



FROM THE FATHERS

“IT SUITS the old man to seek the present world, to love transitory things through desire, to raise the mind in pride, not to have patience, to ponder through the pain of spite the injury of a neighbour, not to give one’s goods to the poor and to seek those of others to multiply one’s own, to esteem no one solely on God’s account, to render enmity for enmity, to rejoice in a neighbour’s affliction. All these are attributes of the old man and plainly derive from the root of corruption. But he who surmounts these things, and at the precepts of the Lord changes his mind to kindness, of him it is rightly said: *‘The old things are passed away. Behold, all things are made new’* (2 Cor. 5:17).”

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, POPE OF ROME, + 604 A.D.

“ATTEND to yourself in the presence of your brethren, and never try to appear more righteous than they are in any circumstance whatever. For if you do, you will have wrought a double ill: you will sting them by your false and hypocritical zeal, and you will assuredly gain presumption for yourself.”

VENERABLE JOHN CLIMACUS, + C. 650 A.D.

“A HUMBLE man is not he who is self-deprecating and who uses humble words, but he who joyfully endures the deprecations and dishonour that are directed to him by his neighbour.”

AN ANONYMOUS ELDER, QUOTED IN “THE EVERGETINOS”

“A FAULT MAY BE COUNTED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS”

HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN CYPRIAN
OF OROPOS AND FILI

ONE of the countless diamonds of Patristic wealth is the following apophthegm of St. Anthony the Great:

“From one’s neighbour come life and death.”

Do you face your brother with love, humility, and respect? The springs of the life in Christ will be opened unto you. Do you thrash your neighbour’s conscience, scandalize, condemn, and deprecate him? The gate to the Kingdom is shut to you.

A particular weakness that marks devout Christians is condemnation, and indeed the kind based on a cursory judgement, primarily on the strength of suspicions.

We have many times touched upon this subject, but we will now approach another aspect of the matter.

Condemnation assuredly stems from a lack of love and fraternal affection; but, what is more, as the holy Fathers instruct us, man’s superficiality and arrogant trust in his power of discernment lead him to condemn, deprecate, and degrade his brother.

But who are you, wretched man, who anticipates God’s judgement? Have you forgotten that only our Lord, Who is a knower of hearts, sees the hidden and the secret things in man, and that only His judgment is unerring?

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Let us convey here the holy thoughts of Abba Dorotheos, in order to become deeply conscious of the entire subject and to fear to the end the great sin of condemnation.

“It happens that a brother does some things out of simplicity. This simplicity of his, moreover, is more pleasing to God than your entire life. You, however, sit there condemning him and damage your soul. And if it should happen that your brother should fall into sin, how could you know how much he struggled and how much blood he shed before he acted badly, so that ‘this fault is almost found to be as righteousness before God’? For God sees the toil and sorrow which the brother suffered before his fall, and He has mercy on him and forgives him. And while God has mercy on him, you condemn him and lose your soul. How could you know how many tears he shed before God for what he has done? And while you have seen his sin, you are ignorant of his repentance....”

Let us, therefore, abstain from soul-destroying condemnation and let us not become hasty judges—and strict ones, at that—of others.

Let us emulate that holy Elder’s thinking when he saw his brother sinning:

“Woe is me, for today he has fallen, and tomorrow surely it will be I. And he will repent of his sin, but I shall not....”

Let us not be superficial and quick to condemn. As we have seen, it is possible for our fellow man’s fall to be almost righteousness before God.

No one but our Lord knows the other’s intention; and our intention is that which gives weight to our actions.

† *Sunday of the Blind Man, 23 May / 5 June 2005*
Taken from the Synod in Resistance website

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“STOP pleasing yourself and you will not hate your brother; stop loving yourself and you will love God.”

VEN. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, + 662 A.D.

The Young Shepherd

A FOLK TALE WITH A MESSAGE

ONCE upon a time, there was a shepherd who married a shepherd girl. The two of them lived happily in the mountains together with their sheep as company. The girl had a few sheep from her parents who had reposed, and he also had a few sheep of his own. All together they made a good flock. In this way the shepherd and his wife lived a poor life, but a peaceful one.

God gave them a son, so they became even happier with their life, despite the fact that they lived isolated from the world.

The shepherd would only go to the city twice a year: once at Pascha to sell lambs, and once at Christmas to sell wool. His wife and child would travel to the city every two to three years to buy clothes.

The three of them lived on the mountain all throughout the year. Their house was a large cave. They would lay sheep skins on the floor in winter which made the place warm. But, in Summer, they slept outside under an awning made with branches, through which they could see the sky, the stars and the moon.

In time, these people forgot many things about the outside world, but they never forgot to pray every night before going to sleep. Their prayers were always the same: “My Lord, do not have mercy on me.”

After some time the shepherd reposed and two years later so did his wife. Their son, who was now grown up, was left an orphan. He lived in the same way as his parents had lived, with his sheep as company and his flute. At night before going to sleep he never forgot to cross his pillow and say his prayer: “My God, do not have mercy on me.”

That’s how he had learnt it from his mother and that’s how he would say it, for he was illiterate and there was no one to teach him.

One winter day, the weather was very bad. Clouds covered the sky and the wind was so strong that it uprooted many trees. The shepherd had put his sheep in a cave which he used for such occasions. Sitting in the cave with the sheep, he lit a fire to make some herbal tea to warm himself up.

Suddenly a wild storm broke out, it was thundering and lightning, and the sky became very dark. The shepherd was sitting at the opening of the cave, watching the raging of the sea and the foaming waves which looked like snow covered mountains as they were hitting the rocks.

In the foggy storm suddenly he saw a steamboat which was fighting against the rough waves.

“My God!” said the shepherd, “for sure that ship will be crushed on the rocks. I must run to the sea-shore quickly. Perhaps I might be able to help someone.”

He closed the opening of the cave with rocks so that the sheep would not escape, he put on his cloak and started running downhill.

By the time he arrived, the ship had been thrown onto the rocks, but the survivors with much effort had managed to reach land.

The castaways were overcome with joy when they saw the young shepherd in that deserted area, coming to their aid. He spoke to them in a polite manner and consoled them. He told them to have their hope in God, for surely a ship would come past to take them to their homes. He often saw ships passing by.

He took them to the cave and lit a fire for them to dry off, because they were shivering and soaking wet from the sea and the rain. He helped them to recover by offering them warm milk which he had just milked for them, dry bread and cheese. When they recovered, they kept saying again and again: “God felt sorry for us and sent this young shepherd to help us in our hour of need.”

Amongst the castaways there was also a priest. At night when they had all laid down to sleep, they saw the shepherd turning to the East

and doing his cross. They eavesdropped and heard him praying: “My Lord, do not have mercy on me.”

The people were dumbfounded! The priest said to him: “My Christian, what are you saying?!”

“I am praying. That is how my parents taught me to pray. They were both illiterate and just taught me these few words to say: ‘My Lord, do not have mercy on me.’”

“Do you know what you are saying? You are pleading with God not to give you anything good.”

“Don’t say that again,” the others advised him.

“What should I say then?”

The priest told him, “Say: ‘My God, have mercy on the world and also have mercy on me and protect me.’”

The young shepherd wondered to himself: “It seems strange to me that my mother did not teach me that.”

He tried his best to learn this new prayer. The priest said it to him once, and then he repeated it, over and over again until he fell asleep peacefully, satisfied that he had learned something good.

Three days passed. Every night the young shepherd, with the priest’s help, would say his new prayer. On his own, however, he couldn’t manage to say it very well.

On the third night, someone stayed awake until morning, surveying the sea from a distance. Towards dawn he saw a steam boat in the open sea.

“Friends!...” he yelled out with joy, “a ship!”

They all jumped up and ran to the sea. They began lighting fires signalling to those in the ship, they were shouting, lifting their hand up high and waving hankies and branches. The ship’s crew saw them and sounded the horn many times in response to their signal. Soon a small boat, sent by the ship, arrived together with the captain and five sailors.

The castaways were jumping with joy and preparing to get on board, but only a few at a time and very carefully so that the boat would not tip over.

Before leaving, they thanked the good shepherd who had saved their lives, consoled them and offered them hospitality in his cave for three days and three nights. They all kissed him crossways and left. The young shepherd began heading uphill back to his cave.

“Now that they’ve found a ship,” he was thinking, “my soul is at peace. May they go with God’s blessing.”

As soon as he said the word God, the new prayer came into his mind. But he could not remember it very well. He could not even manage to say one word.

“What has happened to me?” he complained. “I’ve already forgotten it. How stupid I am!”

He turned his gaze towards the sea and saw the boat with his friends; at that moment they were already making their way up to the deck.

“Heeeyyyy! my friends!” he shouted. “Wait a minute. Father! I want youuuuuu!...”

In the peaceful atmosphere, his voice managed to reach the peoples’ ears. But what could they do? It was impossible to go back!

He did not lose any time; he threw his cloak on the water, stepped on to it, putting his staff in one of the sleeves, and using it as a steering wheel - and started heading for the ship.

When the people saw this, they were astonished, especially the priest. Because, besides all this, he also saw a halo around the shepherd’s head.

“Lord, have mercy!” he cried out, “This man is a saint!”

In the meantime, the shepherd was getting closer and continually shouting out: “Don’t leave! wait a minute. Father, tell me the prayer that you taught me, because I have forgotten it.”

“Your prayer is the right one. Say that prayer. Forget mine!” That is what the priest called back to him, amazed by the miracle that he was witnessing.

“Didn’t you tell me that my prayer was wrong? What are you telling me now?”

“Now, I have changed my mind. God loves and wants your prayer. That is good and true prayer. The one that your mother taught you.”

The shepherd was confused. But what could he do? “I will not get upset,” he said. “If God wants my prayer, I will say it.”

The young shepherd started making his way back to the shore, using his cloak as he had done before. The castaways, upon seeing this great miracle, were making the sign of the Cross in amazement.

Henceforth, that good shepherd lived a quiet and blessed life together with his sheep and his flute. He would always say the prayer that his mother had taught him. The castaways told what they had witnessed to many - from mouth to mouth [it spread]. I also learned about it, and now I have told you so that you will also tell others.

As for the good shepherd, he continues to live well and happy.

*Translation sent us by the Sisters of the **Sacred Convent of the Holy Angels, Afidnai, Greece.** Unfortunately we have not be able to reproduce the charming illustrations which adorned their handwritten translation.*



“PRAYER is a forgetting of earthly things, an ascent to heaven.
Through prayer we flee to God.”

SAINT NECTARIUS OF PENTAPOLIS,
WONDERWORKER OF AEGINA, +1920 A.D.

TEACHING

OF THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV

ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS

THE BEGINNING of every God-loving work is the calling with faith upon the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for He said: *Without Me, ye can do nothing* (John 15:5). By calling with faith upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we undoubtedly hope to receive mercy and the true life, which is hidden in Him; this springs forth when within a pure heart we call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as if from some ever-flowing Divine fount. (Sts Kallistos and Ignatios).

There are two ways of acquiring the action of the Spirit, which we received mystically in Baptism: generally by the fulfilling of the commandments, by many labours and through much time this gift is revealed, and insofar as we keep the commandments to that degree He clearly shines His radiance upon us; secondly, by the skilful and pure calling upon the Lord Jesus that is the remembrance of God, it is manifest in obedience. By the first way our life is consolidated more slowly, by the second more quickly, through practice, as through arduous and patient mining of the earth to discover gold. (St Gregory of Sinai).

There are three methods of prayer and attentiveness, by means which the soul is either lifted up or cast down. Thus attention must be as closely and inseparably united with prayers, as the body is inseparably tied to the soul, and the one without the other cannot be. Attentiveness must advance first like a guard looking out for foes, and it first must contest against sin and oppose the entry of evil thoughts into the heart; and then after attentiveness prayer must be made, which forthwith destroys and kills all those evil thoughts, with which attentiveness had been already battling, because alone it (attentiveness) cannot exterminate them. The life or death of the soul depend on this warfare of attentiveness and prayer; because if through attentiveness our prayer is pure we progress;

but if we do not take pains to keep it pure, then we are left without a guard, then it will be defiled by evil thoughts, and we shall be made as ones useless, and left without any success. Since, as we said, there are three methods of attentiveness and prayer, it behoves us to explain the features of each method, so that those who desire salvation might choose the better and not the worse.

The characteristics of the first method are these: one standing at prayer raises his hands, eyes and mind to heaven, and represents in his mind the Divine counsels, the heavenly good things, the hosts of the Angels and the abodes of the saints, and in general gathers in his mind all that he has heard from the Divine Scriptures, reflecting on this during prayer, gazing upon heaven and inspiring in his soul desire and love of God, sometimes shedding tears and weeping. In this way his heart little by little becomes puffed up, and he himself considers and imagines that what is happening to him proceeds from the Grace of God for his comfort, and he beseeches God to grant him to continue in this activity. This is a sign of delusion, because what is good is not good, if it is not done in the right way and as it should be. Therefore, such a man, if his living in *hesychia* (stillness) is a complete seclusion, is in danger of losing his mind and becoming deranged. And even if this does not happen to him, it will still be always impossible for him to achieve true vision and virtue and dispassion. Thus those are deceived who see light and radiance with their physical eyes, smell sweet fragrances through the nose, and aurally hear voices, and so on. Some of them become so demonized and disturbed in mind that they wander from place to place. Others accept appearances to them of the demon, who appears transformed into a radiant Angel, and are deluded and remain incorrigible even to the very end, refusing even to accept the counsel of a brother. Others of them, incited by the devil, even commit suicide, throwing themselves off precipices; others strangling themselves. And who can relate the various delusions of the devil, with which he deceives? It is beyond explanation. But from what we have said above, every rational man can be instructed regarding the kind of damage which derives from this first method of attentiveness and prayer. If there are any employing this method, it may be that they can avoid the evils we have illustrated on account of living in the com-

munity life with the brethren, because these evils are much greater for solitaries, but nonetheless they will pass their entire lives without making any progress.

... to be continued.



The Coming Month

LIKE AUGUST, September rejoices in two of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church Year: the **Nativity of the All-Holy Theotokos** (8th / 21st) and the **Exaltation of the Honourable Cross** (14th /27th). Although the latter falls on a Thursday this year, it is kept as a fast day. Even in parish churches, both of these feasts are celebrated with a Vigil Service on the previous evening, that of the Exaltation being a particularly beautiful service, because during it the Cross is brought out for the veneration of the faithful.

Perhaps I might add a personal reminiscence here, because it leads to something instructive. I remember that when I was first Orthodox, my mother attended the Vigil Service for the Cross at the old **Russian Orthodox Church in Exile in Emperor's Gate, Kensington**. Of course, she understood very little as the whole service was in Church Slavonic, though she was moved by the solemnity of the occasion and the piety of the people. As the service was rather long for one unused to the Orthodox typicon, and she was impressed by the numbers in the church for a weekday service (a Tuesday that year), she tried to count them all, and later said that on her side of the church alone there were at least 300 people. Perhaps this is an indication of how our commitment to the Church has fallen in the last forty-five years. There are now very many more Orthodox Christians living in the United Kingdom, but Vigil services are generally very poorly attended. Many people seem to think that a weekly attendance at the Liturgy is all that is required. We notice here that even on Sundays, although we have Mattins immediately before

the Liturgy, so that those who come from afar can more easily attend at least part of it, most still contrive to arrive only just before the Liturgy begins (if they bother to manage that!). Sadly we are following the course that the Roman Catholics took about two generations ago. Their church commitment shrank to “Mass only,” and as an inevitable consequence the numbers of practising Roman Catholics has fallen dramatically. If we Orthodox do not make strenuous efforts, we shall suffer the same fate. Liturgy every Sunday, with perhaps the Christmas Vigil and a service in Holy Week, is not enough and will not sustain us. We should always strive to maximize our commitment to Christ and His Church, and not hope, vainly as it happens, to float through on a minimalist programme.

This minimalist approach also breeds two other ills. Firstly, we ourselves are spiritually starved, because it is primarily in Vespers and in Mattins (the two services which make up the greater part of the Vigil on most feasts) that we are given teaching about the feast being celebrated, and secondly we set a bad example to others, who think that such minimalism is normal or acceptable practice.

In past years we have said something about the Great Feasts, so having, I hope, given encouragement for better Vigil attendance, let us turn to the Saints celebrated in September.

A Miracle of the Archangel Michael is celebrated annually on 6th / 19th September. In Phrygia, not far from the city of Hierapolis, in a place called Cherotopa, there was a church dedicated to the Archangel Michael. It is said that the holy Apostle John the Theologian passed by this place and prophesied that the Archangel would be honoured there. Near the church there flowed a healing spring, also dedicated to the Archangel. The church itself had been built through the efforts of a citizen of Laodicea, in thanks to God and to the Archangel Michael for the healing of his mute daughter with waters from the spring. The maiden received the gift of speech at the spring after being told by the local Christians to pray to the Archangel. Following this miracle, the father, his daughter and his entire family were baptized, although previously they had all been pagans. Thereafter, as a thank-offering the father built the church there and dedicated it to the Archangel Michael. Christians and pagans

began coming to the spring for healing. Many of the pagans renounced their idol-worship and turned to faith in Christ. A man named Archippus took up the ascetic life there, and cared for the church for over sixty years, from his youth to deep old age. Through his preaching of Christ and by the example of his God-pleasing life, St Archippus brought many pagans to faith in Christ. Pagans who hated Christians and the witness of the godly Archippus, who never left the church and who served as an example to all who served Christ, decided to destroy the church and at the same time to rid themselves of Archippus' influence. To this end, they diverted two rivers that ran close to each other in the hills above the church. The new watercourse was such that the torrent of the combined streams would rush down the hills and obliterate the little church there. St. Archippus fervently prayed to the Archangel Michael, asking him to spare the holy place. As the waters plummeted down the slope towards the church, the Archangel Michael appeared and, striking the rock with his staff, opened a wide fissure in the hillside, into which the torrent disappeared, without harming the church. At the sight of such a wonderful miracle, the pagans fled in terror. St. Archippus and the Christians assembled in the church praised God, and offered thanks unto Holy Archangel Michael for his protection. The site of the miracle became known as Chonae, which means "fissure" or "plunging" in remembrance of this miracle. The miracle occurred in the fourth century.

The Venerable Coprius of Palestine (24th September / 7th October) was born at a time when pagan Arab tribesmen were raiding Christian villages in Palestine and the Christians were forced to flee. The saint's mother was pregnant and about to give birth when one of these raids caused her and her fellow-villagers to run for protection to the Monastery of Saint Theodosius. However, she did not reach the monastery before her time came, and she gave birth to her baby on a dung heap outside the monastery, and died in giving birth. When the threat from the raiders had passed, the fathers of the monastery found the baby there, and took him to Saint Theodosius, who named him Coprius, which means "dung," because he was found on the dung heap. The fathers fed him with goats' milk and cared for him, and he stayed in the monastery all his life. He was distinguished for his innocence and godly simplicity, and

when he came of age, he received the angelic tonsure as a monk. Such was the excellence that he achieved that he became like Adam before the fall and was given a loving authority even over normally wild and fierce beasts, just as Adam had dominion over the animals in Paradise of old. Once the venerable one found a bear eating the lettuces in his garden, and simply took it by the ear and lead it out of his garden, telling it that if it did that again it would be punished through the prayers of Saint Theodosius. The bear did not repeat the offence. On another occasion, a bear attacked and wounded a donkey that was carrying wood for the saint; he reprimanded it and constrained it to carry the wood itself and to do all the work that the donkey normally did until the latter recovered fully. Once also Saint Coprius was working in the monastery kitchen and a soup that he was cooking started to boil over and spill on to the stove and waste. The Saint, having no spoon or ladle handy, plunged his hand into the boiling soup to stir it, without suffering any harm. More wondrous than these outer manifestations of his sanctity were his continuance in prayer and his abiding in the monastic discipline from the day of his birth until his repose at the age of ninety. Just before his blessed repose, Saint Theodosius, who had naturally predeceased him, appeared to him, calling him to join him in the joy of Paradise.



ON CHURCH MINISTERS

OUR Synod in Resistance communities in this country are in desperate need of more clergy, because we have only two priests and a deacon serving three communities and a large scattered flock of mostly elderly and infirm people who do not live near our three churches, but do need pastoral care and visits. We are therefore heartened that **His Grace Bishop Ambrose** has blessed the ordination of one of our parishioners to help in the ministry. It is hoped, that when the Bishop celebrates the Divine Liturgy for us on **Saint Edward's Day** this Autumn (Sunday 16th September, n.s.), he will tonsure a reader and make him a subdeacon,

thus blessing the beginning of his ministry in the Church. One of our more perceptive parishioners has suggested that before this we include here some information on the readership and sub-diaconate. And so, we offer the following attempt:-

There are five degrees of the clergy: reader, subdeacon, deacon, presbyter (priest), and Bishop. The first two of these are sometimes referred to as the lower orders, and the last three are the higher orders, although the Russians have a rather nicer nomenclature, calling the former church ministers and the latter priestly ministers. This distinction is evident in the way that they are set aside for their ministry, for the Bishop lays hands on the former in a ceremony performed outside the sanctuary, but the priestly ministers are ordained within the sanctuary. St Simeon of Thessalonica mentions that the three orders ordained within the sanctuary, deacon, priest and Bishop, are so ordained as an image of the Holy Trinity.

Readers are usually tonsured during the Hours before the Divine Liturgy. After the chanting of hymns to the Three Great Hierarchs, the Bishop tonsures the hair of the candidate presented to him in the form of a Cross, as is done at Baptism. He then vests him with a short cape, which just covers the shoulders, and which is in present day practice only used on this occasion, and which represents his coming under the yoke of the ministry. The Bishop prays that the Lord will enable him “with all wisdom and understanding to exercise the study and reading of the Divine words, preserving them in blamelessness of life.” He then opens the Apostle Book (The Acts and Epistles), and the reader reads a short portion from it, after which he takes off the cape and is vested with a *sticharion*. The Bishop then reads an exhortation, reminding him that this is the first degree of the priesthood, and that he should peruse the Scriptures daily, that he should live chastely, holily and uprightly. The Bishop then announces to the congregation that the candidate is become a reader. It is his duty thereafter to read and perhaps to chant in church, and to bring others to a knowledge of the Scriptures. Usually, unless they are appointed to the choir, readers also act as altar-servers during the Divine services. When a reader receives the Holy Gifts in the Divine Liturgy, he does so vested in his *sticharion*, indicating that we, each and every one of us, will be judged according to our ministry in the Church.

Outside church, the reader wears the cassock. If not already married, those set aside as readers are permitted to marry (once), but their wife must be an Orthodox Christian.

Subdeacons are likewise appointed during the Hours. The candidate is vested not only with the *sticharion*, but also with an *orarion* (stole) which he always wears crossed across his chest and back, in the same way as the deacon does when he approaches to receive the Divine Mysteries. The *sticharion*, the servers' tunic, is an ankle-length vestment with wide sleeves, and represents the pure and spotless life that a church minister should strive for, the spiritual joy that he derives from that, and the grace which covers him in his ministry. The *orarion* symbolizes the subdeacon's angelic ministry at the Divine Liturgy, for the Cherubim fold their wings and veil their faces before the Throne of God. The Bishop lays his hand upon the candidate's head and reads a prayer over him. The subdeacon usually then holds the basin and ewer for the washing of the Bishop's hands in preparation for the Divine Liturgy, and remains holding it until the Cherubic Hymn, when he will perform the same ministry. A man, after becoming a sub-deacon, having thus dedicated his life to the Lord, is not permitted to marry. Usually for this reason, young unmarried men are not made subdeacons, unless they are monastics. The subdeacon's particular ministry is to serve at hierarchal services, but when the Bishop is not present, he continues much the same ministry as the reader. He also cares for the sacred vessels, vestments and other holy things in the church.

Properly the sub-diaconate is the first order to wear the *orarion*. In fact, one of the canons of the Council of Laodicea (No. 23) specifically says that "readers and cantors must not wear *oraria* and thus chant and read." However, in the modern Russian practice, readers are sometimes awarded the right to wear an *orarion*, and in fact one finds incidents of servers who are not even tonsured as readers being permitted to wear them. This seems to be simply to "add to the splendour" of the ceremonies (!?), but does rather undermine one function of the sacred vestments in indicating the exact ministry of the person wearing them in the Church.

We hope that, with the Bishop's blessing, ordinations to the diaconate and priesthood will follow in due course, and will then try to say something about those priestly orders.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“WHILE I was reading it I came across something that has been bothering me with regards to the religion’s view on women, since I am quite a feminist, and hope that maybe you can answer some questions that I have. I read on Saint Calinic from Cernica that he interdicted women to enter the holy place he had built. Why this attitude to women and why are we inferior and have to obey to the ‘mighty’ men? Are we paying for what Eve did? Is that fair? Isn’t God fair and loves all his children the same? It all seems to be a bit of a patriarchal ‘artifact’ to dominate women and don’t believe God shares this believe. Shouldn’t Adam be the one to blame for being week and falling in temptation? If there’s something to learn from Adam and Eve is that men are week and they blame women for it. I do apologize if my opinions are offending but I am just expressing an internal anxiety of mine which started with my father treating me and my sister differently from my brothers, making us feel inferior and not good enough just because we weren’t boys, and then realized that the Bible and Church more or less has the same view. We didn’t choose to be born women as black people didn’t choose to be black or gay people, at least some of them, did not choose to be gay since it’s based on hormonal imbalance or other biological processes. Therefore, we should not be discriminated on being what we are, what God made us. Would love if you could answer some of these questions for me. The only reason I am bothering you with this is because I got the impression you are easy to talk to and very accessible although you did made several jokes regarding women!” - L.C., Doncaster, Yorkshire. (Our correspondent’s English was not perfect, but we have left her letter as she wrote it; it is perfectly

clear what she means, and her command of English is much better than our grasp of her native language!).

WELL, you didn't listen to the end of Liturgy talk I gave on this very subject a few weeks back, did you? I will try and summarize it. But do promise NOT to be a feminist! It is just as destructive as any kind of masculine superiority, and in fact has done more harm to women in our society. Regarding jokes: I hope men can continue making jokes about women and women making jokes about men (if affectionate and not malicious),.... that is natural and healthy. Political correctness is not, and is a breeding ground for resentment.

First of all, let us be clear, any form of discrimination which lowers people, whether it is because of their sex, their sexuality or their racial background is wrong. We are not all equal as some people think, of course. I am not as clever as Prof. Hawking, or as powerful as Mr. Putin, or as handsome as George Clooney, as fit as David Beckham, as fast as Usain Bolt, or as strong as Arnold Schwarzenegger, or even as humorous as Ken Dodd. But we are all of equal worth.

I think too that you have to distinguish sharply between popular concepts and what the Church teaches. Even among Orthodox peoples there are many misconceptions, and ideas get passed on which are not true teaching but simply distortions of that teaching, and it seems that many of the people in South Eastern Europe, being under Turkish rule for generations, took on some Muslim concepts from the Turks.

Having said that, women are not generally allowed into the altar in church, not because they are in any way inferior.... in many ways they are superior to men. Usually they are better at bearing and giving birth to babies, they are tougher, and they are better at breast-feeding! Nor is it in any way passing on the blame from Adam and Eve - that is an idea which has come through from the Roman Catholics and their wrong idea of original sin.

First note, I said "generally" - women do go into the altar on occasion. Apparently in Romania, when a church is consecrated everyone

goes in to reverence the Holy Table, at Pascha in the Holy Land they do also, and more generally in Convents there are usually nuns that go into the altar to help serve. In our small Convent in London there are two who do so.

The reason why the occasions and places when and where women do this are fewer than those when men are permitted to, is nothing to do with blame, or inferiority, but simply to do with their rôles in life. A woman's rôle is different from that of a man. And in fact men are not allowed to go into the altar unless they have a reason to be there, i.e. they serve as clergymen or as altar-servers.

I realize that in common practice, through misuse, this is often blurred. I remember being quite shocked when I served in a Russian church years ago, when the men-folk, usually the older ones too, seemed to think that they could enter the altar as of right, and would come in before the service and just talk there. This is wrong, - as wrong as discrimination, - but it does give the impression that men are allowed in and women not, and hence those worries that you have had about inferiority, blame, sexism, etc.

Regarding St Calinic, I do not have the reference, but very often in mon-astic communities, if it is a men's monastery, women are not permitted entry, and if it is a women's monastery, men are not permitted to go in. This is just to avoid scandals and temptations and has nothing to do with discrimination. Back in the seventies, I spent five weeks in Greece at a women's monastery and we were only allowed into the church and then had to stand behind the *iconostas*. We were fed at a room by the gate, and put up in a separate building outside the Convent.

Remember always that the greatest saint in the Orthodox Church is a woman, and that women can freely take up the greatest vocation in the Orthodox Church: monasticism. And a thought on racism: I once had a convert to Orthodoxy who is in the Greek New Calendar Church, and has gone rather overboard in "Greekifying," email me rather disparagingly about the Turks, calling them "Asians," as if this were a sign of their inferiority. I replied that, as an Orthodox Christian, I worship an

Asian, because our Saviour, Jesus Christ, was an Asian. It shut him up. Actually a vast number of the saints are Asians too: St John Chrysostom, St Nicolas, St George, St Ephraim the Syrian, St Justin the Philosopher, etc, etc.

Hope these thoughts help a little.



NEWS SECTION

FIRE AT HILANDAR MONASTERY

LATE in the afternoon of 7th August, a forest fire broke out on Mount Athos, threatening the **Sacred Monastery of Hilandar**. Fire-fighters and the Greek army were drafted in to contain the fire. Their task was aided by the fact that, after a disastrous fire in 2004, which destroyed a large section of the ancient monastery, an artificial lake was created nearby to provide water to help contain any subsequent fire. The Fathers of the Monastery naturally resorted to the prayers of the All-Holy Theotokos, the Protectress of the Holy Mountain, taking with them the Wonder-working Icon of **the Mother of God of Three Hands**, which had belonged to **Saint John of Damascus**, and had been given to **St Sava of Serbia** by the Fathers of the **Lavra of St Sabbas the Sanctified in Palestine**, and it is reported that clouds gathered and heavy rains fell miraculously impeding the spread of the fire and sparing the monastery.

METROPOLITAN JONAH RESIGNS

THE First Hierarch of the Orthodox Church in America, **His Eminence, Metropolitan Jonah** resigned on 6th July n.s. It is reported that his resignation was required by his fellow hierarchs, who were apparently disquieted by his manner of administration. As yet no successor has been named, and rather oddly his resignation does not appear

to have been mentioned at all (not even a note of conventional regret!) on the websites of the **Moscow Patriarchate** (which granted the OCA Autocephaly in 1970, and is, thus, their Mother Church) or of the **Russian Orthodox Church Abroad - Moscow Patriarchate** (ROCA-MP), which since its submission to the Patriarchate in May 2007, must in some sense now be a Sister Church of the OCA. This is the more odd in that this year Metropolitan Jonah had celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the ROCA-MP cathedrals in Washington D.C., and Mayfield, Pennsylvania.

“PUSSY RIOT”

THE TRIAL of the “Pussy Riot” protesters has received world-wide media coverage. It has to be noted that their original demonstration in the **Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow** was a disgusting outrage. Perhaps their purpose in protesting against corruption in State and Church in Russia was well intentioned, but the means they resorted were an affront to believers, their acts sacrilegious, and the words they sang blasphemous. Having said that, it appears that the authorities have treated them in return in a correspondingly appalling way, and in so doing have only brought them more attention. The “lady” who, in Ukraine, appeared before **His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow** bare-breasted with **“Kill Kyrill”** inked on to her back, acted in a similarly atrocious way, but apparently the Ukrainian authorities sentenced her to fifteen days detention, and her protest is forgotten. The Moscow authorities held the Pussy Rioters in detention for months even before trying them. Conspiracy theories already abound. One suggestion was that they were somehow put up to it by Prime Minister Medvedev, who did not wish his former Presidency to be overshadowed by Putin’s renewed one (?). The rôle of the Patriarchate itself seems ambiguous. Its representatives were calling for a three-year sentence, before the women were tried, and as soon as a two-year sentence was imposed they made pleas for mercy! Run with the hare: hunt with the hounds! One wonders too if, when they were in prison before their trial, any of the Moscow clergy so keen to voice an opinion about their outrage ever visited them. The whole mishandled case has now sadly sparked similar unseemly protests: a bare-breasted

woman cutting down a Roman Catholic crucifix, protests during the services in the RC Cathedral in Cologne. All this can only, and probably will only, bring sorrow to Christians. Much of the blame for that sorrow must lie at the door of the Moscow State and Church authorities for the way in which they handled this deplorable incident.

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SIR-UK NEWS

NAMING OF A NEW BABY

THE INFANT SON of **Daniel and Andrea Miertea** of Forest Hill, South East London, was named **Matthew**, in honour of the **Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew**, when the first and eighth day prayers were read at their home on Monday 7th / 20th August. After the naming ceremonies, the family kindly offered Fathers Alexis and Sabbas supper in their garden pavilion.

BURIAL AT SAINT EDWARD'S

ON Saint Panteleimon's Day, Thursday, 27th July / 9th August, **Alla Popova** (civil name: Lula Ataulovna Mamedova) was laid to rest in St Edward's Cemetery. She had died in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on 28th July n.s. The funeral was chanted by **Archpriest Vladimir Vilgerts** of the **Russian Orthodox Church of the Dormition on Harvard Road, West London**, assisted by a reader and two members of their church choir. Before the last kiss, Fr Vladimir preached a short but moving and instructive homily. After the interment, in honour of his spouse, Alla's husband, **Stefan Popov**, a renowned cellist, gave a recital in the hall of the Old Mortuary, accompanied by a friend on a keyboard. A mercy meal was then provided by the family for all the people who had come to the funeral. May the handmaid of God, Alla, find rest with the Saints and *Eternal Memory*, and may those bereaved by her death find comfort.

VOLUNTEERS

IN THE LAST MONTH, **James Harrin** of Swindon came and serviced our tractor for us, and **Terence Smith** from the Far North came and stayed a few days, and restored and painted the gate by the church, and helped with much of the work around the Brotherhood. Our thanks to them both for their dedication and help. God bless them for it!

VISITORS

4th August: Fr **CEconomos Philemon Herodotou** and his presbyter, **Sotira**, from Cyprus visited and chanted a memorial service at the grave of his sister-in-law, **Yvonne-Maria Nicolaou**. Fr Philemon, who is in the country for medical treatment, also gave us an icon of the **Great Martyr Barbara**, to whom his church in Cyprus is dedicated.

Later the same day, **His Eminence Archbishop Anatoly of Kerch** and two parishioners from the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Ennismore Gardens, London**, chanted a *pannikhida* at the grave of **Mother Serafima**, it being the anniversary of her repose. After the service His Eminence and his parishioners were received in the Exhibition Room, and we had intended to offer them hospitality, but they anticipated us, because they had brought their own food. They shared it with us, and left some for us to eat later!

11th August: **Graham Lambert** led about 25 members of the **Railway Ramblers** to see the church. They stayed about 20 minutes and were given a short introduction before continuing on their ramble.

12th August: **David Broomfold** and **John Clarke** led a group of about 30 members of the **Fleet and Farnborough Family History Group** to see the church. They were given a talk by Fr Niphon and asked many questions.

13th August: **Andrew Watson** brought a group of ten artists to see the church and to paint it. Perhaps unfortunately for them they came when it was covered in scaffolding.

25th August: **Gail Stewardson** brought **Mother Johanna** of the **Skete in Kamenki** of the **Convent of Sts Mary and Martha Convent** (originally founded by **Saint Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia**) to visit the church. Mother Johanna is a spiritual daughter of the renowned elder, **Fr Iliya**, who is reported also to be the confessor of His Holiness Patriarch Kyril of Moscow.

LETTER IN “THE DAILY MAIL”

ON 15th August, the “*Daily Mail*” published a letter asking what the outcome of the court case about the sacred relics of **St Edward the Martyr** had been. The reply they published was surprisingly (for the contemporary press) very nearly correct, and they accompanied it with a picture of the sculpted icon of the Saint on the north face of our church. As a result of this, a number of “Mail” readers among our correspondents were exposed (!), and, more positively, a number of people subsequently came to visit the Shrine here.



PRACTICAL TIP

IN OUR LAST NUMBER, we mentioned attending quietly to the reading of the Thanksgiving Prayers. We should also mention that everyone should attend quietly to the reading of the prayers before Holy Communion. At this time, there is naturally some movement in church, because those about to receive the Holy Mysteries venerate the icons at this point, but this movement should not be a signal for people simply to sit down, and certainly not to engage in conversations. And, of course, if you are sitting at this point because of old age or infirmity, you should, if you are able, stand up immediately the Holy Gifts are presented for the faithful to receive, and remain standing until They are returned to the altar.