



## FROM THE NUN MARTHA'S RECOLLECTIONS OF SAINT NICOLAS PLANAS OF ATHENS, +1932 A.D.

“ONCE, some forty years ago, I had a misunderstanding with, or rather, had been slandered by, some of my relatives. I did not retaliate with even one word, or insult - nothing of the kind. When both of our families moved to Athens, we would exchange only formalities. When I confessed, I told Father [St Nicolas] about this situation and, at the same time, said that I did not want an exchange of visits with my relative. ‘Things are well enough at this point,’ I told him, ‘since we exchange greetings when we see one another.’ She was married, involved in the world; I was near Father, living another life. This is how I said it, and I believed that I had nothing against her. If it had been another confessor, he might have told me, ‘Well, my child, let things stand as they are; it is not necessary to have more contacts.’ This is what I thought Father would tell me also. But suddenly I heard him saying to me, ‘No, my child, they are not “well enough at this point.” ... It is necessary for you to go to her house, to eat at her table, and sleep one day in her house, because this passion is thriving within you!’ If a lightning bolt had hit me, it would have been less of a shock. I would have been able to drink the most bitter, most foul-smelling medicine rather than do what he told me. Then I saw with consternation how much passion was nestling within me, hidden, which even I myself had not perceived.... But now I had to follow with *obedience!* With trembling knees, I went to her house. Fortunately Father’s prayer enlightened them and they welcomed me nicely - not only she, but even her husband and her mother. We sat down to eat at noontime, and at the table I was saying within myself, ‘Diabolic trinity.’ I meant, naturally, the couple and her mother. One could never imagine my agony of soul that day. At noontime I slept in the same room with my relative [*the siesta*]. As soon as I fell asleep, I saw Satan big as life standing next to me, saying, ‘You fool, you came here to sleep? Bah, to hell with you!’ I awoke, contrite, and said to her, ‘I saw a bad dream.’ And at the same time she said to me, ‘And I also saw a very

bad dream.’ I neither told her what I saw, nor did I ask what she saw. Intimacy was lacking. After that, we returned to our first state of sisterly affection, and we have, by the grace of God, much love.”

FROM A TRANSLATION OF THE LIFE OF THE SAINT,  
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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, IN 1981



# **WATCH!**

**BY SAINT JOHN MAXIMOVITCH**

STAND FAST on spiritual watch, because you know not when the Lord will call you to Himself. In your earthly life be ready at any moment to give Him an account. Beware that the enemy does not catch you in his nets, that he not deceive you causing you to fall into temptation. Daily examine your conscience; try the purity of your thoughts, your intentions.

There was a king who had a wicked son. Having no hope that he would change for the better, the father condemned the son to death. He gave him a month to prepare.

The month went by, and the father summoned the son. To his surprise he saw that the young man was noticeably changed: his face was thin and drawn, and his whole body looked as if it had suffered.

“How is it that such a transformation has come over you, my son?” the father asked.

“My father and my lord,” replied the son, “how could I not change when each passing day brought me closer to death?”

“Good, my son,” remarked the king. “Since you have evidently come to your senses, I shall pardon you. However, you must maintain this vigilant disposition of soul for the rest of your life.”

“Father,” replied the son, “that’s impossible. How can I withstand the countless seductions and temptations?”

Then the king ordered that a vessel be brought, full of oil, and he told his son: “Take this vessel and carry it along all the streets of the city. Following you will be two soldiers with sharp swords. If you spill so much as a single drop they will cut off your head.”

The son obeyed. With light, careful steps, he walked along all the streets, the soldiers accompanying him, and he did not spill a drop.

When he returned to the castle, the father asked, “My son, what did you see as you were walking through the city?”

“I saw nothing.”

“What do you mean, ‘nothing’?” said the king. “Today is a holiday; you must have seen the booths with all kinds of trinkets, many carriages, people animals...”

“I didn’t notice any of that,” said the son. “All my attention was focussed on the oil in the vessel. I was afraid to spill a drop and thereby lose my life.”

“Quite right, my son,” said the king. “Keep this lesson in mind for the rest of your life. Be as vigilant over your soul as you were today over the oil in the vessel. Turn your thoughts away from what will soon pass away, and keep them focused on what is eternal. You will be followed not by armed soldiers but by death to which we are brought closer by every day. Be very careful to guard your soul from all ruinous temptations.”

The son obeyed his father, and lived happily.

*Watch, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.* (I Cor. 16:13). The Apostle gives Christians this important counsel to bring their attention to the danger of this world, to summon them to frequent examination of their hearts, because without this one can easily bring to ruin the purity and ardour of one’s faith and unnoticeably cross over to the side of evil and faithlessness.

Just as a basic concern is to be careful of anything that might be harmful to our physical health, so our spiritual concern should watch out for anything that might harm our spiritual life and the work of faith and salvation. Therefore, carefully and attentively assess your inner impulses: are they from God or from the spirit of evil? Beware of temptations from this world and from worldly people; beware of hidden inner temptations which come from the spirit of indifference and carelessness in prayer, from the waning of Christian love.

If we turn our attention to our mind, we notice a torrent of successive thoughts and ideas. This torrent is uninterrupted; it is racing everywhere and at all times: at home, in church, at work, when we read, when we converse. It is usually called thinking, writes Bishop Theophan the Recluse, but in fact it is a disturbance of the mind, a scattering, a lack of concentration and attention. The same happens with the heart. Have you ever observed the life of the heart? Try it even for a short time and see what you find. Something unpleasant happens, and you get irritated; some misfortune occurs, and you pity yourself; you see someone whom you dislike, and animosity wells up within you; you meet one of your equals who has now outdistanced you on the social scale, and you begin to envy him; you think of your talents and capabilities, and you begin to grow proud... All this is rotteness: vainglory, carnal desire, gluttony, laziness, malice - one on top of the other, they destroy the heart. And all of this can pass through the heart in a matter of minutes. For this reason one ascetic, who was extremely attentive to himself, was quite right in saying that "man's heart is filled with poisonous serpents. Only the hearts of saints are free from these serpents, the passions."

But such freedom is attained only through a long and difficult process of self-knowledge, working on oneself and being vigilant towards one's inner life, i.e., the soul.

Be careful. Watch out for your soul! Turn your thoughts away from what will soon pass away and turn them towards what is eternal. Here you will find the happiness that your soul seeks, that your heart thirsts for.

*Translated from Pravoslavnaya Rus and taken from  
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# PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND AND SINAI

*By Father Œconomos Stephen  
& Presbytera Joanna Hadzi-Fretwell*

DID YOU have a lovely break? - good food, fine weather, lots of interesting places to see? Yes, but - and it is a significant “but.”

Through the words of the pastoral Epistle of Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, let us see that a pilgrimage is not a holiday but primarily a spiritual journey, a milestone and a starting point for a new way of life.

**Pastoral Epistle:**

## **Our Sacred Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Mt. Sinai**

May 14-22, 2012 (Old Style)

**A milestone in our life - A starting point for a new life**

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

**Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!**

**With the blessing** of our spiritual Father, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, our compassionate God has vouchsafed us the great gift of venerating the places where He once trod, and where our salvation was accomplished in the Theandric Person of Christ our Saviour.

**Our pilgrimage** has as its sole aim our rebaptism in the spiritual font of the Holy Places, which were touched by the Uncreated Grace of

God, and which thenceforth became eternal sources of life, incorruption, light, and peace for pious pilgrims.

**A sense** not only of the sanctity of these places, but also of our personal sinfulness, prompts us to prepare ourselves spiritually, such that our beings may be opened and filled with regenerating Grace, Which pours forth from the sacred and holy places of pilgrimages in the Holy Land.

**We are not** taking part in an ordinary excursion, or a trip for relaxation, entertainment, and leisure; rather, we are departing on a sacred journey, during which we will be initiated - that is, we will mystically participate in the Mystery of God's becoming man: the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ our Saviour.

**Hence**, our provisions on this deifying journey must be spiritual: vigilance, prayer, self-criticism, self-reproach, repentance, moderation in food, restraint in speech, guarding of the senses, humility, love, forgiveness, modest dress, and, in general, avoidance of all worldly behaviour.

**A large number** of those participating in this pilgrimage have vowed to eat only fasting food with oil, also avoiding alcohol. This is not obligatory for everyone, of course, and depends on the pious disposition of each pilgrim.

**Let us endeavour** to make this pilgrimage a milestone in our life, and, simultaneously a starting-point for a new life. Let us not impede, by our carelessness, Divine Grace from entering our innermost being - our heart - such that it might renew us and make us firm in faith, hope, love, humility, purity and the peace of the Holy Spirit.

**In our humble** endeavour to assist you in this regard, please allow us to offer you three spiritual gifts: a) one brief but very beautiful text, entitled: "Pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre"; b) two prayers for the journey by air (departure and return); and c) a Prayer of Thanksgiving for the favourable outcome of our pilgrimage.

**We humbly pray** that the blessing of our much-revered Elder and Metropolitan, together with the Grace of our Most Holy Mother, be our constant companions and guides on our pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Mt. Sinai.

April 30, 2012 (old Style)

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

**Least in Christ,  
+ Bishop Cyprian Of Oreoi**

Our journey took us from Athens (where we joined fellow pilgrims) to Tel Aviv Airport, then to Jerusalem visiting St George's Monastery in Lydda on the way. Then many Holy Places during the next nine days in and around Jerusalem, in Galilee, the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and into Egypt to St Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. Amongst them were the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Mount of Temptation, the Mount of Transfiguration, the site of the Ascension of Christ, Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, the site of the Martyrdom of St Stephen, to name but a few.

The pilgrimage was interesting, stimulating and physically hard work, negotiating many steps in intense heat - Jericho in the Jordan Valley about 40°C [104°F]; Jerusalem slightly cooler. Long days - away from the hotel by 7 a.m. (6.30 a.m. when we went to Sinai) - back about 8.15 p.m. for the evening meal, then fall into bed to be ready for the next morning.

With grateful thanks to Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni, Fr Claudios the tour guide, monks from the Monastery of Sts Cyprian and Justina, nuns from the Convent of the Holy Angels, Afidnai, and fellow pilgrims for their prayers, love and companionship as together we made our journey in faith.

## Pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre

**Pilgrimages** to the Holy Sepulchre of Christ and other Holy Places are an ancient and pious custom among Christians. Filled with devout yearning, and enduring great pains, sacrifices, and dangers, many would go at least once in their lives to venerate the places where Christ once lived and walked. They would set off, having prepared themselves beforehand to the best of their ability through confession and purity. Some chose the hardship of going on foot. Others brought money and gifts to the places of pilgrimage. Yet others would work without pay for a six-month stay in one of the monasteries or holy sites. They would venerate all of the Holy Places, were baptized in the Jordan River, and brought back with them the Holy Fire and various items as blessings, such as small crosses, shrouds, and candles, etc.

When they would return to their villages, all of the inhabitants, together with the Priest, would greet them outside the village and, with a ringing of bells, would accompany the pilgrims in procession to the Church.

For having been vouchsafed the blessing of visiting the Holy Places, they were shown respect, and the honorific title "Hadji", ("Pilgrim") was added to their names-for example, Ioannes the Hadji. The other members of their family would also inherit the title. And when the Priest would commemorate their names in Church, he would add "the Pilgrim" (e.g. Hermone the Pilgrim).

The Pilgrims thereafter changed not only their names, but their whole way of life. They would dedicate themselves more fully to the Church, with more regular Church attendance, fasting, prayer, confession, and Holy Communion. But more than anything else, they sought to be just, taking great pains to avoid wronging anyone. One of their distinguishing characteristics was that for the rest of their lives, they would no longer take hold of a scale to weigh goods, lest they inadvertently do somebody an injustice. Even their children would not weigh goods. They would allow the other person to weigh while they turned their heads away so as not to see, indifferent as to the possibility of being wronged themselves. Indeed, when selling sacks of weighed wheat, they would open them and add a couple of handfuls. And whenever they would buy something, they would always take care to pay a little more than the standard price.

Once, a coal merchant was pushing his cart, selling his wares. When a customer approached, he told him: "You weigh the coal, since I am a Pilgrim and do not weigh goods." The other responded: "I do not weigh either; I am also a Pilgrim." So, the two of them stood waiting on the road until the first passerby came along, and he weighed the coal for them.

This pilgrimage was a demonstration of their love and reverence for Christ, and served as both a milestone in their lives and a starting point for a new and spiritual way of life. Remembrance of their pilgrimage preserved and fed - as oil feeds the flame in a vigil lamp - their love for Christ and the Panagia, having been vouchsafed to venerate the places where they lived and trod with their immaculate feet.

Source: Ascetics in the World, The Holy Mountain, 2008

# A Prayer of Thanksgiving for the favourable outcome of our pilgrimage to the Holy Land

**O Master** and Lover of mankind, the Benefactor of our souls, Who camest into the world for the salvation of mortal man and wast clothed in the flesh for those who had departed from Thy grace; Who traversed cities and villages and the entire environs of Thy homeland, proclaiming the Gospel of salvation; Who endured death on the Cross, and by Thy Resurrection hast paved the way for our restoration in the Heavens.

Do Thou, O Lord, accept the fruit of the lips of those confessing Thee and giving thanks to Thee, Who granted us, Thine unworthy servants, to make this journey to the Holy Places [and to Mt Sinai], and vouched us to venerate the sacred Tabernacles where Thine Immaculate feet once trod.

Yea, O Master, for Thou didst grant Thy Grace to us unworthy pilgrims to reach and to venerate, with pious yearning, the immaculate places of pilgrimage of the Holy land.

Do Thou now also bless our return from these places where Thou once trod, and reward our modest journey, that, in recounting Thy great glories to all, we might make known to the rest of our brethren our blessed experiences and longings.

And do Thou grant that all pious Orthodox Christians, living in all parts of the world, might ascend to Jerusalem and worthily participate in the Unwaning Light of Thy Life-Giving Tomb, in the contemplation of the wonders of Thy boundless Grace, and that they might also be vouchsafed the Jerusalem on high at the time of Thy second Coming.

Through the intercessions of the Most Blessed Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of all the saints. Amen.

Source: Metropolitan Timotheos of New Ionia and Philadelphia, Athens 2000

Adaption and present lay-out our own:  
Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, 15th April, 2012

**We have omitted** the two prayers, which His Grace, Bishop Cyprian mentions, for the departure and for the return by air, because they are often heard in our churches during the supplications for those travelling by air. They were composed by our Father among the Saints John of Shanghai, the Wonderworker, + 1966 A.D.

# TEACHING

## OF THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV

# ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS

THE prayer of beginners is as it were a fire of joy, issuing from the heart. The prayer of the perfect, however, is like light, pouring forth fragrance. Or again: prayer is the preaching of the Apostles, the action of faith, or better still, spontaneous faith, the realization of hope, the manifestation of love, and Angelic advancement, the power of the bodiless ones, their occupation and their rejoicing, the proclamation of God, the assurance of the heart, the hope of salvation, the seal of sanctification, the proof of sanctity, knowledge of God, the manifestation of Baptism, the laver of purification, the pledge of the Holy Spirit, the joy of Jesus, the rejoicing of the soul, the kindheartedness of God, the sign of reconciliation, the seal of Christ, a ray of the noetic sun, the hearts' dayspring, the confirmation of Christianity, the manifestation of reconciliation with God, the grace of God, the wisdom of God, or better to say, the beginning of one's own wisdom, the manifestation of God, the activity of monks, the life of hesychasts, the wine of silence, the witness of the Angelic life (see St Gregory of Sinai - Chapters on Various Spiritual Subjects).

This Divine prayer, this call of our Saviour, says the blessed Simeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica, namely: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me*, is the prayer and supplication and the confession of faith, and the bearer of the Holy Spirit and bestower of the Divine gifts, cleansing of the heart, banishment of the demons, and joy of Jesus Christ, source of spiritual thoughts and of Divine contemplations, deliverance from sins, healing of souls and bodies, the granter of Divine enlightenment, fountain of the mercy of God, the granter of revelation and Divine Mysteries to the humble, and salvation itself, because it bears within itself the saving Name of our God, which is the very name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, signed upon us.

*... to be continued.*

# The Coming Month

July falls almost neatly between the **Apostles' Fast** and the shorter but stricter one of the **Dormition**. During this month, we have only regular Wednesday and Friday fasting, and there are no Great Feasts. However there are a host of well-beloved saints celebrated this month; among them:-

The **Holy Great Martyr Procopius** (8th / 21st), before his conversion Neanius, a native of Jerusalem, lived and suffered during the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284-305 A.D.). His father, an eminent Roman by the name of Christopher, was a Christian, but his mother, Theodosia, was a pagan. His father died when he was a child, and he was raised by his mother. Having received an excellent secular education, Neanius was presented to Diocletian in the very first year of the Emperor's accession, and he found favour and quickly advanced in government service. Towards the year 303, when open persecution against Christians began, Neanius was sent as a proconsul to Alexandria with orders to mercilessly persecute the Church of God. On the way to Egypt, near the Syrian city of Apamea, Neanius had a vision of the Lord Jesus, similar to the vision of Saul on the road to Damascus. A divine voice cried out, "Neanius, why do you persecute Me"? Neanius asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am the crucified Jesus, the Son of God." At that moment a radiant Cross appeared in the air. Neanius felt an inexpressible joy and spiritual happiness in his heart and he was transformed from being a persecutor into a zealous follower of Christ. However, the words of the Saviour came true for the saint: *A man's foes shall be those of his own household* (Matt. 10: 36). His mother went to the Emperor to complain that her son did not worship the ancestral gods. Neanius was summoned to the procurator Judaeus Justus, where he was solemnly handed the decree of Diocletian. Having read through the blasphemous directive, Neanius quietly tore it up before everyone. This was a crime, which the Romans regarded as an insult to authority. Neanius was held under guard and sent in chains to Caesarea of Palestine, where the Apostle Paul had once languished. Af-

ter terrible torments, they threw the saint into a dank prison. That night, a light shone in the prison, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself baptized the suffering confessor, and gave him the name Procopius. One day twelve women appeared before his prison window and said to him: "We too are the handmaids of Christ." Apprehended they were thrown into the same prison, where Saint Procopius taught them the Faith of Christ and particularly about how they will receive the Martyr's crown. For this reason in the marriage service of our Church, Saint Procopius is commemorated along with the God-crowned Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena. After this, those twelve women were brutally tortured and slain. Repeatedly the Roman authorities demanded that Saint Procopius renounce Christ, and they subjected him to more tortures. He remained steadfast and was slain by the sword. Inspired by the example of Procopius, many of the holy martyr's former guards and Roman soldiers went beneath the executioner's sword together with their tribunes Nikostrates and Antiochus. Struck by the great faith and courage of the Christians, and seeing the firmness of her son in bearing terrible sufferings, Theodosia repented and died as a martyr.

Our **Venerable Mother Macrina the Younger** (19th July / 1st August) was born c. 327 A.D, in Cæsarea of Cappodocia. She was the first child of pious parents, Basil and Emilia. A dream her mother had when she was ready to be delivered inspired the parents to call her Thecla, after Saint Paul's companion, the virgin-martyr. However, the rest of the household and her kinsmen preferred to call her Macrina, after her devout grandmother (who is also commemorated among the saints), and that is how she came to be known. Emilia took great care in her daughter's upbringing, in teaching her to read, she used the Holy Scriptures as a primer, choosing passages that the young girl could understand. Thereby Macrina became familiar from an early age with the inspiring psalms of King David, and the wise teachings of Solomon and Sirach. So too the young girl became accustomed to look to the word of God for guidance, to seek there counsel and instruction, and to find there consolation and joy. As the eldest of ten children, Macrina was never idle. When she was not studying, she busied herself with handiwork, helped her mother about the house, and looked after her younger siblings. She grew to be meek,

modest and hard-working. She was also graced with rare beauty, and it is not surprising that when she was still quite young she attracted many suitors. Her parents selected from among them a youth of noble character, whom they betrothed to their daughter. The wedding was postponed, however, until Macrina reached marriageable age. Meanwhile, it pleased God, “Who orders all things well,” to take Macrina’s betrothed from this transitory world into the eternal habitations. Macrina nevertheless considered the betrothal to be binding, and resolved not to marry another. With a wisdom that far exceeded her years, she explained to her parents, “Just as there is but one birth and one death, there should be but one marriage. Therefore I do not feel free to marry another, for in the hope of resurrection my betrothed is not dead but is alive in God; he has merely departed to a distant land.” Holding firm to such reasoning, she was able persuasively to decline the proposals of marriage that once again presented themselves. Moreover, she had not personally been inclined to marry, and so she was more than content to accept God’s will, which guided her along a different path. Macrina’s father died just when her youngest brother, Peter, was born. In addition to the large household, the family also owned several properties, and Emilia was grateful for Macrina’s able assistance in shouldering these new responsibilities. To Peter, Macrina was a second mother, caring for him from his infancy and later teaching him and guiding his moral development. Basil [St Basil the Great], although not much younger than his sister, also benefited from her instruction. He came home after many years of study abroad with his head swelled by the pride of learning, and it was Macrina who, by her wisdom, delivered him from spiritual peril and brought him to such humility that he forsook all and entered the monastic life. There was no task which Macrina considered too demeaning. She would often work side by side with the maidservants, and by her conduct encouraged her mother to likewise regard these servants as sisters. Emilia, who had so carefully nurtured her daughter in Christian virtues, now became her pupil in the spiritual life. When her son Naucratus suddenly died at the age of twenty seven, she would have grieved inconsolably had not Macrina reminded her that it does not become a Christian to mourn “as those who have no hope.” With her steadfast spirit and words of consolation, Mac-

rina greatly relieved her mother's suffering, and they both endured their loss with courageous hearts. Desiring to be wholly devoted to God, Macrina became increasingly detached from the world, and after her brothers had left home and her sisters were married, she persuaded her mother to enter with her upon the monastic path. Emilia divided the family property among her children and set at liberty her slaves, and she and Macrina, retaining only some meagre possessions, withdrew to a secluded family property in Pontus, picturesquely located on the banks of the Iris River and not far from Basil's wilderness abode. A number of former female slaves were moved to join the holy pair, and a convent was formed. They all lived under one roof, and held everything in common: they ate together, worked together, and prayed together, serving the Lord in oneness of mind. So keen were they to advance in virtue that they regarded fasting as food and poverty as riches. Neither anger, nor jealousy, nor hatred, nor pride spoiled the harmony of this model community of women. Indeed, apart from their physical bodies, there was little that separated them from the life of the angels. Living in this manner for many years, Emilia reached old age, and when an illness signalled the time of her departure from this world, her son Peter came and, together with Macrina, tended to his mother in her last days. As the oldest and the youngest, Macrina and Peter held a special place in Emilia's heart. Before committing her soul to the Lord, she raised her voice to heaven, saying, "To Thee, O Lord, do I give the first fruits and the tithe of the fruit of my womb: the first fruit is my first-born daughter; and the tithe is this, my youngest son .... Let these be for Thee a right-acceptable sacrifice, and let Thy holiness descend upon them!" Emilia was buried as she had requested, with her husband in the chapel of their estate in Annesi, where Naucratus had also been laid to rest. It was then, in 370, that Basil became bishop of Cæsarea, and he elevated his brother Peter, who did not lag behind him in virtue, to the same rank, as Bishop of Sebaste. A third brother, Gregory, whom Macrina had also persuaded to abandon secular pursuits in favour of what is eternal, he obliged to occupy the small bishopric of Nyssa. St Basil's own labours precipitated his death before the age of fifty, just nine years after his mother. This time, Macrina could not restrain her grief, but she mourned less for her personal loss than for what

the Church had lost in such a worthy hierarch. Nine months later, Gregory was returning from a council in Antioch when he decided to make a short detour and visit Macrina, that he might have a partner in lamenting Basil's death, for his heart was still wounded by grief. To his dismay, he arrived at the convent to find his sister so weakened by fever that she was scarce able to raise herself up in order to ask his blessing. She was in pain and it was evident that her life was ebbing rapidly. Nevertheless, she was overjoyed to see her brother and, courageously ignoring her suffering, she uplifted his spirits with her cheerful and edifying conversations. Far from commiserating with his grief, she launched into a brilliant philosophical discourse concerning the immortality of the soul, so skillfully constructing her arguments as to impress even a convinced skeptic. She spoke for God's wondrous providence, about the purpose for which man was created, about his passage from this temporal, sorrowful life into life eternal. Gregory wished he had power to delay the night in order that her soul-profitting conversation might be prolonged; but the bells rang for evening prayers and he had to take his leave. When Gregory returned to Macrina's cell the next morning, he understood that he was seeing his "teacher" for the last time. Seeing him downcast, Macrina consoled him, for she herself was brimming with spiritual joy: love for God and a clean conscience had cast out all fear of death. About noon she noticeably weakened and began to pray aloud quietly, while those present stood in breathless silence. "I thank Thee, O Lord, for from the end of our temporal life Thou hast fashioned the beginning of eternal life! And thereby Thou hast removed from us the fear of death. With the sleep of death, Thou givest rest for a time to our bodies, which Thou wilt rouse again with the last trumpet!...O eternal Lord God, to Whom I have attached myself since childhood, Whom I have come to love with all the powers of my soul, remember me in Thy kingdom, as Thou didst remember the wise thief who commended himself to Thy merciful kindness; and forgive me wherein I have sinned before Thee, whether by word, deed or thought." Finishing her prayer, Macrina crossed herself and gave her soul to God, as peacefully as if she had fallen asleep. When the time came to clothe her body for burial, Gregory asked one of the sisters if Macrina had some garments in readiness. "Nothing," was the reply. "She gave everything away. Here is her hair shirt, here is her patched cassock

and her ragged mantia. She kept nothing else on earth; rather, she concentrated on storing treasures in heaven.” Saint Gregory buried his sister in the grave of their parents, in the nearby family chapel in Annesi. He concludes his account of her life by touching upon various miracles she had wrought while still alive. He purposely does not expand upon these wonders for fear that those of weak faith might accuse him of exaggeration, so extraordinary was her power of prayer: she healed the sick, exorcised demons, and foretold future events. (This paragraph is a slightly shortened version of an article in the magazine *Orthodox America*).



## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“WE KISS the hands of a priest and a Bishop. Monks are called Father - do we kiss their hands too? and also readers? Note from the Questions Box in Church.*

WELL, first we should perhaps consider what kissing the hand means. Is it an obligatory form of greeting? If so we can set hard and fast rules regarding whose hand should be kissed and whose should not. But it is not an obligatory form of greeting. Such a concept would be clean contrary to Orthodoxy, one which could well inculcate a sense of superiority in the heart of the person whose hand is kissed, and imply that those whose hands are not kissed are in some way relegated to a servile position. Such an attitude to the practice would be spiritually destructive for both parties. But it is not so. Kissing the hand, except within the context of the Liturgy itself (when the Bishop’s or priest’s hand is kissed every time one hands something to him or takes something from him) is rather a sign of loving respect, and therefore we may kiss the hand of anyone for whom we feel such loving respect. Practices do vary from country to country among the Orthodox peoples. Among the Russians, the practice is generally reserved for Bishops, priests, and abbots and

abbesses. Other Orthodox peoples will extend the practice much more widely. Among peoples raised in traditional piety it would not be uncommon to kiss your parents' hands, your godparent's, or those of a teacher, and certainly the monastics - men and women who have dedicated their whole lives to Christ. It is related in the life of Abba Pambo, one of the great Fathers of the Egyptian Desert, that he "was travelling with some monks in the districts of Egypt, and seeing some lay men sitting down, he said unto them, 'Rise up, and greet the monks so that ye may be blessed, for they are always holding converse with God, and their mouths are holy.'" It may well be (as those who know us at Brookwood) that such is not always the case with monks nowadays, but then it is not for us to judge. The clergy we similarly respect with love because of their ministry for the flock of Christ. We kiss their hands because through them the Holy Mysteries are imparted to us and other blessings given. And this indeed reveals where the loving respect is really directed, not to the person of the clergyman or monastic but to Christ of Whose ministry he is an instrument.

We might add here two abuses of hand-kissing which arise. Among the modernizing Orthodox, one sometimes finds those who will not permit their hands to be kissed, presumably because they wrongly assume that the loving respect is directed to them personally and not to Christ. And contrarily, usually with people not long ordained, one notices priests who are over-keen that you kiss their hand and almost thrust it to your lips, or linger waiting to bestow "their" blessing upon you. This again is a misunderstanding of the custom and a sad manifestation of an element of self-importance.

You mention readers specifically for some reason. There is no place in the liturgical practice of the Church for kissing readers' hands, and certainly in that setting they should not offer their hands to be kissed. However, given what I said above, if someone sees a particular reader as in some way deserving of their loving respect, to kiss their hand, as they might their own father's or mother's, is not essentially wrong. Personally I have noticed that among what one might call the convert fringe of Orthodoxy, readers seem to attract to themselves an importance that they do not appear to have in what, again unfairly, we might call ethnic Orthodox

communities. The readership is the first step of the priesthood, and that in itself deserves respect, but, except for the fact that they are vested and appointed to read in church, in most parishes they are no more visible than that. Among the converts I have noticed readers adopting “Reader” as a title, using it on address labels, continually referring to themselves as Reader So-and-so, etc, as if it were a status. It is of course the opposite, a ministry, as indeed are all the ranks of the priesthood, but perhaps like the newly-ordained priests who proffer their hands to be kissed they are indulging in little displays of self-importance, and perhaps this is why you specifically mention them in your question.

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*OUR VIGILANT PROOFREADER, Anthony Bell, had this to add to my reply in **Points from Correspondence** last month on Mid-Pentecost: “Re Mid-Pentecost I think I remember reading somewhere that the connection with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles is in part at least because that feast commemorates the Israelites’ Forty Years in the Wilderness after the Jewish Passover when they were blessed with the Presence of God Who joined them in their wanderings. The Jewish feast is therefore a type of the Resurrected Christ’s special Presence among the Apostles for the Forty Days between Pascha and Ascension Day in the course of which Mid-Pentecost is celebrated. One of the joys of this feast, of course, is that it has so many different meanings!”*

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## **NEWS SECTION**

### ***ECUMENISM TAKES A NEW FORM***

IN OUR LAST ISSUE, we reported an ecumenical event in Germany, in which a hierarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate participated in a “symbolic baptism,” receiving this “symbol” at the hands of the R.C. **Bishop, Heinz Wiesemann.** Now in Chicago, there has been a simi-

lar ceremony in which, according to the *Chicago Tribune* (reported 3rd June, 2012), participants “exchanged edible wafers as a symbolic gesture of unity. Then, the clergy in robes as colorful and as different as their religious traditions led the congregants out of the church.” One of those clergy celebrants was **Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos**, a hierarch of the Œcumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. So it seems that we now have “symbolic” or “mock” sacraments as a tool in engineering unity. In this way the participants can excuse themselves that they did not offer any kind of “sacramental hospitality,” an un-Orthodox concept given currency by the *Thyateira Confession*, written by the late **Archbishop Athenagoras (Kokkinakis)** and published in 1975. However, without any doubt, participation in these “mock sacraments” only blurs the distinction between the true Mysteries of the Church and the ministrations of the heterodox denominations, and undoubtedly prepares the way for full inter-communion between the Orthodox ecumenists and the non-Orthodox. Reading our item in last month’s issue, an Anglican clergyman, very astutely remarked in a message to us: “However more importantly is Metropolitan Augoustinos still part of the Orthodox Church after being Baptised by a Roman Catholic, as to me it is a clear statement that he has completely finished with the Orthodox Church and is joining the Church of Rome.” One assumes the Metropolitan would doubtless object that this was indeed just a symbolic baptism, but what need of a symbolical one, if he has received the One Baptism confessed in the Nicæa-Constantinopolitan Creed? Is not even this a denial of his Orthodox Baptism?

## ***THE SYNOD IN RESISTANCE*** ***ISSUES TWO IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS***

AN EXCELLENT ESSAY, *The Recent Proliferation of “Anti-christology” and Its Perilous Side-Effects*, has appeared on the Synod in Resistance website, “New on Site” section, <[http://www.synodinresistance.org/Info\\_en/New.html](http://www.synodinresistance.org/Info_en/New.html)> It is long but is well worth reading especially in view of the proliferation of fearful and often superstitious ideas regarding the end-times and the signs which will precede them. A second

piece, *Anti-Ecumenism in Serbia and Greece*, has been posted there in response to the perceived stance taken by the Serbian **Bishop Artemije**.



# SIR-UK NEWS

## *ADVANCE NOTICE*

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Ambrose of Methoni**, is planning to be with us for the **Autumn Feast of Saint Edward the Martyr**, the anniversary of the enshrinement of the holy Martyr's sacred relics in our church at Brookwood in 1984. This year, the feast falls on a **Sunday, 16th September (n.s.)**, and so we will have the Vigil Service for the Resurrection and for the Saint combined on Saturday, 15th September at 6 p.m., and the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy on the Sunday morning at ten o'clock. Please keep your diaries free of all other commitments at these times, and join us for the celebration.

## *TWO CHURCHINGS*

UNKNOWN to us at the time, **His Grace Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** baptised **Iustina**, the infant daughter of **Mihai and Cassiana Visanu** of Bumbles Green, Essex, when he was last in England. He also read the forty-day prayers for Cassiana and Iustina, but was unable to present the baby in church. This was done immediately before the Divine Liturgy at the Convent on Pentecost - Trinity Sunday, 3rd June (n.s.).

AND on the Sunday of the Athonite Fathers, 4th / 17th June, **Sophia**, the infant daughter of **Nicolas and Nektaria Papanicolaou** of Saint Albans was churched at Saint Edward's. We hope to baptise her on the Feast of the Birth of St John the Baptist, 7th July (n.s.).

## ***SAINT BONIFACE PILGRIMAGE***

IT BEING the nearest Saturday to St Boniface's day (5th/18th June), on 16th June, Fathers Alexis and Sabbas went to the Isle of Wight, where the parishioners of the Mission there chanted a *moleben* in the old church at Bonchurch, at a place where by tradition centuries before St Boniface had preached. The small but beautiful old church itself dates back to the tenth century and is situated in beautiful surroundings very near the coast. We are extremely grateful to the Anglican incumbent of the parish for permitting us to chant our service in their church.

## ***VISITORS***

THIS YEAR Pentecost Sunday coincided with the Feast of Sts Constantine and Helena, and friends gathered from around the world for this celebration at the **Sts Constantine and Helena Parish in Birmingham**, which is under the **Synod of Metropolitan Kyrikos** - an extremist Synod not in communion with our own. Nonetheless, on Holy Spirit day, the parish priest there, **Priestmonk Sozomenos**, organized a pilgrimage for their parishioners and guests, and they came to Saint Edward's in the afternoon, after visiting Binsey (where St Frideswide's well is found) en route. Some sixty pilgrims including their bishop, **Kyr Parthenios of Kytion, Cyprus**, and the former priest and founder of the parish **Father Sotirios Hadji-Michael**, with whom we had some correspondence in the late seventies. It was good to renew acquaintance with him. Among the six or seven clergymen in the company was another ROCOR-Refugee, **Fr Mark Smith** from Canada. The pilgrims were given a talk in church by Fr Niphon and shown the holy things there. Then they had planned to picnic on the lawns, but as the weather was uncertain, they resorted to the Mortuary, where we provided them with coffee, after which they left us a generous supply of left-overs. After a photo-session and farewells, they left, and on their way back to Birmingham they planned to drive through Windsor Great Park.

OVER the weekend of 9th and 10th June (n.s), we were visited by **Rasophore Nun Onufria** of the **Convent of Saint Nicolas, Cleveland, N.Y., U.S.A.**, which is under the direction of **Mother Agapia** (ROCA). Sr Onufria stayed in a local B&B, but joined us for Saturday evening Vespers and Mattins and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. After Vespers on Sunday, she was met by her son, Clem, and taken to visit his family. While here she told us many things about church life in the States.

ON MONDAY, 11th June, **Alan Harding** brought a small group of walkers to see Saint Edward's Church.

FATHER GABRIEL LAWANI and his presbytera, **Helena**, from Droylsden, Manchester, brought **His Eminence Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens** and **His Grace Bishop Photios of Marathon** to visit us on Wednesday 13th June (n.s). **Hieroschemamonk Augustine** of the **Saint Michael's parish in Guildford** arranged to be here to greet them, but unfortunately had to leave almost immediately to prepare for the reception of the hierarchs at his church. The bishops had arrived in England on the Monday, and the following day had visited York, to see where the **Emperor Saint Constantine the Great** had been proclaimed. At Brookwood, after being welcomed into the sanctuary, they were shown the holy things in the church and then given a tour of the Brotherhood, visiting the candle factory, the garden, the book-bindery and the exhibition room. Then, in the mortuary they were offered refreshments and we chatted for some time. Before leaving both Bishops signed the visitors' book, writing: "We are very glad to meet Orthodox brothers in this country." Their visit was a very pleasant one and left us much edified.

LATER that same day, **John Clarke** brought the **Odiham National Women's Register** ladies, to visit Saint Edward's.

THE NEXT DAY, 14th (n.s), ninety girls from **Sir William Perkins School in Chertsey** visited. They spent about an hour and a quarter in church. They now visit annually, and as usual they were impeccably behaved and asked numerous and intelligent questions. It indicates that theirs must be a very fine school.

FATHER **Hieromonk Evfimy** and **Mother Evfrosinia** from the **Lesna Icon Convent in France** visited again on Saturday 16th June (n.s.), and joined us for breakfast. They kindly brought us a supply of provisions, including some German pasta. Parishioners **Elizabeth Castle** and **Maria von Sabler** arranged to meet them here, both having close contacts with the Convent.

ON 18th (n.s.), **Alexander Semenov**, of St Petersburg, Russia, arrived as we approached the end of our Liturgy. He told us he was in England for two days to be godfather at a Baptism, and that he had lived in the Holy Land, when the present **Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh** had been Archimandrite there. The Archbishop had advised him to visit us. Although his visit was brief, he brought us holy things from Jerusalem. Mr Semenov is hoping to build a church in his native city to the Holy Archangel Michael.

MEDIA PERSONS! **Helen Nixon** who works with **Dan Snow** on BBC programmes visited our Exhibition on Tuesday 19th June, and, quite independently but at much the same time, we were visited by the Ukrainian columnist and writer, **Vitali Vitaliev**, who spent some time in the church.

THE NUN **Heruvima** from the **Sts Flor and Lavr Convent near Kiev, Ukraine**, visited Saint Edward's on Saturday 23rd June (n.s.). She was accompanied by two parishioners from the Russian Orthodox Cathedral at Ennismore Gardens, London. She told us that she particularly wanted to pray to Saint Edward because their Convent is involved in a protracted court case, and having heard how the Saint had helped us with the case regarding his sacred relics, they felt he would also help them. She had also been told by her companions, that she should start her pilgrimage to the holy places of England by visiting St Edward's, because he was the King of England and she should start, as it were, at the top. After making a pilgrimage, Mother Heruvima plans to spend some time at the **Stavropegial Monastery of St John the Baptist at Tolleshunt Knights**. While at St Edwards, the pilgrims chanted the canon to Saint Edward in Church Slavonic before the shrine, asking his prayers.

## ***NEW VESTMENTS & HANGINGS***

THE SISTERS of the **Convent of Saint Elizabeth, Etna, California**, have embroidered new vestments and hangings for our church in duck-egg blue for the festivals of the Mother of God. Like those in white, which we used at the consecration, and those in red, they are beautifully done, and will be an adornment to our church.

## ***BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY***

THIS is not strictly SiR-UK news, but it happened here. On 17th June, the BCS held their AGM in the hall of our Mortuary building. As **John Clarke** had resigned as chairman, the meeting was ably led by the secretary, **Kim Lowe**, who was in fact elected chairman during the official proceedings. After the official business, there was a break for refreshments, and then **Paul Whittle**, the Vice Chairman of the **Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society**, gave an informative and very interesting slide show about the Darjeeling Railway in India. Our best wishes to the BCS under their new leadership.



## **PRACTICAL TIP**

WE had a question in *Points from Correspondence* above about kissing, and we have noticed one erroneous practice with regard to kissing, which seems to be spreading. In many churches, when the faithful lay people receive the Holy Mysteries, they afterwards kiss the bottom rim of the Chalice. This is a pious custom, however it appears that many go even further and think that they have at that point to kiss the hand of the priest holding the Chalice. This is not at all appropriate or right, and could be dangerous. For the rest of the service, after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, you do not kiss the hand of the priest.