



FROM THE FATHERS

“WE and our brethren possess two images. Whenever then a man condemns himself, his brother appears unto him beautiful and excellent; but whenever a man appears beautiful to himself, his brother will be found to be, in his sight, hateful and abominable.”

ABBA PCÆMEN THE GREAT, + 450 A.D.

“THE SUN shines on all alike, and vainglory beams on all activities. For instance, I am vainglorious when I fast; and when I relax the fast in order to be unnoticed, I am again vainglorious over my prudence. When well-dressed I am quite overcome by vainglory, and when I put on poor clothes I am vainglorious again. When I talk I am defeated, and when I am silent I am again defeated by it. However I throw this prickly pear, a spike stands upright.”

VEN. JOHN OF THE LADDER, + 649 A.D.

“THE PERSON who likes to be popular attends solely to the outward show of morality and to the words of the flatterer. With the first he hopes to attract the eyes and with the second the ears of those who are charmed and impressed only by what is visible and audible, and who judge virtue with their senses.”

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

The Necessity of Spiritual Fatherhood

EXTRACTED FROM A TRIBUTE TO METROPOLITAN CYPRIAN THE ELDER

THE AUTHENTIC and genuine spiritual life in Christ is the charismatic life of the regenerated Christian. The wealth and beauty of the believer are the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit which, however, such a Christian will acquire only insofar as he places himself under the direction of an experienced spiritual Father.

Just as indispensable as a biological father is in natural birth is also the necessity of a spiritual Father in spiritual birth. And just as there are three stages to natural birth—conception, gestation, and delivery—, the same thing takes place in spiritual birth.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian writes on the subject to a spiritual child of his:

“We conceived you through teaching;

“We delivered you through repentance;

“We gave birth to you through much patience and exceeding travails and pains and daily tears.”¹

When, by the Grace of God, the strong bond of spiritual kinship is developed, apart from the many other benefits to the soul, the regenerated believer is spiritually secured.

Unity in Christ with one’s spiritual Father preserves him from temptations and dangers. We are able to ascertain this fact in the lives of the Saints. For example, it is reported in the life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian that his disciple and monk under obedience, Arsenius (who later succeeded him as Abbot), was at one point tried by the strongest temptation of his life. His mother according to the flesh, having learned of the place of her son’s asceticism after a lengthy search, went to the Monastery of Saint

Mamas and fell prone at the monastery's outer gate, insistently asking with tears to see her son, with the intention, to be sure, of moving him emotionally and prying him from the monastic life. The monk Arsenius was informed by the monastery's gatekeeper of the event, but he refused to give in to the strong pull of motherly love, saying:

“How could I, brother, who am already dead to the world, turn back and look, as you tell me, at the one who gave birth to me in the flesh? I have the one who gave birth to me in spirit, from whom I suck each day the pure milk of the Grace of God: I mean my father in God, who is also my mother, who has begotten me in the spirit, as they say, and shelters me in the bosom of his tender compassion as a newborn child. I will never suffer to leave him and go to her, even if I hear that she has died.”² After three days, having finally become discouraged, his mother left, empty-handed. In this way, the blessed Arsenius was delivered from a great snare of the enemy, because he consistently experienced in his life spiritual kinship with his Elder.

Now, of course, it is not possible to characterise Arsenius as being uncompassionate towards his mother; but rather, he had put things in their proper order: first spiritual kinship and then biological.

When comparing biological to spiritual parents, Saint John Chrysostom says that the difference between them is as great as the difference between the present life and the next; for, while biological parents give birth to us in this life, spiritual parents do so in the future life:

“The difference between the two is as great as the difference between this life and the next. The former give birth in this life, while the latter in the next.”³

The necessity of a spiritual Father for our spiritual birth and rebirth is so great that the Holy Fathers exhort us to beseech God persistently to show us the spiritual Guide to whom—even

if he is not perfect—we must submit ourselves with trust; for it is preferable for us to be called disciples of a disciple, rather than to live idiorhythmically and to be in danger of being led astray by the enemy.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian characteristically says the following:

“Brother, constantly entreat God that He might show you a man who is able to shepherd you well—one to whom you ought to submit yourself as though to God Himself and whose instructions you must unhesitatingly carry out, even if what he enjoins upon you seems to you to be unprofitable and harmful. And if your heart is moved by Grace to have even greater confidence in the spiritual Father whom you already have, do that which he tells you and be saved. For it is better for you to be called a disciple of a disciple than to live idiorhythmically and to gather the useless fruits of your own will. But if the Holy Spirit sends you to another, do not hesitate at all; for we hear that it was Paul who planted, and Apollos who watered, and Christ who gives the increase. Do, then, brother, as we have said, and go to the man whom God—whether mystically, through His own Self, or manifestly, through His servant—shows you. And, as if seeing and speaking to Christ Himself, in this wise must you revere him and be taught by him what is profitable.”⁴

Indeed, St. Symeon sets out for us a model of such a prayer by which it is possible for a disciple to turn to God:

“O Lord, Thou who desirest not the death of the sinner, but that he return and live, Thou Who didst descend to earth so that Thou mightest resurrect those who lie prostrate and are deadened by sin and make them worthy to see Thee, the True Light, as far as is possible for man, send Thou to me someone who knoweth Thee, so that, having worked for him as for Thee, and having submitted myself with all of my strength and doing Thy will in his will, I may please Thee, the only God, and be vouchsafed Thy Kingdom—I, too, the sinner.”⁵

WITHIN the Tradition of our Church there are two types of spiritual Fathers, which may coincide in the same person. The Bishop is a spiritual Father who is regarded as a “father after God”;⁶ but the same is true for every Priest who, through the power of his priestly office, begets the Faithful into a new life in Christ by means of Holy Baptism.

Because, however, most people are baptized at a young age, they unfortunately do not activate the Grace of the Holy Spirit that they have received in the Holy Mystery. That is why that spiritual Father is necessary who—being in a charismatic position on account of his personal holiness—will literally regenerate the believer who has been deadened by ignorance and sin, and will lead him safely to the realm of Grace and the presence of the Divine Comforter.

Given that the entrance into the monastic life—and, more generally, into the life of repentance—is rightly considered a second Baptism,⁷ it follows that he who initiates us into this second, regenerating Baptism is, certainly—and is called—a spiritual Father, even if he is a simple monk or a layman. For Holy Tradition has passed on to us instances in which simple, but Grace-filled and God-bearing people (such as, for example, Saint Antony the Great) regenerated countless souls in Christ, transmitted to them the wealth of their spiritual gifts, and became spiritual blood-donors to souls dead to Grace. They did not have the authority to provide the means of Grace—the Holy Mysteries—, but they experienced Grace, and they imbued the world with it; they exorcised from the world every profane and demonic element; and, as abodes of the sole and enhypostatic Truth, they offered to the people the regenerating truth of dogma put into practice.

WE CALL to mind the words of Saint Basil the Great:

“He is most truly a father, firstly, the Father of all; and, secondly after Him, the one who is our guide in the spiritual life”; “for the guide is none other than the one who is in the place of the

Saviour and has become the mediator between God and man, and offers to God the salvation of those under submission to him.”⁸

And we call that to mind, feeling infinite gratitude to the All-Holy Lord our God, because He has vouchsafed us, in these so very difficult days through which we are passing, to have a spiritual Father in whose person are met both spiritual Fatherhood—owing to his Priestly office—and charismatic Fatherhood, which is, of course, a rare gift of the Holy Spirit. By means of the first—the Priestly—, you [Metropolitan Cyprian the Elder] have regenerated us through the Holy Mysteries. By means of the second—the charismatic—, you have regenerated us through the transfusion of the spiritual gifts with which Divine Grace has enriched you. To be sure, your God-pleasing and blessed task—that we, your spiritual children, should be perfected in Christ and achieve spiritual birth-giving—is not an easy or painless one.

The holy Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”⁹

Temptations from us, owing to our weaknesses, but also temptations from the devil and his instruments on account of his envy for the salvific work that you are accomplishing—these are your daily cross.

“We gave birth to you,” wrote Saint Symeon, as aforementioned, “we gave birth to you through much patience and exceeding travails and pains and daily tears.”¹⁰

And just as much as your temptations and trials for our sake increase, so much and more does our gratitude towards your holiness increase.

We listen daily to the exhortation of St. Gregory of Nyssa to the Bishop of Melitine:

“Do not cease offering to God the usual prayers for us. For you are indebted, as a grateful son, to take care of the one who has begotten you in God through prayer, according to the commandment which orders one to honour his parents, that it might be well

with you and that you might have long life on earth.”¹¹

IT IS WELL known to everyone that the heliotrope—the plant commonly called the “sunflower”—is always turned upwards towards the light, towards the sun. And we monks and all of your spiritual children, our Most Reverend Father, have need of your presence, just as heliotropes have need of the sun; your love makes us turn ourselves wholly upwards, towards the light, towards the noetic Sun of Righteousness: our Lord and God, Jesus Christ; your fatherly love kindles in our hearts the fervent anticipation of the sight of our Bridegroom.

A certain monk confessed to me that among the most beautiful moments of his life are those in which he feels his heart overflowing with sentiments of the deepest reverence and holy awe for the person of his spiritual Father. When I asked him if that occurs regularly, he answered me more or less as follows:

“I pray to the Lord to grant me this gift permanently, because this condition is a charismatic one—a gift from the right hand of the Most High. In general, feelings of reverence towards one’s Elder are cultivated and renewed by continuous prayer and the mysteriological life. But sometimes, in order for the soul to be strengthened in its struggle and to not become negligent, the Mother of our Lord rests her Most Holy hand on the sweating brow of the struggling disciple, and the anticipated good change is miraculously brought about. Then, the Elder acquires a mysterious transparency: within it the disciple, with his eyes now changed by Grace, sees Christ! Then the heart is illumined, fills with joy, and is freed from the work of creation. Its desires and wishes coincide with the Elder’s and, through him, with Christ’s. It sees all things in Grace and feels that the source of all of its previous misfortune was its own will, opinion, and judgment. Afterwards, of course, this blessed state recedes; but the good memory and the desire for the continuation of the struggle remain. In any case, only through the prayers of his spiritual Father, by means of him and together with him, does the disciple see Christ.”

That is what the monk told me, and he left me literally speechless; but he also rekindled my desire for that Divine gift, which may Christ grant to us, through your holy prayers.

3rd October 1987, + Fr. K.

Footnotes:

1. St Symeon the New Theologian, “Epistle III,” ll. 1-3, in B.C. Christophorides, *Spiritual Fatherhood According to Saint Symeon the New Theologian* (Thessalonica: Ekdoseis “P. Pournara,” 1977), p. 26
2. Nikitas Stethatos, *The Life and Conduct of our Father Among the Saints, Symeon the New Theologian*, §46, ll. 21-32, ed. Archimandrite Symeon Koutsas (Athens: “Akritis,” 1996), pp. 138-139.
3. St John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, Discourse III, §6, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLVII, col. 644.
4. St Symeon the New Theologian, *Catecheses*, XX, ll. 45-62.
5. *Idem*, *Ethical Discourses*, VIII, ll. 437-445.
6. *Apostolic Constitutions*, Book II, ch. 26, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. I, col. 668A: “He [the Bishop], your Father after God, has regenerated you through water and the Spirit into sonship.”
7. *The Service of the Great and Angelic Schema*, from the “Catechesis”: “Behold, child, what sort of promises you are giving to the Master Christ...” (See the *Great Evchologion*).
8. St Basil the Great, *Ascetic Constitutions*, ch. XX, §1 and ch. XXII, §4, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXI, cols. 1389D, 1409A.
9. Galatians 4:19
10. St Symeon the New Theologian, “Epistle III,” ll. 1-3.
11. St Gregory of Nyssa, “Canonical Epistle,” *PG*, Vol. XLV, col. 236BC.



“FLEE vainglory, and you will be glorified; fear pride, and you will be magnified. For pomposity has not been assigned to the sons of men, nor haughtiness to the offspring of women... Associate with those who have humility, and you will learn their ways. For if the mere sight of those here mentioned is beneficial, how much more the example of their lives and instruction of their mouths.”

VEN. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, + C. 550 A.D.

THE following article was written to address a concern in Greece fifteen years ago, but it has parallels with the situation in the United Kingdom today, sadly even within church congregations, and it is instructive for our people who often succumb to temptations similar to those our Greek brethren were experiencing then.

The Foundation of the Ethos of the Orthodox Church

MERCY AND LOVE TRANSCEND RACE,
NATIONALITY, AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

“And who is my neighbour?”

† *His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian I of Oropos and Fili*

a. Ideologizing a disdain for foreigners

THE RECENT mass influx of refugees into our country, particularly from Afghanistan, has occasioned great confusion and has also demonstrated that those “Greek Orthodox” who are opposed to the new identity cards [which do not indicate one’s religious affiliation and are, for this reason, viewed by a vocal faction in Greece as an attempt by the state to undermine the Orthodox identity of the country—*Trans.*] and who have organized public protests over the matter, with certain laudable exceptions (such as the residents of Zakynthos), do not evidence a Christian heart and have failed to keep in mind what it means to be a Christian.

We are not merely addressing, of course, the issue of the legal obligation of the government, which—on the basis of international conventions—is prevented from expelling any refugee who

declares that he has been persecuted and that his life is likely to be in danger if he returns to his homeland.

Nor, in addition, are we only distressed by the shamelessness of the police authorities [in violation of the foregoing international conventions—*Trans.*], one agency of which even went so far as to issue a deportation order to a new mother with her twenty-day-old baby...! (To go where...?)

What is, in our view, by far more alarming is the fact that a disdain for foreigners is being turned into an ideology—in the name of Orthodox tradition, no less!—, to the unbelievable extent that a well-known clergyman has been vehemently condemned for providing free relief to hundreds of children of illegal immigrants, very few of whom are Orthodox (the majority of them being Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants), and that the following truly shocking question has been posed: “Are we going to allow a few clergy who are ignorant of our Orthodox Tradition to save their souls while they destroy Greece?”

b. Love is Christocentric.

THE ETHOS of the Orthodox Church is Christocentric. It is the teaching of the Fathers, proclaimed in deed and word, “always, everywhere, and by all,” that the members of the Orthodox Church are called to function as the active hands of Christ. As the eyes of Christ, which are filled with understanding. As the attentive ears of Christ. As the heart of Christ, which is filled with love for all mankind, in all of its needs and all of its concerns, demonstrating, by their deeds, that they are members of the Body of Christ. They are called to show this love and understanding towards mankind, not only theoretically, but also in concrete terms and in practice. For, it is precisely their bodies, through which love towards humanity is manifested in specific and practical ways, that have become members of Christ. Love should be extended towards other people in a corporeal way, since it is in their bodies that Orthodox Christians have become, or can become, members of Christ.¹

The “neighbour” in the parable of the Good Samaritan is embodied in the person of our fellow man, regardless of race, nationality, or religion.²

The aim of our Lord’s astonishing reply to the question posed by the lawyer in that parable was precisely to demolish the exclusive “boundaries” of love established by the Hebrews, who regarded as their “neighbour” only those who were of the same nation and religion as themselves.

Our Lord and God Jesus Christ, Whose Divine heart becomes our own heart through the Holy Mysteries of our Church, was, and lived as, a “refugee”: He descended from Heaven to earth, took refuge in Egypt, lived as a “stranger,” and has continued, throughout the centuries, to knock on our doors as a “stranger,” in the person of our “neighbour.”

Now, in view of this, what racial, national, or religious “walls” are capable of preventing exuberant waves of love from pouring out of our hearts—the very heart of Christ—in all directions?

c. Saint Acacius and the Persians.

ON 9th APRIL, we celebrate the memory of Saint Acacius, who was Bishop of the Armenian city of Amida at the beginning of the fifth century. During the war between the Romans and the Persians (421-422), the Byzantines had captured seven thousand prisoners, whom they refused to feed or to release. So, Saint Acacius summoned his clergy and addressed the following words to them, among others: “Our God needs neither dishes nor cups, for He neither eats nor drinks.... Since our Church possesses many gold and silver vessels, which derive from the generosity of the faithful, it is our duty to ransom the prisoners with these and to feed them. And that is what happened: the treasures were melted down, the prisoners were ransomed, given food, and sent back to their king with the necessary provisions for the return journey. King Baranos V of Persia was so amazed by this magnanimous act of Saint Acacius that he asked to meet the most holy Hierarch in person.³

d. Saint Gregory Palamas and the Turks.

THE VERY SPLENDOUR of Christian love and “mercy”—over and above race, nationality, and religious affiliation—expresses, in addition, the “œconomy” of God, as Saint Gregory Palamas wrote to his Church flock with regard to his captivity under the Turks (March 1354-Spring 1355): “It seems to me that, because God has ordained things in such a way that Christians and Turks are intermingled, and that I am a prisoner of the Turks, that God’s Providence and the works of our Lord Jesus Christ...are being made manifest to them (the Turks) as well..., such as to be without excuse before His future and most dread Tribunal.”⁴



WOE TO US, if our “national identity” should continue to adulterate the Christocentrism of our Orthodox ecclesiastical ethos, which rises above nationality!

Woe to us, if the dust of the “statistical triumph” (!) of “signatures” [on petitions submitted to the Greek government by those protesting against the new identity cards—*Trans.*] continues to prevent the inscription, in the hearts of Christians, of the “New Name,”⁵ which is unceasingly inscribed by the Holy Spirit and which renews our identity through the “New Commandment”⁶: Of love for our neighbour without conditions, limits, or boundaries!

Tenth Sunday of St. Luke
5/18 December 2005

Source: *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XIX, No. 2 (2002), pp. 7-9.

Notes:

1. Dumitru Staniloae, *Towards an Orthodox Ecumenism* (Pireaus: 1976), p. 103.
2. St. Luke 10:25-37.
3. Socrates Scholastikos, *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. VII, ch. 21 (*Patrologia Greaca*, Vol. LXVII, cols. 782B-784A); Unfortunately, the memory of St. Aca-cius is passed over by the standard Synaxaristai and calendars of Saints.
4. Saint Gregory Palamas, “Epistle to His Church,” §3, in *Suggrammata* [Writings], Vol. IV, p. 121.
5. Cf. Revelation 3:12.
6. John 13:34.

Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV
PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

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

The Mysterion of Unction

§ 105. This mysterion is of ancient derivation and is properly celebrated by seven priests, reflecting the number of the Old Testament priests who bore the ark around the city of Jericho when its walls were made to fall. The service also has seven readings from the Epistles, seven Gospels readings and seven priestly prayers. However, in circumstances where it is not possible to gather seven priests, it can equally well be celebrated by fewer or even by one priest.

The blessing of the oil. A table is set up with the Gospel Book placed thereon, and also a bowl with wheat, in which there are seven brushes or swabs with which to anoint the faithful. A vessel with olive oil and wine is placed there, reminding us of the parable of the Good Samaritan who poured in oil and wine. We begin with the trisagion prayers, then Psalm 142 is read, followed by a Little Litany. This is followed by the Alleluia verses, penitential verses and Psalm 50, for repentance is the foundation of our healing. There follows a canon and the Litany of Peace with special petitions for healing. During this the priest reads the prayer: *O Lord, Who in Thy mercies and compassions, healest the disorder of our souls and bodies, do Thou, the same Master, sanctify this oil, that it may be effectual for those who shall be anointed therewith, unto healing and unto relief from every passion, every malady of the flesh and of the spirit, and every ill, and that therein may be glorified Thy most holy name of the Father, and of the Son, and of*

the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen. We then chant hymns to the saints who are especially renowned for their healing ministry towards us, and then follows the seven times repeated sequence of a prokimenon, Epistle reading, Alleluia, Gospel reading, litany and priestly prayer.

The anointing of the sick. Practices differ somewhat: sometimes after each of the seven sequences, a prayer is read calling upon the aid of the saints and the sick person is anointed, on the forehead, nostrils, cheeks, lips, breast and on both sides of the hands, by each of the priests. However, if many people are being anointed, as is done on the Wednesday of Great Week, it is more customary to leave this prayer until the very end and then to anoint the people.

The Holding of the Gospel Book Over the Sick. As the services draws to a close, and in cases when many are being anointed, before the anointing, the concelebrants hold the open Gospel Book face down over the heads of those who are being anointed, while they read a prayer over them, thus indicating that healing comes from the hand of the Lord. As the Saviour healed the sick during His earthly mission by touching them with His hand, so here the Gospel Book figures His “strong and mighty hand.”

... to be continued with “The Rites Surrounding the Death and Burial of Orthodox Christians”



"GO TO THE TOMBS and see that the assurance of men is nothing. Why then does man who is dust indulge in vainglory? Why does he who is all stench exalt himself? Let us therefore weep for ourselves while we have time, lest, at the hour of our departure we be found asking God for extra time to repent."

VEN. PACHOMIUS THE GREAT OF EGYPT, + 346 A.D.

THE COMING MONTH

THIS year June joins July and October in having no Great Feasts, because Pascha fell early and we celebrated Pentecost in May. However the first twenty-eight days of the month do fall within the **Apostles' Fast**. Of the four fasts in the Church Year, this is the least strict. On Wednesdays and Fridays we are not permitted wine (alcohol) or oil, but these are permitted on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Saturdays (the Sabbath) and Sundays (the Lord's Day and Day of Resurrection), fish is also allowed. Fish is also permitted on the feast of the **Birth of Saint John the Baptist** (24th June / 7th July), and, this year, on the feast of the **Holy Apostles Peter and Paul** (29th June / 12th July), which normally would not be a fast day at all, but in 2017 happens to fall on a Wednesday and so we keep it as a fast but relax the strictness of the fast to permit fish in honour of the feast.

As in all the fasts, we should not simply confine ourselves to the dietary disciplines, which are simply a basis, but should devote more time to prayer and spiritual reading, should more resolutely struggle against the passions, and practice the virtues. To help us in these endeavours, we should minimize leisure pursuits and social engagements, married couples should abstain from marital relations, and we should attempt to live a more contained, controlled life. In addition to this, we must also practice the virtues, and just as food fasting is important in teaching us discipline in restraint, almsgiving is a base line in this endeavour. It is also important because, although in the fast periods we should be retiring from as many worldly concerns and interests as possible to concentrate on the spiritual, this should not mean that we abandon love. The desert Fathers of old withdrew from the world completely, but they did not cut off love for the people in the world. In fact by their prayers they sustained the people in the world. Our prayers are weak and are unlikely to sustain much, but by giving alms we can help those in need. Alms may include other things besides giv-

ing money: you can do some voluntary work, help neighbours with things that they find difficult, visit the sick, the old and the infirm, etc., etc. In this way our fasting will cease to be simply a cold, dutiful religious practice and pharisaical, and will become a training ground for our strengthening in love of God and of our neighbour.

Among the saints celebrated in June, we have:

The **Venerable David of Thessalonica** (26th June / 9th July) was originally from Mesopotamia, and was born in about 450 A. D. He came to Thessalonica and entered the monastery of the holy Martyrs Theodora and Mercurius in the northern part of the city. The examples of the saintly men of the Old Testament, especially that of the holy Prophet, King and Psalmist David, who for three years asked to be given goodness, knowledge and understanding, moved the righteous one to decide to live in the branches of an almond tree until the Lord revealed His will to him and granted him understanding and humility. At the end of three years, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him that his petition had been heard and that he should come down from the tree and continue his ascetic life in a cell. In 535, the Emperor Justinian moved the northern provinces of Illyricum from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Thessalonica and elevated his home region to an archbishopric under the title of Justiniana Nova. Archbishop Aristeidis of Thessalonica accepted the change, but attempted to salvage the civic prominence of the city by bringing back the seat of the governor of Illyricum to Thessalonica. The help of Saint David was sought and he was sent to the Imperial City. His appearance was indeed venerable; his hair fell to his waist and his beard to his legs, while his face shone like the sun. Accompanied by two disciples, Theodore and Demetrius, he set sail for Constantinople. His renown went before him and the whole city welcomed him. His reception by Saint Theodora, the consort of Justinian, and the honours and respect heaped upon him were a cause of wonderment to all. The Empress espoused his cause with the result that Justinian invited him to appear before the Senate. The saint pre-

sented himself there in a spectacular way, holding in his hand a lighted coal and incense, which did not burn his flesh. The bearing of the saint and this manifest miracle moved them to grant his request for his adopted city. Having accomplished his mission, he set sail for Thessalonica, though he was to see it only from afar, since, no sooner had the ship rounded the cape than he surrendered his soul to God. This event took place sometime between 535 and 541 A. D. The arrival of the saint's holy body moved the whole city. The body of righteous David was initially placed at the spot where the holy relics of the martyrs Theodulus and Agathopodes had formerly rested, to the east of the harbour, and were then interred in the monastery of his repentance. Many years later, towards the end of the seventh century, an attempt was made to open his tomb, when the abbot of the monastery, Demetrius, desired, out of great faith, to take a part of his holy relics. No sooner had the work started, however, than the slab covering the grave broke and this was considered to be a sign that the saint had no wish to be disturbed. The sacred relics remained in the same place until the time of the Crusades. During the ensuing Latin occupation, under the house of Montferrat, his relics were taken to Italy. For generations they were in Pavia, but they were translated to Milan in 1967. Finally, to the joy of the faithful, the holy relics of Venerable David were brought back to Thessalonica and placed in the Church of Saint Demetrius on 3rd / 16th September, 1978, as it happens six years to the day before the reception of the sacred relics of Saint Edward the Martyr here at Brookwood.



“WHEN THE SOUL begins to regard itself as something important, the Lord at once withdraws; and, left by itself, the soul grows cold. It is not just with the tongue that we should keep saying ‘I am nothing,’ but we should feel our nothingness in the heart. Then the Lord will always be there, He Who creates and has created everything out of nothing. The Lord will give warmth, but we must do our part as well.”

SAINT THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE, + 1894 A.D.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“I ALSO have a question based on my reading of the book ‘A Spiritual Biography of St Seraphim of Sarov’. I have come to the section ‘Conversation with Motovilov’, most of which is going completely over my head. Whilst discussing the power of prayer, St Seraphim says ‘Many explain that this stillness refers only to worldly matters, in other words, that during prayerful converse with God you must “be still” with regards to worldly affairs....not only is it necessary to be dead to them at prayer, but when by the omnipotent power of faith....the Holy Spirit condescends to visit us....we must be dead to prayer too’. I confess I don’t understand either the first part about being dead to worldly affairs at prayer (so am I wrong to pray to God to help me find a better job where I will not be so stressed, is it wrong of me to ask for people’s health, or for help to sort out problems with my material life, or to ask for a baby?), and neither do I understand the second part about being dead to prayer. I couldn’t possibly imagine consciously thinking to myself that the Holy Spirit has visited me and now I must stop praying. I have probably grossly misunderstood this and wonder if I should just stick to more basic books as I am afraid of creating misconceptions in my mind which might do more harm than good.” - N.P., by email

RE. your questions about Saint Seraphim and prayer: I cannot think why you are asking me. Could there be anyone less competent at prayer? I will simply hazard some thoughts and hope that God will bless them to help you. When the Saint counsels that we should be dead to worldly concerns in prayer, I am sure that he does not mean to imply that we should not pray about our worldly concerns. That would run counter to a great deal of Church practice and tradition - after all we have petitions for our worldly well-being and that of others in the Divine Liturgy itself.

Perhaps part of the answer to your question lies in the Liturgy and in the daily prayers that are appointed for us to read each morning and evening at home. In these, we have a model of prayer

to instruct us. And one thing we should notice is that although worldly concerns are present there, they do not predominate. Those prayers contain praise, thanksgiving, and prayers for the forgiveness of our sins, our correction of life, our cleansing from passions, and other spiritual concerns and these predominate over the concern for worldly things. We should be instructed by this.

Secondly, we have to consider our disposition. The ancient pagan Romans had a very utilitarian view of religion. When you wanted something, you chose the right god or idol, you made the appropriate sacrifice, and you expected to get what you wanted. Our God is NOT an idol, and our prayer does not work like this (although one sometimes gets the impression that many Orthodox think this is how one should approach Him). We bring our worldly concerns to Him, not to tell Him what to do, much less expecting automatically to get what we want, because God loves us so much that instead He always grants us what is most beneficial for us, - but we bring those petitions to bear witness to our trust in Him and in His beneficence. And we pray for others, to manifest our love for them, entrusting them also to God's mercy, which is greater than anything we can begin to comprehend, and, as we often forget, greater than our love for them.

So, in a sense we have to be dead to those concerns, i.e., dispassionate about them. We voice them as we trust in God, we voice them as an expression of love, but we do not clamour for the fulfilment of our petitions in the way we crave. I think this truth is shown by the way in which the Church prays for people. Among the Protestant denominations, for instance, one often finds that they offer prayers, giving God full details of whom they are praying for, what they think is wrong, what they want and what He should do. Often this is backed up with florid expressions of how righteous / earnest they, the petitioners, are! In Orthodoxy, we simply add their Christian names to our petitions, either in the Liturgy or in special prayers. We simply, quietly, dispassionately place the concern in the abyss of God's loving kindness.

When Saint Seraphim speaks of being dead in prayer when the Holy Spirit visits us, he is speaking of a state which neither you nor I are likely to experience, because of our spiritual laxity, immaturity, our uncleanness, our sinfulness. It is perhaps better, knowing nothing of that state, that I say nothing about it, but it is a state of which Saint Seraphim knew by experience, as did many of the Saints, and we should simply reverence the integrity of his words.

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

BISHOP SOFRONIE CELEBRATES TWO BAPTISMS AT BROOKWOOD

ON THE SUNDAY of the Myrrh-bearing Women, 17th / 30th April, **His Grace Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** and **Deacon Nicolae Capitanu** from Romania visited Saint Edward's and celebrated the Divine Liturgy with our **Fr Borislav Popov**. Fr Alexis and Fr Sabbas were safely consigned to the Convent. At the end of the service, His Grace appointed Fr Deacon Nicolae to preach the sermon. After the Divine Liturgy, the Bishop celebrated the Baptisms of two infant girls: **Anisia**, the daughter of **Catalin** and **Alina Nastaca** of **Wealdstone**; and **Antonia**, the daughter of **Vasile** and **Vasilica Colacel** of **Waltham Forest**. Anisia's godparents are **Cristian Gafita** and **Stefan Gafita** and she is named for the **Holy Martyr Anisia of Thessalonica** (feast day: 30th December / 12th January), and Antonia's godparents are **Kiargel** and **Giociana Colacel**, and she is named after the

Venerable Antony the Great of Egypt (feast day: 17th / 30th January). Immediately after their Baptism and Chrismation, our newly-illuminated sisters in the Faith were imparted the Holy Mysteries. May they remain steadfast in the Orthodox Faith until their live's end.

A ROMANIAN INVASION & TWO MORE BAPTISMS AND A WEDDING

ARCHIMANDRITE NIFON from Bucharest was scheduled to visit us over the weekend of 13th and 14th May (n.s.), and in the event he arrived with two other **Hieromonks, Fathers Spiridon and Macarie**, a lay monk **Fr Mefodie**, and the nun **Mother Ilaria** from the convent in Buda. On the Saturday, they came to Saint Edward's to celebrate the Baptism of another two young girls: **Nina**, the daughter of **Marian** and **Andreea Abuzatoaei** of **Luton**, and **Marta**, the daughter of **Constantin** and **Irina Verdes** of **Hayes, Middlesex**. Nina's godparents are **Claudiu** and **Andreea Lazar**, and Marta's are **Pavel** and **Anamaria Amarii**, with **Florin** and **Daniela Rotariu** as additional sponsors. Nina is named for the holy Peer of the Apostles, Nina the Enlightener of Georgia (feast day: 14th / 27 January), and Marta for the holy Myrrh-bearer Martha (feast day: third Sunday in Pascha), the sister of the righteous Lazarus the Four-Days Dead. In the event Father Hieromonk Spiridon celebrated the mysteria with Fr Nifon assisting. Again the newly-illuminated were granted Communion of the Immaculate Mysteries immediately after the ceremony.

On the following day, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, when again Fathers Alexis and Sabbas were at the Convent, the Romanian fathers concelebrated at Saint Edward's Church with Fr Borislav Popov.

In the afternoon the three Romanian hieromonks celebrated the marriage of **Anton-Mihai Arcalianu** and **Raluca-Cos-**

mina Ignat of Dagenham, Essex, after which the family and friends had light refreshments in the Mortuary. *Many Years to the Newly-Illumined and the Newly-Married!*

VISIT FROM THESSALONICA

ON SUNDAY, 15th / 28th May, the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Œcumenical Council, we were joined at the Parish Liturgy by **Father Panagiotis Pavlidis** from Thessalonica. At the end of the service, at which he concelebrated with our clergy, he was shown the relics that we are blessed to have in the church, and then joined us for the Parish Breakfast in the old Mortuary, and was able to meet and talk with our Greek-speaking parishioners. When the meal had ended, he went to see our kitchen gardens and the candle-making factory, before leaving to return to the home of **Alexandros and Katerina Spiroglou**, whose guest in this country he was.

FUNERAL AT SAINT EDWARD'S

THE funeral of **Theodosia Tomkinson** of the **Joy of All Who Sorrow Parish in Droylsden**, Manchester, was chanted in Saint Edward's Church on Friday, 6th / 19th May. For many years Theodosia had lived in Sweden and was an accomplished linguist. She translated Saint Ambrose of Milan's "Exposition of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke" from the Latin into English, and this translation was published in 1998 by the **Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, Etna**, and other translations from the Latin Fathers. In retirement she returned to live in her native Lancashire, and the funeral was conducted by her spiritual father, the **Presbyter Gabriel Lawani**. His presbytera, **Helena**, chanted at the service. For the service, family and friends had gathered

from Sweden and from Scotland, and members of our Brotherhood attended. During his address, Fr Gabriel wisely remarked that if we are granted a long life, as Theodosia was, those added years are not granted to us, as contemporary fashion would insist, for enjoyment and living life to the full, but that we might prepare for the life of the Age to come, which Theodosia had endeavoured to do. She was laid to rest in our cemetery, and then the mourners were offered refreshments, which had been prepared by Presbytera, in the Mortuary. May our Saviour grant Theodosia rest with the Saints and *Memory Eternal*. We ask prayers for her.

MORTUARY RESTORATION

THE TURRET is now encased with scaffolding inside and out, and the timbers have been exposed so that the extent of the rot may be assessed. Unfortunately because of a delay in the delivery of necessary materials, most of this work has had to stop again. However, not wishing to waste the time, the Romanian team have thrown themselves into re-treating the weatherboarding on the church and the outside steps from the altar, and replacing the panels over the former windows.

VISITORS

Monday, 16th May: **Alan Mowat** brought the **Camberley University of the Third Age** walking group to visit.

Friday, 19th May: **Margaret Hobbs** of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** brought twenty-seven people from **Holy Trinity** and **St Augustine's Anglican churches in Upper Tooting** to visit Saint Edward's. Unfortunately they arrived about fifty minutes later than scheduled and so were only able to have a brief look as Theodosia Tomkinson's funeral was due to begin.

Saturday, 20th May: Margaret brought a second band of people to see the church, this time from the **Affinité Group**.

Thursday, 25th May, Ascension Day: Again Margaret, who is tireless in her endeavours (!), brought a third party: fourteen members of the **East Horsley University of the Third Age**.

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PRACTICAL TIP

ALWAYS REMEMBER that the church is a place set apart for prayer. Before you even approach its doors to enter have this in mind, do not come up to the doors chattering and heedless. When you enter, bear in mind the sanctity of the place. First cross yourselves three times, and do not start greeting others and entering into conversations. Especially is this important if the service is already in progress. I once saw on the door of a Protestant church a notice saying: “When you first enter talk to God, during the service listen to God, only after you leave talk among yourselves.” It is a little corny, but contains some good sense. It also presupposes that you are there before the service begins. How many Orthodox Christians today even attempt to do that? To our shame, very few. I also remember a sensible directive put out years ago by Metropolitan Antony of the Moscow Patriarchate Sourozh diocese - and why not quote him when he is right? He said that if you happen to come into the Liturgy, after the Little Entrance, you should not light candles until the end of the service, because you will be moving around, often in front of the rest of the congregation, and distracting them, and again we are shamed by his words, for often people not only come in late and light candles, but they even do so at the most sacred moments of the Divine Liturgy, during the Gospel, the Cherubic Hymn and the Consecration.