



FROM THE FATHERS

“THE MERCHANT does not make a voyage merely for the sailing’s sake, but that he may increase his substance by going abroad; since, if this is not also attained, extreme mischief will result, and the voyage of merchants would be but for loss. Let us consider this in relation to ourselves. We also meet together in the church, not for the mere purpose of spending time there, but that we might return having gained a great and spiritual benefit. Should we then depart empty, and without having received any advantage, this our diligence becomes our condemnation.”

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, + 407 A.D.

“*HE THAT hath ears to hear, let him hear.* As often as this is inserted in the Gospel or in the Apocalypse of John, that which is spoken is mystical, and is pointed out as healthful to be heard and learnt. For the ears by which they are heard belong to the heart, and the ears by which men obey and do what is commanded are those of an interior sense.”

“HE IS DEAF and dumb, who neither has ears to hear the words of God, nor opens his mouth to speak them, and such must be presented to the Lord for healing by men who have already learned to hear and speak the Divine oracles.”

TWO QUOTATIONS FROM THE VEN. BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

“IT GOES without saying, of course, that while one must avoid the many abuses of hearing, one must also be more inclined to utilize this important sense of hearing for the many positive ways available to us in our Christian way of life: to listen to the word of God, to attend and participate in the worship services of the Church, to sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God, to listen with compassion and understanding to the concerns of your fellow men, and to do so many other positive things with our wonderful sense of hearing.”

VEN. NICODEMUS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, + 1809 A.D.



Christian Gratitude

A FUNDAMENTAL HALLMARK OF
ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

by **Archimandrite [now Metropolitan] Cyprian**

This article, translated from the Greek, is taken from an address by Fr Cyprian, a brother of the Holy Monastery of Sts Cyprian and Justina in Fili, Greece, now **Metropolitan Cyprian II of Oropos and Fili**. It was delivered on 4th October, 1999 (o.s.), at the convocation held annually to honour the Name Day of Metropolitan Cyprian the Elder of Oropos and Fili. We have, of necessity, topped and tailed the piece, keeping its essential message. The piece was taken from the former Synod in Resistance website, and those who would like to read the full text may now find it on the following site: <http://orthodox-info.com/praxis/gratitude.aspx>

... I SHALL, at the onset of my address, pose a crucial question: Is gratitude really a matter of concern in our crisis-ridden era? Unfortunately, this question is raised not only by worldly people, but also by pious Christians, who not only do not practise gratitude in their lives, but who neither reflect on it nor perceive

its absence as a serious deficit. This constitutes, in the fullest sense of the term, a very grave sin. How, indeed, is it possible for Christians, who are deemed worthy of the greatest gift—that is, of being members of the Body of Christ—to be unaware that gratitude is the fundamental hallmark of Orthodox spirituality and an indispensable element of our Christian identity?

We observe with profound distress that this ignorance concerning gratitude constitutes yet another proof of the corruption which the Orthodox ecclesiastical ethos has undergone, owing to the influence of a worldly mentality. Such a mentality leads man, a rational creature fashioned according to the image of God, into behaviour that is more irrational than that of irrational animals. Is this characterization perhaps exaggerated? I shall let a Patristic text provide us with the answer. This text relates a very charming, moving, and instructive event, which speaks for itself and introduces us to the important issue of gratitude.

A hyena, having a blind whelp, took it in her mouth and delivered it to St Makarios of Alexandria. She pushed open the hatch of his dwelling with her head, went inside, and threw her whelp at his feet. St Makarios picked it up and ascertained that it was blind. He spat on its eyes and prayed; the whelp then immediately opened its eyes. After suckling it, its mother took it and departed. On the following day, the hyena brought St Makarios the hide of a large sheep. The Saint looked at it and said to her: 'Where did you find this? You must have eaten a sheep. And so, since it is the result of an injustice, I will not accept it from you.' The hyena then bowed her head, knelt, and left the hide at the Saint's feet. The Saint said to her: 'I tell you, I will not accept it, unless you swear to me that you will never again cause distress to poor folk by eating their sheep.' At this, she nodded her head, as if to agree with St Makarios. The Saint then accepted the hide which the hyena had [in gratitude—Trans.] brought him.¹

Let us now attempt to approach, as succinctly as possible, the theological foundations of gratitude as an indispensable hall-

mark of human nature. Orthodox Tradition teaches us that man is a “eucharistic being,” that is, a rational creature who exists in an unceasing communion of love with his Creator and is oriented towards Him with an insatiable disposition of gratitude, thanksgiving, and doxology. Man has this innate capacity for love and thanksgiving because he is fashioned “according to the image and likeness” of God (Gen. 1:26-27); it is precisely for this reason that he bears the seal of gratitude indelibly within himself. God freely created man out of His exceeding goodness, in order that man might participate in Divine Goodness; and the Lord created beneficently so that His creatures, the recipients of this beneficence, might gratefully commune with Him, offer thanksgiving and glory to Him, and thus become partakers of Divine glory. “The desire to glorify God,” says St Basil the Great, “is by nature implanted in all rational creatures.”² St John of Damascus, in a summary of Patristic teaching on this subject, makes these telling remarks: *Since, therefore, God, Who is good, and preëminently good, was not satisfied with contemplation of Himself, but in His exceeding goodness willed that certain things should come into existence which would enjoy His benefits and participate in His goodness, He brought all things, both invisible and visible, out of non-being into being and created them—including man, who is a compound of the visible and the invisible.*³

In connection with this, it should be firmly emphasized that we become fully aware of this loving, grateful, and eucharistic nature of man in the sacred Mystery of Divine Communion. What takes place here? In this Divine Mystagogy, we have a foretaste of the eschatological glory of Deified human nature in the sanctified atmosphere of thanksgiving and doxology to God; in the Liturgy, there is revealed to us the fulfilment of the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, the communion of God with His rational creatures in the glorified Body and Blood of the God-Man, Christ the Saviour—and we experience this fulfilment in our lives.

Man’s gratitude to his Creator reaches its highest point in this supernatural Mystery, because his fallen nature receives the

most sublime gift of re-creation, renewal, and Deification in Christ, as St Symeon the New Theologian writes with profound lyricism: *Therefore, in partaking of Thy Flesh, I partake of Thy Nature, and I truly participate in Thine Essence, becoming a communicant and also an heir of Thy Divinity in the body, greater than the Bodiless Powers, I reckon, and I become a son of God, as Thou didst say, not to the Angels, but to us, thus calling us gods: 'I said: Ye are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High.'*⁴

Therefore, the supernatural and all-holy Mystery of Divine Communion is, in truth, the Mystery of Gratitude. “For this reason,” as St John Chrysostomos marvellously puts it, *the dread Mysteries, full of such great salvation, which are celebrated at every Liturgy, are also called a Thanksgiving because they are the remembrance of many benefits, and they signify the culmination of God’s Providence towards us, and in every way cause us to be thankful to Him.*⁵

From this perspective, that is, of man’s nature as a eucharistic being, we can now understand very clearly the persistence of the Holy Fathers in exhorting us to be unceasing practitioners of gratitude. “This is the will of God,” St John Chrysostomos pithily assures us, “that we always give thanks; this is the mark of a virtuous soul.”⁶ And to the question of why “this is the will of God,” the same Saint responds simply and precisely: “God accepts nothing so much as a grateful and thankful soul.”⁷ In another place, he reiterates: “Nothing so gladdens God as when one is thankful.”⁸ However, it would be very useful for us to mention also the immediate practical results of blessed gratitude, in order to dispel—apart from anything else—the mistaken idea of some, that gratitude pertains only to the contemplative life and eschatological recompense. In the first place, we should not forget the following important truth: in order to preserve a benefaction in the best way possible, we should always remember it and constantly thank God for it. “For the best preservative of any benefaction,” say the Saints, “is the remembrance of that benefaction, and a continual thanksgiving.”⁹

Next, the immediate result of continual thanksgiving is the following: when our Lord ascertains that we respond with gratitude to His gifts, He gives us richer gifts and never ceases from doing good to us: “For such is our Master,” affirm the Saints, “that, whenever He sees that we are grateful for what has already come our way, He bestows lavish gifts on us and never desists from doing good to us, rewarding the gratitude of those who show obedience.”¹⁰ In emphasizing this idea, Abba Isaac the Syrian adds that, when he who is benefitted thanks God, it is as if he provokes His Goodness to give greater gifts than the previous ones: “Gratitude on the part of one who receives provokes the Giver [God] to give greater gifts than before.”¹¹

We should also keep in mind that constant remembrance of God’s gifts ultimately proves to be our best instructor in the virtuous life, since it unceasingly prompts us to strive gratefully to reciprocate God’s love: “Remembrance of benefactions [and gratitude for them] will be a suitable instructor for us in the virtuous way of life.”¹²

I shall conclude this section on the immediate practical benefits of Grace-filled gratitude by extolling, in particular, its value for us as an invincible weapon whereby we can repel all the devices of the demons: “There is nothing so good as thanksgiving.... We have one weapon which is the best, and sufficient to repel all such devices as these: in everything to give thanks to God.”¹³

* * *

With the hope that I am not tiring you, I would like to forestall a misunderstanding: as we proceed and delve into this astonishing principle of Orthodox spirituality, perhaps you are thinking that gratitude, on the basis of all that we have expounded hitherto, is a simple and easy matter. Let us dispel this misunderstanding. When the Saints exhort us to thank our Lord “not only in words, but also with deeds and actions,”¹⁴ they present us with a vast arena in which to practice gratitude; that is, we must give thanks unceasingly and for all things: for our illnesses, for poverty, for pleasant and unpleasant things, for visible and invisible things, “for all the

things we know and do not know, for the seen and unseen benefits that come to us,”¹⁵ “giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20).

The Divine Chrysostomos asks: “What then? Are we to show gratitude for all that happens to us?” And he immediately replies: *Yes. Even if it be disease or poverty..., for seen and unseen benefits..., and for those which we receive against our will; ...but also whenever we are either in poverty, or in sicknesses, or are being insulted, then let us intensify our thanksgiving; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words, nor with the tongue, but in deeds and works, in mind and in heart; let us give thanks to Him with all our souls.*¹⁶

The height of holiness to which thanksgiving exalts us, especially in unpleasant occurrences, is so great that the Saints consider those who show gratitude to be equal to the Holy Martyrs: *Have you fallen seriously ill? [asks St John Chrysostomos]. This brings you the crown of martyrdom [through thanksgiving].¹⁷ Nothing is holier than that tongue which gives thanks to God in evil circumstances; truly in no respect does it fall short of that of Martyrs; both alike are crowned, both the former and the latter.*¹⁸

While we are on this subject, we should not forget that St John Chrysostomos himself, whose end was truly martyric, did not cease, until his dying breath, to exclaim those famous words: “Glory to God for all things; I will not cease from saying this always, in all that happens to me: ‘Glory to God for all things!’”¹⁹

Now, I hasten once again to anticipate the objections of some, that these demands of gratitude are excessive and unattainable, given the realities of life today; and so, before I attempt my final ascent to the highest peaks of blessed gratitude and thanksgiving, it would be good for us to receive some encouragement and fortification. In response to these objections, therefore, I will not bring to mind things that took place in times of old, such as the astonishing gratitude shown by a lion towards St. Gerasimos of the Jordan,²⁰ lest I make my speech too lengthy, but rather a very moving and instructive event from our own day and age.

The Athonite Elder Philaret, who was Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Kostamonitou and who reposed in 1963, had the particular spiritual gift of love. His love was not restricted only to human beings, but extended further, to inanimate objects, animals, and nature. We perceive this empathy for irrational nature as a typical feature of the Grace-filled lives of God's chosen servants. *One day, there was great commotion outside the Elder's cell: two swallows had started a fierce fight with each other! The Elder was troubled. He went outside and beheld a distressing spectacle: the stronger swallow was attacking the other with its beak and literally plucking out its feathers. Without wasting any time, he chased the stronger swallow away. He lovingly took the injured bird in his hands and rescued it; as a result of his nursing, it survived. Thereafter, just as the lion of St. Gerasimos used to follow the Saint everywhere, showing its gratitude and dedication, so also did this swallow: it flew in front of the Elder, fluttered its wings, frolicked, and sang. One day, the Elder went outside, either to marvel at God 'in His works' or to pray in silence. The swallow, his faithful friend and companion, was happily flying beside him. The Elder sat down in the fruit-drying room a short distance from the monastery, and fell asleep without realizing it; but the swallow suddenly began to flutter rapidly above his head, chirping loudly, as if it wanted to wake him up and warn him of some danger. And in very truth, when the Elder awoke, what did he see? A large reptile not too far away from him. His companion had in turn performed its own act of charity for the merciful Elder.*²¹

However, I must now round off the benefits of gratitude with their crowning point: love for God and love for one's neighbour. The Saints teach—and our own experience confirms it—that gratitude brings us closer to God, and thereby our love for the Lord becomes exceedingly fervent.

Let us give thanks to God continually. For, it is outrageous that when we enjoy His benefaction to us in deed every single day, we do not acknowledge the favour with so much as a word;

and this, when the acknowledgment confers great benefit on us. He does not need anything of ours, but we stand in need of all things from Him. In point of fact, thanksgiving adds nothing to Him, but it brings us closer to Him. For if, when we recall the benefactions of men, we are the more warmed by affection for them; much more, when we continually bring to mind the benefits of the Master towards us, shall we be more earnest with regard to His commandments. For this cause Paul also said, 'Be ye thankful' (Col. 3:15). For the best preservative of any benefaction is the remembrance of the benefaction, and a continual thanksgiving for it.²²

At the same time that love for God in our hearts increases through gratitude, love for our neighbour also increases. Experience has shown that thanksgiving is a very effective method for curing whatever weaknesses we might have when it comes to fellowship with our neighbour.

It is striking how the Saints insist that we give thanks to our Lord, not only for the personal benefits that we receive, but also for “common” benefits and those granted to other people; such a thankful attitude on our part turns us from men into Angels: “Let us be thankful,” St John Chrysostomos urges us, “also for the blessings of others; this makes us Angels instead of men; let us give thanks continually.”²³ Indeed, it is worth our while to observe how this wondrous subject of love is analysed by the Saints, who connect it with the sublime Mystery of the Divine Eucharist:

Let us therefore give thanks to Him continually, and let this precede both our words and our works. But let us be thankful not for our own blessings alone, but also for those of others; for in this way we shall be able both to destroy our envy and to reinforce our love and make it more genuine. For you will no longer be able to envy those on whose behalf you give thanks to the Master. Wherefore, as you know, when this Sacrifice [of the Eucharist] is being offered, the Priest also enjoins us to give thanks for the whole world, for things past, for the things present, for what has previously happened to us, and for what will befall us

*hereafter. For, this is what frees us from earth and translates us to Heaven, and makes us Angels instead of men.... We have been taught to treat our fellow-servants in such a way as to consider even their blessings ours. Hence, throughout his Epistles, St Paul gives thanks for God's benefactions to the world. Let us, too, therefore continually give thanks, for our own blessings, and for those of others, alike for the small and for the great.*²⁴

Perhaps this is the most appropriate moment for me to mention something which I hope will contribute positively to your understanding of these thoughts concerning the two aspects of love expressed by means of gratitude. Some time ago, a certain monk confided to me a very beneficial experience of his, in order to edify me and fortify me spiritually; I will summarize his main points, and I especially ask our beloved brethren in Christ to pay attention to these:

As you know, brother, I am weak and have made no spiritual progress.... Despite my efforts, I have never succeeded in offering anything to our Lord.... I do not know how it happened, but I once began to invoke the prayers of my Elder and the help of the Panagia, and to ponder on the love and bounties of our Lord to me in my wretchedness.... Since then, I have not ceased to cultivate this inward activity.... My heart gradually began to soften and feel compunction.... A fire was kindled inside me and it blazes unceasingly.... And it dominates me more and more.... I cannot get my fill of love for Christ.... or of love for my fellow-men and for the whole of creation.... Whenever I give thanks, this flame flares up. I continually entreat Christ, saying: 'O my Christ, do not deprive me of Heavenly blessings for the sake of being satiated by earthly ones.... Deem me worthy to be in the celestial Paradise with the Heavenly Angels and to enjoy the good things of Heaven, just as I am in this earthly Paradise with the earthly Angels, my brothers, and enjoy the good things of this earth in such abundance.'

In referring to this truly wondrous experience and to the most sublime benefits which flow from gratitude, that is, the ben-

efits of love for our Lord and for our brother, we have thus, now, attained to the highest pinnacle: “Love is the fulfilment of the Law” (Rom. 13.10), the “recapitulation”²⁵ of all the commandments, and the “bond of perfection.”²⁶

Consequently, someone with great interest in this subject will rightly pose the crucial question: “Well then, how are we to become grateful, given that our hearts are hard and proud? Is there any method that we can follow?” This very serious question has, of course, been answered in all that I have hitherto expounded; however, I think it expedient for us to invite our Holy Fathers to enlighten us yet again, and in this way to conclude our stroll in this beautiful garden. St John Chrysostomos asserts clearly: “Let us become grateful by continually turning over in our minds the bounteous gifts of God and remembering the magnitude and multitude of His benefactions.”²⁷ And he continues:

*For if we constantly call to mind the benefits which God has bestowed upon our nature, we shall be grateful, and this will become for us the greatest incitement to embark on the path of virtue. For, it is evident that he who remembers the benefits of God will be zealous not to prove unworthy thereof, but to display such eagerness and gratitude that he will be vouchsafed other benefits as well. For, our Master is generous, and when He sees that we are grateful for what He has already given us, He lavishes Grace upon us and grants us yet greater gifts.*²⁸

But an additional question arises: What exactly does it mean for us to be in constant remembrance of God’s bounties? To this equally serious question, the Saints reply by listing examples of God’s benefactions,²⁹ in an attempt to arouse in us the feeling of gratitude to the Lord. For example, St Basil the Great, with reference to the verse in which the Holy Prophet David asks, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me?” (Ps. 115:3), majestically enumerates gifts which we, being more irrational than the irrational animals, habitually forget.

He brought us from non-being in being; He dignified us with reason; He provided us with crafts to help sustain our lives; He causes food to spring up from the earth; He has given us cattle to serve us. For our sake there is rain, for our sake there is the sun; the hills and plains have been adorned for our benefit, affording us refuge from the peaks of the mountains. For our sake rivers flow; for our sake fountains gush forth; the sea is made calm for our trading; riches come from mines and delights from everywhere, and the whole of creation is offered as a gift to us, on account of the rich and abundant Grace of our Benefactor towards us. But why speak of minor gifts? For our sake God lived among men; for the sake of our corrupt flesh, ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’ (Jn 1:14). To the thankless He was their Benefactor; to those sitting in darkness, the Sun of Righteousness; upon the Cross He was the Impassible One; in death, the Life; in Hades, the Light; the Resurrection for the fallen;³⁰ the spirit of adoption into sonship, bestowals of spiritual gifts, and promises of crowns. In addition to such great and splendid benefits, or rather, benefits par excellence, the benefits that He promises us in the future life are many times greater: the delight of Paradise, glory in the Kingdom of Heaven, honours equal to those of the Angels, and the vision of God, which, for those counted worthy of it, is the highest of all goods; every rational nature desires this, and may we also attain to it, after we have cleansed ourselves of carnal passions.³¹

... .. And may our All-Holy Mother vouchsafe that you always taste the most sweet and exhilarating waters of the thanksgiving and gratitude of those dear to you, so that you might derive courage, hope, and consolation therefrom, to the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

1. Palladios, Lausaic History, in *Spiritual Gifts and Persons Endowed with Spiritual Gifts*, 8th ed. (Oropos: Holy Monastery of the Paraclete, 1995), Vol. I, p. 241 (cf. *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXIV, col. 1060CD). The aforementioned volume contains a similar and equally moving story about Abba John the Sabbaïte and a wild boar: “On one occasion, a female boar came to Abba John the Sabbaïte, carrying a whelp in her mouth; when she drew near to the Elder, she left the youngling at his feet. On seeing that it was blind, he spat in the dust, made some clay, and anointed the eyes of the little animal. The whelp at once regained its sight. Its mother then went up to it, took it, and departed, rejoicing. On the following day, she came again, dragging an enormous cabbage with great

effort. The Saint looked at it, smiled, and said: ‘Whence did you bring this? You must have stolen it from the gardens of the ascetics. But I do not accept stolen goods. Go, therefore, and leave it where you found it.’ The animal, in embarrassment, took it and left” (*ibid.*, pp. 252-253). This story is taken from the critical edition by F. Nau (*Oriens Christianus*, Vol. II [1902]).

2. Homily 15, “On Faith,” §1, *PG*, Vol. XXXI, col. 464B.

3. *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book II, ch. 2, “On Creation,” *PG*, Vol. XCIV, cols. 864C-865A. St. Gregory the Theologian makes the following beautiful remarks concerning creation on the basis of Divine goodness: “Therefore, since this movement of Self-contemplation alone could not satisfy Goodness, but Good must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself, so as to multiply the objects of Its beneficence—for this is the nature of the supreme Goodness—, He first conceived the Angelic and Heavenly Powers; and this conception was a work fulfilled by His Word and perfected by His Spirit.... [And wishing to produce] a single living being out of both (the invisible and the visible creation, I mean) He fashioned man..., in one person combining spirit and flesh: spirit because of the Grace bestowed upon him, flesh on account of the height to which he had been exalted; the one, that he might continue to live and glorify his Benefactor, the other, that he might suffer, and by suffering be put in remembrance and be corrected if he became proud in his greatness” (Homily 45, “On Pascha,” §§5-7, *PG*, Vol. XXXVI, cols. 629A-632C; cf. Homily 38, “On Theophany,” §9, *PG*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 320C).

4. “Hymn 7,” vv. 30-36, in *Works* (Thessaloniki: “Orthodoxos Kypsele” Publications, 1990), Vol. III, p. 60.

5. Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §3, *PG*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

6. *Idem*, Homily 10 on I Thessalonians, §2, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 457.

7. *Idem*, Homily 52 on Genesis, §3, *PG*, Vol. LIV, col. 460.

8. *Idem*, Homily 19 on Ephesians, §2, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 129.

9. *Idem*, Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §3, *PG*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

10. *Idem*, Homily 41 on Genesis, §3, *PG*, Vol. LIII, col. 378.

11. Homily 30, “On Giving Thanks to God,” in *The Complete Extant Ascetical Works*, reprinted by C. Spanou (Athens: n.d.), p. 126.

12. St. John Chrysostomos, Homily 26 on Genesis, §5, *PG*, Vol. LIII, col. 238.

13. *Idem*, Homily 1, “On the Statues,” §11, *PG*, Vol. XLIX, col. 41.

14. *Idem*, Homily 18 on Romans, §5, *PG*, Vol. LX, col. 579.

15. *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostomos*, prayer of the *Anaphora*.

16. St. John Chrysostom, Homily 19 on Ephes., §2, *PG*, Vol. LXII, cols. 129-130.

• St. John’s idea that we should thank God, among many other things, “both for the Kingdom and for Hell,” “for Hell, for punishment, for the Kingdom of Heaven” (Homily 10 on Colossians, §§2-3, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 368) is truly very profound and astonishing.

• Interpreting his thoughts, the Saint says: “What is required is for a man to give thanks when he is in afflictions and discouragements.... And why do I speak of the afflictions of this world? We ought to give thanks to God, even for Hell itself, for the torments and punishments of the next world. For, it is very beneficial for those of us who are attentive, when the fear of Hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts.... For what else is the peculiar work of God if not this, that He benefits the human race through chastisements and refreshments alike?” (Homily 19 on Ephesians, §2, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 130).

17. *Idem*, Homily 3 on I Thessalonians, §5, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 412.

• The Saint is here referring primarily to the case in which a sick person does not yield to the pressures of others to have recourse to sorcerers for a cure, but “give thanks to God”: then “you have dealt him [the Devil] a mortal blow” (*ibid.*, §6, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 414).

18. *Idem*, Homily 8 on Colossians, §5, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 357.

19. *Idem*, Epistle 12, “To Olympias the Deaconess,” *PG*, Vol. LII, col. 610.

20. For this amazing story, see John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, ch. 107, trans. John Wortley (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), pp. 86-88 (cf. *PG*, Vol. 87.3, cols. 2965C-2969B).

21. Archimandrite Ioannikios, “Philaret of Kostamonitou,” in *Contemporary Athonite Personalities*: Vol. IX (Oropos: Holy Monastery of the Paraclete, 1983), pp. 80-81.

22. St. John Chrysostom, Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §3, *PG*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

23. *Idem*, Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §§3-4, *PG*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

- 24.** *Ibid.* We continually encounter in St John’s sacred writings this profound and moving exhortation: “Let us be thankful also for the blessings of others.” For example:
- “Nothing profits us so much as constantly to remember the benefactions of God, both public and private” (Homily 1 on St. Titus, §1, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 665).
 - “Let us give thanks to Him for all things, public and private, for His goodness” (Exposition of Psalm 135, §3, *PG*, Vol. LV, col. 404).
 - “Let this, he says, be your work, to give thanks in your prayers both for the seen and the unseen.... Thus is it customary for the Saints to pray, and to give thanks for the common benefits of all” (Homily 10 on Colossians, §2, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 368).
 - “We must give thanks to God also for the goods that befall others.... Do you see how he unites and binds us together, not only through prayer, but also through thanksgiving? For he who is urged to thank God for his neighbour’s good is also bound to love him and be kindly disposed towards him” (Homily 6 on I Timothy, §1, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 531).
- 25.** *Cf* Rom. 13:9. • “What is said through the many commandments is included, like a recapitulation—that is, a concise summary—, in loving one’s neighbour” (Evthymios Zigabenos, Vol. I, p. 154).
- 26.** Col. 3:14. • “He did not say that it is ‘the summit,’ but what is greater, ‘the bond’; this is more necessary than the other. For ‘summit’ indeed is an intensity of perfection, but ‘bond’ is the holding fast together of those things which produce perfection; it is, as it were, the root” (St. John Chrysostomos, Homily 8 on Colossians, §2, *PG*, Vol. LXII, col. 354).
- 27.** St John Chrysostomos, Catechesis 5, Vol. XXX, p. 442.
- 28.** *Idem*, Homily 15 on Genesis, §5, *PG*, Vol. LIII, col. 124.
- 29.** St John Chrysostomos, for example, offers the following list of God’s benefactions to mankind: “Who could reckon what God has already done for us, what He has promised, and what He does each day? He brought us from non-being into being, bestowed upon us both body and soul, made us rational creatures, gave us the air to breathe, brought forth the entire creation for the sake of mankind, and willed that man should enjoy a state of Paradise from the very beginning and have a life free from any pain or toil, and that he be not one whit inferior to the Angels and the Bodiless Powers, and, though in the body, not subject to bodily needs” (Homily 27 on Genesis, §1, *PG*, Vol. LIII, col. 239).
- 30.** These Patristic phrases are the source for the fourth *Sticheron* at the Praises on Sunday in the Seventh Tone.
- The Prophet David examines “his own poverty, for he has nothing worthy to give in return” for these most sublime and innumerable gifts; St Basil provides the answer: the way out of this impasse is the “fellowship and affection” which ought to characterize human beings; when we give to the “least” of our Lord’s “brethren,” we are, in essence, giving to the Lord Himself, Who then “recompenses” us, rewarding us munificently, not as a “benefactor,” but as a “beneficiary”!
- 31.** Homily “On the Martyr Julitta (and the Remainder of the Previous Homily on Thanksgiving),” §§6-7, *PG*, Vol. XXXI, cols. 253B-256A.

Source: *Orthodox Tradition, Vol. XX (2003), No. 2, pp. 13-25.*



“DO YOUR UTMOST to escape from the three passions - gain, honour, and rest - that overturn the soul. When they become the soul’s mistresses they impede its progress.”

VEN. ESAIAS OF SCETIS, +491 A.D.

Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

On the Liturgy

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

§ 57. The Order of the Proskomidi. Approaching the table of preparation, the priest uncovers the sacred vessels, and cuts a cubic portion from one of the prosphoras, or the central seal on a Greek prosphora, in remembrance of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This portion is called the Lamb, because until its consecration it represents Christ, Who was foreshadowed in the Old Testament dispensation by the Passover lamb. As he makes to four cuts on each side of the seal, to extract the Lamb, the priest repeats the words of the Prophet Esaias: *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. As a blameless lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away. And who shall declare His generation?* The Lamb is taken out of the prosphora, as the priest says, *For His life is taken up from the earth.* It is then almost completely cut into four quarters from the bottom, leaving a small portion on top intact to hold it together, and then placed upright on the diskos. The priest then pierces it on the right side with the lance, in remembrance of our Saviour being pierced with the lance when He was crucified, and the wine and water are poured into the chalice, just as blood and water flowed from the Saviour's pierced side. The mixture of wine and water in the chalice is then blessed.

A triangular portion from the second prosphora or seal is taken out in honour and memory of the All-holy Lady Theotokos, and is placed on the right side of the Lamb. *At Thy right hand stood the Queen, arrayed in a vesture of inwoven gold, adorned in varied co-*

lours (Ps. 44:9). From the third seal or prosthora nine small triangular portions are extracted and placed in three ranks of three to the left of the Lamb. Here there occurs a slight difference in practice; in some churches the first of these portions is set down in honour of the heavenly, angelic orders, and the second in honour of St John the Baptist and the Old Testament prophets. In other churches, the Angels are not commemorated in this way, and the first portion is dedicated for the Baptist, and the second for the rest of the Prophets. Thereafter, the third portion is for the Apostles, completing the first row of saints. The fourth for the Hierarchs, the fifth for the Martyrs, and the sixth for the monastic saints, completing the second rank. The seventh is for the Unmercenary Healers. The eighth for the righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, for the Saint to whom the church is dedicated and the Saints commemorated on the day of the celebration of the Liturgy. The ninth portion, which closes the third rank, is for the Saint whose Liturgy we are celebrating, either St John Chrysostom or St Basil the Great.

From the fourth and fifth seals / prosthoras, portions are taken to commemorate the hierarchy, the Bishop of the diocese and the clergy, the founders and benefactors of the church and all the Orthodox faithful, both those still struggling in this life and those who have gone to their rest before us. (In olden times, in countries where they had an Orthodox Sovereign, he or she was also commemorated at this point). In this way, on the diskos, we have the Lamb, placed centrally as the Head of the Church, surrounded by portions representing all the members of the Church, the choirs of the Saints and righteous in heaven and the Orthodox members of the Church here below, both the living and the departed.

In the Russian practice, members of the congregation send up small prosthoras with lists of names of the faithful to be commemorated, and for these small portions are taken from those prosthoras and placed on the diskos below the Lamb. In other churches, such lists are sent up by the faithful who bake the prosthoras for the Liturgy, and usually the church has books of commemoration so that many others are commemorated, and for them too portions are taken from the large prosthora and placed on the diskos.

When these commemorations are completed, the priest tidies the portions on the diskos, making sure none are near the edge and likely to be dropped, and then proceeds to “cover the gifts.” First, having censed it, he places the Asterisk or Star over the portions on the diskos - this holds the veils off the portions there and represents the Star of Bethlehem. Then he covers the diskos with a veil, and next the chalice. Last of all he places a larger veil, the Aer, over both. Each time he censes the veils and says an appointed verse. When the holy vessels are covered in this way, he censes them three times, blessing and glorifying God, - a reminder of the Wise Men offering their gifts, which included incense, to the New-Born Saviour. The priest then prays that the Lord will accept the offering upon His altar above the heavens, and remember those who have made the offering and those for whom they have made it, and He preserve those serving “uncondemned in the priestly ministry.” After this prayer, he makes a dismissal, like that at the end of the services, and the order of the proskomidi is brought to an end.

... to be continued with “The Liturgy of the Catechumens”



“IT WILL BE ENOUGH if you take care to instruct your children in the fear of God, instil them with an Orthodox understanding, and by teaching them to be faithful, you will protect them from reasoning which is foreign to the teachings of the Orthodox Church. The good that you sow in the hearts of your children while they are young will blossom forth in their hearts when they come to full maturity, after enduring the bitter trials of school and contemporary life, which often break off the branches of a good Christian upbringing at home.”

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

***N.B.** These words of admonition were written in nineteenth century Russia, how much more applicable they are today in the “liberal democracy” of the twenty-first century Western world.*

THE COMING MONTH

IN JULY, we have no Great Feasts and no fasting periods. In this respect it is like October. But we do have a host of beloved Saints commemorated in the month. Among them:

Our **holy Father Theodore, Archbishop of Edessa** (19th July / 1st August), was born in the Syrian city of that name. As a small child he had apparently been rather naughty. On one occasion, when the service in church lasted a long time, he climbed under the Holy Table, so as not to be seen, and fell asleep. He was granted a dream which changed his life: A radiantly beautiful Child appeared to him and offered him a honeycomb, and he was given to understand by this sweetness that he should take up the monastic life, but as he reached to the comb, the gift suddenly also included a Bishop's staff and he realized that he was also being called to the episcopate. At the age of twelve he was orphaned and gave away his inheritance to the poor. He set out to Jerusalem, where at the Laura of the Saint Sabbas the Sanctified he did in fact take up the monastic life. After twelve years in obedience, he was blessed to live as a recluse, and spent a further twenty-four years in this struggle. However, the Lord, Who knows the hearts and minds of all, did indeed summon the ascetic to be a bishop, so that he might bring light to the world. It happened that after the death of the bishop of Edessa, no more worthy a successor could be found than Theodore, and through the mutual assent of the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, and likewise of both clergy and laity, he was elected Bishop. He submitted himself to the will of God and, during the reign of the Emperor Michael and his mother Saint Theodora (842-855), he was consecrated Bishop. As he was being consecrated, there occurred a great miracle. The people beheld a dove white as snow, soaring about beneath the dome of the church, which then descended upon the head of the saint. Thus the vision of his boyhood days was fulfilled; he had become a monk and was now consecrated Bishop. He was a model for the faithful in word, in life, in love, and by the good example of his ascetic life

he guided his flock along the path of salvation. Theodore exerted much effort in the struggle with heretics, and with a firm hand he guarded the Church from temptations and errant thought. By his counselling of, and support for, Saint Theodore, the Elder Theodosius the Stylite likewise served the spiritual flock. Seeking protection for his people from the various heretical groups, the Saint undertook a journey to Baghdad, seeking an audience with the Caliph Mavius (maybe in fact al-Muwayyad, the son of the Caliph) to complain about unjust measures against the Orthodox. On his arrival he found the Caliph seriously ill. Calling on the help of the Lord, the holy bishop placed a particle of earth from the Sepulchre of the Lord in a vessel with water and gave it to him to drink, and the sick one was healed. Grateful, Mavius asked for instruction in the Christian Faith, and, taking the name John, with three associates he received holy Baptism. For his confession of faith in Christ before the Muslims, John and the three others were slain. He appeared in a dream to Saint Theodore and to the Elder Theodosios, and told them that he had been granted to suffer for Christ, and had been numbered among the rank of the Martyrs. He also revealed that he would soon meet the two of them in the Kingdom of Heaven. This was an indication to the saint that his own end was approaching. Three years later he peacefully reposed to the Lord; some say this happened in his monastery of repentance, St Sabbas Lavra, others that it was among his flock in Edessa.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“WE WERE having an interesting discussion in our family yesterday about G[ay] L[esbian] T[ransgender], and X wondered if having gay relationship is such a big sin, then why Jesus did not teach against it or at least there is nothing about it in the Gospel. I thought that may be because Jesus came to Jews and that was not exactly one of their typical sins, maybe there was no point talking about it? Perhaps you happen to know the answer to this question? - M.B.B., Surrey.

APOLOGIES for not replying sooner to your message... I just wonder why you conducted your discussion on gay rights on Protestant lines and not on Orthodox ones. Remember our faith is not Bible-based - the Bible is one of the sources of teaching which feeds into our Tradition. Furthermore we do not take the sayings of our Saviour without reference to the rest of the Scriptures. (In this respect, your thought is probably right: the Jews of our Saviour's time knew very well the Old Testament Scriptures and among them the practice of same-sex sexual relations was probably not a great problem). It appears that there are periods when allowance of such practices becomes as it were in vogue. I remember that Archbishop Pavel once told me that there was such a period in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. It seems, as a society, we are going through another.

Another thought: St John tells us specifically that there are "many other things" which Jesus did which are not recorded (John 21:25); our Saviour Himself tells us (John 14:26) that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things, so not "all things" are recorded in the four Gospels. "All things" have been revealed by the Holy Spirit to the Church, about which, see below.

The Biblical references to sexual relations being exclusively between a male and a female are numerous: Gen. 2:18-25; reiterated in Matt. 19:4-5 and Mark 10:6-8 by the Saviour (!), Lev. 18:22; Lev. 20:13; (these make it sound pretty serious!); Deut. 23:17; Rom. 1:26-7; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10. I expect I could go on, but these references show that the Scriptures are quite clear that such relations are sinful.***

Further, as St Paul tells St Timothy, they are "contrary to doctrine," and we have the sacred canons and the writings of the Fathers, and the counsels of spiritual elders throughout the generations which make it absolutely clear that such relations are deemed to be gravely sinful.

A caution I would add is that we should not therefore hate gays or lesbians, we must abide by the rule that we abhor the sin but

not the sinner. Rather we should recognise that people who are tempted in this way have a particularly difficult struggle, and we should try to help and support them in that struggle and pray for them.

Furthermore, we should remember that, in speaking of this particular sin, St Paul adds in “maliciousness, envy, murmuring, whisperers, backbiters, ... despiteful, proud, boasters,” etc. Which of us does not sometimes commit these sins? We, then along with those who commit sins of a homosexual nature, are also “worthy of death” (Rom. 1:32). We cannot for a moment think ourselves better than them. I hope these ramblings will help you a little.

*** **Additional thought:** As are, of course, many relationships and practices between heterosexuals, which fact seems always to be forgotten in these discussions, because sinfully we are always inclined to point the finger of accusation against “the other.”



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

BAPTISM AT BROOKWOOD

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava**, celebrated the Baptism of **Matei**, the infant son of **Ciprian Palaghia** and **Iuliana Maxim of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk** on Saturday, 7th / 20th June, the feast of the Hieromartyr Theodotus of Ancyra. **Mircea Ganea**, the Godfather, had flown in from Romania to be present at the Mysterion. Matei is named after the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew. After the celebration, in the Old Mortu-

ary the family provided refreshments for all who had participated. Bishop Sofronie heard some confessions before returning to London to hear even more. On the next day, the Sunday of the New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Convent in London for our Romanian brothers in Christ.

FUNERAL OF “LADY BOURNEMOUTH”

ON Saturday, 6th June n.s, **Irina Ananin**, who had been nicknamed “Lady Bournemouth,” died at the **Lymington New Forest Hospital**, near her home at Barton-on-Sea. Irina and her husband, **Artemii (Tëma)** were among the most long-standing parishioners of the parish attached to our Convent in London, and Irina was professionally teaching French to within a year of her death at the age of 88. In the week before her repose, she received the Holy Mysteries on the Tuesday morning, and on the Friday evening, in the presence of her family, was anointed with Holy Unction by our clergy. The funeral was chanted according to the Russian usage at the **Convent of the Annunciation** on Thursday, 18th June, and **Fr Archpriest Maxim Nikolsky** of the Russian Cathedral parish in London was among those who attended. **Fr Alexis, Fr Œconomos Stephen Fretwell and Fr Hierodeacon Sabbas** were the serving clergy. The interment was at St Edward’s Cemetery at Brookwood, and thereafter mourners were invited by the family to a Mercy Meal at the **Rowbarge Hotel, St Johns, Woking**, who provided a vegan menu for the Orthodox participants. Family and friends had travelled from the South coast, from Devon, Scotland, and even from Australia for the funeral of a very well-beloved and faithful member of our community. **Mother Vikentia** and **Mother Ioanna** journeyed down from London to pray as Irina was laid to rest. May Irina now find rest with the Saints and may her **Memory be Eternal**. We pray that our Saviour will also grant comfort to her loved ones in their bereavement.

VISITORS

THE **Priest Nicolae** from the **Traditionalist Orthodox Church in Romania** visited us on the Sunday of All Saints (25th May / 7th June). Fr Nicolae, who was making a private visit to England to visit friends in the London area, did not serve, having not prepared for this, but he partook of the Holy Mysteries during the Liturgy, and afterwards stayed with us for the Parish breakfast.

HEGOUMEN NESTOR and his parishioner, **Maksim**, from Vologda, Russia, visited us briefly on Saturday, 20th June. They were guests in this country of **Dr Vladimir Moss**, who lives in this area and brought them to venerate the sacred relics of St Edward. Fr Nestor had apparently recently joined the Synod of the **Russian True Orthodox Church**, under the presidency of **His Eminence, Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk**, from the Moscow Patriarchate. His visit to our Brotherhood was unannounced, and was necessarily brief as their party arrived shortly before Bishop Sofronie was due to arrive for Matei's Baptism, and they left before his arrival.

A SHORT VISIT to our church was made on Tuesday 23rd June n.s., by a group led by **Mike Higginbottom** of the Sheffield based organization "**Interesting Times.**" The group of about a dozen people was making a tour in the London area, oddly entitled "**Cemeteries and Sanitation.**" Arrangements for the visit to Saint Edward's were made through **Margaret Hobbs** of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society.**

A VALUED GIFT

JENNY GRAVESON has kindly given us two framed original illustrations of Brookwood Cemetery, taken from the **Illustrated London News** of 1852 and 1856. We have placed these in the exhibition room, and are very grateful to Jenny for her gift.

BCS AGM

THE **Brookwood Cemetery Society** held their AGM in the hall of the Brotherhood's Old Mortuary Building on Wednesday 3rd June. The formal part of the meeting was chaired by **Kim Lowe**. **Jenny Graveson** retired from the committee, and **Barry Devonshire** was elected in her place. After a break for refreshments, **Neil Morkunas** of **Abney Park Cemetery**, gave a very spirited talk on ***Grave Symbolism***, which he illustrated with numerous slides. Abney Park was established for dissenters, and so has a wide variety of different memorials. After the meeting we wished that the BCS could hold a meeting every week, as they left the hall and the kitchen area much cleaner than they found it!



PRACTICAL TIP

UNFORTUNATELY, here in the suburbs, it is increasingly difficult to plan journeys, because traffic conditions vary so much, almost from hour to hour. However, if you find that you arrive late in church, then next time take the simple expedient of setting out half-an-hour earlier. If then you arrive early and another service is in progress, you will have the blessing of attending that (surely you are not so mean towards God that you would begrudge that!), or if there is no service in progress, you will perhaps be able to help by lighting the lamps, filling the candle troughs, tidying up, or preparing for the service you intend to participate in, and thus contributing to the running of the church, rather than just turning up and expecting someone else to have done everything necessary.



“IF ANY PERSON injures us or wrongs us, we must forgive it, as the Saviour said, so our sins can be forgiven us.”

ABBOT ÆLFRIC OF EYNHAM, + 1014 A.D.