



FROM THE FATHERS

“WE SEE the bodily Christ returning to heaven, borne to the stars on the bosom of a cloud, and we are bidden to expect His return from heaven just as we saw Him going to heaven, to the Father. All creation now waits in suspense for His arrival; faith and hope train their gaze totally upon this King. The world, which must be transformed anew, is already pregnant with the end to come on the final day. Oracles of truth warn all men to believe in the books I have mentioned, and to prepare themselves for God. Make haste, I beseech you, whilst the chance is available here, to lay in a store of blessings and to take precautions against evils. Be converted, and have done with debased preoccupations.”

SAINT PAULINUS OF NOLA, + 431 A.D.

“HE [Christ] was separated from them in the body (though as God He was with them) and, as He promised them, He was taken up and sat on the right hand of the Father with our human flesh. As He lived, died, rose and ascended, so we all live, die and are resurrected. Not all of us, however, will attain to the ascension, but only those for whom to live is Christ, and to die for Him is gain (Phil. 1:21), those who, before they died, crucified sin through repentance and followed a way of life in accord with the Gospel.”

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS, +1359 A.D.

The Day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit

SAINT THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

(1815 - 1894)

WITH WHAT RADIANCE the Holy Church surrounds the feast of Pentecost! We see in the hymns and in the sacred rites, in the decoration of the churches and homes, and even of the pathways, very special manifestations of rejoicing. And this is understandable. All these things are a fruit of the joy of life through the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And how many are the instructive, highly symbolic things in all this! From among the many, I will draw your attention to just one: to the fact that everyone has made bunches of flowers and fragrant herbs, the aroma of which is breathed out strongly at this special season, when they read prayerful supplications to God, Who is worshipped in Trinity.

But what does this same custom, which is so modest in appearance, signify? It represents that the descent of the Holy Spirit has the closest likeness to breathing. And actually, the initial reception of the Holy Spirit, and His abiding within the body of

the Church, when He was poured out upon the whole body of the Church and was received by each of her members, was as a clearly evident reflection of the process of our breathing. Now, see how it was thus!

The descent of the Holy Spirit was mankind's first inspiration of breath from the Divine Spirit. Remember the prophecy of Ezekiel about the valley full of human bones (Ezek. 37:1-14). Remember how, according to his word, bone was joined to bone, how the bones were then covered with sinews, flesh and skin, but how as yet they had no breath in them. And the prophet was instructed: *Prophecy unto the Spirit* [or *the wind* in some translations]. He prophesied and spoke, and they lived (Ezek. 37:9-10). That valley full of bones is an image of fallen mankind, which, estranged from God, did not have life in it and was without any spirit, as the Apostle says. However, the merciful Lord did not abandon it [fallen mankind], but, through a variety of providential actions, He made preparation for its quickening unto life. By the time of the appearance of Christ the Saviour, it [fallen human nature], one might say, was fully ready to receive new life; it resembled a solid body, with bone upon bone, covered with sinew, with flesh and with skin, lacking only breath within it. In the Gospel it is clearly stated that the time for its quickening was at hand. Little was still needed. But why was the Holy Spirit yet lacking? Because Jesus *had not yet been glorified*. Then the Lord arose and ascended in glory into heaven. The Divine Spirit descended, and breathing in the Divine Spirit quickened mankind. Then, this first time, like new-born children coming into the world, for the first time it [fallen mankind] drew into itself that Breath. The Apostles, and all those first gathered together in the Upper Room on Mount Sion, the Church, were the lips through which mankind drew its first breath of the Spirit.

But let us take this comparison further. In ordinary respiration, air is inhaled into the lungs. It passes through a large channel into progressively narrower ones until it reaches the very last sacs. The recipients of the life-giving streams of air are the lungs,

and the process of respiration with the rise and falling of the chest, inhaling and exhaling, is the means by which its life-giving power is imparted. So it is with the Holy Spirit. Once mankind has inhaled the Divine Spirit, he continues to breathe with It uninterruptedly. The set of lungs in which this is achieved is the Holy Church. The channel into the lungs are the Divine Mysteries of the holy Church and her other actions of sanctification. The rhythmic movement of the chest is the annual rhythm of all of the Church's liturgical actions, e.g. Great Lent and its attendant rites, followed by the festivals of the Pentecostarion, followed once again by a fast, and again festal days, and so on, just like the rhythmic movement of the chest. This is how the Church of Christ, indeed the Christian faithful everywhere, breathe. And because Christianity exists amongst mankind, all of mankind draws breath from It, but not all commune in the quickening action of that Divine Breath.

The reason for this is that one part of mankind has damaged organs of respiration, while another does not submit itself to the benevolent influence of this respiration. For respiration to have the fullest effect within the body it is indispensable that the channels in the lungs be neither damaged nor clogged. Similarly, for the Divine Spirit to have Its full effect, it is indispensable that the organs which He Himself established for communion with Himself must be healthy. That is to say, all of the Divine Mysteries and liturgical ordinances must be preserved intact, as established by the Holy Apostles under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Where they have been damaged, the breathing of the Spirit of God is incomplete, and, it follows, does not impart Its full effect. Thus it is that among the papists [i.e., *Roman Catholics* - note: the term *papist* does not have the pejorative connotation is now often does in English, it simply means one who follows the Pope] all the mysteries have been damaged and many saving ministrations have been distorted. Papism is vitiated by these defects and deterioration. Among the Lutherans [*Protestants*] the greater part of the mysteries and sacred ministrations are rejected, or remain distorted both in their meaning and in their form. They resemble

those who embrace the three fourths that are easy and leave the rest to rot. [*It should be borne in mind that St Theophan is here speaking of these denominations as they were in the nineteenth century, when Roman Catholics believed the doctrines of their Church and Protestants adhered to their own teachings. Today the situation has deteriorated considerably, with many in both groupings having little or no doctrinal foundation for their adherence to their particular communions - ed.*]. Close to them, though even more damaged, are our schismatics [*He refers to the various break-away sects in old Russia - ed.*] the Molokans, Khlisti and so on. All such people do not breathe [the Spirit] or do not fully do so, on account of the corrupting maladies which constrict the chest.

However, let us not exalt ourselves, in that we possess the healthy means to breathe with the Spirit of God: true Sacred Mysteries and the properly established Church. Here indeed we have the prerequisites for being quickened by the Spirit. Pay attention as to how. When as from above air enters the lungs and is dispersed through them along the channels, through other vessels it enters thereby the exhausted blood and the other depleted bodily fluids, which have been produced through the food we have received, and then it is expelled again through the channels of the lungs. Being revitalized by the life-bearing stream of air, the fluids become living [arterial] blood. The exhausted, dark [venous] blood is an image of the sinners, who are darkened by sins, and the renewed fluids represent the newly reborn or those who have returned, the unbelievers and the heterodox who have received instruction. These and others are given life in the holy Church of God, when they have undergone the revitalization of the Divine Spirit through the Holy Mysteries. Christians who are sinners deprive themselves of the Spirit, but through spiritual preparation, through confession, through partaking of the Holy Mysteries they again begin to breathe the Divine Spirit.

Without the breathing of the Divine Spirit, there is no life. Just as the Church breathes with this Spirit, so must all of us

breathe Him. The lips through which the Divine Spirit is received, the heart that opens to receive It, is living faith; communion with Him is established through the Mysteries and sacred rites celebrated in accord with with the ordinances of the Holy Church. To make Him one's own, one must act upon His inspiration which is expressed in the demands of conscience and the commandments of the Gospel. Whoever follows that way of life breathes with the Spirit and is enlivened by Him. True evidence of spirituality is prayer, that which is properly called the breathing of the Spirit. He who prays well, in a collected manner and fervently, both in church and at home, breathes with the Spirit.

I beg you therefore, brethren, *be not drunk with wine*, sensual satisfaction, *but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Eph. 5:18-20). Amen.

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“THE WORLD that you see around you, from the king to the beggar, are all in confusion and disorder and conflict, and none knows the reason, or that it is the manifestation of the evil which crept in through Adam's disobedience, *the sting of death* (1 Cor. 15:56). For the sin which crept in, being a kind of invisible power of Satan, and a reality, implanted all evils. Without being detected it works upon the inner man and upon the mind, and contends with him by means of thoughts; but men are not aware that they are doing these things at the instigation of an alien force. They think that it is all natural, and that they do these things of their own determination, while those who have the peace of Christ in their minds, and His enlightenment, know very well the source of these movements.”

VEN. MACARIUS THE GREAT, + 390 A.D.

Why did the Holy Spirit appear as Fire?

Saint Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, + 604 A.D.

YOU HAVE HEARD that the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in tongues of fire. But why did the Holy Spirit, co-eternal with the Father and the Son, appear as fire? Why as tongues of fire? Why does He sometimes appear as a dove and at other times as a flame? Why did He descend as a dove upon the Only-begotten Son, but as a flame upon the disciples?

The Holy Spirit appears as fire because, in the words of the holy Apostle Paul, God is an ethereal, indescribable, and invisible fire: *For our God is a consuming fire* (Heb. 12:29). God is also called fire because He destroys the rust of sins.

But the Lord sends fire down to earth when with the breath of the Holy Spirit He inflames the hearts of mortal men. And the earth lights up when a heart of flesh, that is cold in its iniquitous pleasures, abandons the desires of the modern world and becomes inflamed with love for God. Thus the Spirit very properly appeared as fire, because from every heart in which He chooses to dwell, He dispels the numbness of ice and inflames such a heart with a desire for eternal life.

And the reason He appeared in tongues of fire was because the Spirit is co-eternal with the Son, while the Son is the Word of the Father; thus, just as the tongue is in close proximity to the word, so the Holy Spirit appeared in flaming tongues, in order to show the Spirit's particular closeness to the Word of the Father.

Furthermore, the Spirit also appeared in tongues of fire because He causes everyone in whom He dwells to be ardent and

cogent. Church teachers possess tongues of fire, because in their sermons on the need to love God they kindle the hearts of their listeners. This flame was acquired from the mouth of the Lord Himself by those who said: *Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us... and while He opened to us the Scriptures?* (Luke 24:32), because from the spoken word the spirit is kindled, its cold rigidity is dispelled, the soul begins to burn with lofty aspirations, and distances itself from earthly desires. Celestial commandments are never heeded with a cold heart, but with a heart burning with the fire of inner love for them.

The Holy Spirit appeared both as a dove and as fire, because He makes all those whom He encompasses both pure and ardent – pure as a dove and fiery in their ardour. Such a combination of ardour and purity is the only one acceptable to God. Thus, since the Spirit teaches both righteousness and purity, He had to appear as a dove, so that every heart touched by His grace would be tranquil with meekness and fiery with ardour for the truth.

Yet why did the Holy Spirit appear as a dove over our Redeemer, our Mediator between God and men, but upon the disciples He descended as fire?

It is well-known that the Only-begotten Son of God is the Judge of mankind. But who could have borne His judgment if He, before gathering us together in meekness, had judged our sins with ardour for truth? Thus, having made Himself Man for the sake of men, He appeared meek before men. He did not want to destroy sinners, but wished to gather them to Him; He wished first to rectify them through meekness, in order to have with Him those who could later be saved on the Day of Judgment. For this reason the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove over the One Who came not to destroy sinners through ardour, but to bear with them a while longer through meekness.

On the other hand, upon the disciples the Holy Spirit had to descend as fire, so that they, being plain people and even sinners, could spiritually inflame other slaves of sin to rebel against their

sins and to cleanse by means of repentance those sins which God had spared through meekness. And the fact that even adepts of the Heavenly Teacher are not without sin is confirmed by St. John, who says: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 John 1:8).

Thus the Holy Spirit descended as fire upon people and as a dove upon the Lord because we, in our ardour for truth, must carefully notice and burn with the fire of constant repentance those of our sins which the Lord mercifully bore through meekness. Consequently, the Spirit appeared over the Redeemer in the form of a dove and over people in the form of fire, because the more moderate is our Judge's strictness towards us, the more must our weakness be inflamed against its own self.



“LET US with one mind be incited to reverence Pentecost, exulting in honour of the Holy Spirit, through Whom the whole Catholic Church is sanctified, and every rational soul quickened; Who is the Inspirer of the Faith, the Teacher of knowledge, the Fount of love, the Seal of chastity, and the cause of all power. Let the minds of the faithful rejoice, that throughout the world One God, Father Son, and Holy Spirit, is praised by the confession of all tongues, and that the sign of His presence, which appeared in the likeness of fire, is still perpetuated in His work and gift. For the Spirit of Truth Himself makes the house of His glory shine with the brightness of His light, and will have nothing dark or lukewarm in His temple. And it is through His aid and teaching also that the purification of fasts and alms has been established among us. For this venerable day is followed by a most wholesome practice, which all the saints have found most profitable to them, and to the diligent observance of which we exhort you with a shepherd's care, to the end that if any blemish has been contracted in these days just passed through heedless negligence, it may be atoned for by the discipline of fasting and corrected by pious devotion. On Wednesday and Friday therefore let us fast, and on Saturday for this very purpose keep vigil with accustomed devotion.”

SAINT LEO THE GREAT, POPE OF ROME, + 461 A.D.

Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV
PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

Note: In what follows we have expanded on Fr Alexander's original text to make things clearer for contemporary readers.

§ 104. The Marriage Service Crowning. At the end of the betrothal, the priest leads the bridal pair into the centre of the church before the stand with the Gospel Book and Cross, as the choir chants verses from Psalm 127, and the refrain on each verse: *Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee*. The psalmic verses reflect that in family life, happiness is achieved in the fear of God and in adherence to His commandments. It is God that blesses the struggles of pious spouses, Who grants them what is necessary for life, and blesses them with many and good children. The priest then asks each one of them individually whether they are entering into the marriage with a *good, free and unconstrained will and a firm intention*, and whether they have not been promised to any other, and would thus be breaking a former obligation. When they have answered before the whole church, the priest continues with the celebration of the Mysterion.

The liturgical celebration of the crowning begins with the glorification of the Holy Trinity: *Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*, thus with the same words with which we start the Divine Liturgy. Then there follows a litany, and three prayers, beseeching God for His blessing upon the marriage, that the spouses might continue in chastity, and that they be granted many and good children, and that they be protected all the days of their lives.

After these prayers, the priest places the crowns upon their heads in turn, thus blessing their marital union, as he says: *The*

servant of God, N, is crowned unto the handmaid of God, N, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. To which the choir responds, Amen. Then for the bride: The handmaid of God, N, is crowned unto the servant of God, N, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And again the Amen. This means that through the crowing, according to the law of God and unto the glory of the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the couple present there are united by the union of matrimony. Thereafter the priest blesses them thrice, with the short prayer: O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honour. The significance of this prayer means that we call upon the Lord our God that just as the bridal couple have been adorned with their crowns, so also their union might be adorned and their whole life together with all the gifts of His blessing, so that they might be content, that they might shine forth with piety and holiness, to the glory of His name. The placing on of the crowns, which are of course a symbol of royalty, points out to the bridal pair the grave responsibility that they will have to their descendants, as they become heads of the family for a future generation. And this requires that they strive to the utmost of their ability to bring up their children in confession of the Orthodox Faith, as new members of the Church. The fact that the bridal pair are crowned also brings to mind the crowning of the martyrs who have struggled well in the contest, and thus the newly-weds are crowned for having come to marriage as virgins, and thus having contested well. It is this crowning ceremony which expresses the essence of the mystery of marriage.

Drinking from the cup. After the reading of the Apostle and the Gospel, both of which speak of the strength and importance of marriage, there follow two litanies, and then immediately the recital of the Lord's Prayer, which the newly-married pair attend to with heart and mind, addressing their one Father in Heaven. The priest then blesses a cup of wine, and offers it to the groom and bride three times each to sip from; this signifies that hereafter they must share all things in common, that they must have

one purpose and desire, that they must be one flesh, according to the precept, *and they twain shall be one flesh*, and that their joys and their sorrows, throughout all the remaining days of their lives should be shared.

Procession around the stand with the Gospel and Cross. After giving them the common cup, the priest with his stole holds the hands of the two of them, and three times leads them in a circuit of the stand on which the Gospel and Cross are placed. This procession is made as a sign of spiritual jubilation and to indicate that, as they progress through their married life together, the newly-crowned pair must always strive towards heaven. During this triple procession, the choir chants verses which express the essence of the Mysterion. The first time, they chant, *Rejoice, O Esaias. A Virgin is with child and shall bear a Son, Emmanuel both God and man; for Dayspring is His name, Whom magnifying we call the Virgin blessed.* This is a glorification of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God through the All-holy Virgin, and directs the thoughts and hearts of all to the Saviour and the Theotokos, as they delightedly rejoice that their blessings have been sent down upon the newly-weds. The second procession is accompanied by: *O holy Martyrs, who have fought the good fight and have received your crowns, entreat ye the Lord that He have mercy on our souls.* Thus we glorify and call to intercession for us all the ascetics and martyrs who have been crowned, and at the same time show that the newly-crowned pair must needs live their lives in holiness, martyrically, overcoming all temptations and trials. And at the third circuit, we chant: *Glory be to Thee, O Christ God, the Apostles' boast, the Martyrs' joy, Whose preaching was the Trinity one in essence*, thus glorifying Christ as the praise of the Apostles and the joy of the Martyrs, and in like manner the glory and joy of the newly married, their hope in all the joyous and the distressful circumstances in their life ahead.

The removal of the crowns. The priest then takes the crowns first from the groom and then from the bride, while pro-

nouncing a blessing upon each of them, that as of old God sent His blessings upon the household of the elect Patriarchs of the Old Testament, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and upon Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel, He will likewise bless their life together and their descendants. Then he reads two short prayers and pronounces the dismissal and end of the service.

*... to be continued with an explanation
of the **Mysterion of Unction***



THE COMING MONTH

THIS YEAR the month of May is graced with two Great Feasts, the **Ascension of our Saviour** and **Pentecost**.

The *troparion* for the Ascension is chanted in the fourth tone, and it runs:

THOU hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit; and they were assured by the blessing that Thou art the Son of God and Redeemer of the world.

And when that promise has been given, on the day of Pentecost we chant:

BLESSED art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them didst draw the world into Thy net. O Befriender of man, glory be to Thee.

Such is the pre-eminence of the Great Feast of Pentecost that in the week that follows we have no fasting; we then celebrate the **feast of All Saints** - fruit of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then as St Leo the Great indicated in the quotation given above, we begin a fast which ends after the Divine Liturgy of the day of the

Martyrdom of the holy **Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul** (29th June/12th July). Thus, this year, for Orthodox Christians the Apostles' fast lasts thirty days. From the day of Pentecost until the day of next year's Pascha, we also use, at the beginning of many of our services and of our daily prayers, the following prayer:

HEAVENLY KING, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, O Treasury of every good and Bestower of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.

In this way we acknowledge that we cannot even begin to pray without the aid and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Among the Saints celebrated in May, we have:-

The **Holy Apostle Simon the Zealot** (10th / 23rd May): It may be that Saint Simon was called the Zealot because he had been associated with a political grouping called the Zealots, which objected to paying taxes to the Roman Empire and had taken their name from the zeal shown by the Maccabees in repelling the Hellenizers over a hundred years earlier. However, whether this be so or not, that zeal which appears to have characterized his earlier career was later transferred to serving the Church. He was born in Cana of Galilee and was the bridegroom at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-11). Our Saviour's presence and that of His Mother at his wedding suggests that they may have been in some way related. According to tradition, Simon was so impressed with Christ's miracle that he and his bride later agreed to live as brother and sister for the cause of the Gospel, and Simon was numbered among the twelve Apostles. After receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he and the others stayed some time teaching and preaching in Jerusalem, but they left the city shortly after the martyrdom of Saint Stephen when the Church was providentially scattered abroad (Acts 7:59-8:4). The Church speaks of Simon's missionary journeys to a wide range of countries. He passed through Egypt, Mauritania, Libya, Numidia, Cyrenia on the

north coast of Africa, and Abkhazia. He succeeded in converting many to the Faith of Christ. Simon also went to Britain where he enlightened many unbelievers with the light of the Gospel. Saint Dorotheus of Gaza stated that Simon not only went to Britain, but that he was crucified by idolators and buried there. He is the only one of the Twelve Apostles for whom we have evidence of a missionary endeavour in the British Isles, although St Aristobulus, the brother of Saint Barnabas, and one of the Seventy, preached extensively here and is commemorated as the first Bishop of Britain. In fact the evangelizing mission of the holy Apostle Simon in these lands was short-lived. According to one tradition, he was arrested on the orders of the Roman Procurator of Britain, Catus Decianus, was condemned to death and was crucified by the Romans at Caistor, Lincolnshire, and buried there on 10th May, 61 A.D. Another traditional account states that he also preached in what is today Georgia, was buried at Psyrtskha on the Black Sea coast. Weight was given to this tradition when in 1875, the Russians founded a monastery and a church was erected on his reputed grave site. This monastery was founded under the auspices of the Emperor Alexander III to house monks from Mount Athos, whose holdings there were no longer able to cope with the number of Russian monks on Athos, and so the monastery was called New Athos. Yet another tradition tells that the holy Apostle Simon accompanied the Apostle Jude, and they are thought to have preached together in Syria and Mesopotamia traveling as far as Persia, and are also believed to have been martyred there.

On the same day as St Simon, we also celebrate the **Venerable Isidora, the Fool-for-Christ**, who struggled in the Tabenna monastery in Egypt. Taking upon herself the feat of folly, she acted like one deranged, and did not eat food with the other sisters of the monastery. Many of them regarded her with contempt, but Isidora bore this with great patience and meekness, blessing God for everything. She worked in the kitchen and fulfilled the dirtiest, most difficult tasks, cleansing the monastery of every uncleanness. Isidora covered her head with a rag, and instead of the prepared

foods she drank the dirty wash water and ate the off-scourings from the pots and dishes. She never became angry, never insulted anyone with a word, never grumbled against God or the sisters, never spoke of her struggles, and was given to silence. Once, the great desert father, Abba Pitirim, received a humbling revelation. An angel appeared to him and said, "Go to the Tabenna monastery. There you will see a sister wearing a rag on her head. She serves them all with love, and endures their contempt without complaint. Her heart and her thoughts rest always with God. You, on the other hand, sit in solitude, but your thoughts flit about all over the world." The Elder set out for the Tabenna monastery, but he did not see the one he was searching for among those who were presented to him. Finally and reluctantly they brought in Isidora, considering her a demoniac. Isidora fell down at the knees of the Elder, asking his blessing, but the great Elder Pitirim bowed down to the ground to her and said, "Bless me first, venerable Mother!" To the astonished questions of the sisters the Elder replied, "Before God, Isidora is higher than all of us!" Then the sisters began to repent, confessing their mistreatment of her, and they begged her forgiveness. The saint, however, was distressed by her newfound respectability, and secretly slipped away from the monastery, and nothing more is known of her earthly life. It is believed that she died around 365 A.D.

The Venerable Martyr Michael of the Black Robe (23rd May / 5th June) was born in Edessa, but when his parents died, the young Michael gave away all his goods and travelled to Palestine, where he entered the monastery of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified. Once he was sent into Jerusalem to sell some handiwork for the monastery. A eunuch of an Arab princess met him in the street and brought him to the princess's home to show his wares. (Jerusalem was ruled by Muslim Arabs at that time.) The princess, like Potiphar's wife, conceived an illicit passion for the young monk and invited him to her bed. When he refused, the angry princess had him beaten and taken to the ruler, where she accused him of blasphemy against Mohammed. The judge tried

to make him accept Islam, but he steadfastly refused. To avoid a scandal they attempted to poison him but he was protected by God's grace, and so finally for his steadfastness for Christ he was beheaded by the sword. The Sabbaite fathers retrieved his body and gave it honourable burial at the monastery of his repentance.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“DO THE SINS of the fathers, etc, or family curses become null in the new Law of Christ? After absolution are we subject to responsibility, even if forgiven? The evangelical charismatics seem to declare all is new all is put right after repentance, whereas some of the desert Fathers seem to imply after the absolution there is yet or might be a retribution of sorts.” - J.H., Finchley.

I THINK YOU are getting things a bit mixed up. The sins of fathers are not identical with their curses. We often suffer the consequences of our father's / mother's sins in various ways - we can inherit diseases from them, we can suffer the consequences of a bad upbringing, we can grow up with ideas that are mistaken or soul-destroying which we have taken from them, etc. But their curses are when they, out of spite, malice or exasperation, ill-wish us, and thus give the demons an opportunity to specially attack us more vehemently.

Some of these effects, as we can see quite clearly, follow us even after our Baptism. If they have neglected our education, for instance, we do not suddenly become knowledgeable or learned, when we convert; if we are malnourished and under-developed then we do not suddenly become fit and healthy on Baptism. We still have to live with the consequences of those sins.

Regarding our own sins, again even after repentance we oftentimes have to live with the consequences of the sin. The Good Thief, was forgiven and promised Paradise, but he still had to suf-

fer the agony of crucifixion for several more hours. The “charismatic” “evangelicals,” whom you cite, seem to have a glib and shallow appreciation of things, and do not even seem to have very good powers of observation.



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

SAINT EDWARD'S SPRING FEAST

THE FEAST of the **Martyrdom of Saint Edward** was celebrated with a Vigil Service on the eve (Thursday, 17th / 30th March). Our congregation was joined on the occasion by **Father Deacon Nicolae** from the New Calendarist Church in Romania and by a number of parishioners from the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral Parish at Ennismore Gardens in London**. On the next day, that of the feast itself, we celebrated the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and then gathered for the Parish Breakfast.

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** visited England for the **Great Feast of the Annunciation**, the dedication feast of the Convent in London, and **Fr Borislav Popov** and the Brotherhood members joined him and Mother Vikentia and her sisters for the Vigil and for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, after which the sisters and their helpers provided a festive breakfast for all those who participated.

PALM SUNDAY & PASCHA

THIS YEAR, **Palm Sunday** fell two days after the Annunciation, and Bishop Ambrose travelled to France to keep that festival with **Fr Christian Doucet** and his flock in Meudon. The Brotherhood monastic clergy served at the Convent, where **Adriana Catrina**, the mother of the newly baptized Anastasia, was churched, and **Fr Borislav** served at Brookwood. On Great Wednesday, having returned from France, Bishop Ambrose joined us at Brookwood for the last celebration in the year of the Presanctified Liturgy, at which he preached on the importance for Orthodox Christians of frequent reception of the Holy Mysteries. That evening, he and our clergy celebrated the **Mysterion of Holy Unction**, an occasion on which the church was packed. He then returned to London to keep the remainder of Great Week and the Day of Pascha at the Convent. Here at Brookwood, we were joined by **Fr Archimandrite Daniel** on Great Thursday and he stayed with us until the Monday, helping with late confessions and assisting at the Divine Services of the Passion and of Pascha. On the day of Pascha itself, Bishop Ambrose returned to us to lead the **Agape Vespers Service**, at which the Gospel is read in a number of languages, and at the end of that service we made a procession around the church. Then the participants enjoyed an evening meal together. His Grace celebrated the Divine Liturgy with us on Bright Monday, and stayed the day, leaving early on Tuesday morning for Heathrow, for a flight to Moscow.

CHURCHING AT THE CONVENT

ON THE SUNDAY of St John of the Ladder, 13th / 26th March, **Elena Balan** had the forty-day churching prayers read for her at the Convent in London. Her daughter, **Victoria**, had earlier been baptized at Brookwood by Bishop Sofronie.

COLLECTION FOR THE AFRICAN MISSIONS

AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, we decided to curb **Vasileos Calcanteras's** enthusiasm for flowers for the *Epitaphios*, and restrict how much was spent on that, and in addition give the money put into the alms box at the back of the church on Palm Sunday to the work of **our Church's Missions in Africa**. The "collection" money on that day totalled £1,253.08, and with one very generous donation and several other small gifts, we collected **a total of £2,371.16**, which was given to Bishop Ambrose on Great Wednesday for his missionary labours in Africa. Since then three other individuals have made donations which we shall have to give him on his next visit.

Also, some time ago we collected money for a **Bulgarian family** in great need in Germany, and were then able to send them £4,200. Since then there have been late donors to this cause, and we have given a further £578.80 to that family, which parishioner **Evelin Dimova** is undertaking to take to them.

NEW ICONS FOR SAINT EDWARD'S CHURCH

WE COMMISSIONED two icons from the **Convent of Saint Philothei in Sweden** at the request of one of our people, and this commission was passed on to the **Convent of the Holy Angels, Afidnai, Attica**, and so, to our surprise, Bishop Ambrose brought the icons with him when he came for his visit. One is of the **Touching of Christ by St Thomas**, and the other, in memory of **Ariadna Rogers** (see March issue) was of the **Holy Martyr Ariadne**. Also, on her own initiative, **Deaconissa Kalina Petrova** painted us an icon of **Christ the Saviour**. All these will be shortly framed. In addition to these hand-painted icons, the **Grigoras Family** (especially **Daniel the server**) has given us a triple icon of the Saviour, the Theotokos and St Nicolas,

Christopher Russell has donated an icon of the holy Martyrs An-**tony**, **John** and **Eustachius** of **Vilnius**, and the sisters in **Sweden** sent us a copy of an icon they had painted of **St Gertrude** of **Nivelles**. This was sent at the request of **Mary Labarge** of **House Springs, Missouri**, who had commissioned the original icon. Our thanks to all those who have thus contributed to the beautification of our church; may the saints, whom they have honoured, ever pray for them.

CIVIC RECEPTION IN WOKING

AS THE END of her mayoral year draws to a close, **Cllr Anne Murray, the Mayor of Woking, and her husband, Michael Smith**, hosted a Civic Reception at the H. G. Wells Conference & Events Centre in Woking. The event, which included the presenting of awards and three musical interludes by two young people, a flautist and pianist, was attended this year by **Fr Alexis** and **Fr Hierodeacon Sabbas**. We were kindly taken under the wing of **Tony and Mary Branagan**, a former Mayor and Mayoress of the town.

CHERTSEY WALK TO HONOUR SAINT ERKENWALD

ON Saturday, 29th April, a walk around **Abbeyfields, Chertsey**, was arranged by **Chertsey Museum** and led by **Emma Warren**, the curator of the museum. Members of the Brotherhood attended the midday event, and we were taken around the site of the monastery, told of its history and the life of **St Erkenwald**. Very generously **Mary Haigh**, whom we met en route, allowed the participants to view the inside of the abbey barn, and another neighbour, whom the group just happened to meet in the road, allowed us into his gardens to see the only paving stones that

remain of the medieval church and the place where King Henry VI was first laid to rest. All those on the walk were given copies of our icon of St Erkenwald, and Mrs Warren used a larger version of that and of our icon of the Saints of London in her presentation.

MORTUARY RESTORATION

THE WORK on the restoration of the Mortuary came to a stand-still over the festal period at our request, as we wanted to keep access to the refectory, kitchen and lavatories as clear as possible. At the time of preparing this issue, it is about to start again, with the straightening of the turret and its completion. This may cause some inconvenience, but we hope that you will bear with us while this final stage of the work, which began in Bright Week last year, is undertaken.

Among the recent contributors to the fund for the restoration, we have received a donation from the **Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation**, and one from a lady in Russia, who is a film-maker. She visited us over ten years ago and interviewed us, but then for a long time we heard nothing more from her. Just over the feast she contacted us again and made a donation by using the **donate button** on our website. Except for from the few people in Russia whom we might consider to be "ours", this is the first time we have had a donation from that country, and we thank our donor, **Maria**.

VALUED CONTRIBUTIONS

ROXANA IOANA AMARIE, assisted by **Clara** and **Ionella**, worked from 11.30 a.m. till 8.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 28th March, spring cleaning and tidying in the Old Mortuary kitchen and utility area, in preparation for Pascha.

Also on the day after Thomas Sunday, **Ivan and Evelin Tsenkov and their children** kindly volunteered to help clean the church of the floral decorations, the potpourri and to scrape up the numerous wax droppings from the candles. They made an excellent and much appreciated job of it.

Led by **Presbytera Marina Popova** and **Elena Holden**, the “Dinner Ladies” donated a new coffee urn for our Parish Breakfasts.

We have already sent round an email letter, attempting to thank all those who contributed in so many ways to the celebration of the feasts last month. If inadvertently we have forgotten or overlooked anyone, we ask forgiveness, and we thank all those of you who have helped us over a very busy period. May our Risen Saviour bless you all and reward you richly.

VISITORS

Monday 27th March: **Archpriest Joseph Skinner** and his Matushka from the **London Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Ennismore Gardens**, and about twelve people, including **Mother Marfa of the Metochion of St Elizabeth the New Martyr at Bodiam**, visited our cemetery to serve a memorial service at the grave of **Veronica Souslova**. They then came to the mortuary hall to have a mercy meal in her memory together.

Later on the same day, a group from the **Friends of Kew Gardens** unexpectedly visited Saint Edward’s Church, while walking through the Cemetery.

Wednesday, 28th March: **Mary-Ann Ochota** of the **Discovering Britain** website visited Saint Edward’s.

Thursday, 6th April: A **Camberley University of the Third Age** group visited the church and were shown around.

Thursday, 27th April: A group of about twenty women involved in complementary medicine unexpectedly visited the church. They spent about twenty-five minutes asking questions and looking around. The group was led by **Jill Robertson**.



PRACTICAL TIP

FEW OF US today live in villages and neighbourhoods with a nearby parish church, and consequently our church attendance is often reduced to Sundays only, and this can hardly be avoided. However, do make sure that you give some effort to what, in his homily above, St Theophan the Recluse, calls “the annual rhythm of all of the Church’s liturgical actions.” This is particularly important for families with young children. Their primary source of instruction in the Faith, particularly if you live far from a church, must needs be through parental care and instruction, backed up of course with prayer and good example. The base-line for this is keeping the appointed fast days and reading the daily Scripture readings, but add a little more to this. Try and find out something about the saints commemorated each day (there are many ways of doing this these days - something which has become much easier in the last couple of generations - because there are now so many books and a great deal can be gleaned from Orthodox internet sources). During the feasts, add the troparion and contakion of the feast to your daily prayers, and thus try as much as you are able to join in the prayer of the whole Church, even though you may not be able to attend the services.

“IF SOMEONE is upset with you, that is, not at peace with you, but does not express it, be pleasant with them, as if you don’t notice it.”

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