the Saint Edward Cemetery alongside our Brotherhood on Thursday 4th April, n.s. Her priest, **Archpriest Alexander Fostiropoulos**, of the **Exarchate of the Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe (Ec. Patr.)**, officiated at her funeral. After the service the mourners gathered for a Mercy Meal in the main hall of the Old Mortuary Chapel here. May Ann, who phoned us just a week or so before her death, telling us that it was the last time that she would speak to us in this life, now find *rest with the Saints*.

ANDREAS NICOLAOU of Woodmansterne, Surrey, died at the relatively young age of 47 at the Princess Alice Hospice in Esher, on 6th April. In the last days of his life he was visited by both of the priests of our community, who also concelebrated at his funeral. The service was held in Saint Edward's Church on Wednesday 10th April, n.s., and Andreas was laid to rest at the foot of his mother's grave in our cemetery. Again after the committal a Mercy Meal was held in the Old Mortuary, and, through the generosity of his family and friends, enough foods were left over to provide for the Brotherhood for days to come. May God grant Andreas, who had the blessing of being fully conscious of his impending death for weeks beforehand and was thus able to prepare himself spiritually for it, now be granted *Eternal Memory*.

VISITORS

MARGARET HOBBS of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** brought a group of about a dozen people from the **Godalming Baptist Chapel** to see our church on Wednesday, 17th April.

ON THE SATURDAY of the Laudation of the Mother of God, 7th / 20th April, **Fr Evfimii and Mother Evfrosinia** of the **Lesna Icon Convent in France** arrived just as we came to the end of the Divine Liturgy. They joined us and the parishioners that were there for the breakfast afterwards. They came loaded with provisions and gifts for us, and left with various medical supplies which **Oleg Myslov** had given for them.

ANIMAL MATTERS

ON 12th April, **Perkin**, our 16 year-old Top Dog, was put to sleep at the local vets. He had been growing more infirm for several months, and in the last days of his life was obviously in pain.

On 17th April, **Rob Lindsay**, came to service the fire extinguishers in the church, mortuary and new house, and kindly brought pigs' ears for the dogs, and two live point-of-lay pullets for our hen run. We now have nine layers and two cockerels, one of which Rob also gave us.



PRACTICAL TIP

WHEN you have received the Holy Mysteries at the Divine Liturgy, you should return to your place quietly and attend to the end of the service and to the thanksgiving prayers afterwards. Even if you have the habit of reading these at home in the evening, you should stay for those read in church so as not to set a bad example to others, who may be led to think that talking then or leaving the church is acceptable practice.