



FROM THE FATHERS

“WHAT is the fruit of the Spirit? Let us hear Paul speaking: *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace* (Gal. 5:22). What precision of speech, what harmony of teaching! He places love first; then recounts what follows. He establishes what is the root; then shows us the fruit. He lays down the foundation; then leads on to the edifice. He begins with the spring, and at once goes on to the streams. For a foundation cannot be laid for joy, if we value our own health and happiness before that of others, our own welfare above that of our neighbour. This will not come to pass until the rule of love prevails. Love is the root, the fount, the mother of all good.”

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, + 407 A.D.

“HE truly loves God whose soul, not consenting to evil delight, is not overcome by it. For the more a man gives himself to the love of baser things, the more does he cut himself off from the love of God... Turn your mind inwards upon yourselves, dearly beloved brethren. See whether you do indeed love God. And let no one believe himself, whatever his mind may say, unless it is confirmed by deeds. Let us ask our life, our soul, our tongue, whether we love our Creator? The love of God is never idle. It works great things, if it is present; if it refuses to bring forth good works, it is not love.”

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, POPE OF ROME, + 604 A.D.

At almost every Liturgy throughout the year, we hear the Beatitudes chanted as the Third Antiphon immediately before the Little Entrance, and this month on the third day of the Great Feast of Pentecost, we shall hear them read as the appointed Gospel lection, and so we are including in this issue the following instruction concerning their teaching.

The Gospel Beatitudes

SAINT IGNATIUS (BRIANCHANINOV)
OF THE CAUCASUS

FROM fulfilling the Gospel commandments feelings are revealed in the soul, which are foreign to the fallen man and unknown to him. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit* (John 3:6); and as the commandments of Christ are *spirit* (see John 6:63), then those feelings which derive therefrom are spiritual feelings.

What is the first feeling which appears in the soul from the fulfilling of the Gospel commandment? - **Poverty of spirit.**

When a Christian begins to long to keep the Gospel commandments, both inwardly and outwardly, he comes to see that his own disordered nature rises up against the Gospel and acts against the Gospel. In the light of the Gospel, the Christian thus sees within himself the fall of man. From this insight, a humble understanding concerning himself is naturally given birth, such as is called in the Gospel **poverty of spirit** (Matt. 5:3).

Poverty of spirit is a blessing, the first in the evangelical number, the first also in the order of spiritual progress, the initial spiritual stage, the first rung on the ladder to blessedness.

Each and every feeling and stage, essentially linked to renewal, must also without exception have blessedness within, as a manifestation within the soul of the heavenly kingdom, as a pledge of salvation, as a foretaste of the eternal blessedness.

Saint David said of poverty of spirit: *A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise* (Ps. 50:17).

Poverty of spirit is salt for every spiritual sacrifice and whole burnt offering. If they are not salted with this salt, God rejects them (see Mark 9:49).

The sight of his fall is already a blessing for the fallen man. One who sees he has fallen is enabled to recognise the indispensability of salvation, and of a Saviour; he is enabled to believe in the Gospel with a living faith. Such a state is a gift of Grace, it is the action of Grace, its fruit, and therefore it is also a blessing. It is natural for the poor man to bewail his poverty. And poverty of spirit gives birth to the following blessing for him: **mourning**.

Mourning is the pious sorrow of a faithful soul looking into the mirror of the Gospel, and seeing within that mirror its numberless stains of sin. Such a soul washes those stains with holy water, that is with tears; it scours the stains with holy sorrow.

Untold comfort, untold lightness floods into the heart after the shedding of saving tears for one's sins, for one's fall; tears which make their appearance on account of the feeling of poverty of spirit.

If even here on earth, pious mourning affords such an incomparable spiritual comfort, for what blessedness in the age to come does it prepare us?

Christ's pronouncement is an endorsement of those who mourn piously: *Blessed are they that mourn* (Matt. 5:4).

You have committed sins? Then shed tears!

He who is occupied with deeply observing himself, who sees himself besmirched with countless sins, who reckons himself worthy of eternal torment, and who bewails as though already condemned therein, such a man sees little, or rather generally does not see, the failings of those close to him, and is ready to forgive

those failings that he does observe; he is willing to forgive from his heart all offences and insults.

The condition of the soul, from which anger, envy, remembrance of evil and judging have been estranged, is one with a new blessedness, and this is called **meekness**.

Blessed are the meek (Matt. 5:5), the Saviour announces, *for they shall inherit the earth*.

What is this earth? After the fall, God called Adam earth, and in calling Adam earth He called me earth as well: *Earth thou art, and unto earth shalt thou return* (Gen. 3:19).

Being earth, together with others I am deprived by the fall of rule over this earth. Various passions have stolen that from me, particularly fierce anger, which provokes me and impels me. I am deprived of this rule over myself. Meekness restores this power to me, it reintroduces to me the ability to rule over my inheritance, my earth, everything mine, my flesh, my blood, my actions. *The meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in an abundance of peace* (Ps. 36:11).

Having restored the earth again, I begin to desire heaven; I enter a new state, which introduces grace within me, leading me to a new blessedness. I start to ***hunger and thirst after*** the ***righteousness*** of God, not the hollow human version (see Matt. 5:6).

Divine righteousness is revealed to mankind in Divine kindheartedness, and, as does no other virtue, it commands us to become like unto God through perfect kindheartedness (Matt. 5:48).

Kindheartedness (mercifulness) does not judge anyone, loves enemies, lays down its soul for others, and makes a person like unto God. This stage is again blessedness (Matt. 5:7). The heart which is embraced by **mercy** cannot have any thoughts of evil; all its thoughts are of goodness. Such a heart, in which only good stirs, is a pure heart, capable of Divine vision. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God* (Matt. 5:8).

They asked one of the great teachers of monasticism, “What does a pure heart mean?” He replied: “A heart which, like the Divinity, is moved by a measureless feeling of mercy towards all that is created” (Ven. Isaac the Syrian).

The **peace** of God descends into the pure heart, re-uniting the mind, soul and body, which hitherto had been dislocated, restoring the man, remaking him as an heir of the New Adam.

The peace of God is the portion of the saints of God. By means of holy peace, the Christian, having completed the course of repentance, is reconciled with God, with every circumstance, with all his neighbours, and with himself; he is made a son of God by Grace (Matt. 5:9).

The peace of God is concomitant with the manifest presence in a man of the Holy Spirit; it is the activity, the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

He who has attained the peace of God within is enabled to achieve the other final beatitudes: courageous forbearance, bearing reproach, slander, rejection and other misfortunes.

He who has attained the peace of God is not fearful of the billows without; in the scales of his heart, the comfort of Grace counts as naught all that in earthly terms is accounted precious, great and delightful, as also all that in earthly terms is accounted onerous, distressing or bitter.

Look upon the magnificent ladder of the Gospel beatitudes; examine every rung. It is good to be atop this ladder. Even that man is blessed who only reaches the first of its steps.

On this ladder it is impossible to scramble; unfailingly one must ascend step by step.

Divine Grace leads one upon it. It takes a man up to the last step, not when he considers himself worthy of this, but when It recognizes him to be worthy. Those who are worthy of this exaltation are the humble.

Blessedness is not for those who make themselves to be worthy: a proud and stupid self-opinion may afford a man some sort of blessedness, but it will deceive you throughout your whole life; it will cheat you; it will deprive you of what is truly good on earth and in heaven.

Seek spiritual poverty. The search for this beatitude is permissible and praiseworthy. It is the foundation, the granter of all the other beatitudes. When you shake the foundation, then even he who stood on the highest steps of spiritual progress can be brought down, and is often dashed to death.

The attainment of poverty of spirit is achieved through study of the Gospel, through fulfilling its precepts, checking your activities and values against the Gospel precepts, through compelling you heart to bear wrongs courageously, through self-reproach, through prayer and through acquiring a broken and humble heart.

God declines a proud request; He does not fulfil that which is unnecessary, but when His creature begs of Him a gift which is essentially profitable and indispensable, then He bestows it from His bountiful treasuries.

What is essentially profitable and what is indispensable for a man is the spiritual gift from God of **poverty of spirit**. Amen.



“THE unclean spirit is the thief, who cannot steal from those who walk in the light of good works. But if a man has taken his delight in the dark of earthly desires, or in the midst of earthly pleasures, he will strip him of every enduring flower of virtue. And it is because of this the Lord says: *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.*”

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN, + 397 A.D.

Sermon on the Ascension of our Lord

BY HIS EMINENCE, BISHOP PHOTII OF TRIADITZA

4th /17th May, 2007

THE GOD-MAN Christ, beloved faithful, came from the Truth, brought to us as a gift the Truth and returned to the Truth, raising up human nature, on the fortieth day after His Resurrection, to the very Throne of the Holy Consubstantial, Life-giving and Indivisible Trinity. The Saviour came not only to show us the path toward the Truth. He came, being Himself the Truth and the Way towards Her. Christ the Lord levelled the walls between the earthly humans and the celestial Truth. Ay, if we do not rise above the dust of the earth, if we do not rally courage enough to rise above our own nonentity, above our voluptuous desires for earthly things, we will be unable to walk on the path toward the Truth, we will be unable to be children of the Truth, we will be unable to live with the Truth and in the Truth. And the path, leading towards the Truth, leads all the way upwards and never downwards, just as Christ's path led towards Golgotha. And our very first step of rising from the earth toward heaven, our very first breaking off from the earthly bounds, is our ascending on the cross, as Christ Himself was raised from the earth on the Cross, in order that He draw every man toward Himself: toward the Truth, toward the Way and toward Life. The path from the cross to heaven, to immortal life, is indeed sometimes of extensive duration and a long distance, very long, and sometimes it may be traversed in but an instant, as happened to many of the holy New Martyrs of Batak,¹ whose memory we celebrate today, together with Christ's glorious Ascension. Everywhere there was blood, shrieks and horror..., some of the Martyrs bravely threw themselves into the embrace of Truth, others did this timidly and with resignation, or—in a swoon of terror—let themselves fall into the same embrace, not renouncing their Faith in order to be spared from death, but in an instant, passing under the blade of the axe or the *yataghan*, they became participants in the fullness of Truth and Life!

However, there is hardly anything half so grievous as one who, having once torn himself away from the earth and ascended his cross, has afterwards become frightened by the way of the Cross and the Resurrection, or has been hoaxed by the earthly desire to feel again the earthy dust under his feet. And lo! Today² the Hierarchical Assembly of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad descends from the cross of their Orthodox witness. Today, by serving the Liturgy together, the mark is set for the Church Abroad to be grafted into the organism of the Moscow Patriarchate. Lo, today the chief priests seal their descent from their cross by exchanging the liturgical kiss with those who were calling them to descend from the cross as they themselves had done in the past. How painful is the lie, which in our days calls the descent ascent, and the fall rising! While the Hierarchs of the Church Abroad were raised from the earth on the cross of witnessing for Orthodoxy, they were called schismatics; when they descended from the cross, when they delivered to Caesar—be he even so an ecclesiastical Caesar—what belongs to God, they immediately rose in his eyes and became his brethren. Indeed, is there anything more disheartening than to see how a lie bedecks itself with the garments of Truth? Indeed, those who descended from the cross pronounce, and will continue to pronounce, many words of fidelity to the Church and Orthodoxy—words glorifying the exploit of the martyrs and confessors; but is it really not a descent to wreathe verbal praises for the spiritual heroes, having yourself fled in disgrace from the battlefield? Is it not immoral—having yourself abandoned your witnessing of the Truth for the sake of earthy benefits and gains—to glorify the persons, who held the love of Truth higher than their own lives? And yet, Caesar will not celebrate his victory for long. He shall not be jubilant for long, because what is God's has been delivered to him by the hands of bishops, with the sole purpose of acquiring his condescension. For God is never mocked!

And because the God-Man after His ascension abides with us—with all who, even though weak, aspire to tread along the path leading upward and only upward: to Golgotha and the Cross, and

thence toward the heavenly homeland, from whence over us pour down the streams of the love of the New Martyrs of Batak, of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, of all the citizens of Heaven, who walked their earthly path in the never-setting light of the Way, the Truth and Life! Amen.

Footnotes:

1. The Holy Martyrs of Batak - Bulgarian Martyrs from the village of Batak who were slain by Turkish forces in 1876, in an assault on the Christians which lasted from the 1st to the 4th May (Old Calendar). Their feast day is observed on 4th / 17th May, which in 2007 was also the Great Feast of the Ascension.

2. It was on that very same feast day in 2007, - and it is for this reason that Bishop Photii contrasts the Martyrs of Batak with the betrayers of the Church Abroad, - that the “Act of Canonical Communion” between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia was signed in Moscow, thus changing the historical course of the latter and bringing her into full communion with “World Orthodoxy,” its Sergianist heritage and its ecumenical activities. However, through God’s mercies, one hierarch, Bishop Agafangel, and numbers of the clergy and laity throughout the world did not accept this “descent from the Cross.” Some joined themselves to other Traditionalist Synods, and many formed a continuing Church Abroad under the omophorion of Bishop Agafangel. The traditionalist Synod now comprises twelve Bishops, and has monasteries and parishes throughout the world. The Synod which united with the Moscow Patriarchate also has twelve Bishops (with a thirteenth in retirement) and lives semi-autonomously as part of the Moscow Patriarchate, though its exact purpose is unclear: many decisions are purportedly referred to the Patriarch himself, the churches directly under the Patriarchal administration even abroad seem to have a stronger presence, and, even eight years after the union, duplications of dioceses and administrations are still in evidence. So, one is left wondering: To what purpose this apparent duplication of administrations?

Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

On the Liturgy

§ 49. Teaching Concerning the Liturgy. The most important service in the Christian Church is that in which the Mysterion of Holy Communion is celebrated. It is called the Liturgy, which derives from the Greek, meaning a communal service or work, because all the faithful are bound to participate therein. It is also known as the Eucharist, or Thanksgiving, because it is celebrated as a thanksgiving memorial of Christ's ministry; and popularly [in Russian] its is called the *Obednya*, which relates to the Russian word for the midday meal, *Obed* - dinner, because it is appointed to be served before dinner.

§ 50. The Institution of the Mysterion of Holy Communion. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself laid the foundation of this Mysterion. On the Thursday, the eve of His death, in the evening he instituted the Eucharist. He took bread and blessed it and gave it to His disciples, saying: *Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me* (1 Cor. 11:24). Then He took a cup of red wine, and giving praise to God, gave it to them, saying: *Drink ye all from it: for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins* (Matt. 26:27). *This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me* (1 Cor. 11:25).

§ 51. Its Purpose. The Lord instituted this Mysterion primarily as a perpetual memorial of His saving death, secondly to confirm the new covenant between God and His followers; and finally to provide the faithful with a means of union with Himself for the attainment thereby of life eternal.

§ 52. The Development of the Liturgy. From the Book of the Acts of the Apostles it is evident that, after the descent upon them of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles daily assembled with the faithful in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Mysterion of Holy Communion. Approaching this celebration for the first time, they naturally first of all established a form and order for the sacred rites of the Mysterion. Having established them once and for all by common consent, they subsequently themselves conformed to the order that they had instituted, as did the Bishops and priests who had been appointed by them to the various churches. The order set up by the Apostles can still be seen within the Liturgy of the Apostles James, the brother of the Lord, which is preserved to this day in the East. The Apostles and the first pastors of the Church passed on the order of the Liturgy to their successors orally, requiring them to learn all the prayers and rites by heart. This was done with particular caution, so that the mysteries of the Divine service would not in some way be revealed, and then subjected to the ridicule of the pagans. But in the fourth century, when Christianity supplanted paganism in the Roman Empire, the Apostolic Liturgy, preserved till then by oral tradition, was committed to written record. Adopted and revised by Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, it has come down to us in the forms of the Liturgies of Saint Basil the Great and of St John Chrysostom.

The Liturgy may be celebrated on every day of the year, except for certain days in Cheesefare Week [Wednesday and Friday] in Great Lent and on Great Friday. It may be celebrated only once a day on the same Holy Table and only once a day by the same celebrant. Following the example of the Saviour's Mystical Supper, in Apostolic times it was celebrated in the evening, and sometimes continued until midnight (Acts 20:7), but when a decree of Trajan forbade nighttime assemblies for all types of people, the Christians began to gather for the Liturgy just before dawn. In the fourth century, it was established that it should be celebrated no later than noon, as is the case today [with a few special festal exceptions].

§ 53. **The main parts of the Liturgy.** The Liturgies of St Basil the Great and St John Chrysostom fall into three parts: 1) The Proskomidi, 2) the Liturgy of the Catechumens, and 3) the Liturgy of the faithful.

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



THE COMING MONTH

MAY this year begins while we are still celebrating Pascha, whose leavetaking falls on the 7th / 20th of the month. The next day we celebrate the **Great Feast of the Saviour’s Ascension** into the heavens. Naturally such an important festival is observed with the chanting of a Vigil service as well as the Divine Liturgy, and the festival is kept for nine days, until and including the Friday of the following week. The Saturday following is kept as a **Soul Sabbath**, a day on which we especially commemorate all the faithful departed. This commemoration is made because during the radiantly joyous days of Pascha and the Ascension, the commemoration of the departed in memorial services has been curtailed somewhat in recognition of our Saviour’s victory over death. So this day is set aside when people may bring *koliva* and have their departed loved ones commemorated. It is also appointed here, because the next day is **Pentecost-Trinity** (18th / 31st), the day on which the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles and disciples, and through their ministry to us also. We thus include all those who have gone to their rest before us, who have received “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Mysterion of Holy Chrismation) in this celebration.

Pentecost-Trinity is kept for seven days, the second day of the festival being a special celebration of the **Holy Spirit** Himself. The whole week, like New or Bright Week, the first week of Pascha, is kept as a fast-free week in recognition of the importance of this Great Feast.

The following Sunday is kept as the **feast of All Saints**, the fruits of the planting of Pentecost. And on the Monday we start the **Fast of the Holy Apostles**, which begins annually on this the eighth day after Pentecost itself, and continues to and includes the eve of Sts Peter and Paul's day, 29th June / 12th July. This means that this fast varies in length depending on how early or late Easter falls. This year it was early and so, among the Orthodox, this fast will last for **34 days**. It is to direct us on the path towards sainthood ourselves, so that we might indeed celebrate with all the Saints, whose Sunday introduced this fast to us.

Among the individual saints celebrated this month we have the **Holy Martyrs Timothy and Maura** (3rd / 16th), who suffered for the Faith under Diocletian. Timothy, from the village of Perapa in the Egyptian Thebaid, was the son of a priest. He was made a reader, and had the duty of being the keeper and copyist of service books. Saint Timothy was denounced on this account. He was brought before the governor Ariannos, who demanded he hand over the sacred books. For his refusal to obey, they subjected the saint to horrible tortures. They inserted red-hot iron rods into his ears, from which he was blinded. Saint Timothy bravely endured the pain and he gave thanks to God, for granting him to suffer for Him. The torturers hung up the saint head downwards, putting a piece of wood in his mouth, and they tied an heavy stone to his neck. The suffering of Saint Timothy was so extreme, that the torturers themselves implored the governor to be more lenient. Then Ariannos was told that Timothy had a young wife by the name of Maura, whom he had married only twenty days before. Orders were issued for her arrest in the hope, that with her present they could break the will of the martyr. At her request, they allowed the Martyr to speak. Saint Timothy urged his wife not to be afraid of the tortures and become his companion in martyrdom as in marriage. Maura answered: "I am prepared to die with thee," and boldly confessed herself a Christian. Ariannos gave orders to tear out the hair from her head and to cut off the fingers. Saint Maura underwent the torment with joy, and even thanked the governor. Then Ariannos ordered her to be thrown into a boiling cauldron,

but she did not sense any pain and remained unharmed. Suspecting that, out of sympathy, the servants had filled the cauldron with cold water, Ariannos approached and told the saint to splash his hand with water from the cauldron. When the martyr did this, Ariannos screamed with pain and drew back. Then, momentarily admitting the power of the miracle, Ariannos confessed the God in Whom Maura believed as the True God, and he gave orders to release the saint. But the devil still held great power over him, and soon he again began to urge her to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Ariannos was overcome by a satanic rage and he inflicted new tortures upon the Saints. At the last, he ordered that they crucify the martyrs. Over the course of ten days, both husband and wife hung on crosses face to face with each other. On the tenth day they surrendered their souls to the Lord. This occurred in the year 286. At Constantinople a church was built in their honour.

Our **Venerable Father Cassian the Greek of Uglich** (21st May / 3rd June), is celebrated on the day of the Holy Peer of the Apostles, the God Crowned Sovereign Constantine the Great, after whom he was named before his tonsure. He was himself a descendant of a Byzantine princely line, and came to Moscow as part of the delegation to Great Prince Ivan III, together with the daughter of the Emperor, Sophia Paleologa. He subsequently decided to devote his life to God's service and declined to remain at the court, placing himself under the direction of Bishop Joasaph of Rostov. When the bishop withdrew to the Therapon Monastery for solitude, Constantine followed him and led a strict ascetic life. He accepted monastic tonsure after a miraculous vision by night of St Martinian. After some time, St Cassian left the monastery, and settled not far from the city of Uglich, where he founded a cell in honour of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Reports of his exploits spread widely, and people began to come to receive his blessing and his counsel. St Cassian accepted all with love, guiding them on the way to salvation with quiet words. He reposed in deep old age in A.D. 1504. In the Uglich Chronicles many miracles of the saint were recorded, in particular the protection of his monastery from the Poles in the years 1609-1611 by his prayers.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

THIS MONTH, because so many points were raised by our correspondent, we are reproducing our reply as written with her queries and the answers interlined. Sadly, the queries show up the deplorable ignorance of many contemporary Orthodox Christians about their Faith. For many this ignorance is understandable, as they grew up under the atheistic regimes and lacked any proper instruction in the Faith. For others, the children and grandchildren of emigrés, their “instruction in the Faith” seems often to have only the slightest relevance to the teachings of the Church, but to have concentrated heavily on fostering in them an attachment to some “Mother Country” they have never known. The results of this are everywhere only too evident. In our own email correspondence, we note that, time and again, people will respond to any perceived slight on their perceived “Mother Country,” its politics, its language or culture, but are little interested in the concerns of the Church and her hurts. It was, of course, this same “education” that led so many in the old Russian Church Abroad to accept the union with Moscow. Much more disastrously, such a “schooling in the Faith,” has left many with an attachment to the customs of their parents’ people, a kindergarten appreciation of some church customs (“We bless fruit on Transfiguration,” “We make pastry birds on Forty Martyrs’ Day,” etc - things which in themselves can be beautiful and helpful), - but no real spiritual formation or understanding of the principles and requirements of the Faith, and so they are spiritually rudderless, and their children often even more so. (Below we have set off our correspondent’s words in a different type-face.)

MANY THANKS for your message. Apologies for not replying sooner... My, what confusion you live in! I will try and answer all your questions. Maybe the best way is to interline your points with my replies.

“Is it true that the oldest edition of Evangelie (not a copy) is in Slavonic?”

No, it is not! The Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus date back to the fourth century [both are in Greek] and are considered to be the oldest extant texts of the Scriptures, but there are fragments which are even older [also in Greek].

“If this is the case, then is it true to assume that the Holy script’s native language is Slavonic?”

Well, it is not the case, and so one cannot make that assumption. In any case it is a historical absurdity! The Slavs as a distinct people do not seem to appear until about the sixth century; they had no alphabet until one was devised for them by Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Peers of the Apostles, - they lived in the ninth century, - and so until this time they had no literary tradition at all. This is a full 700 years and more after the Apostolic writings. The Old Testament writings are, of course, even older than the Apostolic ones.

“Also why [do] many say that the Arabic is the brother of the Slavonic language?”

I think that if there are many who say this they must be talking about something they are completely ignorant of! Slavonic is considered to be one of the Indo-European family of languages; Arabic is classified as one of the Afro-Asiatic, often called the Hamito-Semitic, family. They are not at all closely related. The oldest text of any of the Scriptures that we have in Arabic dates only from the 8th century.

“Also what about the Bible? was it written in Latin because the old Hebrew language did not exist at the time? when was the Bible written?”

No, the Bible was not written in Latin at all. There is a version of some of the Scriptures translated into Late Latin dating from the 3rd century A.D., but the classic version is St Jerome’s Vulgate which dates from the end of the 4th century. The early Christians in Rome used Greek in their services. Hebrew is a language much older than Latin; the oldest texts date back to the tenth century B.C. Rome itself did not exist until more than 200 years after this.

The Bible, of course, was not written as a book. It is an anthology of various books. The Old Testament Scriptures were written in Hebrew, but translated into Greek in the third century BC. This version is called the Septuagint and is the version used by the Orthodox Church. Subsequently Hebrew versions were revised, in part to obscure the fact that the prophecies pointed to our Saviour. Unfortunately Protestant translators did not comprehend this and so translated from the Hebrew, thinking it would be the oldest and more authentic version.

The New Testament books, with the possible exception of St Matthew's Gospel, were written in Greek in the first century A.D., and possibly the very first years of the second century. St Matthew's Gospel may originally have been written in Aramaic, the language of Palestine in the time of Jesus, and translated into Greek; however, if this is the case, the translation was early and I do not think the Aramaic version is extant.

So, the Bible was not written in Latin. One cannot say that it was written at a specific time, because it was written at various times, although the canon (the actual books that were accepted as authentic) was only finalized in the fourth century. To say that Latin predates Hebrew is sheer nonsense.

I hope this helps, but wonder where on earth you got all these completely unfounded and untenable ideas. It is rather worrying: you have children for whom you are their primary instructor in piety. If you are so ignorant of these things, how will they be instructed? How will they grow up Orthodox and have a hope of salvation? You really should come to Fr Nippon's Saturday classes and begin to learn about the Faith you profess to believe in. If I had a doctor who did not know the difference between gangrene and a common cold, I would be worried. If an economist did not know the difference between interest rates and the gross national product, I would be worried. So also an Orthodox Christian should know about their Faith and be in a position to answer questions about it. The ideas that you have put forward (maybe they are not your own but were put to you by someone else) are unsubstantial

historical impossibilities, stupidities and myths. Leave them.

Our correspondent in this instance later revealed that she had gleaned these absurd ideas from visiting an online chat room, which shows the spiritual danger and folly of wasting one's time with such things, time which could better be spent seriously studying the Faith, rather than being tempted, and tempting others, with unfounded opinions.



SAINT EDWARD'S SPRING FEAST

THE annual commemoration of the Martyrdom of St Edward always falls within Great Lent. In fact, those who plotted his assassination are said to have been anxious to be rid of him before Pascha, when he might have married and begotten an heir. This year the feast fell on the Tuesday of the last week of the fast. On the Monday evening we chanted a Vigil for the Saint, and on the Tuesday morning celebrated the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Few of our regular parishioners seem to attend this celebration, coming instead for the Autumn feast, perhaps because of the food restrictions or because of the other services which make Lent a busy time. At the Vigil we were joined by a goodly number of pilgrims from the **London Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Ennismore Gardens**, and for the Tuesday morning service our ranks were swelled by people from both the Moscow Patriarchate churches in London.

BISHOP AMBROSE'S VISITATION

AS has become his custom since the Convent of the Annunciation in London and our own community came under his archpastoral care, **His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** came to England for Great Week and the beginning of New Week, so as to ensure that as full as possible a round of Divine services could be celebrated at both communities. He arrived in London from France on Lazarus Saturday, 22nd March / 4th April, and was met at St Pancras Station by **Constantin Militaru**, who had kindly volunteered to bring him to Brookwood. They arrived at our church as we were celebrating the Vigil for Palm Sunday, and on the feast day itself His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy for our people, assisted by **Fr Stephen Fretwell, Fr Borislav Popov** and

Hierodeacon Sabbas. Fr Alexis served at the Convent. After the Parish Breakfast, where as usual the Bishop took the opportunity to mingle with the parishioners, he returned to the church to celebrate the **Mysterion of Holy Baptism** for **Simeon**, the new born son of **Alexandru and Tatiana Petrea of Stanmore**. **Mihai Visanu**, the coordinator of our Romanians, stood as godfather to the newly-illuminated. On Great Monday we had our normal monastic services with the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, although in view of the impending feast and the need to go to London we did not this year read the four Gospels through in full. Bishop Ambrose attended these services and partook of the Holy Mysteries. In the afternoon, he and members of the Brotherhood drove to London for the **Vigil for the Great Feast of the Annunciation at the Convent**, the dedication festival of the sisters' community. After he had been greeted by **Mother Vikentia** and offered refreshments, the Vigil was served according to the Russian typicon (with lenten additions), and afterwards the sisters treated us to a supper. The Brotherhood members then returned to Brookwood, but Bishop Ambrose stayed in London at the priest's house, so that he might have more opportunity to hear confessions. The **festive Liturgy** the next morning was also celebrated according to the Russian usage, with **Lenten Hours, Typica and Vespers** preceding it, and the chapel was packed with people for this celebration, many of them being members of the Traditionalist Romanian congregation. A more formal *trapeza* [dinner] was provided by the sisters afterwards, though one keeping strictly to the Great Week fasting precepts. Bishop Ambrose then returned to Brookwood, where on the Wednesday, he himself served the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with the Brotherhood clergy according to the hierarchal usage. In the evening he was the proto-celebrant at the **Mysterion of Holy Unction**, which followed Compline, and he anointed all those who had come seeking spiritual and physical healing through the mysterion. As soon as possible after this service, he returned to the Convent to serve for the rest of Great Week and for the Paschal Midnight service there. **Roxana Gafita** kindly took His Grace to the Convent, and he could not have arrived there much before midnight. On the day of Pascha itself, Sunday 30th March / 12th April, Bishop Ambrose was brought back to Saint Edward's by **Matias Fagerlund** and his family, to preside at the **Agape Vespers Service** and the little reception that we have every year after that. It is during this service, that we read the Gospel in many languages, to indicate that it is to be preached to all peoples of the world. This year,

however, we were only able to muster nine languages. His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy at Brookwood on the Monday of New Week, and after having breakfast with us and our parishioners, he was taken back to London by the Romanian faithful. Later that day, he visited the Birmingham area, before leaving England on the Tuesday to make his way to Russia and South Ossetia for a pastoral visit to those regions. From monies collected from our parishioners and readers in the **Orthodox Aid Fund**, we were able to give His Grace the equivalent of £1,000 in dollars for the **Missions in Africa**, and a similar amount in euros to pass on to **His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos & Fili** for the **soup kitchens** being run by his diocese in Greece, but what is this to compare with the pastoral love and care that His Grace showed us by being with us over the festal period?

GREAT WEEK & PASCHA AT BROOKWOOD

WHEN Bishop Ambrose was not with us during Great Week, we naturally maintained our usual service schedule, and we were helped immensely by **Vasileos Kalkanteras and the group of volunteers with him**, who spent a large part of Great Friday decorating the *epitaphios* and the church with flowers. Much of the work Vasileos and Evphi had done beforehand at home, bringing things prepared in advance to decorate the *epitaphios*. For the **Midnight Paschal Service** itself, the church was not only packed, but it appeared that only about half the people were unable to get in. Fortunately the weather was mild and fine. Usually, at the priestly exclamation, *Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered*, many depart! Some did of course, but this year, the church remained full throughout the service. We were honoured to have the **Mayor of Woking, Cllr Tony Branagan**, with us. He arrived in the mayoral car, just before we began the Midnight Office, joined us for the procession around the church, stayed through Mattins and the Divine Liturgy, leaving at about 3.30 a.m. As he had come to us straight from attending a Charity Ball, and had another appointment later in the day, along with Bishop Ambrose, he must share the accolade of being the **hero of our festive season!** **Benjamin Waterhouse** accompanied Cllr Branagan to guide him through and explain the services. After the Divine services in church and the blessing of the paschal foods at the end of the Liturgy, our parishioners gathered round the bonfire on the Brotherhood grounds to break their fast together.

INFANT BAPTISM AT BROOKWOOD

IUSTIN, the infant son of **Cristian and Irina Verdes** of Hayes, Middlesex, was baptized at Saint Edward's Church on Saturday 12th / 25th April, after the churching prayers had been read for his mother. **Pavel and Ana-Marie Amariei** were the godparents and **Daniela Rotariu** a witness. Iustin is named after the Holy Martyr Justin the Philosopher, and on the day after his Baptism received the Holy Mysteries for the first time at the Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Convent. After the Baptism, the family and friends provided light refreshments for all who attended and left a plentiful supply for the Brotherhood as well.

CIVIC RECEPTION

ON Friday 11th / 24th April, Fathers Alexis and Niphon attended the Civic Reception of the **Mayor and Mayoress of Woking, Cllr Tony Branagan and Mrs Mary Branagan**, as representatives of our community and parish. The reception was held in the **H. G. Wells Conference and Events Centre** in the town. The fathers were seated at a table with last year's Mayor, **Cllr Ann Roberts**, and **Jenny Graveson of the Brookwood Cemetery Society**, along with two representatives of the Buddhist temple in Knaphill. Soon after we arrived, we were greeted by the **High Sheriff of Surrey, Mrs Elizabeth Kennedy**, and met several members of the borough council and administration, now involved in the running of the main cemetery at Brookwood. At the reception, awards were granted to three outstanding young people in the borough and to one adult, and one young girl gave a recital on the cello accompanied by a pianist. At the end of the evening, Cllr Branagan graciously came over to our table to thank us for attending the event.

PRESS NOTICES

WOKING NEWS & MAIL, Thursday, 9th April, carried a paragraph about Saint Edward, his relics and our Brotherhood in their "Your Community News" column, which is penned by **Ann Tilbury**. The piece was factual, correct and sympathetic, and thus welcome. **The Mayor, Cllr Tony Branagan**, also mentioned his being with us for Pascha night in his "Diary" in the same paper on 16th April.

VISITORS

ON Bright Wednesday, **Diane Holliday**, the manager of the main Cemetery here at Brookwood, brought **Ian Tomes** (see last article below) to visit us. Mr Tomes was shown the church and exhibition room, and expressed a lively interest in our work and worship.

OUR THANKS

ON 14th April, we sent round this email to as many as possible: *Just a note to thank all of you who contributed to the celebration of Great Week and Pascha here at Saint Edward's. First of all, all those who joined us in the Divine Services and those who, unable to do this for, as the services say, "a cause worthy of blessing," supported us by their prayers at home. Our thanks to Father Stephen and Father Borislav for helping to bear the burden of the priestly ministry to our people. Thanks also to those who baked the prosphoras and the Thomas Bread, who helped with the reading and chanting, with serving in the altar, who decorated the epitaphios and the church, and those who cleaned and prepared the church, the lamps and icons ready for the final decorating, those who laundered the church linens, helped with the ironing and changing the hangings and vestments, to the pot pourri and fragrance providers, those who made candle holders and helped in many and various ways to make sure that we could celebrate the services as fittingly as possible. Thanks to those who ferried Bishop Ambrose between London and Brookwood during his ten-day stay here in England, ... Also many thanks for those who provided the Brotherhood and our Great Week congregations with a breakfast every day, saving us time and work on days on which we had very little spare time. And to all those who brought foods for the Paschal Breakfast around the bonfire. Thanks again to Nick Kalnakov for helping to build the bonfire, to those who set up the tables on the lawn and to those who put up the lights (so that the food could be seen in the early hours of the morning!). Thanks also to those of you who brought others to the services, giving lifts to those who needed them, and who, indeed, helped out in so many ways that we have perhaps forgotten. - To this, we must now add thanks to those of you who came in after New Week to help clean the church, remove the decorations and put things back in their usual order.*

- *May our Risen Saviour bless you all and grant you His mercies, both in this life and in the life of the Age to come, for your kindness, generosity and support.*

NEW ICON CARDS

WE HAVE had another **icon card** produced. It is of **Saints Aidan and Cuthbert of Lindisfarne**, and depicts, side by side, two of the icons of hierarchs from our iconostas at Brookwood. The icons were painted by the **Sisters of the Convent of Saint Elizabeth in Etna, California**, and the photography and printing were undertaken by **MRM Studios in Aldershot**.



PRACTICAL TIP

IN this month's *Points from Correspondence* we have noted with sadness the appalling ignorance about our Faith, demonstrated by some of the faithful. Two other recent incidents, both from people living abroad, have confirmed that such ignorance is widespread. These people can speak passionately and intelligently about politics, the social world, entertainment, etc., - they are not unintelligent, - but when it comes to the one thing that should be the "head of their joy," they give the impression of knowing next to nothing. In one case, someone argued vehemently that St Andrew the First-Called Apostle was a Roman Catholic. Of course, we cannot speak of Roman Catholicism existing at all in the denominational sense until after the eleventh century. St Andrew lived in the first century. In the other instance, someone implied that some of our fellow Orthodox believers were somehow inferior for being Asian. In fact our Saviour, during His earthly sojourn, was an Asian. He lived all of His life, except for a short period in Africa, in Asia. The Apostles also were from Asia, as were a great many of the earlier and greatest Church Fathers. One (Orthodox) Archbishop of Canterbury was from Asia. More importantly, as Orthodox Christians, whatever our provenance or ethnic background may be, **we belong to the One Nation named after Christ**. Such ignorance is spiritually destructive. How

can we grow in the Faith, if we know so little about it? How will our children be instructed if all we are able to offer them, instead of the bread of spiritual instruction, is the stone of ill-founded opinion and prejudice? We are betraying them. Therefore, we would encourage each and every Orthodox Christian who has a care for their salvation to **read something spiritually instructive every day** of their lives. It does need to be an extensive piece, but at the very least do a little. For instance, read the Scriptural readings for each day posted in our calendar insert. It is for this reason that we bother to type them out! But back it up with something else, something from the lives of the Saints, commentaries by the Fathers or their spiritual counsels, so that you do not fall into the trap of interpreting the Scriptures as do the Protestants. Remember: *No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation* (2 Ptr. 1:20).



THE BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY

THE BCS has just published the 100th edition of its newsletter, *The Brookwood Express*, a title reflecting the fact that the cemetery once had its own railway line. This edition is splendidly in full-colour and contains valuable information about the new administration of the main part of the cemetery, supplied by **Ian Tomes**, the Strategic Asset Manager of Woking Borough Council. Such is the close link between us and the cemetery, our parishioners, and those who have an interest in our Brotherhood and its work, are encouraged to **join the BCS**. The membership secretary is **Jo Toogood**, 4 College Close, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 4JU; telephone 01276 63703. The AGM of the Society will be held at the Brotherhood in the Old Mortuary on Wednesday, 3rd June, at 7.30 p.m., and, after the formal business and refreshments, there will be a talk on **Grave Symbolism** by **Neil Morkunas** of **Abney Park Cemetery Society**. Abney Park Cemetery is one of the “Magnificent Seven” London cemeteries.



“HE who loves God prefers knowledge of God to all things created by Him, and ever strives for it with desire.”

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