



## FROM THE FATHERS

“MARY called Him her Son, Who was undivided by His human body from the glory of His Divinity: since One is God, seen in this world in our body. His glory [*seen on Mount Tabor*] reveals His Divine nature, which is from the Father; and His body reveals His human nature, which is from Mary. Both natures have united, and, without change and without commingling, have been joined together in one hypostasis or person. The Same is the Only-begotten of the Father Who is the Only-begotten of Mary. And he who separates them is himself separated from His Kingdom; and he who commingles His natures into one will have no part in His life. He that denies that Mary gave birth to God shall not see the glory of His Divinity; and whosoever denies that He was clothed in the flesh Who was free from the stain of every sin shall be shut out from salvation, and from the life which is given by His Body.

VEN. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN, + 373 A.D.

“AS TO the expressions about the Lord in the Gospels and Apostolic writings, we know that theologians treat some in common as regarding the one Person, and distinguish others as regarding two Natures, and interpret the God-befitting ones with regard to the Divinity of Christ and the lowly ones with regard to His humanity.”

SAINT CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, + 444 A.D.

# A Humble Sermon on the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

BY THE EVER-MEMORABLE METROPOLITAN OF OROPOS  
AND FILI, CYPRIAN THE ELDER

## 1. Prayer

*Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Radiant children of the Church and the Theotokos:*

Overcome by a sacred yearning to extol the Immaculate Mother of God, let us begin our venture with this holy prayer of our Church:

*“Set a rampart about my mind, O my Saviour;  
for I make bold to sing the praises  
of the rampart of the world,  
Thy most pure Mother....  
Endue me with a tongue, ready speech,  
and thoughts that are without shame:  
for every gift of enlightenment is sent down from Thee,  
O guiding Light, Who dwelt within her ever-virgin womb.”*

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## 2. Not mourning, but joy

*My Christian brethren,*

This auspicious and chosen day of the holy and life-bearing Translation of the Theotokos, the Queen of all, “adorned with Divine glory,” once again summons the Godly-minded assembly of the Orthodox to a universal feast and celebration.

Let no room be given to mourning and tears, “for joyous and not mournful is the present feast.”

To the brilliant lamp of the immaterial fire, to the true and living ark of God, to the queenly child of God, to the tabernacle of the glory of God, and to the animate and living heaven of the King of all, are due gladsome songs and honours befitting the Mother of God.

The Virgin of holy birth reposed according to the laws of nature, but she was taken up and translated in a manner above nature to the bosom of her Son and God, to the heavenly Holy of Holies not made by hands, “wherein are the pure sound of those celebrating and the voice of unutterable rejoicing.”

Her most immaculate, life-bearing, light-bearing, God-bearing, luminous, Divine, Divinely-glorified, most sacred body, being united with her illuminated and most holy soul, that is more radiant than the sun, passes over from this mortal life to the Divine one that knows no end; she passes through death to life: she, who gave birth to the enhypostatic Life.

Her Dormition is life-bearing. The death of the pure child of God became the passport to an “everlasting and superior life.” The bounds of nature are decisively overcome in the dead, but living, Mary. Before the strange-sounding wonder, even “the order of incorporeal Angels that walks the heavens” trembles and exults.

“Laying aside,” then, “all of life’s cares,” let us hasten to encircle, with piety and holy yearning, the Divinely-glorified body of our Lady the Theotokos, and chant hymns of departure.

Radiant is the feast and beyond understanding are the mysteries into which the pious are initiated by the passage of the Most Blessed Maiden from corruption to incorruption.

If all of the feasts of the Saints resemble the stars in the sky, as St. John of Golden Discourse [*i.e. Chrysostom*] says— “all of the feasts of the martyrs are wondrous, and resemble the brilliance of

the stars” —, then the present feast of the Mother of God indisputably resembles the brightly-glowing and silvery full moon, which dispels the dark of night and illumines the world.

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### *3. Let us, all together, sing praise*

*My beloved brethren in Christ:*

Let us all together, then, without exception, “with one mouth and one heart,” sing praises and divine hymns, and “let us sing unto the Mother of our God, let us sing,” ye Patriarchs and Hierarchs, Priests and Deacons and monks, kings and rulers and all of the judges of the earth, men and women, young men and virgins, and elders with the younger.

Today, all the choirs of the nine venerable, heavenly, and bodiless Orders invisibly surround the sacred bed of the Ever-Virgin.

First of all, the upper rank of the Thrones, the Cherubim, and the Seraphim. Next, the middle rank of Authorities, Powers, and Dominions. And finally, the lower rank of the Principalities, the Archangels, and the Angels.

And all of these Holy and Bodiless Hosts, with joy and shouts of gladness, accompany the Most Glorious Mary to the heavenly tabernacles, chanting melodious hymns.

But what am I saying? Even He Himself, the Supreme King of kings and Lord of lords, God the Word, the Only-begotten of God, Who became the Son according to the flesh of the Virgin, is invisibly present at the gladdening funeral of His beloved Mother.

He receives her luminous soul in His immaculate hands and, after three days, resurrects her life-bearing body.

Hence, in this way, He elevates her whole body to Heaven and introduces her into the Holy of Holies not made by hands, that she may eternally be glorified and reign together with her Son,

having the second place after the Holy Trinity, and being god after God, and the second glory and beauty of Heaven after the inconceivable glory and beauty of the three-sunned Divinity.



#### *4. Divine and unprecedented ascent*

##### *Radiant children of the Panagia:*

Let us raise our minds higher and let us behold, with the eyes of our soul, the sacred procession making the Divine and unprecedented ascent. Let us listen to the lower-ranking Angelic Powers as they say to the upper-ranking Archangels: “Behold, the Queen of all and child of God is nigh. Lift up the gates, and receive her above the world.”

Let us all marvel at the choirs of the Righteous from ages past, who hasten to receive her with inexpressible joy, “clapping their hands” and chanting hymns befitting the Mother of God: “Who is the one ascending in white, appearing as the daybreak, beautiful as the moon, exquisite as the sun. How beautiful! How delightful! Thou flower of the field, lily of the valley, the King hath introduced thee into His treasury, where the Dominions attend upon thee, the Principalities bless, the Thrones hymn, the Cherubim are astonished, and, rejoicing, the Seraphim glorify.”

The most venerable treasure of all treasures, the jewel of virginity, passes through the gates of the much-desired Paradise. And she who is more spacious and honourable than the heavens is introduced into the heavenly treasury, while hearing the Divine and exhortative words of her Son and God: “Come, O My blessed Mother, to your rest, in joy inexpressible, in everlasting light, wherein is the true light, the resplendent Kingdom, and the never-ending choir of the Angels. There, where are the streams of unending delight, the meadows of incorruption, the springs of eternal life, the channels of Divine light, the rivers of perpetual illumination. There, where lies the place of all good things, the

ultimate end, beyond which there is nothing whatsoever. There, the Father is worshipped, the Son is glorified, the Holy Spirit is extolled, the single nature of the one Divinity in Trinity. Come, O modest one, to be glorified with thy Son and God. Thou gavest me of thine own; come and enjoy with me of mine. Come, O Mother, to thy Son. Reign together with Him Who took flesh of thee and was impoverished with thee.

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### *5. Model of inner life*

*Blessed Christians:*

Indescribable is the glory of our Lady the Theotokos!

In this life she was “the purest temple of the Saviour, the most honourable bridal chamber and Virgin, the sacred treasure of the glory of God.”

Her entire life constituted a sublime model of a very deep inner life and activity of the heart.

She lived in chastity, humility, and submission. She worked, unnoticed in simplicity, silence, and prayer.

She never called attention to herself. She never wanted to display herself as the Mother of the Lord, the great and Divine Teacher, Who was astonishing the land of Palestine with his astounding miracles. She lived unpretentiously and humbly, shunning the praise and commendation of the world.

She worked profoundly, cultivating her inner world in an essential way within the atmosphere of the Grace of the Holy Spirit, Which overshadowed her after her eternal and imperishable utterance that opened the gates of Paradise to us, the human race; for this was the saving “Yes” in God’s plan for our regeneration: “Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord. Be it unto me according to Thy word!”

The inwardness, introversion, and the attentive practice of the “mystery of piety,” according to our Saviour’s counsel: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father in secret,” constituted the true and unfading glory of the all-sacred child of God, Mary; for “all of the glory of the King’s daughter is within.”

The genuine and unadulterated “glory” is found “within.” The real “ornament,” the God-pleasing decoration, as the Apostle Peter says, is not, of course, “the outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold or of putting on of apparel.”

But what is opulent and important in God’s eyes? “The hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, of a meek and quiet soul.” In other words, the hidden and unassuming person of the heart, who has as his adornment the incorruptible adornment of a meek, patient, and quiet spirit.



## 6. *City of God*

*My pious brethren:*

Our Spotless Lady was a “city of God.”

Thus did the Psalmist and Prophet-King David foresee her: “the rushings of the river gladden the city of God.”

The holy Damascene says that these “rushings” are the blessed waves of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Cities in ancient times were usually built in proximity to rivers. This position safeguarded life in such cities because, in this way, the inhabitants had access to abundant water for all of their needs. The river was a source of great joy for the people and a blessing for the city. Contrarily, a city without a river could not easily survive.

Thus, the city of antiquity was also to become a model of the Theotokos.

The holy David says that the “rushings,” or the rising, of the river nearby the city made it joyful and happy: the waves of the gifts of the Holy Spirit made the most pure Theotokos “full of Grace.”

The Virgin was imbued with the first wave of the Divine gifts before the Annunciation; the second, after the Annunciation; and the third, during Pentecost.

These three holy “rushings” of the Divine Comforter showed the Bride of God and Maiden to be a city and dwelling-place of God, about whom many wondrous things have been spoken on earth and in Heaven: “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.”

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## 7. *Overshadowed mountain*

### *Feast-loving Children of the Theotokos:*

Our sweetest Mother was the prophetic mountain overshadowed by the dense forest of Divine Grace that covered her: “God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed by the forest.”

The Theotokos was covered by the holy virtues. Not a trace of her most holy figure remained morally or spiritually exposed. The Holy Spirit had entirely covered her with the veil of sanctity.

All of the virtues that man can attain by the breath and Grace of the Holy Spirit were gathered together under the veil of the Undeified Mary. That, moreover, is why the Church calls her the *Panagia*, or “All-Holy.”

Owing to the dense forest, the Prophet’s high mountain was also inaccessible and virgin.

But the Theotokos, too, being entirely covered by the virtues, achieved the inaccessibility of her person; there being no void in her person, evil could not penetrate her in any form—in thought, fantasy, or action—whatsoever.

In this way, the Mother of our Lord proved to be the sole Virgin in essence and in truth. She was, and continues to be, the unique sublime and virgin forest, which adorns human nature.

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## 8. Lifelong effort

*Beloved brethren in Christ:*

The Mother of God's enrichment and perfection was not attained automatically and instantaneously, since the incorrupt Maiden gained perfection and all-holiness through a voluntary, conscious, and lifelong effort.

In this manner, she preserved and increased the spiritual gifts with which she was enriched during the descent of the Holy Spirit.

This course of the Theotokos towards perfection is prototyped in the Song of Songs, with the invitation of the Bridegroom to the Bride: "Rise up, come hither, my dove."

That is to say: Rise higher and higher! Ascend the steps of holiness! Fly towards perfection! Come near Me, made pure, incorrupt, and perfected like the pure white dove!

The blessed and Most Pure Bride of the King of all, being the dwelling-place and sanctuary of the glory of God, experienced in her life this continual "flight" upwards, to the summits, to the Bridegroom, by means of humility, silence, and a lack of ostentation.

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## 9. The Panagia and the Church

*Pious children of the Church:*

Saint John of Damascus calls the All-Blessed Theotokos a "most sacred statue of the Holy Spirit" and a "river filled with the fragrances of the Spirit."

And indeed, all of the wondrous and strange-sounding things that happened to our Panagia came about by the Grace and sanctifying presence of the Divine Comforter.

The same thing, however, also happens with the Church.

The Holy Fathers arrive at an identification of the Panagia with the Church, since the work begun by the Mother of God in the incarnation of the Word is being continued by the Church.

The Queen of all and Theotokos is the personification of the Church, and the Church is the extension of the Panagia.

“I call the Ever-Virgin Mary the holy Church,” writes St Cyril of Alexandria. And St John of Damascus addresses the Theotokos, saying: “Rejoice, heaven-like Church.”

The Panagia was certainly a vessel of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But the soul of the Theanthropic Body of the Church is also the Holy Spirit, since the presence of Pentecost in the Church is continuous and uninterrupted, as the Divine Chrysostomos says: “We are always able to celebrate Pentecost.”

Moreover, the Birthgiver of God was a Temple of the Holy Trinity. But the Church, too, according to St Gregory the Theologian, is an “image of the Holy Trinity.”

The Holy Spirit, furthermore, made the Panagia wholly Mystery. But in the Church, too, the Divine Comforter accomplishes all of the Sacred Mysteries.

The Most Pure Mary, as the “treasurer and dispenser of the wealth of Divinity,” alone so remains for both “Angels and man,” according to St Gregory Palamas. But what is more, as St Irenæus tells us, “only within the Church is it possible for one to draw near the source of the Holy Spirit.”

Indeed, within the mysteriological realm of the Church and through the intercessions of the Mother of God, man becomes God-bearing, spirit-bearing, tastes of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, becomes a familiar of God, and has the boldness to pray to the

Comforter, as St Symeon the New Theologian, that great devotee of the Divine Beauty, exclaimed with unrivalled lyricism:

*Come, true light.*

*Come, eternal life.*

*Come, hidden mystery.*

*Come, unnameable treasure.*

*Come, reality beyond any speech.*

*Come, person beyond all comprehension.*

*Come, unceasing exultation.*

*Come, impenetrable light.*

*Come, unfailing hope of the saved.*

*Come, lifter up of the fallen.*

*Come, resurrection of the dead.*

*Come, Almighty, for Thou dost unceasingly create,  
transfigure, and change all things by Thy  
will alone.*

*Come, invisible one that none can touch or feel.*

*Come, for Thy name fills our hearts with desire  
and is always on our lips; but Who Thou art  
and what Thy nature is, we cannot say or  
know.*

*Come, unique one in one.*

*Come, for Thou Thyself art the desire within me.*

*Come, my breath and my life.*

*Come, comfort of my lowly soul.*

*Come, my joy, my glory, mine unending delight.*

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## *10. We must acquire the Holy Spirit*

*Blessed children of the Panagia:*

Everything I have related until now in all brevity helps us to explore more profoundly the following great truths:

Firstly, that our Panagia is the model of inner life and activity of the heart.

Secondly, in order for us, personally, to experience her holy virtues in our lives, we must acquire the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, this can be accomplished only within the Church, which is the extension of the Panagia.

The Spotless Maiden was purified by the Holy Spirit and offered Christ to us. The Church was given life during Pentecost by the Comforter and offers us to Christ. The Church is Christ, Who calls us, at every Liturgy, to unite with Him: “Come, eat...” “Taste and see....”

The Theotokos is the “mystical” and “noetic” Paradise, in which is planted the “Divine plant,” Christ, “by the eating of which we shall live, and not die as did Adam.”

All of those living in the earthly Paradise, which is the Church, “that Heaven on earth,” enjoy the blessings of Mary, the child of God, and participate in the life and joy of Christ.

One who consciously experiences his union with Christ in the Holy Spirit, through the intercessions of the All Pure one within the Orthodox Church, will have a foretaste of the joy and blessedness of eternal life, of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the Church of the first-born.

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### *11. Let us pray to the Theotokos*

*Brethren and children in Christ:*

Let us not cease, while struggling towards purification, enlightenment, and our deification, to repeat with fervent longing the beautiful prayer from the Small Compline:

*O Spotless Bride of God and Lady, abhor me not, the sinner.... And be thou ever with me, as Thou art merciful and compassionate and the lover of good: being a fervent protectress and help in this life, to defend me from the assaults of adversaries and guide me unto salvation; and in the hour of my departure, to care*

*for my wretched soul and drive far from it the dark countenances of evil demons; and in the terrible day of judgment, to deliver me from eternal torment, and show me forth as an heir of the unspeakable glory of thy Son and our God.*

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May we all be vouchsafed, through the intercession and aid of our Mistress and Lady Theotokos, the eternal delight of Paradise and the unspeakable glory of Christ our Saviour, but also of His Most Pure Mother, whom it is truly meet and right to bless and magnify unto the ages, because she gave birth without corruption to God the Word and was raised above even the first rank of the Bodiless Powers, the Seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Thrones, thus becoming a sundropped throne and seat of our Lord and King of all, Jesus Christ.

Homily delivered on 15th August, 1986

Your humble intercessor before the Lord,  
† ***Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili***

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“JUST as from the rib of Adam He made woman, so from the daughter of Adam, the Ever-Virgin Mother of God Mary, He borrowed the virginal flesh without seed, and being clothed in it, became man like unto the first-created Adam, so as to accomplish this work, namely: just as Adam, through the transgression of the commandment of God was the cause of the fact that all men become corruptible and mortal, so also Christ, the new Adam, through the fulfilment of all righteousness, became the first-fruit of our rebirth into incorruption and immortality... And inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ became perfect man in soul and body, like us in everything except sin, so He gives of His Divinity to us also who believe in Him.”

VEN. SIMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, + 1022 A.D.

# Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

*Continuation*

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

## ***II. The Liturgy of the Catechumens***

§ 58. **Teaching on the Liturgy of the Catechumens and its Origin.** The second part of the Liturgy - the first part in which the congregation participate - is called the Liturgy of the Catechumens. It received this name because during its celebration those who are catechumens and those who are not able to receive Communion because they are in a state of repentance are nonetheless permitted to attend. For the greater part it consists of litanies, chants and the reading of the word of God, and thus it is primarily a service of teaching and instruction.

It begins, after some preparatory verses said quietly between the clergy in the sanctuary, with the exclamation by the priest, *Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...* As he mentions the Three Persons of the Trinity, the priest makes the sign of the Cross with the Gospel Book over the *antimension*. To his exclamation the chanters respond with the *Amen*, which means *Truly*, or *So be it*. After this we have the Great Litany, which is also called the Litany of Peace, and then the chanting of the Typical Psalms or the Antiphons. During the litanies, short prayers are read silently by the priest, and the exclamation of each litany is in fact the doxology at the end of these secret prayers.

§ 59. **The Typical Psalms and Antiphons.** Psalms 102 and 145 are known as the Typical Psalms. They are called this because they describe the benefactions, which God has manifested to the race of man, especially through the incarnation of the Son of God. The first begins: *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.* And the second thus: *Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord in my life, I will chant unto my God for as long as I have my being.* The chanting of the psalms is separated by the intoning of the Little Litany.

After the second psalm (or the second antiphon, if used), the chanters sing a hymn, composed by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in honour of the Son of God: *Only-begotten Son and Word of God, Thou Who art immortal, and didst deign for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary, without change becoming man, and Who wast crucified, O Christ God, trampling down death by death: Thou Who art one of the Holy Trinity, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us.*

After this hymn, there is a second Little Litany, and we chant the nine Beatitudes from the Gospel. The last of these have verses from the canon from Mattins of the day inserted between them.

Instead of the two typical psalms and the Beatitudes, both on the greater feasts and on the days when there is a feast or commemoration of the lowest order, we chant antiphonal verses, chosen from the Psalms. Often these are foretellings of events within the incarnate dispensation of the Son of God. The verses are separated by short refrains, and themselves show that the present celebration is a fulfilment of ancient prophecies concerning the Saviour, and thus they indicate the essential message of the festival. The refrains which separate the verses have a New Testament connotation and refer more directly to the feast. This composition is properly chanted by two choirs of chanters alternately, and it is for this reason they are called antiphons. As with the typical psalms and Beatitudes, the three antiphons (three in honour of the Holy Trinity) are separated by two Little Litanies.

§ 60. **The Entrance with the Gospel.** At the beginning of the chanting of the Beatitudes or the third antiphon, the Royal Gates are opened. Actually, the more senior priests by rank are permitted to serve with them open from the beginning of the Liturgy. After reverencing the Holy Table, the priest takes the Gospel Book and gives it to the deacon. Preceded by a candle-bearer, they then process anti-clockwise round the Holy Table and out of the north door of the sanctuary, where they stand before the Royal Gates. The deacon requests the priest to bless the entrance, and when the chanting has stopped, he raises the Gospel Book on high and with it makes the sign of the Cross in front of the doorway, exclaiming, *Wisdom, Upright!* Thereupon he enters the sanctuary through the central doorway and places the Gospel book again upon the Holy Table, where it was before. The priest then follows him into the sanctuary, after blessing the candle-bearer, and again stands before the Holy Table, where he then reads the appointed prayer silently. This rite is called the Little Entrance to distinguish it from the Great Entrance, which comes later in the Liturgy and is made with the gifts which are to be consecrated. In ancient times, the Gospel Book was not kept on the Holy Table but in a safe place with the holy vessels (this was especially the case in times of persecution), and when the time to read the Gospel approached the clergy would process to that place and bring the Gospel into the church and place it on the Holy Table in readiness. This is the origin of the present practice. The transfer of the Gospel Book reminds the faithful of the Saviour Jesus Christ coming into the world to begin His preaching ministry. To maintain this symbolism the rite is still performed in the Liturgy with the Gospel Book, even though in the present practice there is no practical necessity to move the Gospel Book and replace it where it was. When, therefore, the deacon raises up the Book at the Entrance and exclaims *Wisdom! Upright!*, the faithful bow as if before the Saviour Himself, Who has come to begin His ministry of Divine preaching. The chanters accompany this act of worship, chanting, *Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ. O Son of God, Who art wondrous in the saints* (or, on Sundays, *Who didst arise from the*

dead), save us who chant to Thee: Alleluia! As the clergy re-enter the sanctuary, they kiss the small icons of the Saviour and Mother of God on either side of the doorway. If several priests are serving together the senior one enters first, and if the Bishop is celebrating, naturally, he goes first. This order reminds us that it is as followers of our Leader, Christ our True God, that we are enabled to enter again into Paradise.

*... to be continued with "The Chanting of the Trisagion."*



## **POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE**

*An exchange with A.S., Carshalton, Surrey:-*

THE BEST WAY to answer is to interline your points with mine.

*Could I please ask for guidance in relation to this one about people talking in church? As you say this happens at Brookwood. I know that even though I may not be talking my mind is usually busy talking to me and I am so often not really 'present' in the services, so I am certainly not thinking I am better than those who are talking.*

Your response here is good; this is of course part of our struggle in prayer, to keep attention on what is being prayed, and it is not an easy struggle. I am not a spiritual elder and cannot help you much on this one. When I can attend, maybe I shall be better able to help others! However, one simple thing I have learned is that when you realize that you are thinking about the fate of the wildlife in the Serengeti, pray [briefly] for forgiveness and help and immediately cut back to the prayers and the service. Do not try and work out how you got into the Serengeti, otherwise you have yet another distraction.

*But I am aware that talking is not only a distraction to others but also a failure to recognise at any level that one is in the presence of God. But I am unsure how I should respond to people who do start talking during the service.*

Again you are quite right in your analysis of the sin of talking in church, but the one thing that you must be more wary of is not to judge those sinning in this way. One can develop a habit of looking round to see that this one is doing something wrong, that one is talking, that one is badly dressed, etc, etc. What does this do but put you on a plinth of self-exaltation? So guard vigorously against those thoughts. Sometimes people are so wrapped up in them that even when they come to confession, they are telling other people's sins, even if they mask this with an implied "concern." Remember many people have little or no idea of what the church services are for. They have been schooled, in that they have at all, to think of going to church as a religious practice, and the thought does not occur to them that they should participate or that they should receive any benefit from it except perhaps having done the acceptable thing. So they are to that extent outsiders. In many instances they come from parishes where they cannot understand the words of the prayers and hymns and so this "mere attendance" syndrome is made even worse. So one response to them, and an important one, is to pray for them.

*This tends to be either when people are standing waiting to take Communion when the prayers are being said and also when the thanksgiving prayers are being said (often this gets quite loud), some people having gone to the back of the church and must think this doesn't 'count' as being in church!*

Of course, there is naturally some disturbance at these times, because of the movement in church, venerating the icons, getting in the Communion queue, or going up to take the antidoron. And I think you are right that some people simply do not consider the thanksgiving prayers as part of the service. Some, I have noticed, even though they have received the Gifts, leave the church then. And, of course, the back of the church is not the place to be!

As I have mentioned before, it is best, if you do not want to be distracted to be near the front, and for a number of reasons: first, the latecomers tend to congregate at the back, so there is distraction in their coming; secondly, up front you can hear the words of the prayers more clearly; thirdly, there are fewer people in front of you to distract you by their behaviour; fourthly, there seems to be a schoolboy attitude - you think if you are at the back you are not seen (by whom???) and so can get away with things, and lastly if you are at the front people are less likely to come up to you and start a conversation with you. I have often thought (but never done) of painting a line across the church about two thirds of the way to the back for those who are wanting to be attentive to stand in front of and those who do not to stand behind!

*Although I do sometimes try and ‘shush’ people they either stop for a minute or pay little attention and then it starts again either then or at the next service.*

Well, our congregation, having started as a convert clique, lacks a very important element: **dragons!** I remember when I first became Orthodox in a Russian parish, there were formidable old women who did the shushing and did an excellent job. Of course, among British converts we get this mock humility thing which stops them doing this: “Oh, it is not my place!” Those old Russians loved the beauty of God’s house and the services so much that they knew it was **their** place to do it. We have one woman who is training to be a dragon, join forces with her. Never give up.

*Many people may not have seen the email so I wondered if something could be said directly to everyone in church? It is getting to the point that I almost dread the thanksgiving prayers being read as so few people seem to be paying any attention.*

Here you hit a very deep problem; we have in fact spoken many times in church about these problems, and Fr Niphon tries to keep some sort of order, Fr Thomas tries to look after the children who are neglected by their parents, even though both have other duties, and just last week Fr Stephen in his sermon shushed

someone, but it seems that we have come to times when people no longer have “ears to hear.” Again all we can do is keep on never giving up.

I hope this helps a little. Your struggle will help although I cannot promise an immediate remedy, but we must bear in mind the teaching of Saint Augustine on the two miraculous draughts of fishes. We live in the situation of the Church on earth before the General Resurrection; there are disorders and temptations. Our bearing them helps to save us, and perhaps those around us. The person continually talking in church might one day come to their senses and find salvation. At least while they are standing in church there is a hope that one day they might hear. I remember a story told of Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky, whether it is true or not I have no way of knowing. Apparently he used to preach quite often about the offensiveness of an excess of make-up. There was one lady in the congregation whose face rivalled that of parts of a baboon in its colourfulness. Years passed, she still came plastered in this muck. Then one day she approached him and said, “I have suddenly realized that what I am doing is wrong, and that is why you have been saying these things,” and she presumably had a good wash and thereafter came looking more attractive! So we must be patient, hoping that for those slow of hearing the penny might drop one day.



“AN ELDER used to say, ‘If it should happen that a sickness of the body overtake you, let it not be grievous for you, for if your Lord wishes you to be sick in the body, who are you that you should be in despair? Does He not care for you in everything? Could you live without Him? Be patient and entreat Him to give you such things as are helpful, and which are according to His will; and besides this eat His food of grace with long-suffering.’”

FROM “THE PARADISE OF THE FATHERS”

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

## ***PRAYERS FOR THE NEW-BORN & HOUSE BLESSINGS***

ON Thursday 26th June / 9th July, the Brotherhood clergy read the first-day prayers (actually a day late) for the newly-born daughter of **Constantin and Elena Ungurianu** at their home in Kenton, North London. The following Wednesday, they returned to read the naming prayers for the baby, who was called **Ecaterina**, after the Great Martyr (feast day: 25th November / 8th December). On this occasion *en route* to Kenton, they also stopped over at Uxbridge to bless the new home of **Adrian and Alexandra Alexa** and their family.

After the Liturgy at the Convent of the Annunciation on the feast day of the New Royal Martyrs of Russia, 4th / 17th July, they visited **Subdeacon Dmitri Galitzine's** house and the flat of **Elena Golitsyna** and **Boryana Gagova**, both in Chiswick, to bless their homes.

## ***INTERMENT AT SAINT EDWARD'S***

On Tuesday, 17th / 30th June, **Lydia Simpson**, a Palestinian Orthodox Christian, was laid to rest in our cemetery. Though the funeral was chanted at the **Russian Orthodox Church on Harvard Road**, West London, their priest was unable to come for the interment itself, and so members of the Brotherhood accompanied Lydia to her resting-place. We had come to know her a little in the last year of her life when she visited the grave of her husband here, who pre-deceased her in March, 2014. After the burial, the family and mourners were offered light refreshments in the Old Mortuary building. May Lydia find rest with the Saints.

## ***NEW CATECHUMEN***

ON THE FEAST of St Alban, the Proto-Martyr of Britain, at the end of the Divine Liturgy, **Christopher Hunter** made his vows and was blessed to be a catechumen, receiving as his name saint, the **Holy Great Martyr Christopher** (feast day: 9th / 22nd May). We ask the prayers of the faithful for our new catechumen, that he not reject the grace he has received, and will assiduously prepare himself for Holy Baptism.

## ***KEOTCoLtd AGM***

THE Annual General Meeting of the charity which administers the property here, the **King Edward Orthodox Trust Company Limited** (registered charity number 284929), was held in the exhibition room immediately after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 5th July. All the directors and members attended with the exception of **Fr Stephen Fretwell**, who on account of his advancing age tendered his resignation by letter and suggested a younger person be elected in his place. In the event, after some deliberation, **Simon Teague** was elected to replace him, and, when informed by email, accepted the election and is now one of our trustees. In addition to the usual chairman's and treasurer's reports, **Mrs Irina Aldersley**, our architect, gave a report on the surveys conducted on the state of the timbers of the mortuary. She undertook to follow this up by contacting contractors and having a more extensive survey than has been possible hitherto, because some of the timbers will have to be exposed. We hope this can be done in the summer months. The members also adjusted the price of grave reservations, leaving a reservation for a single-depth grave at £2,000, but raising that for a double depth to £3,000. The cost of a single depth reservation and the subsequent interment thus falls within the margins which poorer people may claim if they are on benefits.

## ***VISITORS***

ON Thursday, 25th June, **Alyson Warner** of **Surrey** magazine viewed our church and exhibition room, while visiting Brookwood Cemetery, about which she is writing an article.

ON Saturday, 27th June, a group of **Japanese tourists** visited our church. There are historic Japanese graves near us in the cemetery.

ON Thursday 16th July, a group of three parishioners from the **Russian Orthodox Church on Harvard Road**, visited the church and exhibition room, and Fr Nippon spent some time with them, answering their various questions about our Faith.

## ***GIFT AID***

IF, when you come to church, you would like to increase your freewill offerings, which you put in the alms box at the back of the church, by **25%** with no extra cost to yourselves, you may do so **if you are a U.K. taxpayer.**

You will need to:-

- a) Sign a gift aid form (which we can give you).
- b) Either put cheques (so we have your name) in the box, made out to **King Edward Orthodox Trust Co Ltd**,
- c) Or, put in cash, but put it in an envelope with your name clearly written on it.

We can then pay that money into our KEOTCoLtd account and claim the tax already paid on it back from the exchequer.

## ***FREEWILL OFFERINGS***

AS MOST of you will know, we do not have collections during our services, so as to avoid as much distraction as possible, but we simply have the alms box at the back of the church for people to make offerings. In the first six months of the current New Calendar year, the **weekly average** of these gifts was as follows: January £509.81; February £319.40; March £516.36; April £810.08; May £498.34; and June £411.15. We thank all of you who have contributed to our support in this way, and all those of you who give regular donations through bankers' orders or by donating to our **Charities Aid Foundation** account by pressing the **donate** button on our site, <[www.saintedwardbrotherhood](http://www.saintedwardbrotherhood).

**org>**. Special thanks to those of you who *gift-aid* your donations and thus increase their value to us, and those of you who give anonymously, whom we cannot otherwise thank. May God bless you and reward you.



## PRACTICAL TIP

THE “INSPIRATION” for most of these tips comes from some incident in parish life. Recently, someone asked for prayers and a blessing for a project which was far from conducive to their salvation or that of the others it would involve, and he became somewhat touchy when he did not get the response he was hoping for. Now, as laymen most of you are not under obedience, and certainly we have no one here at the Brotherhood who is an Elder, so you may conduct your lives as you will, as long as you follow the teachings of the Church and avoid sin. However, if you do choose to ask a blessing of any clergyman for some project, you should do two things: first, you should ask before setting out on that project, and secondly you should be prepared not to receive a blessing for it. It is verging on the blasphemous to simply use “blessings” as a rubber stamp for what you are intent upon in any case, or as a kind of talisman against misfortune.



“LET THE ZEALOUS be particularly attentive to themselves, lest, by condemning the careless, they themselves incur worse condemnation. And I think the reason why Lot was justified was because, through living among such people (Gen. 13:12-13), he never seems to have condemned them.”

“VAINGLORY makes those who are preferred proud, and those who are slighted resentful.”

TWO QUOTATIONS FROM ST JOHN CLIMACUS, + 649 A.D..