



FROM THE FATHERS

“ALTHOUGH there seem to be tares in the Church, yet neither our faith nor our love ought to be hindered so that we ourselves should withdraw from the Church. We must labour only that we become wheat to be gathered into the barns of the Lord.”

HOLY Hieromartyr Cyprian of Carthage, + 258 A.D.

“IF WE are members one of another, the welfare of our neighbour is not his concern only, but that of the whole body, and the injury of our neighbour is not confined to him, but distracts with pain all else as well.”

“LET US HONOUR one another, that we may learn also to honour God. He that is insolent with respect to men, will also be insolent with respect to God. But when covetousness and selfishness and insolence meet together, what is wanting for complete destruction?”

2 QUOTATIONS FROM ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, + 407 A.D.

“IF YOU are indeed keeping the commandment of loving your neighbour, why do you implant in yourself the bitterness of annoyance against him? Is it not clear that above love you prefer the transitory, and in protecting it you wage war against your brother?”

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

THE PLACE OF THE BISHOP IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH*

by Archimandrite [now Bishop] Cyprian

The text of this article, translated from the Greek, is taken from an address delivered by Father Cyprian, a brother of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili, Greece, on October 6, 1997 (Old Style), at the annual convocation (held that year at the Novotel Convention Center in Athens) in honour of the Name Day of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan and Much-Revered Spiritual Father;
Holy Hierarchs; Reverend Fathers and Brothers;
Honoured Company of Monastics;
Beloved Brothers & Sisters in Christ:*

A

I call upon your blessings and prayers, that I may fulfill this task of obedience—a service which was assigned to me, in my unworthiness, by our monastic Brotherhood.

1. The meagre thoughts that will be expressed this evening have as their basis the well-known Patristic teaching that Angels are the light of monastics, and monastics are the light of the laity: “Angels are a light for monks; the monastic way of life is a light for all people.”¹ Monastics are a light, first and foremost, because they struggle to become a “good example” for all, an example and a model of virtue.

They are also a light when, with prayer, love, and humility, they encourage and guide the Faithful in acquiring a genuine ecclesiastical ethos.

This service of brotherly love that characterizes monastics is especially valuable in our days, because our brothers and sisters in the world are exposed to a variety of influences, with the result that—usually out of ignorance—they think and act in a manner at odds with the Church.

Permit me this evening, therefore, to contribute—with the help, to be sure, of our *Panagia* and our Saints Cyprian and Justina, whom we are honouring—to this service of love, by dealing with a fundamental characteristic of the true ecclesiastical ethos, which is: a profound recognition of the central place of the Bishop in the Church and a deep reverence for his person.

At this year's convocation we would like to approach this subject, which for every pious Christian literally constitutes an essential determining factor in his Church life, with brevity and simplicity.

2. But this subject, specifically, incites fear in us. What do I mean? The Thirty-Sixth Canon of the Holy Apostles prescribes that the clergy of a diocese be punished very severely for one very serious sin, an ecclesiastical transgression.

What is this transgression?

If the people of a diocese, “on account of their own insubordination and malice,”² are not obedient to their Bishop and do not accept him as their Shepherd, then the clergy of this diocese are to be excommunicated, “because they have not corrected such an insubordinate people”;³ “inasmuch as,” according to the interpretation of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, “they did not instruct such an insubordinate people by their teaching and good example” (see note 2).

- We clergy, therefore, are obliged to provide our people with “teaching” and a “good example,” if we are to avoid the very heavy penalty of excommunication.

B

We are constantly impressed by the great reverence shown by Russians, Romanians, and other Orthodox peoples towards their Hierarchs.

In the lands of these folk, even after subjugation under atheism and the severe blows that the Orthodox Church thereby sustained, there has been preserved a popular dedication to, and honour for, the person of the Bishop which is probably without parallel.

1. This is how a clergyman, who took part in a tour made by a Hierarchy to Russia, describes some of its highlights:

In the cities through which we passed, the Faithful spread out their garments in the Bishop's path and then kissed the place where the Bishop had stepped....

In one small city..., the street along which the Bishop was going to pass was completely covered with flowers. ...The Archbishop was welcomed by the light of hundreds of candles held by the Faithful.

In one parish of the diocese..., almost all of the residents of the street leading to the Church cleaned the doorsteps of their houses and took tables spread with white tablecloths out of their dwellings. After a short while, a zig-zag of white and multi-colored cloth—on which icons, bread, and salt (traditional symbols of hospitality) had been placed—and flowers showed the Bishop which course he was to follow. The Bishop... approached one of the tables, blessed it, and greeted the inhabitants.⁴

2. But the people's dedication to the person of their Bishop reaches a climax at his repose.

In one Russian city, two or three hours after the announcement of the repose of the elderly Metropolitan, it was already difficult to make one's way through to his residence.... For many nights, the people filed past the remains of their Shepherd. During the funeral, the large Cathedral was able to contain only a small portion of the Faithful, the majority of whom were forced to remain in the courtyard of the Church and in the neighbouring streets. Many thousands of believers came to bow before the venerable remains of the deceased (see note 4).

And in another instance "tens of thousands of Faithful escorted in procession the remains" of their Metropolitan "from the Cathedral to the cemetery, which is seven kilometres away" (see note 4).

C

Someone may ask: Is this behaviour on the part of the people not a bit hyperbolic? Is not the focus of devotion, here, shifted from Christ to the Bishop? The Holy Fathers clearly answer, "No!"

“The Bishop in his diocese is,” says St. John of Kronstadt, “after God and the Theotokos, the source of sanctification for all the Christians of his flock, and this is why they should all have great esteem and love for him as the most perfect celebrant of the Holy Mysteries.”⁵

This teaching, which is correct in every way, is not recent in Orthodoxy, but is a fundamental idea of the Apostolic Church.

1. St Ignatios the God-Bearer, Bishop of Antioch, links the Bishop and Jesus Christ together to such a degree that everything which happens to a visible Bishop of the Church is attributed and ascribed to the invisible Bishop, Christ our Saviour. The following is precisely what the Saint says:

For the honour, therefore, of Him Who desired us, it is right that we obey (the Bishop) without any hypocrisy; for a man does not merely mislead this Bishop who is seen, but seeks to deceive Him Who is invisible.⁶

2. In another instance, St. Ignatios urges us to see the Bishop as the Lord Himself: “Therefore, it is obvious that we must look upon the Bishop as we would the Lord Himself.”⁷

3. The Saint goes on to exalt the place of the Bishop in the Church so highly as to teach that all who wish to be with God must be with the Bishop: “For as many as belong to God and Jesus Christ—these are with the Bishop.”⁸

4. And so significant is the issue of our unity with the Bishop, and through him with God, according to St. Ignatios, that this unity demarcates two completely different worlds: the world of God and the world of the devil: “See to it that you all follow the Bishop, as Jesus Christ follows the Father...”; “It is good to know God and the Bishop”; “he who does anything without the knowledge of the Bishop is serving the devil.”⁹

D

St. John Chrysostomos was a true exponent of this Apostolic Tradition. From the many instances which testify to the profound reverence and obedience of Chrysostomos towards the Episcopacy, we will cite only three, which pertain to the period of his activity in Antioch.

1. Once, while the Saint was still a Presbyter, at a gathering of the Faithful he did not see Flavian, the Bishop of Antioch, present, as he usually was; this grieved the Saint, and he said tearfully: “When I look upon that Throne, deserted and bereft of our teacher, ...I weep; I weep, because I do not see our Father with us!”¹⁰

2. At another time, the holy Bishop Flavian was absent again, since he was ill at home; so, Chrysostomos began his sermon with an expression of fervent love for his Bishop: Just as a choir misses its leader and a crew of sailors its helmsman, so also this company of Priests is missing its Hierarch and common Father today.... But even if he is not present in the flesh, he is, nonetheless, here in spirit, and he is with us now as he sits at home, just as we are with him as we stand here; for such is the power of love that it habitually gathers together and unites those who are separated by a great distance.¹¹

3. In another instance, the most holy Flavian was present, and Chrysostomos shortened his sermon, offering the following justification: So I must bring my discourse to an end, since I want to hear the voice of my Father (and Bishop). For we—like shepherd boys under the shade of some oak tree or poplar—play reed pipes as we sit under the shade of these sacred foundations; whereas he (our Father and Bishop), in the way that an accomplished musician who plays a golden lyre and with the harmony of its notes elevates the entire audience to a higher realm—so he, not with a harmony of notes, but with the harmony of his words and actions, greatly benefits us.¹²

• It is clear, then, in what way the Holy Chrysostomos guided the People of God and helped them to acquire a true ecclesiastical ethos: The absence of his Hierarch would be a matter of indifference to a Presbyter who did not recognize the importance of the Bishop in the Church; whereas Chrysostomos suffers and weeps. The presence of the Bishop, on the other hand, would not act as a brake for a garrulous preacher, whereas Chrysostomos cuts his sermon short, so as to allow his Bishop to speak, while he praises him appropriately, humbling himself and exalting the nobility of the Hierarch.

E

On the basis of this comparison that St. John Chrysostomos makes between a Presbyter (a shepherd boy with his pipe) and a Bishop (an excellent musician with his lyre), permit me to encapsulate in just a few sentences—in order not to tire you—the purely theological and ecclesiological outlook of our Most Holy Orthodoxy concerning the place of the Bishop in the Church.

What is the Church?

1. The Church is the Assembly of the People of God for the celebration of the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, wherein the local Church actually becomes and is revealed as the Body of Christ, as a Theandric organism, in which the Holy Trinity dwells.¹³

2. The visible centre and head of the Eucharistic Assembly is the Bishop: It is he who leads the Assembly and preaches the word of God; it is he who offers the Eucharist, as an “Icon of Christ,” the Great High Priest, and as the one who presides “in the place of God,”¹⁴ according to St. Ignatios of Antioch.

3. In the early Church, only the Bishop offered the Divine Eucharist in each local Church; that is, there was only one Eucharist, and this was centred on the Bishop.^{14a}

4. The Bishop, when he offers the Divine Eucharist, offers Christ in His wholeness, imparting the Holy Mysteries to the Faithful with his own hands; in ancient times, the People of God partook of Christ only from the living Icon of Christ, the Bishop.¹⁵

5. Therefore, the Bishop not only embodies the local Church, but also expresses in time and space the Catholic Church, that is, the whole Church; for that which embodies Christ in His wholeness, and wherein one receives Christ in His wholeness, is that which embodies the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. “Wherever Jesus Christ is,” says St. Ignatios, “there is the Catholic Church.”¹⁶

6. For precisely this reason, when one is united with the Bishop in the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, then he is also united with the

Catholic Church. St. Cyprian of Carthage emphasizes this ecclesiological truth in the following striking terms: “The Bishop is in the Church and the Church in the Bishop; and if one is not in communion with the Bishop, he is not in the Church.”¹⁷

F

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I hope that all to which we have thus far referred will suffice to help us understand why the People of God, whenever a Bishop Liturgizes, yearn to receive Communion from his hands; why there is a veritable festival in villages, whenever the Bishop visits; why the Faithful welcome him with the pealing of bells, “with palms and branches”; why they spread carpets for him to step upon; and why girls present their dowries to him to be blessed—why, in short, the Faithful have such love for, and dedication to, their Bishop.

Elder [St] Silouan of Athos, in his endeavour to present to us the Orthodox teaching about the Episcopacy, relates the following amazing incident:

A humble and meek man was walking with his wife and their three children. On the road, they met a Hierarch, who was passing by in his carriage; and when the peasant had bowed piously to him, he saw that the Hierarch who was blessing him was enveloped by the fire of Grace.¹⁸ I think that this instructive miracle, together with the aforementioned Patristic testimonies, suffice to make us, clergy and laity alike, aware of our obligation before a Bishop.

Orthodox Tradition has always assigned the Bishop to such a central place in the Church that it proclaims through the Holy Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem († 1707) the following great truth: “What God is in the heavenly Church of the firstborn, and the sun in the world, such is each Bishop in the local Church.”¹⁹

1. Is it possible, then, given these assumptions, for us to treat a Bishop with disrespect, when, indeed, we take into account that the Thirty-Fifth Apostolic Canon appoints that a clergyman who insults a

Bishop be deposed,²⁰ while the Third Canon of the Synod at Hagia Sophia anathematizes a layman who dares to strike a Bishop?²¹

2. Is it possible for us to do anything connected with the Church clandestinely, without the Bishop's knowledge and blessing, seeing that the Saints instruct us: "Do nothing without the Bishop"?²²

3. Is it possible for anyone—especially, to be sure, the clergy—to be independent and to follow their own pastoral agendas, when the Thirty-Ninth Apostolic Canon enjoins: "Let Presbyters and Deacons not carry out anything without the knowledge of the Bishop"?²⁴

4. Is it possible for us who have the rank of disciples to be impertinent, daring to teach the Bishop, the Teacher of the Church, when the "Apostolic Constitutions" admonish us in the following way: The Bishop, he is the minister of the word, the guardian of knowledge, the mediator between God and you in your worship of Him. He is the teacher of piety; and, next after God, he is your Father...; he is your ruler and governor; he is your king and potentate; he is, next after God, your earthly god, who ought to enjoy honour from you...; for let the Bishop preside over you as one honoured with the dignity of God, which he is to exercise over the clergy, and by which he is to govern all the people.²⁴

5. Is it possible for us to assemble illicitly "without the knowledge of the Bishop" and to act schismatically, when the Saints teach us: "Just as the Lord did nothing without the Father..., so must you do nothing without the Bishop..."?²⁵

6. Is it possible, finally, for us to judge and to condemn a Bishop, when the Holy Chrysostomos forbids this in the strictest terms, "...even if his (the spiritual Father's) life is extremely corrupt"?²⁶ ...And when the same Saint, in posing questions to those who accuse Priests, forbids them even to enter a church? When you accuse your spiritual Father, how do you consider yourself worthy to step over the sacred threshold [of the Church]? ... And does not such a one (an accuser of Priests) fear, lest the earth open up and cause him to disappear completely, or a thunderbolt fall from on high and burn up his accusing tongue?²⁷

G

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I hope that you will forgive me for keeping you. I was carried away by the seriousness of the subject and by my desire for your edification in Christ.

1. The damage done to the Orthodox ethos by extra-ecclesiastical factors has touched on one of the most fundamental characteristics of this ethos: a profound awareness of the central place of the Bishop in the Church. May this meagre attempt of ours be regarded as a small contribution to the amelioration of this evil, of this damage. I am profoundly convinced that, only when our relationship with the Bishop in the Church is brought to life in an Orthodox, Patristic manner, will the Lord have mercy on us and grant us to behold good Shepherds and, as a result, better days.

2. Likewise, in conclusion, we would also like you to receive our treatment, this evening, of the correct attitude that one should have towards the Bishop as a necessary response to those unfortunate brethren of ours who distorted the spiritual meaning of a gift that we presented to our Most Reverend Metropolitan in 1987. In that gift—a painting from the Icon studio of the Holy Convent of the Holy Angels in Aphidnai, Attika, done with my own guidance and with my advice—our local Church was symbolically portrayed as the Body of Christ, with Her Bishop and the Divine Eucharist at the centre. This, for us, is the Patristic understanding of the Church; it was natural that all those who do not know this aspect of the Church or experience it in their own lives, should malign that symbolic gift, in order to damage the reputation of our honoured Chief Shepherd. May our Lord forgive them and lead them to repentance!

H

Our Most Reverend Spiritual Father, Divinely-Chosen Shepherd of Our Little Flock:

On the occasion of your Name Day, accept our humble but heartfelt wishes that you might be preserved, by the Grace of the Lord, for

many long years in safety, honor, and health, teaching aright the word of Evangelical Truth. May the Most Blessed Mother of our Saviour strengthen you and grant you forbearance, and especially when we, your spiritual children, relax our vigilance and behave improperly towards you. As our Bishop, as a living Icon of Christ, the Great High Priest, continue—we beseech you—to pray all the more fervently before the dread Altar for your reason-endowed Flock, that no sheep thereof might stray and be caught by wild beasts, cut off from unity with you, unity with the Church, and unity with Christ.**

Source: *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVI, Nos. 3-4 (1999), pp. 8-17.

Notes

* We should make it clear at the outset that the Faithful are obligated to revere and obey Hierarchs as long as they are truly Orthodox and teach aright the word of Truth.

• St. John Chrysostomos, in dealing with the exhortation of the Apostle Paul who says, “Obey them that have the rule over you (Bishops, Teachers, and Spiritual Leaders), and submit yourselves” (Heb. 13:17), faces a legitimate question: “But what if...he is wicked; should we obey?” His reply is as follows: “Wicked? In what sense? If indeed with regard to the Faith, flee and avoid him; not only if he be a man, but even if he be an Angel come down from Heaven; but if in regard to his life, be not overly curious” (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXIII, col. 231 [Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews, XXXIV, § 1]).

1. St. John of Sinai, *The Ladder*, Step 26.1, § 23.

2. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, “Interpretation” of the Thirty-Sixth Apostolic Canon (*Pedalion* [Rudder], p. 40).

3. Apostolic Canon XXXVI.

4. Solon G. Ninikas, *The Spiritual Resiliency of the Russian People* [in Greek] (Athens: 1991), pp. 21-22.

5. Bishop Alexander (Semenoff-Tian-Sansky), *Father John of Kronstadt* [in Greek] (*Oropos*, Attika: Parakletos Monastery Publications, 1976), p. 113.

6. St. Ignatios, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 665A (“Epistle to the Magnesians,” III.2).

7. St. Ignatios, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 649AB (“Epistle to the Ephesians,” VI.1).

8. St. Ignatios, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 700A (“Epistle to the Philadelphians,” III.2).

9. St. Ignatios, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, cols. 713A, 713C, 716A (“Epistle to the Smyrnæans,” VIII.1-IX.1).

10. St. John Chrysostomos, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLIX, col. 47 (“Homilies on the Statues,” III.1).

11. St. John Chrysostomos, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLVIII, col. 953 (“Homily on the Kalends, When Bishop Flavian of Antioch Did Not Arrive,” § 1).

12. St. John Chrysostomos, *Pat. Græca*, Vol. XLIX, col. 314 (“Homilies on Fasting,” V.5).
13. Cf. Ephesians 4:5-6 and I Corinthians 10:15-16, concerning the ecclesiastical and sacramental Assembly and the meaning of the “Body of Christ.”
14. St. Ignatios, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 668A (“Epistle to the Magnesians,” VI.1).
 • In the extended form of the Epistle to the Smyrnæans, he writes the following: “Honour...the Bishop as the Hierarch, who bears the image of God...[,] of Christ, in his capacity as a Priest” (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 853A [“Epistle to the Smyrnæans,” IX]).
- 14a. Cf. St. Ignatios, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 668C (“Epistle to the Magnesians,” VII.2) and col. 700B (“Epistle to the Philadelphians,” IV): “One Father,” “one Jesus Christ,” “one Church,” “one Altar,” “one Eucharist,” “one Flesh of the Lord,” “one Cup,” and “one Bishop.”
15. St. Hippolytos of Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition*, § 22 (*Sources Chrétiennes*, No. 11 bis [Paris: Cerf, 1968]), pp. 96-97.
16. St. Ignatios, *Pat. Græca*, Vol. V, col. 713B (“Epistle to the Smyrnæans,” VIII.2).
17. St. Cyprian, “Epistle 66.”
18. Archimandrite Sophrony, Elder Silouan of Athos (1866-1938) [in Greek] (*Thessaloniki: Orthodoxos Kypsele Publications*, n.d.), p. 392.
19. Dositheos of Jerusalem, “Confession of Faith (1672),” Definition 10, in J. N. Karmiris, *Dogmatic and Credal Monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church* [in Greek], Vol. II (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1968), p. 753 [833].
20. “If any clergyman should insult the Bishop, let him be deposed; for ‘thou shalt not speak ill of the ruler of thy people’ [Exodus 22:28].”
 • See also the “Interpretation” of St. Nicodemos, as well as the notes, which conclude as follows: The laws of the Emperors, which promote piety, stipulate that anyone who enters a church when the Mysteries or other holy services are being celebrated and insults the Bishop, or prevents the services from being celebrated, should be subjected to capital punishment. This same principle should be maintained also when litanies and services of supplication are being celebrated and Bishops and clergy are present; that is, whoever insults the clergy should be exiled and whoever disturbs a litany or a service of supplication should be put to death. From this Canon one may infer that whoever insults his father in the flesh or his spiritual Elder ought to be given an epitimia; for Scripture says, ‘He that curseth father or mother,’ whoever he may be, whether a clergyman, a layman, or a monk, ‘let him die the death’ [St. Matthew 15:4; cf. Leviticus 20:9]. Death in these cases is the deprivation of Divine Communion, which among those endowed with understanding is reckoned truly to be death, as we see in the Fifty-Fifth Canon of St. Basil the Great (*Pedalion*, p. 72, n. 1).
21. “If any layman in authority, despising the Divine and Imperial ordinances and mocking the dread statutes and laws of the Church, should dare to harm or imprison any Bishop without cause, or having fabricated a cause, let him be anathema.”
 • See the “Interpretation” of St. Nicodemos, as well as his notes (*Pedalion*, p. 366). [The Synod in Hagia Sophia was the Eighth (Ecumenical Synod, under St. Photios the Great, convened in 879)].

• St. Ignatius of Antioch says the following: “He who honours a Bishop will be honoured by God; just as he who dishonours him will be punished by God” (Patrologia Græca, Vol. V, col. 853A [“Epistle to the Smyrnæans,” Longer Version, VII.2]).

22. St. Ignatius, Patr. Græca, Vol. V, col. 668A (“Epistle to the Philadelphians,” VII.2).

• St. Ignatius emphatically insists on this point: “Let no one do any of the things pertaining to the Church without the Bishop” (Patrologia Græca, Vol. V, col. 713B (“Epistle to the Smyrnæans,” VIII.1)).

• See footnotes 9 and 25.

23. See the “Interpretation” of St. Nicodemus, and the “Concord” (Pedalion, pp. 43-45).

• According to the “Apostolic Constitutions,” the Deacon “does nothing” “without the Bishop,” and it is enjoined that “all things that he is to do with anyone be made known to the Bishop, and be ultimately ordered by him” (Book II, ch. 30); “...Let him not do anything at all without his Bishop, nor give anything to anyone without his consent” (Book II, ch. 31); “...Do nothing in a clandestine way, so as may tend to his reproach” (Book II, ch. 32) (Patrologia Græca, Vol. I, col. 677BCD).

24. “Apostolic Constitutions,” Patr. Græca, Vol. I, cols. 665B- 668A (Book II, ch. 26).

25. St. Ignatius, Patr. Græca, Vol. V, col. 668B (“Epistle to the Magnesians,” VII.1).

• Especially applicable is the following related view of the Saint: “It is right, then, that we should not merely be called Christians, but also be such; even as there are some who recognize the Bishop in their words, but in everything act apart from him. Such people seem to me not to act in good conscience, since they are not validly acting in consort” (ibid., IV).

26. St. John Chrysostomos, Patrologia Græca, Vol. LIX, col. 472 (“Homilies on the Gospel of St. John,” LXXXVI, § 4).

27. St. John Chrysostomos, Patrologia Græca, Vol. LI, col. 201 (“On Aquila and Priscilla, Discourse II,” § 5).

**We wish to acknowledge that we have been especially aided in the present work by material from the periodical Thymiaia (No. 13 [May 1993]).



"WHAT was said to Peter, *Feed My sheep*, was said to all [the apostles]. The other Apostles were Peter's equals, but the first place was granted to Peter, so that the unity of the Church might be set forth. All are shepherds, but one flock in revealed. Then it was fed by all the Apostles with harmonious agreement, and ever since it is fed by their successors with joint concern."

VENERABLE BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

The Coming Month

IN JUNE, this year, there are no Great Feasts, and the principal celebration is that of the **Holy Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul**, which falls on Thursday, 29th (12th July on the civil calendar), and in preparation for this feast we keep the fast until that date. The day after Sts Peter and Paul, we have a feast of all the **Twelve Apostles**. It is because our Orthodox episcopate was established, after Christ, by the Apostles and continues their Apostolic ministry and holds fast the Apostolic Faith, that in this issue we have included Bishop Clement's excellent article on the place of the Bishop in the Church. Perhaps the most striking thing about the Bishop's instruction is that it does not emphasize rank or order, but the deeper mystical meaning of the ministry, and the people's response of love, rather than of mere subservience, to the love of their archpastors. This in itself is Apostolic rather than juridical.

Among the other saints celebrated in June, we have:-

The **Venerable Sophia of Thrace** (4th / 17th June) was born in Ainos, Rhodope, and was a married woman and the mother of six children. Though she was thus occupied with many worldly cares and responsibilities, she still kept the commandments of God and lived a virtuous life, never missing a church service. After her children died, she became a mother to orphans, and gave assistance to widows. She sold her property and gave the money to the poor. She led an austere life, eating bread and water. The Psalms of the Prophet King David were always on her lips, and tears flowed continuously from her eyes. She would do without the necessities of life herself rather than allow a poor person to leave her home with empty hands. Because of her humility and her love for the poor, God blessed her in the following way. In her home was a container of wine which she reserved for the poor. She noticed that no matter how much she took from the container, it remained full. However, as soon as she told someone about the miracle and glorified God, the container emptied in the normal way as she used the wine. St. Sophia became

sorrowful, believing that the wine diminished because of her unworthiness. Therefore, she increased her ascetic efforts until her health suffered. Sensing that the end of her life was near, she received the monastic tonsure. The righteous one fell asleep in the Lord at the age of fifty-three.

The **Holy Martyr Neaniscus the Wise** (10th / 23rd) was a man renowned for his wisdom. In some calendars he is commemorated under the name, Neaniscus, which means Young Man, and in others simply as a young man, so it is not clear whether this was his name or that his name has been lost. However, his memory is with the saints and kept within the Church. He was betrayed to the Roman pagan authorities in Alexandria by his servant, interrogated and tortured, but remained steadfast. He was sentenced to death, and as he was taken to the scaffold he noticed the servant who had betrayed him in the crowd. He called him over and gave him a gold ring that he was wearing, saying, "I thank you, for your betrayal has procured such blessings for me." And so, with forgiveness and thanksgiving even for injury, he submitted to the sword and won the crown of victory.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"THIS WEDNESDAY, we had Mid-Pentecost, the feast halfway between Pascha and Pentecost. What we read about [in the Gospel reading - ed.], however is something that happened during the Feast of Tabernacles, which occurred around harvest time. Why the apparent discrepancy? - N.L., U.S.A.

I SUSPECT that there are several answers to your question, of varying depth and importance. Perhaps at the most superficial, there is simply no record in the Gospel of an event related to the mid-feast of Pentecost. Then, in this feast we particularly emphasise that our Saviour is the Wisdom of God, and for that reason often the icon used for the festival is that of the twelve-year-old Saviour conversing with the doctors

in the Temple. The Gospel reading which is appointed, although it does not relate to an event which happened on the mid-feast of Pentecost, also nonetheless declares the Wisdom of God. Sometimes churches dedicated to the Holy Wisdom keep this feast as their dedication festival. Furthermore, the hymns repeat the phrase, “in the midst of the feast,” - this of course refers to the fact that we are mid-point between Pascha and Pentecost-Trinity Sunday, but we should also bear in mind that in every celebration of the Church Year, Christ, the Wisdom of God, is in “the midst of the feast.” He is central.

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“FIVE YEARS have now passed since the union between ROCA and MP, and you have been very critical of that union. Generally I think your criticism has been fair and right, but can you see anything good that has come from the union?” - C.O., Wolverhampton.

I AM in two minds about even answering your question. In the first place I was a member of the Russian Church Abroad for almost forty years, and a clergyman therein for just under 32 years, and so naturally I have a great attachment to that Church, many friends within it, and great concern for it. On the other hand, our community left because we could not countenance joining a Church (the MP) whose hierarchs had espoused ecumenism and had not addressed the compromises they had made in the past. So Romans 14:4 comes to mind: “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.” So, on this earth, it is for the Patriarch of Moscow to “judge” them now, certainly not a priest in a tiny suburban mission outside their jurisdiction. In that we make comments about developments within the now ROCA-MP, it is primarily simply to instruct and warn our own people. So what I say now is simply a personal comment, and worth only that (and so perhaps indeed worthless). In general I have been saddened by the course that ROCA-MP has taken since the union of 2007. We had expected it to be drawn into “World Orthodoxy” and into ecumenism, but have been appalled by the speed with which it has embraced these things. I have been saddened also by their re-writing

of history with “spin,” their attacks on those who disagree with them, and many other aspects of what can only be described as the Putinization of their Church. I have to think hard to see anything positive. Only two things can I find. First, in the last years before the submission to Moscow, ROCA ostensibly held to a traditionalist stance (actually it was conservative rather than truly traditionalist towards the end), but seemed to do so with a certain pridefulness, a kind of one-upmanship. Naturally that pride has now gone, along with the ostensible traditionalism. Secondly, I remember that the first time the then Bishop Mark came to Saint Edward’s, in 1985, he took particular pains to make clear that, though he had been consecrated as a Bishop being a convert to Orthodoxy, there could be no more convert Bishops lest ROCA lose its “Russian character.” This struck us as rather odd, but was of no immediate concern to us, as it is the Orthodoxy of our hierarchs rather than their ethnicity which was important to us. However, that rather oddly xenophobic ban appears to have been happily dropped immediately ROCA submitted to Moscow, because they very shortly thereafter consecrated two convert Bishops. I wish I could say more positive things, but am at a loss to do so. - A.A.



NEWS SECTION

HISTORIC CHURCH TO BE A MOSQUE

PRAVOSLAVIE.RU (25/5/12) reported that a church, built in the sixth century by Emperor Justinian I in what is now the Turkish city of Iznik is to be converted into a mosque. Iznik is the ancient city of Nicea. The report states that “Nicea is where two Ecumenical Councils were held—in 325 and 787. The latter council was held in the very church of Holy Sophia. In Nicea the Symbol of Faith was composed and accepted, and still bears the name “Nicene Creed.” Here the Arian heresy was dealt a decisive blow. The church of Holy Sophia received the fathers of the Ecumenical council who condemned iconoclasm. That this

church in particular has been turned into a mosque is a wound for the entire Christian world.... This is not the first time this church has been under the crescent. When the Turks seized Nicea in 1331, they turned the church into a mosque. In 1922 there was a terrible fire there, which kept the building out of use for nearly 100 years, and it was only restored in 2007. The Turkish government's decision to turn the ancient cathedral into a mosque has drawn criticism not only from Christians, but also from experts. Art historian Selchuk Miulaim of Marmara University has expressed his apprehension that given the church's immense significance in the history of Christianity, refitting it as a mosque will provoke a wave of indignation from the whole world."

SAINT CUTHBERT GOSPEL SAVED

ACCORDING to the BBC website, "The oldest intact European book - the St Cuthbert gospel - is to remain in the UK after the British Library raised £9m to buy it. The acquisition of the 7th Century copy of the Gospel of St John follows the library's largest fundraising campaign.... The book was sold by the Society of Jesus (British Province) to raise money for education and restoration work. The manuscript, produced in the North East of England, was buried with the early English Christian leader [*St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne*] on Lindisfarne in about 698 AD. It was rediscovered at Durham Cathedral in 1104 after the coffin had been moved to escape Viking raids. The library has acquired the gospel in partnership with Durham University and Durham Cathedral, and it will be displayed equally at the library and in the North East.... 'To look at this small and intensely beautiful treasure from the Anglo-Saxon period is to see it exactly as those who created it in the 7th Century would have seen it,' said the library's chief executive, Dame Lynne Brindley. 'The exquisite binding, the pages, even the sewing structure survive intact, offering us a direct connection with our forebears 1300 years ago. I would like to pay tribute to the donors who have made this acquisition possible.' The St Cuthbert Gospel will be on display in the Sir John Ritblat Treasures Gallery at the British Library's main building in London's St Pancras. The first display in Durham is anticipated to be in July 2013 in

Durham University's Palace Green Library on the Unesco world heritage site.... The manuscript has also been digitised in full and will be available to view online."

***ROMAN CATHOLIC FRATERNISING WITH THE
ORTHODOX IN SWITZERLAND, AND WITH THE
SIKHS IN THE U.K.***

THE CONFERENCE of Swiss Bishops (RC) held a meeting in Friburg, Switzerland, on 8th & 9th May, and they were joined for the first time by the **Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of Switzerland**, headed by **Metropolitan Jeremias** of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. A communiqué states that the two communions consider themselves "Sister Churches." When the submission of the former ROCA to the Moscow Patriarchate was being promoted in the early years of the last decade, we were given the rather improbable assurance that, within the MP, the hierarchs of ROCA would act as a "conscience" and a brake on its ecumenical activities. Of course the opposite happened, and now one of their hierarchs, **Archbishop Michael of Geneva and Western Europe**, has participated in this ecumenical meeting. Less than ten years ago, ROCA was a Sister Church of our own **Synod in Resistance**; now it seems that her hierarchs are prepared to be portrayed as being in a Sister Church relationship with Roman Catholics - quite a journey in a short time! It is clear that these hierarchs are attempting to be Janus-like and facing both ways: to be "traditional" and anti-ecumenical, and yet to participate in ecumenical activities and to be accepted in "World Orthodoxy." One may see the same Janus complex among the Roman Catholics themselves. While in Switzerland they are declaring their Sister Church status with the Orthodox, in Birmingham, according to their Archdiocese's website: "History was made in the Catholic Church during a special Mass and Investiture at Metropolitan Cathedral and Basilica of St Chad, Birmingham, of Bhai Sahib Bhai Dr Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia and Mr William Ozanne, as Knights of the Pontifical Order of Pope St Gregory the Great, on Sunday 22 April 2012. The Most Reverend Bernard Longley, Archbishop

of Birmingham, invested the internationally known and respected Spiritual Leader and Chairman of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, based in the Handsworth area of Birmingham, with one of the highest Papal Awards.... More than 120 Sikhs, from Birmingham, London, Leeds, and some who had flown from Kenya and India were present in St Chad's Cathedral for this unique and ground-breaking event in inter-faith relations involving the Catholic Church and the Sikh faith.... Canon Gerry Breen, Dean of St Chad's Cathedral, read out the two Papal Briefs of 'Benedict XVI Supreme Pontiff,' given at St Peter's in Rome, signed and sealed by the Cardinal Secretary of State, Cardinal Bertone. Archbishop Bernard Longley invested each of the knights elect in the name of the Holy Father with the insignia of a Knight of the Pontifical Order of St Gregory the Great, pinning the Cross to the left breast of each and presenting them with their framed Papal Brief. The Archbishop also presented Bhai Sahib-ji with the sword of the Pontifical Order of St Gregory the Great." So which way are they facing? - towards Orthodoxy, which, if it were true, would rejoice our hearts, or towards Inter-Faith relations with those who do not accept our Saviour *the Way, the Truth and the Life* (Jn 14:6)?

“BAPTISM” OF A CONSTANTINOPOLITAN METROPOLITAN BY A ROMAN CATHOLIC

MYSTAGOGY, the weblog of John Sanidopoulos, which contains some excellent articles, reports that “Ecumenism Day (May 5) was established in Germany in 2003 to bring together divided German Christians of various denominations and churches who believe in the Holy Trinity to symbolically celebrate their mutual cooperation. This year on Ecumenism Day thousands of pilgrims gathered in Trier to venerate an alleged robe of Christ, probably of medieval origin, which is seamless and came to symbolize on this day the seamless unity of Christians which is desired. However when the various Christian representatives, among whom was Metropolitan Augoustinos of Germany, gathered at the Basilica of Constantine, things went a little too far and the representatives got ahead of themselves with a symbolic baptism of each member by another member. They dipped their hand in water and symbolically

baptized each other on the forehead with an open hand, saying: “You are baptized in the Name of the Triune God”. Then, as a reminder of the theme of the pilgrimage, a white baptismal stole with the theme written on it was put on each representative. This was done to Metropolitan Augoustinos by Bishop Karl Heinz Wiesemann of the Catholic Church. Such are the unfortunate situations an Orthodox participant can get into when Ecumenism goes too far and the program is beyond their control and not properly evaluated beforehand to avoid a scandalous incident.” We are thankful that Mr Sanidopoulos has brought this appalling incident to light, though his criticisms of the event are far too lenient. To say only that “things went a little too far,” and to call this an “unfortunate situation” is simply Newspeak. That a Bishop should accept re-baptism, if only “symbolically,” is a scandal; that he should do so from the hands of one outside the Church is an even greater scandal. It remains to be seen whether any action will be taken to address this outrage by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, to which Metropolitan Augoustinos belongs.

SOME POSITIVE NEWS FROM UZBEKISTAN

THE Russian Orthodox Church’s Central Asian metropolitan area under the leadership of **His Eminence Metropolitan Vikentii**, who came late in August 2011, has introduced stronger safeguards with regard to Baptism. According to *uznews.net*, the new ruling hierarch of the **Uzbekistan Orthodox Church**, Metropolitan Vikentii “has decided to revive old traditions and strengthen his confidence in Orthodox believers.” Members of the church have spoken of him respectfully. The decision to hold 12 compulsory catechetical lectures for godparents before the Baptism of an infant was adopted at the 4th October 2011 Eparchial Clergy Meeting at Tashkent’s eparchy directorate. Catechetical lectures are now mandatory for all priests of the Tashkent and Uzbekistan eparchy. The practice of Baptism without catechetical lectures is only allowed for a person if he is seriously ill or about to die. The meeting also decided that “it will be mandatory for both for children and adults to undergo the sacrament (*sic*) of Baptism through full immersion” in a big baptismal bowl instead of previously practiced aspersion with holy water.

SIR-UK NEWS

TWO BAPTISMS AT SAINT EDWARD'S

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** baptised **Stefan**, the infant son of **Nicolae and Iuliana Ursache** on Saturday, 29th April / 12th May at our church. Stefan's godfather was **Paul Chiriac**, and the newly-illuminated was named after **St Stephan of Tryglia**, on whose day he had been born. After the Mysterion, refreshments were provided for all who joined in the joy of this feast. The next day, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Bishop Sofronie celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden** for the traditionalist Orthodox Romanians living in this country.

Bishop Sofronie returned to England on Thursday 18th / 31st May and baptised **Luca**, the infant son of **Marian and Andreea Abuza-toaei** of Dagenham, Essex. The Bishop came straight from the airport after landing in Britain from Romania, but the family only arrived more than two hours later, so His Grace showed us a marvellous example of patience. The godparents were **Doru and Anca Purice**, and Luca, who received the Holy Mysteries after his Baptism, is named after the **Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke**.

WEDDING OF THE YEAR

ON THE SUNDAY of the Samaritan Woman, 30th April / 13th May, the wedding of **Maren and Zornitza Daraktchiev** of Bracknell was celebrated at Saint Edward's. The couple, who have recently joined our congregation, had been married in a civil ceremony for some time, having two young daughters, **Jasmin** and **Alexandra**, but in the confusion of post-Soviet dominated Bulgaria they had not had a church wedding. **Michael Woodrow** and **Elena Matthews** sponsored the ceremony, and after it, the bride and groom provided refreshments in the Old Mortuary, including a special bread which was eaten dipped in honey to add

sweetness to their life together - a traditional custom. It really was a very uplifting occasion, and we hope that now, with God's blessing on their union, they will find salvation through their married life together.

BLESSING FOR A NEW BABY, SOPHIA

ON THE FEAST of Mid-Pentecost, Wednesday 26th April / 9th May, after the Divine Liturgy at the Convent, Frs Alexis and Sabbas travelled on to far-distant Stevenage, to the **Lister Hospital**, to name the infant daughter of **Nicolas and Nektaria Papanicolaou** of St Albans, on her eighth day. The baby, who was named **Sophia** after St Sophia the mother of the Virgin Martyrs Faith, Hope and Charity (feast day: 17th / 30th September). Besides her parents, Sophia's grandmother, who had come over from Canada, and her half-sister were present at the naming. The fathers had visited the hospital on the previous Wednesday as well to read the first day prayers for Nektaria.

VISITORS

AT the beginning of the month, **Hieromonk Evfimy and Mother Evfrosinia** of the **Lesna Icon Convent in Normandy, France**, visited us again. They were in this country to serve at the mission which the Synod under **Archbishop Tikhon** (RTOC) has established here. As usual they brought us treats, 500% proof organic apple juice from the Convent's orchard, and a selection of cheeses for Fr Niphon. They arrived shortly after breakfast and stayed to well past midday, discussing church matters of mutual interest.

On St George's Day, Sunday 23rd April / 6th May, **Val Pretlove** brought two groups of people, who were being conducted on walks through the main cemetery, to see Saint Edward's Church.

On Monday 28th May (n.s.), ten members of the **New Malden Surrey History Class**, led by **J. M. Skinley**, spent about an hour and a half looking at the church and the Exhibition Room. Sadly, **Jackie Mallyon** who had arranged the visit was unable to attend herself.

GIFTS FOR THE BROTHERHOOD

THE HADZI-FRETWELLS, **Fr Œconomos Stephen and Presbytera Joanna**, who have returned from their pilgrimage to Greece and the Holy Land, brought us an immense bag of holy oils and icon cards from the places they had visited, as well as treats from the Holy Land, and an icon of **St Gerasimus of the Jordan and his lion**. They had travelled to Greece and joined the pilgrimage led by **Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi and Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** to Jerusalem. We have asked them to give us a report to publish in the next issue of *The Shepherd*.

AT THE VIGIL for the Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer we were joined by **Silouan Leon**, a parishioner of the **Russian Orthodox Church on Harvard Road, West London**, and two friends. One of these, **Jana Letalova**, from the Czech Republic, brought us a beautiful framed icon of **St Wenceslaus** (Vaclav) and a smaller one of the saint's grandmother, **St Ludmila**. For all these gifts and kindnesses as well as those listed in the insert, we are extremely thankful. God bless you.



PRACTICAL TIP

WHEN bringing babies up to receive the Holy Mysteries, do not hold them upright facing the Chalice. Rest them in the crook of your right arm, so that they are lying back. The deacon or server may then ensure that the red cloth is placed so that no drop can fall, help to open the baby's mouth if necessary, and easily wipe their lips after communion, and baby will find it easier to swallow. Also as the Bishop or priest will be administering the Gifts holding the spoon in his right hand, it will be easier for him to direct it to the baby's mouth than if you hold the baby on your left arm. Also hold their arms and legs so that they do not wiggle and perhaps spill the Holy Chalice.