

FROM THE FATHERS

“FIRST I WILL ACCUSE YOU: you call yourself a sinner, but in fact you do not show that you acknowledge this. One who acknowledges himself to be a sinner and guilty of many evils never contradicts anyone, does not quarrel with anyone, does not become angry with anyone, but considers everyone better and more intelligent than himself. And if your thoughts, reviling you, tell you that this is so in actual fact, then how can they arouse your heart against those who are better than you? Be heedful, O brother, this is wrong. We have not yet attained to the point of considering ourselves sinners. He who loves the one who accuses him is most wise (Prov. 9:8). But if one loves someone and does not fulfil what he hears from him, this is more like hatred. If you are sinful, then why do you reproach your neighbour and accuse him, as though sorrow were coming to you through him? Do you not know that everyone is tested by his own conscience (Rom. 14:22), and this gives rise to sorrow in him. . . . And with regard to the fact that you consider yourself a fool, I tell you: Beware, lest you be deceived; test yourself, and you will find that in fact you do not consider yourself such; for if you think thus of yourself, you should not become angry with anyone, being in no state to judge whether a matter has been done well or ill; after all, a fool is called senseless, and a fool and senseless man, as has been said, does not have in himself the salt (of wisdom), and not having salt in himself, how can he season and salt others? Behold, O brother, how we are made a mockery! We only speak with the lips, but in deeds we show something entirely different.”

FROM THE COUNSELS OF THE VENERABLE BARSANUPHIUS & JOHN,
6TH CENTURY SPIRITUAL ELDERS FROM GAZA IN PALESTINE

HOW SHOULD WE KEEP THIS DORMITION FAST?

BY THE BLESSED & EVER-MEMORABLE
ARCHBISHOP AVERKY OF JORDANVILLE

THE FOLLOWING HOMILY is something of a period piece, written as it was over fifty years ago. However, although a few references may strike readers as dated, there is much of spiritual worth in the Archbishop's words. Indeed, the state of the Orthodox diaspora and the mentality of its peoples has not greatly altered since Archbishop wrote this work. If that mentality has altered, and if the world has changed, it is sadly in both cases much to the worse. The Archbishop's words are more pertinent now than when he penned them. Our readers will notice, and some might be offended by, his constant references to the Russian peoples, but one must bear several things in mind. First and most basically, he was a Bishop of the Russian Church addressing his flock of Russian people, mostly emigrés, which at that point probably comprised very few non-Russians. He is addressing them in terms to which they would respond. And take particular notice how carefully he phrases his expression. He never speaks of "Russian Orthodox people," but always of "Orthodox Russian people." There has been a tendency, one unfortunately greatly augmented in recent years with the euphoria in some quarters over the "re-united" (actually more-than-ever disunited) Russian Church, to represent Russian Orthodoxy as something essentially distinct from, and, grotesquely, even superior to, the Orthodoxy of other peoples. Few are the hierarchs and Church leaders in the Russian Church today who would have the sensitivity of Archbishop Averky to address the Orthodox Russian people, rather than the Russian Orthodox people. And, although his words are addressed to each of us as individuals, yet we can only bemoan the fact that his teaching was not heeded by the "uniting parts of the Russian Church" in 2007, which now so heartily congratulate themselves on their "well-being," but have glossed over the need for real repentance.

TODAY, 1st August, according to our Orthodox calendar, we set out upon the Dormition Fast. For us it serves as a spiritual preparation for the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, imitating her own fast, by which she prepared herself for her departure from this earthly life, and it lasts for two whole weeks.

Last year, 1959 [*this sermon was first given on 1st/14th August, 1960 - ed.*], the Assembly of Hierarchs declared this present year, 1960, a year of repentance. In connection with this, we have for a long time been considering reminding all the Orthodox Russian people of the Appeal of the Pastoral Conference, which was convened this year at the Holy Trinity Monastery:

“The Fast of the Dormition of the Theotokos stands before us, by which customarily we prepare for the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos. Do we all always observe this fast in all its strictness, do we all prepare and commune of the holy Mysteries of Christ during this fast? The Mother of God weeps for us, having a presentiment of the dread punishment of God, which we bring upon ourselves by our own lack of concern, our own lack of repentance, our own stoney lack of feeling. In this year of repentance, let us now observe this fast before the Dormition as one of general preparation of all the people, so that we might worthily approach the Communion of the holy Mysteries of Christ on the feast of the Dormition. It is to this that our Pastoral Conference now calls the Orthodox Russian people” (See *Pravoslavnyaya Rus’* - No 12, 15th / 28th June, 1960).

But what of us? Are we addressing everyone in this appeal or not? Are we entering upon this fast as our Holy Church teaches us, with increased prayers, with all-round abstinence from the passions both of soul and of the body, with the labours of true repentance? Will we prepare as is proper and as is appointed, and will we apply ourselves with feelings of heartfelt contrition, with a firm intention to correct our life, for the great Mysteries (sacraments) of Confession and Holy Communion?

Before all else, let us take a clear account of ourselves with that certain truthfulness, such as pertains to all healthy minded people; then following this, let us resolve to change our life from the very root for the better, upon which depends the whole course of our future, both here in this earthly life, and, what is more important, there in that life eternal which we all await.

It is true that, glory be to God, many of us, Orthodox Russian people abroad, make such preparation. They do so every year in Great

Lent, and some do so in the other fasts, among which the Dormition Fast is numbered. But is this preparation, as it is sometimes done simply by received custom, by tradition, as something inherited from pious forebears, always a real preparation? - that is, is it really **repentance**, which is what is required of us, what God awaits from us?

Can one really call it “preparation” to receive the dread Mysteries of Christ, when one comes late at the very start of the Divine Liturgy, expecting confession during the time of the Liturgy itself, and thus requiring the priestly ministers either to break off from serving or (if it is a concelebration) not to take part? Can one really call it “preparation” when it is done in a purely mechanical way without any deep self examination, without the self-examination which is required by the Apostle’s injunction (1 Cor. 11:28)?

How many come to confession nowadays without sufficient examination of their interior world, and even, as they themselves often openly inform the confessor, without knowing what they have to repent of. “I am sinful, like everyone else,” or “I am sinful, having the usual human sins,” they will customarily say, without the necessary understanding of the whole depth and weight of their sins, and, it follows, without the intention to leave off from, or change, their sinful life. And when they hear the prayer of absolution, they assume that all that is required has been done, and that with a conscience at peace they may approach the Holy Chalice, and then equally at peace, without any interior conflict within themselves, they continue with the sinful life to which they had formerly become habituated.

All this is not that **true repentance**, which the Kindhearted Lord, the God of those who repent, awaits, desiring that the sinner turn away from his path of transgression.

True repentance presupposes before all else a painstaking self-examination; an attentive scrutiny of one’s conscience, of one’s interior world, by means of setting against it the law of God; an assessment of one’s sinfulness, without those tiny quotas of some sort of self-justification; it presupposes brokenness of heart on account of one’s sins and a decisive rejection of them, united with a firm intention to make amends for one’s

sins by the good deeds which are contrary to them, and not to repeat those sins any more.

“Repentance is a contract with God for the correction of life,” says that great instructor of the spiritual life, the Venerable John of the Ladder (Step 5). So, where there is no intention to correct one’s life for the better in a fundamental way, there is no true repentance. The Greek word itself, *metania*, which has been handed down to us without the slightest shadow of change of meaning, and which is expressed in our word ‘repentance,’ means ‘change,’ - a complete, fundamental change of a person’s thought, feeling, and desires, i.e., his inner spiritual rebirth. For this reason repentance is called a ‘second rebirth,’ or a ‘second Baptism’ (see the Order of Confession in *The Book of Needs*).

Behold, this is the repentance which the Lord awaits from us! He desires that we, Orthodox Russian people, change our lives in a fundamental way, to become, as it were, a new, a different people, better in all respects than we were hitherto.

With such repentance, such a fundamental change for the better, our present life, all our hopes for some better future, for our salvation, for the salvation and rebirth of our unhappy homeland, Russia, are vain.

And what are we, Orthodox Russian people in foreign lands, to repent of?

Oh, there is much that we should repent of!

First of all it is necessary to repent of the general sins of mankind, checking our life against the demands of God’s Law, even if only according to the Ten Commandments. (And for this it is necessary, of course, to know these Ten Commandments, something which - alas! - our contemporary generation cannot boast about). Many Russian people have completely ceased accusing themselves of sins, even those mostly clearly and evidently breaking these Ten Commandments, instead accounting the breaking of them as normal, widespread, and therefore in some sense excusable. They have no idea of the patristic saying that “the multitude of sinners does not save us.” Even if everyone around us sins, this does not serve as any justification for our own particular sins.

Furthermore, we have our own particular specific sins, for which undoubtedly God will call us to account, if we do not really repent of them.

Know that we, sons and daughters of Holy Russia, have the great good fortune to confess the one true, the one saving, Holy Orthodox Faith. Much has been given us. And to whom much is given, from him much will be required (See Luke 12:48).

Our most important and basic sin is that we have forgotten that we are living in foreign countries, in 'far lands,' and here in exile and in the diaspora, we have begun to feel 'at home.' Many of us, - alas! - many already do not want to take into account why we are found abroad, besides which, to be at ease in their countries and attempting to come to terms with their circumstances, we are merging completely with life around us, we are assimilating, slavishly imitating all the people among whom we live, only considering how in some way we might best get established and improve our material success, our well-being, in our new circumstances, and for this end we are ready to sacrifice our spiritual values, including even our Faith itself.

Among us there are some who care about the salvation and re-birth of Russia and about returning to Russia and they even set up various types of political and patriotic organizations with this aim, periodically holding assemblies and organizing conferences. But in the majority of cases, they sin in that they do not desire to understand why such a dreadful catastrophe befell our homeland, and they continue to live aboard entertaining those very same thoughts and feelings, and with the temper which accompanies them, which once brought that catastrophe about. They do not desire to bring about within themselves that unique and saving fundamental change; they do not really want to repent. And therefore, for all their sometimes, maybe, very good and sincere intentions and efforts, they are left with still-born fruit, which leads to nothing and never brings anything positive, leaving behind for all only the bitter after-taste of disillusionment.

The whole life of contemporary Christians is in all ways completely contrary to that which true Christianity requires of us. At the present time, people, bearing the name 'Christian,' in the majority of

cases, do not even think about what this name implies and they do not strive even a little to fulfil the Gospel precepts, but lead their lives in a completely pagan way. And for this reason it is now not possible for us to live ‘like everyone else.’ Now, more than ever before in the past, it is imperative that we bear in mind the teaching of the holy Apostle James: **“Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? And so, he who has his own ideals so that he might persuade himself and set himself at rest is he “whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”** (James 4:4).

The present-day dissipation and light-mindedness of life in the world is so mindless that it cannot be reconciled with Christianity. These two things are mutually completely at odds. There is no such thing as a minimal Christianity, which might in some way be reconciled with contemporary dissolute worldly life, which has made as its one purpose the achievement of the greatest possible comfort in life, along with every kind of pleasure and enjoyment.

He who wants really desires to repent must resolutely reject the evil worldly wisdom of the present times. Either / or! There is no midway, and there cannot be one. Either we are sons of God, or we are “sons of opposition,” “sons of perdition.” To constantly amuse oneself, going to restaurants and cinemas and other places of entertainment - all this is clean contrary to true Christianity, and these things he, who has firmly resolved to commit himself truly to repent before God, and not simply in an exterior or hypocritical way, cannot stand to do.

From this point of view, the incessant instances of the countless balls and suppers, events and entertaining gatherings, even when they go under the name of “benefits,” in which so much of our life in the diaspora is now submerged, especially here in America, goes completely against any true repentance.

The most dreadful thing is that in the life of contemporary people falsehood enters in and gets very firmly established there. Present-day Christians lie before God, they lie to each other, they even lie to themselves. They are always “playing a rôle,” attempting to present themselves as something they are not. They are concerned only with outward re-

spectability, “neglecting the tabernacle fashioned by God.” as the Great Canon [Ode 2] expresses it.

And within this there is an even greater sorrow: that they do not even want to keep Christ’s commandments and without the least fear they flout Church rules, and in doing so, they think, in a completely un-Christian way, that they are justified in all their unbridled behaviour and by their own mind-set.

Self-love and pride literally infect everything - all of contemporary life.

But the most dreadful thing, of course, is that this is not simply sinning against morality, which to one to degree or another has always had its place in people’s lives, but this is the basic sin of the present day, which hitherto never manifested itself with such force, which never before enclosed people, even those calling themselves Christians, in such a broad sweep, which never hitherto so boldly raised its head, vigorously captivating for itself even those who, evidently, wanted to resist it, but also did not find within themselves the strength to go against the general flow.

This is the sin of Apostasy, or of capitulation.

And it is an all too frequent manifestation today. People call themselves Christian, sometimes even ministers of the Church of Christ, and in reality they are apostates. They have surrendered their souls to the coming Antichrist and they actively participate in his grandiose scheme, now underway throughout the whole world, - the preparation for the kingdom of Antichrist on earth.

And it is especially painful and bitter that many Russian people not only continue to live abroad with those dispositions which led Russia to Bolshevism, but under the influence of the foreign and heterodox environment around them they go even further, wholly engaging in the headlong course of the Apostasy. For such people repentance is particularly difficult. Without the special action of the Grace of God upon their souls it may even be unattainable.

This sin is particularly enticing, because it promises so much - money, career prospects, and all earthly good things, and at the same time

it is very proficient at hiding itself under the disguise of an outwardly good appearance.

He who actually, and not in words only, desires to repent, must exhibit full obedience to the Holy Church in all things - to her teachings and to her practice, to her age-old usages which are founded the sacred Scriptures and Holy Tradition, on the teaching of the Holy Fathers, those Pillars of Orthodoxy and strugglers for Christian piety. With resolution he must reject all those pretensions, which are so full of pride and self-confidence, which seek to 'reform' or to 'correct' things in the Church, or to 'infuse' some 'new, living current' within her, and so on. No kind of innovation, no kind of modernism should be able to find any place in our Church, more especially that modernism which follows the trends of the anti-Christian ideas of this present evil age, which, while they appear one thing, conceal any sign of their ideological aspirations, such as the ecumenical union of all faith confessions, or universal government headed by a one-world administration.

“Not all that glistens is gold,” says a good Russian proverb [*and an English one too! - transl.*] And we, the Christians must understand that Satan himself, when it proves necessary for him, can “take on the appearance of an Angel of light,” and therefore it is no marvel “if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

He who desires actually to repent must, with all resolution, tear asunder the entangling nets of the contemporary world, which, with a determination which cannot be countered, drag all deeper and deeper into the abyss of Apostasy, from which there is no way out.

This we, Orthodox Russian people, must recognise within ourselves, if we are really seeking to achieve true repentance, if we sincerely desire salvation for ourselves and for our homeland, Russia, and with that of the whole of mankind, of the whole world, for as must be manifest to us all now, the fate of the whole world at the present time is closely bound up with the fate of our homeland, Russia.*

But woe to us, if within us there begins to speak a feeling of proud self-justification; if we do not begin to desire to recognise within ourselves all the various guilty things enumerated above. “Pride and self-

justification,” according to the teachings of the Holy Fathers, “darken the mind” (Abba Dorotheus: *Questions and Answers*, question 82).

“Guard against pride and self-justification,” the great elder John the Prophet teaches, **“for they impede repentance”** (answer 82).

Unfortunately there are among us Russians, those who not only do not recognise the whole depth of their fall, but with a kind of incomprehensible delusion, even yield to some sort of unfounded delight, with self-esteem and trust in themselves and in others, assuming that everything is alright with them.

Such a disposition is completely alien to true Christianity. We must not congratulate ourselves, lest this bring upon us the most severe judgment. Lulling the conscience, into which groundless fantasies have entered, is the very greatest evil, which cuts off at the very root every possibility of true repentance.

Before all else, true repentance depends upon humility, a complete and unreserved humility before the commandments of the Gospel, before the canons and precepts of the Church, a readiness completely and without dissimulation to submit to them. True repentance is completely alien to any sort of pretence or claims of self-determination. It is an inexorable awareness within oneself of one’s own sinfulness. Only when it is such can it be active and salvific.

What then? Shall we embark upon this road of real repentance? Shall we thus observe the Dormition Fast which is upon us? Shall we resolve in the most fundamental way to change our life for the better?

Or, as before, shall we take life easily, disregarding all that has been said above, until we are struck at the inescapable dread hour of God’s retribution which is approaching, when instantaneously all our present “well-being” will fall away, and awful destruction shall befall us, not only a temporal one, but one eternal.** *May it not be!*

Translator’s footnotes:

* This thought might strike some of our readers as odd or unrealistic. In fact, Archbishop Averky could have been thinking of two things. He was writing in 1960,

when the Cold War was at its coldest. Politically the fate of the whole world then was very much bound up with that of what was commonly called Russia. However, on the deeper level, he was more probably considering Russia's classic claim to be the *Third Rome*. This concept has, unfortunately, been bastardized by extreme nationalists, and is often presented as if it were a reason for pride, or some kind of national superiority. In fact, it was a calling to a ministry within the Church, that Russia should serve as a beacon of Orthodoxy to the rest of the world, and thus her fate would be very much bound up with the fate of the whole world. If she would lead in showing the way of repentance, then there would be hope that other peoples would follow.

** This, of course, might refer to the end of the world, but also applies at the time of death of every Orthodox individual, something we shall all experience.



ON MONASTICISM

**By the Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky
of Jordanville**

Continuation

THAT'S FINE, say the foes of monasticism, let it be accepted that there is nothing egotistical in the monastic community life, but the original form of monasticism was the solitary life, and didn't solitaries, as the name implies, departed from people, and aspire to avoid any communication with people? So in what did their service to their neighbours consist of, and what use were they?

Let us see whether solitaries actually left the world with egotistical considerations, whether they really did not want to serve their neighbour, and whether their fleeing was of any use to the community of man?

From what world did they depart, and why? They left the "world that lieth in evil," according to the word of the Apostle, so that, in complete solitude and being in communion only with the One God, it would be easier and more sure that, with the aid of God's Grace, they could overcome that evil, which governs the world. We must not forget that we, the Christians, are soldiers of Christ, and our most important task in life is a

constant warfare with evil, the annihilation of the elements of evil in the world. If we do not overcome evil, then it will overcome us and subject us to its power. But how can one most successfully fight with evil? With what before all else is it essentially necessary to begin this struggle? **Of course, one must begin this battle with evil within one's own soul.** Everyone must overcome evil in his own soul, and only then will he be in a position to help others in this struggle. It is precisely to this that the word of God calls us: **"Put off first the conversation of life of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"** (Eph. 4:22-24).

It was precisely for this reason that the solitaries went out into the desert to distance themselves from the boiling-over of the sinful passions of man, and having freed their souls from their influence, to cleanse themselves of every defilement of flesh and soul, and through this to be made vessels of God's Grace. And when, by way of many struggles and labours, with vigils and prayers, they achieve this, then God places them upon a candle-stand to illumine all. They become proficient, thanks to the action of the Grace of God through them, and teach others how they might conquer the evil within their own souls. From the history of the ascetic life we see what an exalted service to mankind the solitaries rendered, how they became great men of prayer, clairvoyants, wonder-workers, grace-filled masters and spiritual guides to very many thousands of the faithful. Although physically they had separated from people, in spirit they remained close to all of suffering humanity, embracing it in their fatherly love. For true love for God is inseparably bound to genuine love for one's neighbour. And to the degree that a man draws near to God, to that degree will he become close in spirit to other people (Abba Dorotheus, instruction 6). **"Such is the essence of love,"** says the venerable Abba Dorotheus, **"that insofar as we are found outside and not loving God, to that degree each is also separated from his neighbour. If we shall love God, then as much as we draw close to God though love for Him, to that degree we are also united by love to our neighbours."**

And in fact, is it not startlingly the case, yet fully confirmed by such solitaries, that they leave the world, but the world as if sensing the

power of the Grace they have, strives towards them, thirsting to receive from them saving instruction, understanding, comfort, and it always receives what it desires? Even by their standing apart these solitaries manifest influence which is wonder-working and mystically beneficial for the human soul, and, like a magnet, they draw all to themselves. These people become the conscience of the world, and steadfast intercessors for the world before the throne of God, in accordance with the witness of the holy Apostle James, **“the prayer of a righteous man availeth much”** (James 5:16).

We can recall how many people were delivered from a sinful life by the Venerable Antony the Great, and how many thousands of monastics followed the venerable Pachomius the Great! Then what can one say of those who take these great ascetics, solitaries and desert-dwellers, from each of whom there has been such immense profit not only for their contemporaries but also for many succeeding generations, and then absurdly accuse them of not having any wish to service neighbour? They offered the very highest service to their neighbours, so high that we can hardly picture it to ourselves, and that is **service for the salvation of their souls.**

And how did they achieve this? They began with the utmost care for the salvation of their own souls alone, because only he who himself **“hath suffered being tempted is able to succour them that are tempted”** (Heb. 2:18). The Venerable Seraphim of Sarov, that great ascetic of the Russian land, teaches this method of serving one’s neighbour, when he says, **“Acquire the Spirit of peace, and thousands around you will be saved.”** This, his teaching, he confirmed by his own witness. Having **“acquired the spirit of peace,”** by prolonged solitary struggles and labours, living in reclusion, he later received many thousands of people, who poured in to him from everywhere to receive his spiritual counsel, instruction and comfort. **“And none of them went away empty or without comfort,”** according to the words of the church hymn; each one received that for which he had come, and returned deeply satisfied.

Without such people, who minister as transmitters of God’s Grace in the world, living would be even more arduous and joyless, and the whole world would be clutched by the elements of evil, evil triumphantly

victorious. This is why in all fairness His Grace [*now Saint*] Theophan the Recluse of Vysha says: **“Monks, - this is a sacrifice to God from the world, which in offering them to God also makes a defense for itself.”**

The God-pleasing sanctity of these ascetics is manifested by the many miracles: by the gift of prophesy and clairvoyance, the healing of the sick, and so on. Could it really be that God would reward egoists with such clear signs of His goodwill, ones so evident to all? But no, the malicious detractor will not be convinced; as with the atheist deprived of spiritual sight, it profits nothing to show him the acts of God, because defiled in the abyss of the passions and lusts of life as he is, it is impossible to show him the worth and significance of the monastic life. They, who work according to their passions and imagine that they are serving mankind, cannot comprehend that a man, who aspires to the solitary life, suppressing everything evil within him, drawing near to God, can at all the same be offering a great service to people, because he is broadening the domain of good in the world, and becomes a mediator between God and the people, a luminary for them and an example for their emulation.

...to be completed in the next issue.



“LOOK, BEWARE, lest you, who cherish attachment to kinsmen, be exposed to the all-engulfing deluge, and you be swept away by the cataclysm of love for the world. Do not be moved by the tears of parents or friends; otherwise you will be weeping eternally. When they surround you like bees, or rather wasps, and shed tears over you, do not for a moment hesitate, but sternly fix the eye of your soul on your past actions and your death, that you may ward off one sorrow with another. Our own, or more correctly, those who are not our own, flatteringly promise to do everything to please us. But their aim is to hinder our splendid course, and then in this way drag us to their own goal.”

VENERABLE JOHN CLIMACUS,
THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT, STEP 3:17
INSTRUCTION TO ONE CONTEMPLATING THE MONASTIC LIFE

The Coming Month

IN AUGUST, we have the two Great Feasts of the **Transfiguration of our Saviour on Mount Thabor** (Friday, 6/19th) and the **Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos** (Sunday, 15th/28th), and a feast, which does not rank with the Twelve Great Feasts, but is surely next in rank to them, the **Beheading of St John the Baptist** (Sunday, 29th August / 11th September). This day is usually kept as a strict fast, so that we remind ourselves to align ourselves spiritually with the great desert-dweller and ascetic, St John, and not with those who were partying in drunkenness with King Herod, but this year, as the feast falls on a Sunday, we are permitted wine and oil with our food, but no meat, dairy products or fish. All these feasts are celebrated with Vigil services.

Among the Saints in August, we have the **Holy Hieromartyr Alexander the Charcoal-burner, Bishop of Comana** (12th / 25th August). The bishop of Comana died, and a new bishop had to be chosen. The citizens invited Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, Bishop of Neocæsarea, and asked his help in choosing a pastor. The clergy and people began to elect whom seemed to be worthy to be bishop. The names set forth were primarily well-known people, learned, eloquent speakers, etc. But St Gregory did not bless any of their choices. He reminded them how the Lord chose David to rule as king, looking not at externals but at the heart. “Man looks at the face,” he said, “but the Lord looks at the heart, judging not by a man’s outward achievements, but by what is hidden in his heart. Let us likewise try not to pay attention to externals but to seek what God has prepared.” Some were offended at his advice, and growing restive, began to make disparaging remarks. To the amusement of all, one said: “If one disregards outward appearances, why not elect Alexander the charcoal to be bishop?” Saint Gregory saw this mention as a sign from God, and asked who this Alexander might be. Alexander seemed to be simple and uneducated; he lived in poverty, barely supporting himself by burning and selling charcoal. Seeing him always in ragged clothing, his face and hands black, many scorned him; even children made fun of Alexander the charcoal burner. Indeed, this was the only name by which he was known there in the city. However, Alexander had received an excellent education; his wisdom and learning could have gained him great respect among the people, if he had desired to reveal his talents. But out of love for God, he had chosen a poor and humble life. He bore patiently everyone’s scorn, and only the Lord knew his good deeds and enlightened wisdom. Alexander served Him in deep humility, but it pleased the Lord to raise up his servant for the benefit of many. He was brought to the bishop. As usual,

he was dressed in a tattered smock, and covered from head to toe with charcoal smuts. The sight of him provoked a gale of laughter, but Alexander stood before the bishop, calm and quiet, paying no attention to the reaction of the crowd. The Holy Spirit revealed to St. Gregory that God's grace rested upon this humble man. Motioning Alexander to follow him outside, the bishop had a private talk with him in which he learned the truth--that Alexander was in reality a wise and learned man who, out of love for the Lord and for the sake of Christian humility, had chosen for himself a life of struggle and poverty. The bishop told him to wash and put on a clean garment. Meanwhile, he returned to the assembly and began an exposition of the Holy Scriptures. When Alexander appeared, the people barely recognized him: he was wearing clean clothes, and now washed was handsome and intelligent of appearance. When the hierarch turned to him with some questions concerning the Scriptures, Alexander astonished the people with his wise answers. Many felt ashamed that for so long they had considered him to be an ignoramus, and had treated him so badly. With one accord they asked that Alexander be consecrated bishop. He was raised up through the ecclesiastical ranks and very soon was consecrated bishop by St Gregory. Alexander began to guide the Church of Comana, teaching his flock by word and good deeds. His sermons were simple, yet filled with Divine wisdom. He had no concern for delivering beautiful orations, but tried to set forth the precepts of the Christian Faith in words which everyone could understand. In all his teachings one could sense the grace of the Holy Spirit. It was said that once a certain learned man laughed at the simplicity of the Saint's words, but afterwards he saw in a vision a flock of white doves, shining with unearthly light, and heard a voice which said to him, "Such are the words of the Bishop Alexander, at whom you laugh." The learned man repented and asked the holy Bishop's forgiveness. During the Emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians, Saint Alexander was brought before a tribunal. By admonishments and tortures they tried to make him renounce Christ. Their attempts were in vain. Seeing the bishop's steadfastness, they sentenced him to death and cast him into a furnace, and thus the humble hierarch received a martyr's crown.



“VANITY is eliminated by acting secretly,
and pride by ascribing to God all that is well done.”

VENERABLE MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR, + 662 A.D.

NEWS SECTION

JORDAN RIVER RUSSIAN PILGRIMAGE CENTRE

INTERFAX announced on 8th July that the **Russian Ecclesiastic Mission in Jerusalem** expects a Pilgrimage Centre in Jordan to be opened this September, and that the final stages and finishing works of this project are now underway. The property “was transferred to Russia in unlimited use in 2006 on initiative of Jordan King Abdullah II. The complex consists of a hotel for pilgrims, a church, a canteen and a house for honorary guests.” It is on the eastern bank of Jordan River not far from the historic place of the Lord’s Baptism. The site was blessed in March 2008, when the foundation stone was also laid. The Interfax report also mentions: “In January 2011 on the Feast of Baptism, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev had a dip in sacred Jordan waters. He also visited the site of building the pilgrimage center for Russian pilgrims.”

An OCP report (13/7/11) also adds that “Israel opened the traditional baptism site of Jesus to daily visits Tuesday [i.e. 12/7/11], a move that required the cooperation of Israel’s military and the removal of nearby mines in the West Bank along the border with Jordan. The location, where many believe John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the waters of the Jordan River, is one of the most important sites in Christianity.”

A DEPLORABLE DEPARTURE FROM TRADITION

A CORRESPONDENT has send us the following link, which depicts baptism in present-day Serbia: http://gal.eparhija-zahumskohercegovacka.com/galerije2/mostar_170711/album. For those of you still without internet connection, the link shows a beautiful little church, with clergy in beautiful vestments, but the Bishop is baptizing children simply by pouring a little water on them from a jug. Our correspondent comments: “Just for you to get an idea of what is now standard baptism in Serbia.” One can only hope that such is not indeed the standard practice there, for the Orthodox Church has always insisted on **Baptism by triple immersion**, except in such cases when this is practically impossible. There must be considerable and justifiable doubt in the heart of any true Orthodox Christian that the poor children depicted in the pictures on this link are indeed baptized.

ROCA CLERGY MENACED

SEVERAL REPORTS have recently reached us of clergy and people of the **Russian Orthodox Church Abroad**, under the presidency of **His Eminence Metropolitan Agafangel**, being pressured or menaced.

A) In mid-July, many **ROCA clergymen in North America** received a letter from **ROCA-MP Metropolitan Hilarion** insisting that they “return” to ROCA-MP or face censure. His Eminence wrote: "We notify you that in accordance with the ruling of the Synod of Bishops on May 16, 2011, you have six months starting from the receipt of this ukase to return to the body of the Russian Church Abroad [*i.e. ROCA-MP*] and to your lawful hierarchy. After six months, at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Synod of Bishops, the matter of your defrocking will be considered." Given Metropolitan Hilarion’s meek and kindly disposition, one can only assume that he was under some pressure to issue this diktat, though it is rather odd that it comes more than four years after these clergymen refused to follow the Synod he now heads into communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. It is perhaps pertinent that it comes just a few months before the five year period of reconciliation with Moscow draws to a close. One presumes that then various loose ends will have to be tied up, such as the status of “dissident” clergy, the duplication of episcopal titles, the fact of two parallel Russian Ecclesiastical Missions in Jerusalem, etc, etc.

B) **Metropolitan Agafangel** himself reports on his website that “the Odessa City Council has refused our Holy Great Martyr St. Elizabeth parish the right to pay lower rates for its church and declared, ‘We consider it inappropriate that this organization retain the right to pay lower rates for the rental of the premises.’ The parish had been paying lower rates since it acquired the premises in 2007. On the other hand, the city built the Transfiguration cathedral church in the center of the city and gave it as a gift to the MP along with an award of one million *hryvnya* (Ukrainian currency) for improvements.” So, no equality before the law there!

C) **Archpriest Sergey Kondakov**, one of three priests in Udmurtiya, Russia, who decided in May to come under the omophorion of Metropolitan Agafangel, has been facing constant threats. A man entered his church on 24th June, and handed him a black card, saying that Fr Sergey and his family had little time left to live. According to his blog, this incident occurred after a ‘well known Protopriest’ asked for the help of a major criminal figure in fixing ‘the problem’ created by Fr Sergey’s decision to leave the Moscow hierarchy and

join ROCA. Fr Sergey received a phone call from that Protopriest on 27th June, in which he promised to “smash his (Fr Sergey’s) head and to smear around his brains.” When Father informed the Protopriest that the call was being taped, he put down the phone.

The compiler of this magazine remembers that when, over a decade ago, the Moscow Patriarchate was forcibly seizing the church properties of the then “un-reunited” ROCA, a correspondent wrote saying something to the effect that the Churches of “World Orthodoxy” seemed to be ever congratulating themselves with galas, meetings and significant events, while ROCA was always suffering. He took this, with some spiritual wisdom, as an indication that she was following the right path (Mark 10:30 - "with persecutions"). If there is any truth in his observation, a comparison of events reported on the ROCA-MP website and that of the Synod of Metropolitan Agafangel will give an indication as to which is more truly following the spiritual path of the old Church Abroad.

* * * * *

SIR-UK NEWS

BISHOP SOFRONIE, A BAPTISM & A WEDDING

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** visited Brookwood again over the weekend of 16th and 17th July, n.s. On the Saturday, he baptised **Alexia**, the infant daughter of **Consantin and Paulina Gavriloae** of Harrow; she was named after **Saint Alexis, the Man of God**. The sponsors are **Constantin and Nina Toma**. After the celebration of the Mystery, the family provided those present with refreshments.

On the Sunday, His Grace was the proto-celebrant at the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward’s, it being the feast of the **Holy New Royal Martyrs of Russia**. After the Liturgy, he solemnized the marriage of **Petru Costin & Ioana Tenciu**. Their sponsors were **Constantine and Rodica Costin**. After the wedding, photographs were taken of the bridal party and refreshments offered to all present.

May God grant the newly illumined, the newly married, and their sponsors an abundance of blessings, and may He reward Bishop Sofronie, who, despite his ill health, comes so often to care for the Romanian-speaking Traditionalists in the country, for his pastoral labours.

BISHOP AMBROSE'S PROPOSED VISITS

BISHOP AMBROSE tells us that he will come to England for the **Feast of the Enshrinement of St Edward the Martyr in September**. God willing, he will preside at the Vigil Service on the eve of the feast, Thursday 2nd/15th September (7 p.m.), and at the Divine Liturgy on the day of the celebration, Friday 3rd/16th September (9.30 a.m.), after which there will be a Parish Breakfast for all who attend.

On the following Sunday, His Grace will celebrate at the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden**, on what is, coincidentally, the name day of the late **Abbess Elisabeth**, and he will also serve there for the Vigil and Divine Liturgy of the Birth of the Mother of God, later in that week.

Bishop Ambrose will also be returning to England at the beginning of December (n.s.), and will celebrate the Great Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple, Vigil & Divine Liturgy, at Saint Edward's in Brookwood.

BLESSINGS FOR THE NEW-BORN

THE FORTY-DAY PRAYERS were read for **Simona Biosa** and her infant daughter, **Georgiana**, at the Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden, and as Georgiana had already been baptized, she was presented in the church there. On Friday, 2nd /15th July, the first-day prayers were read for **Liggy Fagerlund** and her new-born daughter, at her home in West London, where the birth had taken place. Fortunately the baby's uncle and aunt, **Nicholas and Mirona Meade** and their children were present with the baby's father, **Matias**, for the occasion. On the following Friday, the eighth-day naming prayers were read there, and the baby was named **Xenia**, after **St Xenia the Blessed of Petersburg, the Fool-for-Christ**.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE AGM of the charity which administers the property of Saint Edward's at Brookwood, the **King Edward Orthodox Trust Co Ltd**, was held immediately after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 17th July (n.s.). All the directors and members of the charity were present, with the exception of Fr Niphon,

whose help was needed in the church, where Bishop Sofronie was celebrating the marriage of Petru and Ioana. Within the next few weeks, the accounts should be posted on the **Charity Commissioners** website. The registered charity number for KEOTCoLtd is **284929/0**, and the Charity Commissioners website address is: < <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk>>

BRITAIN'S HOLIEST PLACES

RECENTLY we were kindly given a splendidly produced book entitled *Britain's holiest places*, by **Nick Mayhew Smith**, and subtitled, *The all-new guide to 500 sacred sites*. Unlike so many guides of this ilk, all the places are broadly Christian, and surprisingly Saint Edward's has an entry (on page 81). Although the write-up has the usual journalistic inaccuracies, it is in general very sympathetic. Each holy place is given a rating, the highest "score" being 11. Brookwood was given 8: Glastonbury gets only 7! Mr Mayhew Smith must have encountered our Fr Niphon when he visited Brookwood, because he describes the monks here both as "warm and welcoming to visitors," and "elderly." Among other specifically Orthodox places, mentioned in the book, are the three Orthodox chapels in Walsingham. In general we found the book so good, that we have obtained copies to sell on our bookstall. It is only a pity that we did not have them during our "American season" around Pentecost.

INTERMENT AT BROOKWOOD

JOHN WATKINS was laid to rest in the Cemetery on 14th July. John's wife, Martta, is from Karelia and has for many years been a parishioner at Saint Edward's; John himself was a Roman Catholic. Both have helped and supported our community almost from its inception in 1982, and Martta has given us much of her handiwork to beautify the church: altar coverings, scarves for icons, etc. John's funeral was held in his home parish church, and the grave side prayers were led here at Brookwood by his elder son, **Dom Basil Watkins**, a monk of Ramsgate Abbey. After the interment, the family and friends, who had come from all over southern England and from Sweden, were invited to a Mercy Meal in the Old Mortuary main hall, with everything provided by the family and much of it prepared by Martta, who is now approaching 90. At the meal, John's younger Son, Glyn, gave a short address in memory of his father.

HEROIC EXAMPLE TO BE FOLLOWED BY ALL!

ON SUNDAY, 11th / 24th July, **Adamantios Kourides**, attended the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward's. He is a 70 year-old Greek gentlemen from Chios. What was remarkable about this was that he cycled from his home in Farnborough, Hants, and that only 24 days after having a major lung operation at the Brompton Hospital in London. Where there is a will, there is a way!

MAYOR OF WOKING'S CIVIC CELEBRATION

THE IN-COMING MAYOR of Woking, **Cllr Ken Howard**, and the Mayoress, **Sally Howard**, held a special Civic Celebration at the **H.G. Wells Conference and Events Centre** in central Woking, on Saturday, 2nd July. Mayors and their consorts from across the county were invited, and in all there were about 250 guests. The ceremony was to welcome the new Mayor, and on behalf of the Brotherhood, Fr Alexis and Fr Niphon attended. A film, highlighting some aspects of Woking life, was shown on five screens, and this was interspersed with dancers from the Winston Church School performing, the Octavia Singers, and two songs accompanied on guitar by Mat Cunningham. The new Mayor is an unbeliever, but the film contained two religious items, one about the **Shah Jahan Mosque**, and one about our own Church and Brotherhood, with a short interview with Fr Niphon, and curiously, as well as several icons of St Edward, a portrait of King Edward VI. There was also coverage of the **Brookwood Cemetery** in general and a very interesting piece on the **Surrey History Centre** and its work. From this we learned (and can one wonder?) Surrey had more hospitals for the mentally ill than any other county in England. After the presentation, refreshments were offered to all the Mayor's guests.

REDECORATION IN THE OLD MORTUARY

DIMITRI MIHAI spent the greater part of a week with us re-decorating the main hall of the Old Mortuary building. KEOTCoLtd provided the materials, and Dimitri did a very thorough and nice job, cleaning and preparing and then decorating everything. May he receive a blessing from Heaven.

FLORIST SHOP BLESSING

AFTER the Divine Liturgy at the Convent on the **Birth of St John the Baptist**, Fr Alexis blessed the **Florist Shop** of one of the Convent parishioners, **Vanche Ivancho**, in **Fortune Green**, North London. The family had prepared beautifully for the blessing, with icons and candles to be distributed to the participants, and they had invited a number of friends and neighbours. One of those present then asked for her flat to be blessed. Refreshments were offered to those who joined us for what turned out to be a small, but an uplifting, event. Our thanks to **Mrs Anne van der Lee** for acting as the choir, and for **Baroness Anna von Bennigsen** for taxiing “the choir” to the flower shop.

SERVICE TO ST EDGAR

BROTHER ISAAC LAMBERTSEN, who serves as a reader and chanter at the ROCA-MP Synodal Residence in New York City, has recently composed a service in English to the **Blessed King Edgar the Peaceable**. King Edgar was the father of our St Edward, and was responsible for sponsoring the monastic reforms, initiated during his reign by Sts Dunstan, Oswald and Ethelwold, and, even after the Norman Conquest, his reign was looked back upon as a “golden age,” because he established such order and peace throughout the kingdom - hence his epithet. His coronation at Bath in Somerset was the first recorded of a King of the greater part of England, and it’s order forms the basis of the rites still used in the coronation of the Monarch.

FREEWILL OFFERINGS IN ALMSBOX

WORSHIPPERS at St Edward’s Church will know that we do not have collections during Divine Services, believing them to be disruptive and inappropriate. We simply have the almsbox on the candle-desk at the back of the church. Our **average weekly collections** in this box for the first six months of 2011 have been as follows: January - £370.39; February £335.74; March - £348.86; April - £546.99; May - £226.83; and June - £330.22. ***God bless all of you who have helped support our Brotherhood in this way.***

VISITORS

AMONG the many visitors we have had in the last month, we include the following groups:-

VAL PRETLOVE led a group from the “**Friends of City Churches**” on a Cemetery Walk on 13th July, and they visited St Edward’s Church, and then came to the Old Mortuary for refreshments.

MISHA SARNI, a parishioner of the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens**, and a long-time friend of our community, visited on 18th July. He brought **Hieromonk Nicanor** from Khabarovsk and two other pilgrims from Russia. They spent about two hours with us, and then continued their journey to Oxford.

VIOLET CLARE, a Brookwood village resident, brought a group of about seven friends to visit the church and exhibition room on 20th July. They had all been brought together by their shared experiences in caring for sufferers from Alzheimers. They spent several hours with us, asking questions about the Church and our Faith.

* * * * *

PRACTICAL TIP

NEVER REPROACH anyone for doing good! This may seem blindingly obvious, but in the last few months we have had a number of people, who help and support us in various ways, asking us not to put them on the “thank you” list in the insert to this magazine. On enquiry, it appears that their reticence in this regard had nothing to do with modesty, but that they had been questioned and reproached by others for doing what they do! Maybe this is because the reproachers are doing nothing themselves, and the good that others do makes them feel guilty. Oddly in one instance, a benefactor was told not to help us because we are men - sexism rears its ugly head in a peculiar form! One kind soul asked us not to mention them, not because they worried about the reproaches, but because they did not want their reproacher to be given yet another occasion for sin. However, whatever the motives for these reproaches, and whether the good is done for us or for others, they are the work of the evil one. If you must ask questions about the good that others do, then be absolutely sure that you ask only one person: yourself; and that you ask only one question: why you are not doing likewise.