

# FROM THE FATHERS

“WHEN SALVATION was given to the nations, then all cities and towns were enlightened by the power and entrance of Christ, and escaped every former sickness and infirmity. The Lord pities the people troubled with the violence of the unclean spirit, and sick under the burden of the Law, and having no shepherd at hand to bestow upon them the guardianship of the Holy Spirit. But of that Gift there was a most abundant fruit, whose plenty far exceeded the multitude of those who drank thereof; how many soever take of it, yet an inexhaustible supply remains; and because it is profitable that there should be many to minister it, He bids us ask the Lord of the harvest, that God would provide a supply of reapers for the ministration of that gift of the Holy Spirit which was made ready; for by prayer this gift is poured out upon us from God.”

ST HILARY OF POITIERS, + 368 A.D.

“AS LARGE FIELDS require many reapers, so also do the multitude of believers in Christ, hence He adds, *Prayye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest*” (Lk 10:2).

SAINT CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, + 444 A.D.

“ALSO the people must be induced to pray for their pastors, that they may be able to work what is good for them, and that their tongue grow not lifeless in exhortation. For often for their own wickedness their tongue is tied, but often for the fault of the people it comes to pass that the word of preaching is withdrawn.”

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, + 604 A.D.

“THE LORD appoints the seventy disciples because of the great number of those in need of teaching. Just as fields that are heavy with crops require many harvesters, so also are those who will believe great in

number, indeed beyond count, and in need of many teachers. He sends them out two by two because the goal is more certain to be achieved when there are two to help each other. They go before His face because they were to teach as did John the Forerunner: *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. Notice how He says, *pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers*, and then Himself sends them out by His own command. Christ is truly the Lord of the harvest, that is, the Lord of those who believe, because He is true God.”

SAINT THEOPHYLACT OF OCHRID, + C. 1108 AD.

“BECAUSE the pastor is subject to many temptations, and the devil and his evil servants war against him most especially, therefore he also needs the special help and support of God. Then you, and all the people as well, must pray to God for him that He may help him and strengthen him.”

SAINT TIKHON OF ZADONSK, + 1783 A.D.

“THE PRAYER of a priest for men has great power with God, if only the priest calls upon the Lord with his whole heart, with faith and love. God grant that there may be more priests who would pray to God with an ardent spirit, for who should pray to the Lord for His sheep with such power, if not the priest, who has received grace and authority to do so from God Himself?”

SAINT JOHN OF CRONSTADT, + 1908 A.D.



# THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

*From the Works of St Theophan the Recluse*

*And as Moses lifted up the serpent  
in the wilderness, even so must  
the Son of man be lifted up;  
that whosoever believeth in Him  
should not perish, but have eternal  
life. (John 3:14-15)*

OH, the mystery and the inexplicability of the wisdom of the Cross! And first, how can our mind comprehend that it is life which springs forth from the Cross? The Cross was an instrument of death, and furthermore one of the most shameful; nonetheless the Church hymns it as life-bearing, life-giving, the tree of life and immortality, the lifting up of the fallen, the resurrection of all, and in general She ascribes to it every good thing which the true Christian might seek after in this life, and those which he might hope for in the future life. How true life can derive from the Cross has been a cause of scandal in all ages for all the superstitious, the mindless, and the wise falsely so-called. But that which the mind cannot grasp, faith must regard and hold fast; and we, who have been quickened by the Cross, are not without blame if we fail to strive to comprehend the life-bearing power concealed in the Cross, to reflect upon it and, after the example of the Apostle Paul, to be constantly informed thereby, and determined *not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified* ( 1 Cor. 2:2), for, in his own distinguished way he presented those being saved with his well-tested understanding of the power of the Cross: *the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God* (1 Cor. 1:1:18). And if we should always continue thus, how much more so

now should we now incline our attention and heart before it, when the Holy Church calls us to fall down before the honourable and life-creating Cross. Let us be instructed by the mystery of the Cross, so that we might see that true life proceeds from it.

We believe with the heart and confess with our lips that our Lord Jesus Christ, having done away with death by the Cross, has granted us through it eternal life, and everyone who desires to be a communicant of that life must needs take up his cross, of whatever kind it may be.

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, by the Cross, having done away with death, has granted us through it eternal life. Death used to reign upon the earth, and along with sin began to reign within all the sons of Adam. *As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men* (Rom. 5:12). All mankind came to be a single dead corpse, and the world in general a gloomy cemetery. And of the whole race of mankind it was possible to say, as it was of the sons of Israel, *a valley full of bones* (Ezek. 37:1). But when death was established here on earth, above the beginning of a new life was laid and a new way of being, through the sacrifice of the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who spake to His Father: Behold I go to do Thy will, O My God; *whole-burnt offerings and oblations for sin hast Thou not demanded, but a body hast Thou perfected for Me* (Ps 39: 10, 9).

Finally, in the fullness of time, the Only-Begotten Son of God actually came down upon earth, took human nature on Himself, suffered and died upon the Cross. This death upon the Cross put death to death, and raised us up to true life in all its breadth; eternal life was returned, for it was from the Cross that the Lord said unto the thief: *Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise* (Luke 23:43), even the life of the body was returned, as is evident from the special signs at the very hour of the Lord's death upon the Cross, when *the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose* (Matt. 27:52).

Spiritual life returned, for the crucified Christ was made power and wisdom unto salvation for them that are called (see 1 Cor. 1:24). And in this way, true life again reigned upon earth, the one God having life in Himself. We can live insofar as God grants us life, through a living com-

munion with Him. Sin separated us from God; we lost God's goodwill and we died. The Saviour, taking upon Himself our nature, by His death upon the Cross reconciled us with God. God returned His blessing to us and we were quickened.

This is how and why the tree of the Cross became the tree of life and immortality, why the Cross is "eternal light," the "raising of the dead," and "the resurrection of all," as the Holy Church chants (in the canon of the festival).

But the life-bearing fountain from the Cross does not itself pour forth for the quickening of those without life, like the fountain of Paradise which watered the face of the earth through its four rivers. We ourselves must draw close to it, so that our moribund condition might be quickened by its life-creating power; we ourselves must needs bend beneath its shadow, so that it will give sinews to the dry bones and dead, that it will put flesh on them, cover them with skin and settle their breath in them (see Ezek. 37:5-6). For without this Cross life will eternally be excluded from us, and as was formerly the case we shall be left dead, and for ever we shall continue as dry and lifeless bones.

How then can we appropriate the life-bearing power of the Cross? How and by what means can we be attached to the one living olive tree?

*Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me, says the Lord (Mark 8:34). And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, teaches the Apostle Paul (Gal. 5:24). There is no other way to union with Christ, Who bore the Cross, other than each taking up his cross, which consists in crucifying the carnal man with its passions and lusts. The source of our quickening is in uniting ourselves with the saving sufferings and death of our Lord, Whom the Apostle Paul sought with such ardour that he counted *all things as dross* for His sake (see Phil. 3:8). But to be deemed worthy of this communion, we must achieve it not through delights but through afflictions, which are all the inner afflictions of crucifying ourselves. And this is just where our spiritual life starts.*

After the Fall, man became double. Another law arose within him, which operated within his system and opposed the law of the mind,

and he, being taken captive by the law of sin, there appeared as it were another person, another man, in whose head there was pride, and in whose hands self-interest, and in whose bowels the pleasing of the flesh. This person who had appeared constrained the man that he was formerly, pressing our true life out of him. And so, in order to raise up and resurrect that life, it is necessary to mortify that false man who lords it over us unlawfully, taking over all the activity of our souls.

From the Cross, on which the crucifixion of sinful man is accomplished, - from it, for each one of us, our spiritual life is imparted by the power of Grace divine.

For when a sinful man is beaten about the head, pride, then in its place humility is established; when they nail his hands, self-interest is nailed, and then in its place is taken by unattachment; when his legs are broken, so is pleasing the flesh, then chastity is born in its place; and when at last the very heart is pierced, so too is self-love, and then it is granted God-loving self-denial. Self-denial with humble-mindedness, unattachment and chastity constitute the first rudiments, the first elements indicating spiritual life, to which thereafter it only remains to give freedom and to culture it, so that it might flourish, strengthen and reach fulness. For that which most mortifies sin, most enlivens the soul; the more decisive and unsparing the self-crucifixion, the more trusty and successful is the growth of true life, which by degrees will ascend from strength to strength until it reaches the measure of its full maturity.

Thus true life proceeds from the Cross. Thirsting for life, let us make haste to the life-bearing waters which flow from the Cross. In this saving work, let us not fear the painful afflictions which accompany bearing the cross. It is true that the way of the Cross, following the Saviour, is one of sorrows, but to be joined to Him is the highest consolation.

Difficult is the way which leads to life, but for those who journey that way there is the support of hope.

The very Cross of Christ, which is the basis and foundation of our quickening through our interior cross, will be for us a comfort and aid. He who loves it, and as it were carries this love in his heart, such a one will take delight in its sweetness, and will be filled with its power.

He will not be tossed about by the waves of the thoughts and of lustful desires. The Cross of Christ, like the staff of Moses, will cut through this sea and provide him with a safe crossing (see Ex. 14:21-22). The inner pains of the heart, when he parts with his favoured things, and, the outer enfeeblement from the unrighteousness that always wars against the truth, will not shake such a one. The healing power of the Lord's Cross will abundantly sweeten the bitterness of soul, just as once the wood thrown into the spring removed the bitterness of its waters (see Ex. 15:23-25). Let all the enemies of salvation and of life surround him, the almighty Cross of Christ will ward them off and rout them, just as the enemies of Israel were routed by the lifting up of Moses' arms (see Ex. 17:11-13). But what is even more desirable, on such a one it sends down the blessing of God, on all his good initiatives and deeds, just as Jacob by laying his hands crossways on Ephraim and Manasses called down upon them and their descendents abundant good things (see Gen. 48:17-21); it will send down a blessing whereby every good and profitable undertaking will be achieved easily, successfully, and fruitfully, from which he will flourish in the Church of God like a lily of the field (see Matt. 6:28), like a tree beside a fountain of water.



“AS FOR WOMEN, who furnish drugs for the purpose of procuring abortions, and those who take foetus-killing poisons, they are made subject to the penalty prescribed for murderers.”

*Canon 91 of Holy and Œcumenical Sixth Council*



# ON MONASTICISM

By the Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky  
of Jordanville

## *Continuation*

The most remarkable bulwark of the monastic life, which has existed for centuries and continues to this day as a kind of monastic kingdom, is the **Holy Mountain Athos**. Athos is the most eastern mountainous peninsula of the three peninsulas which extend into the Aegean Sea from the borders of Macedonia. According to tradition, the Most Pure Mother of God herself visited Athos, calling it her portion, and foretelling that here the monastic life would flourish, and promising to be the heavenly Protectress of the monastics living there.

The **first historical reference to Athonite monasticism comes from the seventh century**, when the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus granted this mountain as a habitation for the monastics. Among the ascetics from these earliest times, the **Venerable Peter the Athonite**, who lived on Athos for 53 years, is glorified. The settlement of Athos [by monastics] was greatly increased during the epoch of iconoclasm, because it proved suitable for the monks to hide there from the persecution of the authorities. The **Venerable Eftymius**, who is known as a builder of the monastic life, is especially renowned among the strugglers of the ninth century. At this time Athos received important privileges from the Byzantine Emperors. **Basil the Macedonian** granted the whole Athonite peninsula to the exclusive use of the monks, and, at the time of the **Emperor Romanus the Elder**, the Athonite monks were freed from all taxes and obligations. A stricter organization of the Athonite monastic life was granted in the second half of the tenth century, at the time of **Saint Athanasius of Athos**. It was then that **Protaton** was established, which serves as the meeting place of all the Athonite abbots, where from Athos is governed as from the highest judicial and administrative authority there.

In A.D. 1046, a strict typicon was introduced on Athos. According to this rule, every worldly occupation and all amusements were strict-

ly forbidden on Athos, and entry to Athos was henceforth closed to all of the female sex, not only people, but also animals. [*Translator's note: this ban is often grossly misunderstood today, but in the East it is often the case that women are not allowed to visit men's monasteries, and by the same token men are not permitted to enter women's monasteries, so there is nothing particularly 'sexist' among this discipline*]. From this time, the monastic life particularly began to flourish on Athos, which became in fact a Holy Mountain, as it is also called this in that typicon. At the beginning of the First World War, there were approximately 10,000 monks there, and of these more than half were Russian. Athos played an enormous rôle in the introduction and flowering of the monastic life for us in Russia.

Monasteries appeared with us [i.e. the Russians] immediately after the Baptism [of Rus'], and **the Venerable Antony** [of Kiev] is accounted the progenitor of the current strictly ascetical monastic life which we had in Russia. He was born in Lyubech in the what is now the administrative district of Chernigov, and while still in his earliest youth he went off to Athos, because of his yearning for the monastic life; there he was tonsured in the **Monastery of Esphigmenou**. When he had achieved demonstrable spiritual experience, the Elder who had tonsured him gave him the obedience to return to Russia, and to plant monasticism in that newly-enlightened land. Arriving in Kiev, the Venerable Antony, found several monasteries there, which had been founded by the Greeks according to the desire of the princes, but he did not chose any of them for himself, but rather settled in a cave near Kiev, which had been dug out by the priest Hilarion, who subsequently became Metropolitan of Kiev (1051 A.D.). There he continued the strict monastic struggles that he had begun on Athos; his food was only black bread and water once a day. Soon fame of him spread abroad, and people began to come to him seeking spiritual counsel and a blessing. Some besought him to live there, desiring to emulate his ascetic life. One of the first fellow-strugglers with St Antony was the **Venerable Theodosius**, who had been born in Kursk.

When the number of the brethren reached twelve, Saint Antony went into reclusion on a nearby mountain. The brethren chose St Theodosius as their abbot, and he established the monastic life on the bases of

the cœnobitic life. The number of the brethren grew more and more, and thus the renowned **Kiev Caves Lavra** grew up. Following the example of the Kiev Caves Lavra, a multitude of communities sprang up in every corner of Russia as she then was, and the Lavra itself became a true spiritual centre and source for the whole spiritual life of Kievan Rus'. From it there came renowned Archpastors, zealous preachers of the Faith, writers and even governmental functionaries.

The same significance that the Kiev Caves Lavra had for Kievan Russia, was achieved in the Muscovite period of Russian history by the **Trinity Lavra of St Sergius**, which was founded by the renowned fourteenth century ascetic, the **Venerable Sergius of Radonezh**. Who among the Russian peoples does not know of this wondrous struggler, the Abbot of the Russian Land, who struggled in the deep, dense forest in the region of Radonezh, and who blessed the Prince Dimitri Donsky for his battle with the Tartars?

The Trinity Lavra of St Sergius in its turn gave rise to a multitude of new monastic communities in every quarter, which, in addition to their purely spiritual significance, had an enormous effect in colonizing and spreading cultured life among the wild peoples of the northern and eastern outreaches of Russia.

Other particularly renowned houses in the North of Russia, known for their strict life, were: **Valaam** on Lake Ladoga, which was founded by the **Venerable Sergius and Herman**, and **Solovki Monastery** on the White Sea, founded by the **Venerable Zosimas and Sabbatius**. The Russian peoples fervently loved the monastic life, and from their midst they offered a whole assembly of wondrous ascetics.

In the fifteenth century there appeared among us a particularly strict zealot for monasticism, the **Venerable Neil Sorsky**, who composed his own typicon, known as the **Tradition of Skete Life**.

Monasticism flourished in our midst and the spirit of Christian piety little by little touched all aspects of life as it was then in Russia, where for many the life of the ordinary layman grew close, not only in spirit, but even in its outward aspect to the monastic life. So it continued until our unfortunate intimacy with the West at the time of the Emperor Peter I. In

the West at that time everywhere the rebirth of paganism, under the name of **humanism**, was being celebrated, the Christian precepts were trampled upon and forgotten, cynical atheism and immorality audaciously raised their heads. And this corrupting spirit penetrated us from the West through the window that Peter had opened upon Europe. All of life in Russia was violently broken up and thrown off course by this Western European influence, which was strange to her and inimical to Orthodoxy. Monasticism then suffered especially, suffering a series of mortal blows from the governments of Emperor Peter I, the so-called “favorites,” and of the Empress Catherine II. Things reached such a state that the monasteries were forbidden to receive anyone except laid-off soldiers and incorrigible drunkards. Of the 1,200 monasteries that existed during the time of Patriarch Nikon, 815 were closed down, that is more than two thirds of them, and from the remaining monasteries church lands and other immovable assets were taken.

Only in the second quarter of the nineteenth century did Russian monasticism begin to recover a little from the blows that had been visited upon it. A central rôle in the flowering of the monastic life again, in this period which is nearer to our times, was played by the remarkable **Optina Hermitage** in the administrative district of Kaluga, which was glorified by [Sts] Leonid, Macarius, Ambrose and latterly Barsanuphius and Nectarius, clairvoyant elders who were much experienced in the spiritual life.

The Revolution which broke out in 1917 struck a crushing blow to monasticism in Russia. The monasteries were commandeered and destroyed by the Bolsheviks; the monks were dispersed. The outer institution of monasticism was completely annihilated, but in fact monasticism did not disappear, it only went into the Catacombs, and from the information we have it is far from being just a few in numbers, as is manifest even from Soviet newspapers and magazines, which report the uncovering and exposure of what they call secret monasteries, which are sometimes operating under the pretence of being collective farms.

And so, such in short measure is the history of monasticism which stretches back many centuries. Throughout the length of this history, monasticism has seen many changes and differences in form; it has been guided by various typicons and rules, but in essence it has always

remained one and the same, faithful to itself. Its essence is: **the constant abiding of the mind and heart in God**, according to the precise definition of Bishop [St] Theophan, and this has always remained unchanged.

How is monasticism represented in contemporary times? And how can one become a monastic? What is required for this?

*... to be continued in the next issue.*



## THE COMING MONTH

WE HAVE an article on the *Mystery of the Cross* by St Theophan in this month's edition, because the **Great Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross** falls on 14th /27th September. This is one of the most beautiful festivals of the Church Year, and in cathedrals and monasteries, during the Vigil, there is the rite of the Exaltation, during which the Cross is raised by the protocelebrant in the direction of each of the four points of the compass, while each time, the choir chant a hundred *Lord, have mercies*.

But this is not the only Great Feast to fall within the month, we also have the **Birth of the All-Holy Theotokos** on 8th / 21st. The New Year itself falls on the first of the month, and remembering that, in the beginning, God created all things in six days and rested on the seventh, on this eighth day we celebrate the beginning of the New Creation in the Birth of the Mother of God. The eighth day, of course, is also a scriptural figure of the life of the Age to come - the seven days being the type of this life and of this world. It is through the ministry of the Theotokos that we are given access to the Life of that Age to come, which is Christ Himself. A new beginning is made. The All-holy Virgin's parents, Joachim and Anna, who lived in piety and righteousness, were nonetheless not blessed with a child, until in deep old age, Anna conceived. This was permitted by God to demonstrate the barrenness of mankind, and how by God's intervention it is restored. The Orthodox Church rejoices in the birth of this baby, as she does of any child, but the more so because this child was

to become the Mother of God Incarnate. Although she holds that Anna's conception of Mary was miraculous, in that Anna was then past child-bearing; the Church does not believe that this was a virgin birth, nor does she hold the modern Roman Catholic teaching that the conception was "immaculate." We rejoice in this birth not for fictitious reasons such as these, but because it is the beginning of a new dispensation, as the Dismissal Hymn of the feast itself declares:

*Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.*

For us, at Brookwood, of course a third important celebration in the month is the **Enshrinement of the Sacred Relics of St Edward the Martyr** here in 1984, which feast falls on 3rd / 16th. This year, God willing, for the first time we shall be blessed to celebrate this feast in a church fully consecrated.

Among the other celebrations in September, we have:

The **Venerable Serapion of Pskov** (8th / 21st) was born in Yuriev, now Tartu in Lithuania, and desiring the monastic life he settled in the Monastery of the Three Hierarchs, founded by Saint Evphrosynus (not the one below), near Pskov. He found the life there too austere, and so decided to leave without a blessing. However, on his way, he injured his leg and returned in repentance. For the next fifty-five years, until the latter reposed, he lived in strict obedience to his spiritual elder. He always stressed the importance of community prayer in the assembly of the brethren in church, saying that the *Rule of the Twelve Psalms* read alone in one's cell was not worth a single *Lord, have mercy*, chanted in church. He wore threadbare clothes and was never found idle, living an extremely rigorous ascetic life, despite his early misgivings. Naturally he knew Lithuanian and he could also speak Finnish, and he used these gifts to promote the Orthodox mission among those peoples. He died on the feast of the Birth of the Virgin in A.D. 1481, at the age of ninety. Miracles were worked at his tomb. There, shortly after his death a blind man recovered his sight, and the Saint appeared to a woman called Melania, who was

almost driven to suicide by her domestic unhappiness, and brought her peace and relief from her mental torment.

The **Venerable Evphrosynus the Cook** (11th / 24th) was a simple countryman who entered a monastery where he was given an obedience in the kitchens. Because of his simplicity he patiently bore the scorn, rebukes and derision of the other members of the community, and no one paid him any particular respect. However, there was a godly priest in that monastery, who had for many years desired to see the good things which God has prepared for those that love Him. One night, he was granted a vision, and he saw himself in the gardens of Paradise. There he saw the humble Evphrosynus, and asked him if this was indeed the dwelling place of the elect. The saint assured him that it was, and wanting some assurance that this was true and not an illusion, the priest asked Evphrosynus whether he might take something from the garden. The saint gave him three apples. In the morning the priest was woken as usual by the summons to Mattins, and at first thought he had an unusual dream, but then in the folds of his rason he found the three apples, giving off a fragrance of unearthly sweetness. In Mattins he saw Evphrosynus standing in his usual place in church, and asked him where he had been that night. The saint humbly replied that he had been there in the monastery, but when the priest pressed him not to conceal the works of God, he confessed: "I was with you, Father, in the garden, where you saw the good things God has in store for his elect." The priest told the other brethren of this miracle, and showed them the three fragrant apples as evidence. Portions of the apples were given to the sick and they were healed. However, because now he was a figure of veneration among the brethren, the Blessed Evphrosynus fled the monastery so that he should not be tempted by the praise of men.

The **Holy New Martyr John of Crete** (15th /28th): The life of this saint shows how our Merciful Saviour can even use something base and rather shameful to bring us to salvation. John was the son of a peasant from Crete, but was living in New Ephesus in Asia Minor - now mainland Turkey. On the feast of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, he and some friends had a festive meal, and rather inappropriately on such a day, they all drank too much, and became rowdy. Some Turkish

soldiers challenged them, and a fracas broke out. In the event one of the Turks was killed. Being sure that he was not to blame for the murder, John took no special precautions, but after a few days he was arrested and thrown into prison. There he spent sixteen days in a dark and filthy cell, fed only on scraps. Eventually he was brought before the judge. It happened that the judge was the brother of the soldier who had been killed, and he decided that he would insist on the conversion of John to Islam. However, sinner though he had been, John remained steadfast in his faith, even though he was promised honours and wealth. Finally the Turks despaired of converting him, and he was led out to be executed. His countenance was radiant as he went, he bowed to the ground before the Christians asking their forgiveness and prayers, and he called upon the prayers of the Mother of God and the Saints. He went eagerly to his death, knowing that he was to receive a Martyr's crown. During the night after his execution a heavenly light shone over the place where his body had been thrown. St John contested for the Faith in the year 1811; he was about twenty years of age.



## AN EVENING PRAYER

FORGIVE, O LORD, THEM THAT HATE AND WRONG US. DO GOOD TO THEM THAT DO GOOD. GRANT OUR BRETHREN AND KINSMEN THEIR SAVING PETITIONS AND LIFE ETERNAL. VISIT THE INFIRM AND GRANT THEM HEALING. GUIDE THOSE AT SEA; JOURNEY WITH THEM THAT ARE TRAVELLING. HELP ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS TO STRUGGLE. TO THEM THAT SERVE AND ARE KIND TO US, GRANT REMISSION OF SINS. ON THEM THAT HAVE ENJOINED US, THE UNWORTHY, TO PRAY FOR THEM, HAVE MERCY ACCORDING TO THY GREAT MERCY. REMEMBER, O LORD, OUR FATHERS AND BRETHREN WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP BEFORE US, AND GRANT THEM REST WHERE THE LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE SHINETH. REMEMBER, O LORD, OUR BRETHREN IN CAPTIVITY [SPIRITUAL OR PHYSICAL], AND DELIVER THEM FROM EVERY MISFORTUNE. REMEMBER, O LORD, THEM THAT BEAR FRUIT AND DO GOOD WORKS IN THY HOLY CHURCHES, AND GRANT THEM THEIR SAVING PETITIONS AND LIFE ETERNAL. REMEMBER ALSO, O LORD, US, THY LOWLY, SINFUL AND UNWORTHY SERVANTS, AND ENLIGHTEN OUR MINDS WITH THE LIGHT OF THY COMMANDMENTS, THROUGH THE INTERCESSIONS OF THINE ALL-IMMACULATE MOTHER, OUR LADY THEOTOKOS AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY, AND OF ALL THY SAINTS, FOR BLESSED ART THOU UNTO THE AGES OF AGES. AMEN.



# POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“I WAS READING the Prologue (from Ochrid) for the 1st of January and it said in the Homily that our consciences are darkened by sin. However, in a prayer book distributed by the Church of Antioch, there is a short preparation for Confession. There it says ‘ask God to grant you the grace to make a thorough examination of your conscience, courage to make a sincere and complete confession, and strength to amend your way of life in the days to come.’ Is this a contradiction? How do we make a complete confession just going off our consciences?” N.L., U.S.A.*

NO, there is no essential contradiction here. It is true that our consciences are darkened by sin, but, unless we are tremendously evil, this does not mean that they are completely and utterly darkened. If we are striving to lead an Orthodox Christian life, then our conscience still mirrors something of our spiritual state, and St Nicholas Velimirovic in his Prologue, as you quote, counsels that we ask God’s help. It is by doing this and by examining our consciences that we keep them clearer. The more we do so sincerely and honestly, asking God’s aid, the cleaner they become. It is like having a drinking glass - it becomes dirty when we use it, but if we wash it thoroughly it clears again. If we went on using it without ever cleaning it, it would become completely murky and we would not be able to see through it at all, and indeed it would become a cause of ill-health. So a neglected conscience becomes ever more murky, and a cause of spiritual ill-health.

Some people talk glibly about their consciences - saying that their conscience does not convict them of any wrong in certain circumstances. This can be because they have indeed done no wrong in this instance, but it can also be, and is more likely to be, that their conscience has become so clouded by their sins that it no longer operates properly. A person whose conscience is cared for, as St Nicolas Velimirovic indicates, is much more likely to see therein evidences of sin and failing even when the past action or word or thought that he is considering was essentially good, because in this life hardly anything that we sinners do is not untouched by some sinful taint.

*And two points from Orthodox clergymen abroad, which we include not to comment upon or answer, but because of the perceptiveness of their observations:-*

First from **Serbia**, a letter from **Fr Angelarius of the Monastery of Sisojevac**, a reply to a short note of thanks sent by us for gifts brought to us by a pilgrim from that monastery. Fr Angelarius writes: “We are very glad that seed of Christ’s true faith is giving such good fruit in your area, even when you are surrounded by heretics and infidels [unbelievers]. It is easy to us to be Orthodox and monks here in an ‘Orthodox’ country, but your cross is bigger and more heavy than ours is. Stay strong, my brothers!” [*We have very slightly corrected his English*]. This message, although Fr Angelarius seems to have a much more inflated opinion of our witness than is deserved, touched us because very few people living in Orthodox countries seem to realize the particular struggle that we in the diaspora have, and his perception in this regard was very moving.

And from **Russia**, a letter from a priest, who belongs to one of the Synods that do not accept the Patriarchal administration, and who serves in one of the far-flung regions of the country. He writes: “Archbishop XXX (Moscow Patriarchate) sent a letter to the YYY (local village) administration warning against us, calling us ‘the spiritual and political opposition.’ I wrote to him that neither spiritual nor political opposition can exist in the YYY region because in this region (22,000 square kilometres - that is two-thirds of Belgium for example), there are no priests of the Moscow Patriarchate, because there can be no profit here. And profit, - I wrote to the Archbishop, - is the main thing for you. The people are poor here. And the MP takes much money from the people. For instance: 500 rubles for a Baptism. We do not take anything - only voluntary donations. But pay attention: ‘political opposition.’ It means that those who do not agree with MP should be considered as political opposition towards the ruling regime, that is the MP is an integral part of the regime.” Again we have slightly corrected his English and have omitted names of persons and places to protect our correspondent, who, in the much vaunted freedom of the “New Russia,” is still considered a dissident, a person in **political** opposition because of his religious convictions. Note also that the Patriarchate which, for prestige reasons, can build beautiful

churches throughout the West and man them with clergymen, can leave an area two thirds the size of Belgium in their own homeland without a single priest. The sum 500 rubles is only about £10 officially, but in a region where the people have to struggle to survive, such as the one in which this priest serves, it is not an inconsiderable amount.



## **NEWS SECTION**

### ***A RUSSIAN PIPE DREAM?***

THE TIMES (31/7/2010) carried a half-page article by **Canon Michael Bordeaux**, the founder of the **Keston Institute**, headed “*The opium of the people remains a Russian pipe dream,*” in which the author, who is no enemy of Russia or of Orthodoxy, outlines the progress, so far, of religious liberty in Russia, since the fall of Soviet Communism. He concentrates on the question of religious education with reference to a new experimental policy introduced this year on 1st April, whereby parents could opt for their children to be given religious education in schools in one of four approved “traditional” religions: Russian Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam or Buddhism. Roman Catholics and Protestants were not given an option. Nineteen of Russia’s 89 regions were involved in this project initially. These were deliberately widely spread across the vast country, so that they would be as representative as possible. Apparently most of the teachers only received two-weeks training for this work. The Moscow Patriarchate, it is said, was hoping that 60-80% of the children would be enrolling in the Orthodox course, but their hopes have been bitterly disappointed. This target was only reached in four regions: Kostroma (75%), Tver (62.3%), Stavropol (60%), and Birobijan (61%) which, surprisingly, is a Jewish Autonomous Region. Overall, just over 35% of parents opted for the Orthodox course. Those parents who did not wish their children to receive religious education could opt for secular ethics or history of world religions. 38% (topping the Orthodox

figure) chose the former, and 16% the latter. Canon Bordeaux ends his article: “Patriarch Kirill, in his second year in office, continues to attempt to gain special privileges for the church in all public spheres, so these results represent a major setback.”

## ***RUSSIAN PATRIARCH PAYS TRIBUTE TO TAIZÉ***

“TODAY AT TAIZÉ a hundred brothers, Catholics and Protestants, live together. And the community is often visited by young believers from the Orthodox churches,’ stated Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church. ‘The thousands of young people who visit Taizé and take part in the meetings organized each year by the community in various European countries show convincingly that the Gospel message of God’s love can still find a living echo in people’s hearts today,’ he said” - thus on 12th August *ENI* reported the Patriarch’s joining other religious leaders in **paying tribute to Taizé on its 70th anniversary**. The community was founded as an innovative Protestant/Ecumenical “monastic” community by **Brother Roger Schutz**, who unfortunately was murdered, but before his end had converted to Roman Catholicism. Had the Patriarch examined his doctrine, he would have found Brother Roger’s very different to that of the Orthodox Fathers. Brother Roger is quoted as saying: “Tomorrow’s generations will have less and less patience with the division of Christians into different confessions. They will no longer tolerate the loss of energy used to legitimize (*sic*) confessional positions, while —by the dizzying increase of population—men without knowledge of God grow more numerous day by day.” Commenting on his teaching, the Paris’ daily “*Le Monde*,” with a certain worldly astuteness, once said: “Taizé contributes to leveling the psychological and doctrinal obstacles that history has strewn in the path of Christian unity.” Taizé has, in fact, been a major force for non-doctrinal ecumenism. Tens of thousands of people make a pilgrimage to Taizé, including Protestants, Baptists, Catholics, Jews, Buddhists, and others. The Taizé services are said to be non-dogmatic and non-authoritative. There is no preaching. They claim not to dictate what people must believe, but, of course, in so doing they are dictating. It is said of their community, “No confessions

of faith are required. No sermons are given. Clergy are not required.” And so, here we have something very different from the Faith of the Orthodox Fathers, and one is more than a little perplexed by an Orthodox Patriarch paying tribute to their witness.

## ***THE RIMINI MEETING***

ACCORDING TO ZENIT, “High-ranking representatives of the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches embraced on Monday [23rd August] in a moment reflecting a will for unity between the two Churches. A photo of the embrace between Cardinal Peter Erdo and Metropolitan Filaret was printed with the title ‘Europe’s Brothers.’” “The cardinal and metropolitan made their embrace of unity as they joined in a debate on the topic ‘Can An Educated Man, a European of Our Days, Actually Believe in the Divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ?’ Cardinal Erdo is the archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, Hungary, and the president of the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE). Filaret is the metropolitan of Minsk and Sluzk and Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus. The Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches are already united in their common stance on many issues affecting Europe: challenges to life and family and religious freedom among them. Recently, an apostolic nunciature was opened in Moscow, and there is ever greater insistence on a meeting between Benedict XVI and Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. To this end, Metropolitan Filaret said that ‘the time is ripe for a meeting between the Pope and the Patriarch. It might even be possible in 2011; in principle I see no obstacles.’” It continues; “‘We have been in dialogue with the Catholic Church for some time, at times with moments of exhilaration, at others with a fall in tensions. Now we are in a moment of stability, but between us, we, the parties, are open to dialogue. I hope this atmosphere will continue.’ **Cardinal Erdo pointed to Catholic-Orthodox union in dogmatic issues.** ‘Hence, for me,’ he said, ‘the circumstance that we are not in full and complete communion is a physical pain’” [*emphasis ours - it appears that the Orthodox he has met have not told him of any disagreement on dogmatic issues*].

## ***FAB MONASTICISM?***

BBC NEWS reported on 26th August that “Beatles hits sung by Russian monks in Antarctica will echo round Liverpool’s Anglican cathedral as part of a festival dedicated to peace. It has taken months to track down singers from every continent willing to take part in the Peace, Love And Understanding concert on Saturday. The monks from King George Island have recorded their Fab Four favourites and sent the video to the UK. Organiser, John Keats, said: ‘We have singers from every continent now.’ The monks’ place of worship, Trinity Church, is believed to be the southernmost church in the world and was built near Bellingshausen Station, Russia’s permanent outpost in Antarctica.... To celebrate The Beatles’ legacy, the concert at the cathedral is taken from Paul McCartney’s belief that their music was about peace, love and understanding.” The **Trinity Russian Orthodox Church in Antarctica** is beautifully built in a traditional style akin to the Kizhi wooden churches, yet it would seem from this report that the monks stationed there (Moscow Patriarchate) are not following a traditional monastic life, endeavouring to be “not of this world.” Indeed, though one cannot doubt the obvious talent of the Beatles, surely it is evident to the believer that the “peace, love and understanding,” that they preached by their words and life choices, was not that of the Lord Jesus Christ, but from another source.

In a similar, but even more distressing, vein, ***You Tube*** has a video of a concert called ***Light and Joy*** with prayers involving five religions, those being Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The stage is full of people singing, playing and dancing together in a concert in Russia. The last part features the choir of the **Moscow Patriarchate’s Belgorod Seminary** singing their prayer to the Holy Trinity under the direction of **Protopriest Nicholas Katsu**, done with **the blessing of Archbishop John of Belgorod**: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wchoqfBYSao>>

From this and the two preceding items, it appears that at every level the Moscow Patriarchate’s commitment to an unguarded ecumenism, if not also to the modernist popularism that destroyed so much of the remaining Christian witness in the West, is firmly ensconced in its heart.

Before the unhappy rapprochement of 2007, ROCOR proponents of the submission to Moscow suggested that, within the Patriarchate, they would be a voice of traditionalist witness. That voice has been raised once, we believe, by Metropolitan Hilarion, but otherwise for the voice of conscience, the witness to Orthodoxy, the leaders of the present RO-CA-MP have been curiously and disappointingly muffled.

### ***GLORIFICATION OF ABBESS CATHERINE***

THE CONVENT of the **Lesna Icon of the Mother of God, Provemont, Normandy**, will be celebrating their dedication feast on 9th & 10th October, and this year marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Convent. At the Vigil service on 9th, the foundress of the community, **Abbess Catherine** will be glorified and numbered among the Saints, by a decision of the Synod of their Bishops, the True Russian Orthodox Church. Abbess Catherine died on 15th /28th October, 1925, in Serbia, where the sisters had been given refuge in exile. Her relics have recently be found to be incorrupt. The Convent was founded with the blessing and under guidance of St John of Cronstadt the Wonderworker.

### ***GREEK CHURCH IN BRIGHTON BURNS***

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH of the Holy Trinity, Carlton Hill, Brighton (Ec. Patr.) was severely damaged by fire on the afternoon of Sunday 4th July. The building formerly a Free Church, dating from early Victorian times, was converted for Orthodox use in the 1980s. The interior of the church is said to be completely gutted, and the local press reports suggest that the police suspect the damage was caused by a deliberate criminal attack.



# ***SIR-UK NEWS***

## ***GIFT TO SAINT EDWARD'S***

THE RASOPHORE NUN MONICA from the **Convent of Saint John of Shanghai the Wonderworker, in Egorovka, near Odessa**, visited Brookwood during August, en route to the Holy Land. From her **Abbess, Mother Alexandra**, and sisterhood at Egorovka, she brought a beautiful hand-painted icon of the **Mother of God of Tikvin** for our community. Although we have copies of many of the miraculous icons of the Theotokos in our church, providentially this was one which we did not formerly have and we owe a debt of gratitude to the sisters at Egorovka for this sign of their Christian love.

## ***NEW CHURCH FURNISHINGS***

MARK WILMOT, of the **Broxbarn Joinery in Ottershaw**, has now completed and installed the table, which we commissioned in preparation for the consecration of the church. The table, with panelled sides finished in light oak, was fixed on Friday 20th August, immediately behind the Holy Table, and has been designed to incorporate the fittings for the seven-branched candle stand, the processional Cross, and the liturgical fans. It is free-standing and yet immediately abuts the Holy Table, and so will also hold the hierarchal blessing candles (dikiri and trikiri) during Bishops' services, thus allowing unordained servers to handle them freely. It was work of some considerable skill to accommodate the fittings that we have had there for years, and to negotiate the step in the floor at that point, while allowing us manoeuvring room for changing the Holy Table hangings. Mr. Wilmot's work, which sadly will not be seen by the majority of people, has enhanced the sanctuary area. The new Holy Table, which will be consecrated on 12th September, has been prepared by the same craftsman.

## VISITORS

FR VLADIMIR from Telgava, Latvia, paid us a surprise visit on Wednesday, 18th August n.s. He was accompanied by his teenage son, Joseph, and a parishioner from the Russian Orthodox Church on Harvard Road, West London, where, during the absence of **Fr Nicholay Savchenko**, he is serving as their Russian-language priest. The visitors were shown round the church, and Joseph was particularly pleased that we had a relic of his name saint, Joseph the Betrothed. He had never before had the opportunity to venerate one. They were then given refreshments and discussed certain church matters in the Exhibition Room, before returning to London for the Vigil of the Feast of the Transfiguration at their church. At much the same time, **John Clarke** brought a group of about twenty people, touring the cemetery, who were also shown the church and exhibition.



## PRACTICAL TIP

BY THE TIME, you receive this issue of the magazine, the holiday season will be drawing to a close. In the last two or three decades, holidays seem to have become something of an obsession. Whereas a couple of generations ago, people were fortunate to have one holiday a year, and many had none at all; now it seems that people have two, or perhaps three, a year. No one begrudges people having a break, travelling, etc, but perhaps now is a good time seriously to take stock. Just how much do you spend on your holidays each year, how much time and effort do you invest in them? Everywhere the Church's mission is hampered by lack of means and lack of helpers - does what you give to the Church (in time, money and effort) compare at all with what you devote to your holidays? The greater part of our race lives in poverty, many in starvation. News of disasters reach us daily from all parts of the world. Even here in the affluent West (to use a rather dated term now!), there are charities needing funds urgently to help the old, the sick, the dispossessed. Does what you give in alms, showing the needy the love of God, compare with what you have spent on your holidays? If it does not, isn't this an indication that you are living selfishly and not in a way which manifests Christian love? And yet, do you still call yourself a Christian?