



## FROM THE FATHERS

“FAITH is the foundation of the Church, for it was not of the person but of the faith of Saint Peter that it was said that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. It is the confession of faith that has vanquished hell. Jesus Christ is the Rock. He did not deny the grace of His name when He called him Peter, because he borrowed from the Rock the constancy and solidity of his faith. Endeavour then, to be a rock yourself; your rock is your faith, and faith is the foundation of the Church. If you are a rock, you will be in the Church, for the Church is built upon the Rock.”

ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN, 397 A.D.

“*AND I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, that is, on the faith of his confession.*”

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, + 407 A.D.

“SEE what praises follow this faith. *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build this Church.* What does *Upon this rock I will build My Church* mean? Upon this faith; upon what has been said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Upon this rock, He says, I will build My Church.*”

ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, + 430 A.D.

# SERMON OF ST AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO ON THE HOLY APOSTLES

*Taken from "The Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers"*

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THE GOSPEL which has just been read touching the Lord Christ, who walked on the waters of the sea (Matt. 14:25); and the Apostle Peter, who, as he was walking, tottered through fear, and sinking in distrust rose again by confession, gives us to understand that the sea is the present world, and the Apostle Peter the type of the One Church. For Peter, in the order of Apostles first, and in the love of Christ most forward, often answers alone for all the rest. Again, when the Lord Jesus Christ asked, whom men said that He was, and when the disciples gave the various opinions of men, and the Lord asked again and said, *But whom say ye that I am?* Peter answered, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* One gave the answer for many: Unity in many. Then the Lord said to him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonas: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven* (Matt.16:13-17). Then He added, *And I say unto thee.* As if He had said, "Because you have said unto Me, *Thou are the Christ the Son of the living God,* I also say unto thee, *Thou are Peter*" (Matt. 16:18). For before he was called Simon. Now this name of Peter was given him by the Lord, and that in a figure, so that he should signify the Church. For seeing that Christ is the Rock (*Petra*), Peter is the Christian people. For the Rock (*Petra*) is the original name. Therefore Peter is so called from the rock; not the rock from Peter; as Christ is not called Christ from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. *Therefore, He saith, Thou are Peter; and upon this Rock, which thou hast confessed, upon this Rock which thou hast acknowledged, saying, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, will I build My Church; that is upon Myself, the Son of the*

living God, *will I build My Church* (Matt. 16:18). I will build thee upon Myself, not Myself upon thee.

For men, who wished to be built upon men, said, *I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas* (1 Cor. 1:12), who is Peter. But others who did not wish to be built upon Peter, but upon the Rock, said, *But I am of Christ*. And when the Apostle Paul ascertained that he was chosen and Christ despised, he said, *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Cor. 1:13). And, as not in the name of Paul, so neither in the name of Peter; but in the name of Christ: that Peter might be built upon the Rock, not the Rock upon Peter.

This same Peter therefore who had been pronounced *blessed* by the Rock, bearing the figure of the Church, holding the chief place in the Apostleship, a very little while after that he had heard that he was *blessed*, a very little while after that he had heard that he was *Peter*, a very little while after that he had heard that he was to be *built upon the Rock*, displeased the Lord when He had heard of His future Passion, for He had foretold His disciples that it was soon to be. He feared lest he should by death lose Him Whom he had confessed as the fountain of life. He was troubled, and said, *Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee* (Matt. 16:22). Spare Thyself, O God, I am not willing that Thou shouldest die. Peter said to Christ, I am not willing that Thou shouldest die; but Christ far better said, I am willing to die for thee. And then He immediately rebuked him, whom He had a little before commended; and calls him, whom he had pronounced *blessed*, *Satan*. *Get thee behind Me, Satan*, He says, *thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men* (Matt. 16:23). What would He have us do in our present state, Who thus findeth fault because we are men? Would you know what He would have us do? Give ear to the Psalm: *I said: Ye are gods, and you are all the sons of the Most High* (Ps. 81:6). But by savouring the things of men: *like men ye die* (Ps. 81:7). The very same Peter a little while before was *blessed*, afterwards is *Satan*, in one moment, within a few words! You wonder at the difference

of the names, mark the difference of the reasons of them. Why do you wonder that he who was a little before blessed, is afterwards *Satan*? Mark the reason wherefore he is blessed. Because *flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven* (Matt. 16:17). Therefore *blessed*, because *flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee*. For if *flesh and blood* revealed this to thee, it were of thine own; but because *flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven*, it is of Mine, not of thine own. Why of Mine? Because *all things that the Father hath are Mine* (Jn 16:15). So then you have heard the cause, why he is *blessed*, and why he is *Peter*. But why was he that which we shudder at, and are loth to repeat, why, but because it was of thine own? For *thou savourest not the things which be of God, but those that be of men* (Matt. 16:23).

Let us, looking at ourselves in this member of the Church, distinguish what is of God, and what of ourselves. For then we shall not totter, then shall we be founded on the Rock, shall be fixed and firm against the winds, and storms, and streams, the temptations, I mean, of this present world. Yet see this Peter, who was then our figure; now he trusts, and now he totters; now he confesses the Undying, and now he fears lest He should die. Wherefore? Because the Church of Christ hath both strong and weak ones; and cannot be without either strong or weak; whence the Apostle Paul says, *Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak* (Rom. 15:1). In that Peter said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*, he represents the strong; but in that he totters, and would not that Christ should suffer, in fearing death for Him, and not acknowledging the Life, he represents the weak ones of the Church. In that one Apostle then, that is Peter, in the order of Apostles first and chiefest, in whom the Church was figured, both sorts were to be represented, that is, both the strong and weak; because the Church does not exist without them both.

And hence also that which was just now read, *Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water* (Matt. 14:28). For I cannot do this in myself, but in Thee. He acknowledged what he had

of himself, and what of Him, by whose will he believed that he could do that which no human weakness could do. Therefore, *if it be Thou, bid me*; because when Thou biddest, it will be done. What I cannot do by taking it upon myself, Thou canst do by bidding me. And the Lord said, *Come*. And without any doubting, at the word of Him Who bade him, in the presence of Him who sustained, in the presence of Him who guided him, without any delay, Peter leaped down into the water, and began to walk. He was able to do what the Lord was doing, not in himself, but in the Lord. *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord* (Eph. 5:8). What no one can do in Paul, no one in Peter, no one in any other of the Apostles, this can he do in the Lord. Therefore, by a wholesome despising of himself, and commending of Him, Paul said well: *Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* (1 Cor. 1:13). So then, ye are not *in* me, but together *with* me; not under me, but under Him.

Therefore Peter walked on the water by the bidding of the Lord, knowing that he could not have this power of himself. By faith he had strength to do what human weakness could not do. These are the strong ones of the Church. Mark this, hear, understand, and act accordingly. For we must not deal with the strong on any other principle than this, that even so they might become weak; but thus we must deal with the weak, that they may become strong. But the presuming on their own strength keeps many back from strength. No one will have strength from God, but he who feels himself weak of himself. *A rain freely given shalt Thou ordain, O God, for Thine inheritance* (Ps. 67:10). Why do you, who know what I was about to say, anticipate me? Let your quickness be moderated, that the slowness of the rest may follow. This I said, and I say it again; hear it, receive it, and act on this principle. No one is made strong by God, but he who feels himself weak of his own self. And therefore a *rain freely given*, as the Psalm says, *freely given*, not of our deserts, but *freely given*. *A rain freely given* therefore God ordains for His inheritance; for *it became weak*; but *Thou shalt restore it* (Ps. 67:10). Because Thou hast ordained for it a *rain freely given*, not looking to men's deserts, but to Thine

own grace and mercy. This inheritance then was weakened, and acknowledged its own weakness in itself, that it might be strong in Thee. It would not be strengthened, if it were not weak, that by Thee it might be *restored* in Thee.

See Paul, a *small* portion [the Latin word for small is *paulus* -ed.] of this inheritance, see him in weakness, who said, *I am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God* (1 Cor. 15:9). Why then art thou an Apostle? *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor. 15:9). *I am not meet, but by the grace of God I am what I am.* Paul was “weak,” but Thou didst *perfect* him. But now because by the grace of God he is what he is, look what follows; *And His grace in me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all* (1 Cor. 15:10). Take heed lest thou lose by presumption what thou hast attained through weakness. This is well, very well; that *I am not meet to be called an Apostle. By His grace I am what I am, and His grace in me was not in vain:* all most excellent. But, *I laboured more abundantly than they all;* thou hast begun, it would seem, to ascribe to thyself what a little before thou hadst given to God. Attend and follow on; *Yet not I, but the grace of God with me.* Well! thou weak one; thou shalt be exalted in exceeding strength, seeing thou art not unthankful. Thou art the very same Paul, little in yourself; and great in the Lord. Thou art he who thrice beseeched the Lord, that the *thorn of the flesh, the messenger of Satan,* by whom you were buffeted, might be taken away from thee. And what was said to thee? What didst thou hear when thou madest this petition? *My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor. 12:9). For he was *weak*, but Thou *didst perfect* him.

So Peter also said, *Bid me come unto Thee on the water.* I who dare this am but a man, but it is no man whom I beseech. Let the God-man bid, that man may be able to do what man cannot do. *Come,* said He. And he went down, and began to walk on the water; and Peter was able, because the Rock had bidden him. Behold what Peter was in the Lord. What was he in himself? *When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink,*

*he cried out, Lord, I perish, save me* (Matt. 15:30). When he looked for strength from the Lord, he had strength from the Lord; as a man he tottered, but he returned to the Lord. *Whenever I said: my foot hath slipped* (they are the words of a Psalm, the notes of a holy song; and if we acknowledge them they are our words too; yea, if we will, they are ours also). *Whenever I said my foot hath slipped* (Ps 93:18). How slipped, except because it was my own. And what follows? *Thy mercy, O Lord, brought help unto me.* Not my own strength, but *Thy mercy.* For will God forsake him as he totters, whom He heard when calling upon Him? Wherefore we have: *Who hath called upon God, and hath been forsaken by Him?* (Ecc. 2:10), and again: *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered* (Joel 2:32). Immediately reaching forth the help of His right hand, He lifted him up as he was sinking, and rebuked his distrust: *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Once thou didst trust in Me, hast thou now doubted of Me?*

Well, brethren, my sermon must be ended. Consider the world to be the sea; the wind is boisterous, and there is a mighty tempest. Each man's peculiar lust is his tempest. Thou dost love God; thou walkest upon the sea, and under thy feet is the swelling of the world. Thou dost love the world: it will swallow thee up. It is practised only in how to devour its lovers, not to carry them. And when thy heart is tossed about by lust, in order that thou mayest get the better of thy lust, call upon the Divinity of Christ. Think ye that the wind is contrary, when there is adversity in this life? When there are wars, when there is tumult, when there is famine, when there is pestilence, when even to every individual man his private calamity arriveth, then the wind is thought to be contrary, then it is thought that God must be called upon. But when the world weareth her smile of temporal happiness, it is as if there were no contrary wind. But do not ask upon this matter the tranquil state of the times: ask only your own lust. See if there be tranquillity within you: see if there be no inner wind which overturneth thee; see to this. There needs be great virtue to struggle with happiness, lest this very happiness allure, corrupt, and overthrow thee. There needs, I say, be great virtue to struggle with happiness, and great

happiness not to be overcome by happiness. Learn then to tread upon the world; remember to trust in Christ. And *if thy foot have slipped*, if thou totter, if there are some things which thou canst not overcome, if thou begin to sink, say, *Lord*, I perish, *save me*. Say, *I perish*, that thou perish not. For He only can deliver thee from the death of the body, Who died in the body for thee.



# The Thyateira Confession

***An Appeal by Saint Philaret of New York,  
the New Confessor (+ 1985 A.D.), to the  
Primates of the Holy Churches of God,  
and Their Eminences, the Orthodox Hierarchs***

INSTRUCTING us to preserve firmly in every respect all that the Orthodox Faith commands us, the Holy Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: *But though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed* (Gal. 1:8). He taught his disciple Timothy to abide in that which he had learned and which had been entrusted to him, knowing from Whom he had learned it (2 Tim. 3:14).

This is a mandate which every Hierarch of the Orthodox Church must follow, and to which he is bound by the oath given by him at his Consecration. The Apostle writes that a Hierarch should be one *holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers* (Titus 1:9).

At the present time of universal wavering, disturbance of minds, and corruption, it is especially demanded of us that we should confess the true teaching of the Church, regardless of who might be listening or of the unbelief surrounding us. If, for the sake

of adapting to the errors of this age, we should be silent about the truth, or put forth a corrupt teaching in the name of pleasing this world, then we would truly be giving those who seek the truth a stone in place of bread.

The higher the standing of one who acts in this way, the greater the scandal that he generates, and the more serious can the consequences be. For this reason, we became very sorrowful when we read the so-called ***Thyateira Confession***, which was recently published in Europe with the special blessing and approval of the Holy Synod and the Patriarch of the Church of Constantinople.

We know that the author of this book, His Eminence, Metropolitan [*sic* - his title was actually Archbishop] Athenagoras of Thyateira, has previously shown himself to be a defender of Orthodox truth, and therefore all the less could we have expected from him such a confession, which is far removed from Orthodoxy. However, if this had been only a personal expression of his, we would not have written about it. We are moved to do this, rather, because on his work there rests the seal of approval of the whole Church of Constantinople in the person of Patriarch Demetrios and his Synod. In a special Patriarchal Protocol addressed to Metropolitan Athenagoras, it is stated that his work was examined by a special Synodal Committee. After its approval by this Committee, the Patriarch, in accordance with the decree of the Synod, gave his blessing for the publication of “this excellent work,” as he describes it. Therefore, the responsibility for this work is transferred from Metropolitan Athenagoras now to the whole Hierarchy of Constantinople.

Our previous “Sorrowful Epistles” have already expressed the grief that overcomes us when, from the throne of Saints Proclus, John Chrysostomos, Tarasios, Photios, and many other Holy Fathers, we hear a teaching which without doubt they would have condemned and given over to anathema.

It is painful to write this. How we would have wished to hear from the throne of the Church of Constantinople, which gave birth to our Russian Church, a message characterized by ecclesias-

tical rectitude and a confession of the truth in the spirit of her great Hierarchs! With what joy we would have accepted such a message and transmitted it for the instruction of our pious flock! But on the contrary, a great grief is evoked in us by the necessity to warn our flock that from this onetime fount of Orthodox confession there now comes forth a message of corruption that causes scandal.

If one turns to the *Thyateira Confession* itself, alas, there are so many internal contradictions and un-Orthodox thoughts therein that, in order to enumerate them, we would have to write an entire book. We presume that there is no need to do this. It is sufficient for us to point out the main premise upon which all of the un-Orthodox thinking contained in this confession is based, and from which it proceeds.

Metropolitan Athenagoras in one place (p. 60) writes, with full justification, that Orthodox Christians believe that their Church is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church and transmits the fullness of Catholic truth. He likewise acknowledges that the other confessions have not preserved this fullness. But later he as it were forgets that if any teaching departs in any respect from the truth, it is, *ipso facto*, false. Belonging to a religious communion which confesses such a teaching, people are thereby already separated from the one true Church.

Metropolitan Athenagoras is ready to acknowledge this with regard to such ancient heretics as the Arians, but when speaking about his contemporaries he does not wish to take their heresy into consideration. And with regard to them he calls us to be guided not by ancient Tradition and Canons, but by the “new understanding which prevails today among Christians” (p. 12) and by “the signs of the times” (p. 11).

Is this in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Fathers? Let us recall that the First Canon of the Seventh Œcumenical Synod gives us a completely different criterion for the direction of our Church thought and Church life. “For those who have received the priestly dignity,” it is stated there, “the formulations of Canonical

decrees serve as testimonies and statutes.” And further: “We embrace the Divine Canons, unwaveringly holding fast to all that is prescribed by the same, whether they have been set forth by the all-laudable Apostles, those trumpets of the Spirit, by the Six Holy Œcumenical Synods, by those who have assembled at a regional level for the purpose of issuing such edicts, or by our Holy Fathers. For all of these, being enlightened by one and the same Spirit, have decreed what is profitable.”

In defiance of this principle, in the *Thyateira Confession* emphasis is constantly placed on the “new understanding.” “Christian people,” it says there, “now visit churches and pray with other Christians of various traditions with whom they were forbidden in the past to associate, for they were called heretics” (p. 12). But who was it that previously forbade these prayers? Was it not Holy Scripture, the Holy Fathers, and the Œcumenical Synods? And is the matter really about those who were only called heretics and were not such in actual fact?

The First Canon of Saint Basil the Great gives a clear definition of the naming of heretics: “They [that is, the Holy Fathers] call heretics those who have altogether broken away and have become entirely alienated with regard to the Faith itself.” Does this really not refer to those Western confessions that have fallen away from the Orthodox Church? The Holy Apostle Paul instructs us: “A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject” (Titus 3:10); the *Thyateira Confession*, however, summons us to religious get-togethers and communion in prayer with them.

The Forty-fifth Canon of the Holy Apostles commands: “Let a Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon who has only prayed with heretics be suspended.” The Sixty-fourth Apostolic Canon and the Thirty-third Canon of the Synod of Laodicæa speak of the same thing. The Thirty-second Canon of the latter prohibits receiving a blessing from heretics. The *Thyateira Confession*, on the contrary, calls for joint prayer with them and goes so far as even to allow Orthodox Christians both to receive communion from them and to give it to them.

Metropolitan Athenagoras himself gives the information that in the Anglican Confession a large segment of the bishops and believers do not acknowledge either the Grace of the Hierarchy, or the sanctity of the Œcumenical Synods, or the transformation of the Gifts at the Liturgy, or the other Mysteries, or the veneration of holy Relics. The author of the *Confession* himself points to those articles of the “Anglican Confession” in which this is expressed. And yet, disregarding all of this, he allows Orthodox Christians to receive communion from Anglicans and Catholics and finds it possible to give them Communion in the Orthodox Church.

Upon what is such a practice based? On the teaching of the Holy Fathers? On the Canons? No. The only basis for this is the fact that such a lawless thing has already been done and that there exists a “friendship,” which has been manifested by the Anglicans for the Orthodox.

However, no matter what position might be occupied by one who allows an act forbidden by the Canons, and no matter what kind of friendship might be the cause that has inspired such an act, this cannot justify a practice condemned by the Canons. What answer will be given to the Heavenly Judge by the Hierarchs who advise their spiritual children to receive, in place of true Communion, that which often the very ones who give it do not acknowledge as the Body and Blood of Christ?

Such a lawless thing proceeds from the completely heretical, Protestant, or—to express it in contemporary language—ecumenical teaching of the *Thyateira Confession* regarding the Holy Church. It sees no boundaries in the Church. “The Holy Spirit,” we read there, “is active both within the Church and outside the Church. For this reason its limits are ever extended and its bounds are nowhere. The Church has a door but no walls” (p. 77).

But if the Spirit of God acts alike both within the Church and outside her, why then was it necessary for the Saviour to come to earth and found her? Concern for the preservation and confession of the authentic truth—a truth which has been handed down

to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Apostles, and the Holy Fathers—turns out to be superfluous in this conception.

Although the Confession does say on page 60 that the Orthodox Church can “rightly claim at this moment of history to be the One Church that Christ the Son of God founded upon earth,” it does not see any necessity for the inviolate preservation of her faith, allowing thereby the coëxistence of truth and error. Despite the words of the Apostle, that Christ has presented her to Himself as “a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27), the *Thyateira Confession* presents the Church as uniting in herself both truth and that which it itself acknowledges as apostasy therefrom, that is, heresy, although the latter expression is not used here.

The refutation of such a teaching was clearly set forth in the renowned “Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs” on the Orthodox Faith: “We unequivocally confess, as a matter of firm faith, that the Catholic Church cannot err or go astray and utter falsehood in place of truth: for the Holy Spirit, always active through the Fathers and teachers of the Church who faithfully serve her, preserves her from every error” (§12).

Submitting to the new dogma of pleasing the times, the author of the *Thyateira Confession* clearly forgets the injunction of the Saviour that if your brother “neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:17), and the same instruction of the Apostle: “A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject” (Titus 3:10).

Therefore, with great sorrow we must acknowledge that in the so-called *Thyateira Confession* there has resounded from Constantinople not the voice of Orthodox truth, but rather the voice of the ever more widespread error of ecumenism.

But what will be done now by those whom “the Holy Spirit hath made overseers, to shepherd the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28)? Will this false teaching, officially proclaimed in the name of the whole Church of

Constantinople, remain without protests on the part of the Hierarchs of God? Will there continue to be, in the expression of Saint Gregory the Theologian, a betrayal of truth by silence?

Being the youngest of those who preside over the Churches, we had wished to hear the voices of our elders before speaking out ourselves. But up until now this voice has not been heard. If they have not yet become acquainted with the content of the *Thyateira Confession*, we entreat them to read it attentively and not to leave it without condemnation.

It is frightful that the words of the Lord to the Angel of the Church of Laodicæa might be applied to us: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16).

We now warn our flock and call upon our fellow shepherds, appealing to their faith in the Church and to their awareness of our common responsibility for our flock before the Heavenly Chief Shepherd. We implore them not to disdain our warning, lest a manifest mutilation of Orthodox teaching remain without censure and condemnation.

Its broad distribution has moved us to inform the entire Church of our grief. We should like to hope that our cry be heard.

President of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia

✠ ***Metropolitan Philaret***

New York, 6th/19th December, 1975

THE piece above was written by a man who was in deed and word a successor to the Apostles, St Philaret the New Confessor. It was written almost forty years ago, and, thank Goodness, the book which it refutes, "The Thyateira Confession," appears to have sunk without trace. However, the teachings and ideas expressed in that book have, if anything, gained greater currency among the ecumenist Orthodox, and therefore Saint Philaret's appeal has lost nothing of its relevance.

*N.B. In every issue, our “translation” of Fr Alexander’s work has been rather free, as we are addressing readers with a different background to those he was addressing at the end of the nineteenth century in Imperial Russia. In this month’s section below, we have of necessity been even freer than usual to make things clear to our readers.*

## Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

*Continuation*

§ 54. **Teaching on the Proskomidi.** The first part of the Liturgy, during which the elements are prepared for the Mystery, is called the *proskomidi*, a name which derives from the Greek for offering. It received this name because among the Christians of ancient times, the faithful would bring the bread, wine, oil and other things necessary with them to church as offerings. [*In fact this is still a common custom among many Orthodox peoples today - see, for instance, our “Thanks to” section in the calendar insert. However in the more modern Russian practice, to which Fr Alexander is obviously referring, it is usual for the church to provide these things.*] Of the offerings brought in this way, the church ministers would select those things necessary for the Divine service, and apportion the rest for the Agape Meal which would follow the Liturgy. Where and when this practice was abandoned, the clergy themselves would ensure that the necessary things were provided for the service, providing them from the alms given for the upkeep of the church.

§ 55. **The elements for the Mystery: *prosphoras*.** The bread used in the Liturgy (the individual loaves are called *prosphoras*) must be pure, wheat bread and leavened, because the bread used at the Mystical Supper by our Lord Jesus Christ was

leavened. This is manifest by the word used for it in the Greek Gospels, *artos*, which signifies bread which has risen. [*From this point Fr Alexander describes the Russian practice, in which five small prosphoras are used for the proskomidi. In the Greek practice one large prosphora is used but the seal on it is composed of five sections arranged in the form of a cross. Other than that, the practice is identical, each section on a Greek prosphora being the equivalent of an individual small prosphora in the Russian usage.*] Each of the loaves offered is made in two portions or layers [*somewhat like a cottage loaf* - ed.], representing the two natures of Jesus Christ, Divine and human, and on the top it has a seal, a cross with the initials, IC, XC, NI, KA, in the four corners of the cross. From the Greek this means “Jesus Christ conquers.” It reminds us of the Cross seen in the heavens by Saint Constantine the Great. The loaves are called *prosphoras*, which again derives from the Greek, and suggests an offering or gift. Five are used in the Liturgy [*see above*] to recall the five loaves with which the five thousand were satisfied in our Saviour’s miraculous feeding of them. The wine used must be red wine and pure, because such was used at the Mystical Supper by Jesus Christ and it is more akin to blood.

**§ 56. Preparation of the Clergy for the Celebration of the Liturgy.** The clergy who are preparing to celebrate the Liturgy must needs attend, or at least read, Vespers and Mattins, and the prayers of preparation appointed, and of course keep the fast before Communion. Having come to the church before the Liturgy, they stand before the Royal Gates, and say the appointed prayers, asking that they be strengthened for the service, then they kiss the icons of the Saviour and the Mother of God, and turn and bow to the congregation, asking for their forgiveness of their sins and that they, the people, pray to God for them. They then enter the sanctuary and prostrate or bow (depending on the day) before the Holy Table, kiss the Gospel Book and the Table itself, and then greet each other with “Christ is in our midst,” thus showing that they serve together in brotherly love. Next they vest in the sacred vestments, for each of which a short verse from the psalms

is appointed, which they say silently for themselves. These verses reflect the spiritual significance of each of the separate vestments and the virtues which should adorn the persons in the priestly orders. Having fully vested, they wash their hands, again saying appointed psalm verses and then approach the proskomidi table to begin the service.

*... to be continued with “The Order of the Celebration of the Proskomidi.”*



## THE COMING MONTH

MOST of June is taken up with the Apostles' fast, about which we wrote in the May issue. The two most important feasts in the month are the **Nativity of St John the Baptist** on 24th June / 7th July and the feast of the **Holy Apostles Peter and Paul** on 29th June / 12th July, which this year falls on a Sunday. It is until this latter feast, having received the Holy Mysteries at the Liturgy or the antidoron at the end of the service, that we keep the fast. After the Liturgy we may break the fast.

Among the other saints celebrated this month, we have:

**Saint Sampson the Hospitable** (27th June / 10th July) was the son of a rich and illustrious family in Rome. In his youth he received an excellent education and studied medicine. Using these skills, he treated the sick free of charge. After his parents' death he generously distributed alms and freed his slaves, preparing himself to take up the ascetic life. With this intent he set out for the East, but the Lord directed him to another ministry, that of service to his neighbour, and he settled in the Imperial City, Constantinople. In his small house, the saint began to take in homeless wanderers, the poor and the sick, and he cared for them. The Lord blessed the efforts of St Sampson and endowed him with the power of wonderworking. He healed the sick not only through being a skilled

physician, but also through the grace of God. For this reason he became renowned, and the Patriarch, learning of his great virtue, ordained him to the priesthood. The Emperor Justinian fell grievously ill, and it was revealed to him that he could receive healing only through St Sampson. The Saint was summoned and healed the Emperor, who naturally desired to reward his benefactor with silver and gold, but the saint refused this and instead asked Justinian to build a home for the poor and the sick. The Emperor readily fulfilled his request. St Sampson devoted the rest of his life to caring for those who came there for healing and shelter. He lived to deep old age, and after a short illness he departed peacefully to the Lord. The Saint was laid to rest at the church of the holy Martyr Mocius, and many healings were worked at his tomb. His hospice continued to operate, and the Saint did not cease to care for the suffering. He appeared twice to a negligent worker at the hospice and upbraided him for his laziness. Subsequently the hospice was transformed into a church, and beside it a new home was built for those in need. Miraculously, during the time of a raging fire in the city, the flames did not touch St Sampson's hospice, rather through his intercessions a heavy rain quenched the fire. Centuries later, in 1709 A.D, the Russian Emperor Peter I defeated the Swedes under Charles XII at the Battle of Poltava on Saint Sampson's day, and therefore veneration of the Saint became widespread in Russia.



“IT IS NOT always for the same reason that sinners commit the same sin... It is one thing to sin through force of habit and another to sin though being carried away by a sudden impulse. In the latter case the man did not deliberately choose the sin either before committing it or afterwards. On the contrary, he is deeply distressed that the sin has occurred. It is quite different with the man who sins through force of habit. Prior to the act he is already sinning in thought, and after it he is still in the same state of mind.”

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

# NEWS from the communities in England of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece

## ***FOUR BAPTISMS AT BROOKWOOD***

NICOLLE, the infant daughter of **Cristian and Raluca Gafita** of Edgware, Middlesex, was baptised at Saint Edward's Church on Saturday, 19th April / 2nd May. The **Priestmonk Iustin** from Romania celebrated the Mysterion, and the godparents were **Stefan Danut Gafita, Tatiana Florea and Tatiana Balan**. After the Baptism, light refreshments were provided by Nicolle's family. The next day, the Sunday of the Paralytic, with the blessing of **Mother Vikentia**, Father Iustin celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Convent in London, for the Traditionalist faithful of the Romanian Church.

On Sunday, 4th /17th May, the Sunday of the Blind Man, after the Divine Liturgy, **His Grace Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** celebrated the Mysterion of Holy Baptism for **Elisa**, the daughter of **Nicolae and Catalina Mitrea** of Eltham, and for **Elena**, the daughter of **Ioan and Simona Biosa** of Boreham Wood. Elisa's godparents were **Catalin and Daniela Mustata**, and Elena's **Daniel and Andreea Mitrea**. Again light refreshments were served after the Baptism, and then Bishop Sofronie made his way to the Lord Pirbright Hall to join the rest of our parishioners (see below: "***Much Ado...***").

**Archimandrite Serapion** from Romania joined our clergy at Brookwood in concelebrating the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Œcumenical Synod, 11th /24th May. After the service, he heard confessions of the Roma-

nian faithful and read prayers for their special needs. In the afternoon, he was the celebrant at the Baptism of **Nicolai**, the son of **Cristian Dunca** and **Andreea Preda** of Millwall, East London. The godparents were **Simon and Ana Daniela Oara**.

We ask the prayers of the faithful for the newly illumined servants of God Nicolle, Elisa, Elena and Nicolai that they may be kept in the faith of a godly confession all the days of their lives, and prayers also for their sponsors that they bear the responsibilities they have undertaken dutifully.

### ***“MUCH ADO ...”***

ON the feast day of the Great Martyr Eirene, 5th/18th May, Fr Alexis marked the 40th anniversary of his ordination. Unknown to him **a plot** was hatched, and on the Friday, three days before this, he learned that **Their Graces Bishops Ambrose of Methoni and Sofronie of Suceava** were coming to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the nearest Sunday to this date, the 4th/17th. Bishop Ambrose arrived on the Saturday, and was met on our behalf at Heathrow by **Alex Spiroglou**. That evening he was present with us at our Vespers service. On the Sunday morning we served according to our usual typicon, and during Matins the two Bishops prayed within the sanctuary. At the Divine Liturgy they concelebrated with Fr Alexis, **Fr Ekonomos Stephen Fretwell, Fr Gabriel Lawani from Droylsden, and Fr Borislav Popov**, assisted by **Hierodeacon Sabbas and Deacon Nicolae**, who had accompanied Bishop Sofronie from Romania. **Mother Vikentia and Mother Germana** from the **Convent of the Annunciation in London** attended the service; they and **Mrs Chrysanthy Lemos** were kindly brought by **Mrs Tatiana James**. The Liturgy was conducted in English, Romanian, Greek, Slavonic and Arabic, and for the occasion the church was full, as everyone else had been told of the event.

Bishop Ambrose kindly presented Fr Alexis with a white priestly stole and matching cuffs, which he had sewn himself. Bishop Sofronie and the Romanian faithful presented him with a fine set of red vestments, which he was under orders to wear on the occasion, and they also bought him a ticket to Romania so that he might attend the dedication festival of the **Sacred Monastery of Slatioara** on the Transfiguration of our Saviour in August. Apparently **Ecaterina Rogojina** was the liaison person in making these arrangements with our Romanian community, and so one of the plotters! (To spare their blushes, we will not mention that **Elizabeth Castle** and **Elena Holden** played major rôles in this plot). The local parishioners gave him an *epigonation*, on which there is a beautiful iconic depiction of the Holy Passion-bearer, Edward the Martyr. Recognizing his increasing dotage, they also gave him a rocking chair! Other friends and parishioners presented numerous other gifts.

At the Hierarchal Liturgy, Bishop Ambrose preached telling us of the significance of anniversaries, and of the life of **Saint Philaret the New Confessor**, who ordained Fr Alexis, and he spoke of our approaching death. Then Bishop Sofronie preached in Romanian, with Bishop Ambrose translating sentence by sentence. He urged the faithful to be assiduous in saying their prayers, spiritual reading, in going to confession and partaking of the Holy Mysteries. After the thanksgiving prayers, we made our way to the **Lord Pirbright Hall**, which had been hired for the occasion, for a festive meal, which had been laid on by our parishioners. Towards the end of the meal, **Anna Rotherham** sang Russian folk songs for us, accompanying herself on the guitar. As Bishop Ambrose left to catch a plane, taxied by **Daniela Antonova**, Bishop Sofronie, who had stayed at the church to celebrate the Baptisms of Elisa and Elena, joined us at the meal. Thanks are more than due to those who contributed to this splendid occasion. May they all be rewarded for their extraordinary kindness and for their ingenuity in managing to arrange everything in secret, though your present writer does wonder why a celebration of forty years of decline, accumulated sins and increasing decrepitude was called for.

## **CONTINUED VISIT OF BISHOP AMBROSE**

HAVING briefly visited Scotland, Bishop Ambrose returned to us on the Tuesday, being met at Gatwick by members of the Brotherhood. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy with us on the Wednesday, the Leavetaking of Pascha. In the afternoon, **Jenny Graveson** of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** visited us to show His Grace the grave of **John Singer-Sargent**, the artist, who had painted a portrait of the great-grandfather of the Bishop. In the event, she kindly extended her tour to graves in the cemetery much further afield. In the evening, Bishop Ambrose presided at the Vigil service for the **Great Feast of the Ascension**. Early in the morning, he was taken by Fr Sabbas to celebrate the Liturgy for the festival at the **Convent in London**. The three priests attached to our Brotherhood meanwhile celebrated at St Edward's. Having left us at just after six in the morning, His Grace arrived back at Brookwood a little while before Vespers, and he attended Mattins with us on Friday morning. He was then taken to Heathrow for his flight back to Athens by **Inna Onischenko**, after what must have been a very tiring visit to Britain for him. The next day, he emailed to tell us that he was in Italy!

## **WE PUBLISH A NEW BOOK**

A NEW BOOK from Saint Edward Brotherhood has just been published. It is entitled ***Christian Union? An Orthodox Christian's Guide to Ecumenism: Past, Present and Future***. It is written in an approachable style and discusses the history of ecumenism and more everyday matters that concern Orthodox Christians living in the world. The book is A5 in size, 85 pages long with 15 black and white illustrations and two full colour plates. Many of the illustrations were done by **Sofia Popova**, the daughter of our Fr Borislav. It is available direct from the Brotherhood's website and from **Amazon**. When buying directly from us, it is priced at £7.00 from the bookstall, £9.00 including postage to the U.K.

## ***FUNERAL***

THE FUNERAL service of **Viacheslav Polozov** was served at the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Ennismore Gardens, London**, on Friday, 9th / 22nd May. The deceased was laid to rest in Saint Edward's Cemetery after the service, with **Archpriest Joseph Skinner** of the Cathedral clergy serving. About twenty people attended the interment, after which the mourners were offered refreshments in the Old Mortuary Hall. May the servant of God, Viacheslav, find rest with the Saints.

## ***SURREY CHURCHES PRESERVATION TRUST***

THE ANNUAL LECTURE of the SCPT was held on Saturday, 9th May, at **St John's Church Centre, Merrow**. The lecture, given by **John Elliott**, an architectural historian, was entitled "**The Victorian Church Building Campaign.**" As the Trust has generously given donations to our church restoration at Saint Edward's, Fathers Alexis and Niphon attended the lecture this year. It was most interesting and entertaining, and illustrated with slides of photographs and diagrams. We also had the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance with **Dame Sarah Goad, the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey**, who laid the foundation stone of our new monastic house at Brookwood in September, 2006, and with **Sam Osmund**, the Trust's secretary, and **Andrew Plumridge** of the SCPT team.

## ***VISITORS***

ON ASCENSION DAY, Thursday, 8th / 21st May, our congregation at Saint Edward's was joined for the Divine Liturgy by **thirty Anglican pilgrims from Australia**. They were led by **Rev. Graeme Napier** of the **Saint George Cathedral, Perth**,

although several of them were from other parts of Australia and the party included other Anglican priests. During the Divine Liturgy, **Father Stephen Fretwell** preached on the feast, and afterwards Fr Alexis briefly welcomed the pilgrims. They were then given a short talk about Saint Edward and our church by **Fr Niphon**, before joining us in the Old Mortuary for the parish breakfast. Having already visited Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, after their pilgrimage to our church, they made their way to Winchester to continue their tour of the holy places of Britain.

On Friday 22nd May, **Cllr John Kingsbury, the Leader of the Council in Woking**, visited Brookwood Cemetery, accompanied by **Mr Ian Tomes, the Strategic Asset Manager of the Borough Council**. They came to see the church and were shown the Exhibition Room by Fr Niphon. The previous Sunday afternoon, Mr Tomes and his wife had made a brief private visit to our Brotherhood, just as we returned from the celebratory breakfast at Lord Pirbright Hall.



## **PRACTICAL TIP**

WHEN I recently told a parishioner off for taking photographs during the Divine Services, she gave the silly excuse that, “Other people were doing it.” This is not an excuse any Orthodox Christians should use, nor indeed any intelligent person, whatever their faith or lack of it. After all, “other people” commit murders, take drugs, steal, defraud the benefits system, have sexual relations outside marriage, lie, live in comfort and often luxury without a care for those less fortunate than themselves; “other people” are proud, vain, malicious, quick to anger, spiteful, gossippers and so on. We should not simply take example from “other people,” but should first consider whether their example is good. Our rôle models should not be other sinners, but the saints of God; our guidelines should be the teachings of the Church. This woman’s excuse in sin, though, does have one good consequence: it demonstrates how careful we should be not to give a bad example.