



FROM THE FATHERS

“INCENSE even of itself is fine and sweet-smelling, but gives particular evidence of its fragrance at the time when it is applied to the fire; so too is prayer fine of itself, but becomes finer and more sweet-smelling when offered with ardour and glowing spirit, when the soul becomes a censer and lights a burning fire.”

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, + 407 A.D.

“NOW THE PRIEST burns incense not only in the morning but also in the evening. For incense is burned in the morning so that whenever we are disposed to begin a good work with God’s inspiration we will invoke His help in order to bring it to completion, and it is burned in the evening so that, when we have finished the things we began so well, we will return prayers of thanks to the One Who has given us everything that we have received... *He shall burn an everlasting incense before the Lord throughout your generations* (Ex. 30:8), because it is doubtless necessary that the soul should not turn away from prayer and lamentation to idle words or deeds. Even when its prayer is finished, it should maintain the same vigour of devotion that it assumed in prayer, in accordance with the example of Hannah, of whom it was said that *after she had prayed, her countenance was no longer changed in diverse things*” (1 Sam. 1:18).

VEN. BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

The Refined Life of Observant Orthodox Traditionalism

TRANSCRIBED FROM A SERMON BY
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WHAT exactly is the observant life of an Orthodox traditionalist? We might approach this question by asking two other questions: first, “What constitutes ‘observance’ for the Orthodox Christian?”; and second, “What is Orthodox traditionalism?”

Observance is inseparable, in fact, from the issue of traditionalism. Following the teachings and instructions of St. Gregory Palamas, an observant Orthodox Christian is one who follows Holy Tradition: the laws of God, beginning with the Ten Commandments, the commandments of love set forth by Christ Himself (that is, to love God above all else and to love one’s neighbour as one loves himself), and the Sacred Canons of the Church. St Gregory, in various writings, also tells us, in keeping with the consensus of the Fathers, that the traditions and customs that constitute the Holy Tradition of the Church must be observed *in toto*—not selectively and, as is usually the case today, with a self-serving application of the oft-made distinction between Holy Tradition and “traditions” with a small “t,” the latter supposedly a matter of choice and the former binding. While the distinction between Holy Tradition and certain ecclesiastical customs of an incidental kind, or small “t” traditions, can be useful, it is in fact unknown to the Church Fathers in their definitive and punctilious comments about Holy Tradition *per se*. Moreover, it assuredly has no application to inspired Canons concerning matters of faith and of revealed doctrine. Indeed, at a universal or encompassing level,

St. John Chrysostomos says of what has been handed down to us in the Church the following: “It is tradition, ask no more.” Observance also goes beyond the law and touches on our spiritual commitment, our loyalty to those who serve as our spiritual guides, our fidelity to the living Body of Christ (those who are our co-believers), and, of course, beyond that to all men and women, whatever their religion. Indeed, if we are called to be a separate and *sui generis* Christian “race,” the “New Israel,” it is for the purpose of also calling all others to participate in that to which we are separately and peculiarly called. These things, too, are part of the Holy Tradition which we are enjoined to observe.

As to the matter of traditionalism itself, there are those who quite wrongly believe that it is enough to be Orthodox: that a mere confession of Orthodoxy is the *sine qua non* of παράδοσις, or of receiving that which has been passed down from Christ, the Apostles, and the Fathers themselves, and that *Orthodox traditionalism* is a conceptual redundancy. This is faulty reasoning that is sadly meant, in most cases, to excuse one from all that follows on the confession of correct doctrine (ορθοδοξία); that is, from *all that is demanded by the requisite practice and observance of the Faith*, or orthopraxy (ορθοπραξία). Tradition is, in fact, an active process of direct engagement with life. It is a dynamic passing-on of the very empirical experience of the Church. Indeed, the term “traditionalism” describes that *inseparable bond between confession and practice*, which correctly captures the πληρότης της πίστεως, or the “fullness of the Faith.” Any division between faith and works, confession and effort, and believing and living is what has, in fact, separated those who are Orthodox in name and confession from the True Orthodox faithful, the latter distinguished by the spirit of traditionalism underlying their witness. In the same way that they dismiss Orthodox traditionalism as conceptually redundant, the former also accuse True Orthodox Christians of pleonasm and tautologism, arguing that “Orthodoxy” is by its very definition “true.” However, only when one comes to understand

that observance brings true belief and its application in practical action *together* does he come to see that there is a nominal Orthodoxy of mere confession and a True Orthodoxy *of essence* that entails the implementation of the truths of the Faith in *observance*. As the late Father Georges Florovsky observes, it is not enough, in claiming Orthodoxy, to recite a correct credal formula or to adhere to a correct theology; rather, one must attain to the *φρόνημα των Πατέρων*, or the “mind of the Fathers,” through the dianoetic, noetic, and practical application of Orthodox Truth as a “theology of facts”; in short, one must make the Faith empirical by way of experiencing and living it. One must be *truly* Orthodox.

It is on the basis of all that I have said about observance and traditionalism that the Church Fathers, in unanimity (as though with one mind—*unus animus*) and with adamant resolve, tell us that Orthodoxy is not just about how we believe, but about how we walk, talk, dress, and conduct ourselves; and this not only in Church and in private, but in our worldly lives, in our work, and even in the entertainment and diversions which we allow ourselves. A correct confession of Faith without these things—and, assuredly, without strict, sincere fasting, without prayer (incessant inner prayer, moreover), and without adherence to the Sacred Canons and Divine Traditions of the Church (if not by their exactitude, at least in the *desire* for that perfect adherence and not in a spirit that seeks every reason to avoid perfect observance in the service of personal pleasure and unbridled worldliness)—is of no avail to us. We will be judged “where we are found,” as a spiritual axiom has it, and not by our words and pronouncements; i.e., we will be judged by our spiritual state, by our love for Holy Tradition and observance, by our love for our fellow man, and by our quickness to find fault in ourselves and not in others (another aspect of observance and one of the highest forms of self-denial). If we lie, slander others, justify ourselves at the cost of denigrating our brothers, and seek that which serves the self, we will have by nature deviated from the spirit of observance and will find ourselves inwardly estranged from the “Faith of our Fathers” (the Faith as it

is transmitted in spiritual succession), however “exact” our confession and however much we may feign a certain public or “external” commitment to traditional observance. We will be, as the Desert Fathers tell us in a frequently-cited simile, like trees with beautiful leaves that, nonetheless, bear no fruit.

Having said what Orthodox observance is, and having commented on the attributes of the observant traditionalism of True Orthodoxy, I would like to comment in greater detail on the refined way of life that the truly observant Orthodox Christian can live, seeking therein, in this imperfect world, perfect transformation and union, by His Grace, with God (which constitutes salvation, as the Orthodox Church envisions it). In so doing, I do not mean to chastise anyone (for were I to do so, I would have to chastise myself first); nor are my critical comments offered in the rude spirit of condemnatory judgmentalism that, sadly, too often marks putative Orthodox traditionalism today. My purpose is to emphasize that, in seeking higher spiritual things with sometimes woefully immature zeal, we must constantly seek to *refine* ourselves, both spiritually and in our daily interactions with the world and with others. Never should we forget the centrality, in our observance of the Faith, of good manners; of obeisance to our spiritual (and, indeed, social and political) superiors; of a sense of decorum; and of the ability to rise above, first, our own pettiness and, second, the smallness of our detractors, whether the meanness of the latter (or our own, for that matter) be motivated by jealousy, animus, demonic energies of one kind or another, or the tragic tactics of contemporary Church politics and the human foibles and deficits that often mar and stain the honour of service to the Church. If we seek refinement as a first step in our higher spiritual pursuits, we will not only avoid the crude and fetid weaknesses to which I have referred, but we will, in fact, find that, in the same way that the ills of the body and soul are often interconnected (sometimes, by God’s Providence, in a positive way, at other times, because of our sins, in a negative way), so the external behaviours of the Christian often impede or enhance him in his search for virtue. Refine-

ment can be *a path to enlightenment*: a first step, in the mundane realm, that can facilitate and foster spiritual growth.

Orthodox traditionalists have, for some curious reason, developed the perfidious idea that a genuine commitment to the Faith somehow makes them the “guardians” of that Faith, if not upholders and confessors of the Truth. Spouting with what is frequently disingenuous piety the admonitions and chastisements of the great Fathers and Confessors of Orthodoxy, but lacking the Grace and wisdom with which the Church Fathers utter such things, these unwisely zealous individuals create an image of crassitude and vulgarity that is wholly foreign to the refinement that characterizes the whole of the Orthodox Patristic tradition. Lacking charity, hospitality, and external social graces, they defile the very traditions that they imagine themselves to be defending. Worse yet, they often appoint themselves public procurators of the Faith, imagining that, before correcting themselves and acknowledging their own sins, they have the right—and *even responsibility*—to act as investigators and judges of the clergy, their fellow believers, and the various “heretics” and “defilers of the Faith” upon whom, as one Saint expresses it, they presumptuously believe that they have the right to “rain down fire” from on high. They frequently go beyond criticism, beyond the sharpness of words sometimes needed to correct the errant, and become contumelious critics of everyone, using crude, insulting, and rude language from the streets in the name of the Faith. This lack of refinement is one of the telltale signs of spiritual immaturity, of a lack of discernment and discretion, and of spiritual delusion. It is absolutely inconsistent with Orthodox observance and is characteristic of crass and uncouth behaviour. It must be avoided if one wishes to pursue an observant Orthodox life.

Another divergence from observance which has become a part of so-called traditionalism is the habit of inquiring into the personal lives of others. Refined, civilized people are taught from their childhood not to stare at others in public, to mind to their own affairs, and not to be overly curious about the personal lives

of others. Even the Church Canons advise us not to be overly curious about the “personal” failings of our Church leaders. Yet, in this age of the emergence of unrefined and ill-bred habits, not only are such standards of comportment ignored, but nosiness is widely accepted. Almost universally, people “Google” one another nowadays, trying to collect, in their voyeuristic perversity, information on others. And this is done in the Church, as well, as though some hypocritical “need to know” or the “right of the People of God” somehow negated the Lord’s message that such things should be of no concern to those whom He calls to “follow Me.” Psychologists and psychiatrists, *in the context of their professional duties and in the defined arena of their offices*, may have the right to pry into the personal affairs of others. But this, aside from entailing strict standards of confidentiality which, when violated, can lead to the suspension by state medical boards of one’s license to practice, is for the purpose of helping others and of curing their ills, and has nothing to do with prurient interest in the weaknesses and sins of one’s fellow man. The Christian is called to a different kind of therapy: that of covering the sins of others and of attending first and foremost to his own affairs, avoiding, as the Fathers advise us, the deadly sin of being overly curious about “our brother’s sins.” A sign of refined people is that they keep their private affairs to themselves and that they respect as sacred the privacy of others. This is also one of the marks of an observant traditionalist, despite the contrary behaviours that prevail among so-called traditionalists.

At a more mundane level, this forgoing refinement in behaviour is accompanied by traits which observant Orthodox should pursue and cultivate, since they both support and reflect proper demeanour. An observant Orthodox Christian should constantly strive to live an enriching and elevated life, reading good literature, listening to uplifting music, enjoying good art, and pursuing intelligent conversation. This applies not only to spiritual reading, Church psalmody, Iconography, and spiritual discourse, but also to the secular realm. Though a crude kind of anti-intellectualism

has surfaced—and wholly improperly and inappropriately—in the Church under the guise of Orthodox observance and traditionalism, it behooves us to refine the mind and the intellect (the dianoetic faculty) with the same care with which we seek to develop our noetic or spiritual faculties. There is, of course, nothing demonic or “worldly” about good literature, classical music, traditional folk music, uplifting and inspiring art (including even some of the more tasteful traditions of modern art), or dressing and grooming oneself in a style which, while avoiding the caprice of changing modes, excessive hair cutting and styling, and gaudy ornamentation, is attractive, dignified, classical, traditional, and modest (in terms of avoiding the accentuation of the body in a cheap and vulgar way). Quite to the contrary, these things can help develop one’s spiritual sensitivities. If there is anything demonic to be said about them, it is that demonic blindness can lead one to imagine that they are somehow evil or inappropriate, since their contribution to the refinement of the soul is so direct and indisputable, both from the psychological and spiritual standpoint. To be sure, attendance at concerts and dignified, sober entertainment are not evil; they can be beneficial to the soul. This is also true of other social activities, such as preparing and enjoying good meals, setting a proper table where they can be enjoyed, and engaging in social conversation in settings that are elevating and formal. These things are not invitations to gluttony and worldliness, but are, in fact, means by which these sins can be checked and monitored. An observant life in the Orthodox tradition calls us to raise ourselves up and to become noble, not only in spirit, but in our daily comportment and activities.

Aside from these general traits that the observant Orthodox traditionalist should cultivate, there is a very specific activity which all Orthodox—if not the heterodox population, as well—should avoid as destructive to a refined way of life. It behooves even a *marginally civilized* individual to avoid the “public life” of the Internet, a wonderful contemporary tool for intellectual resources, if rightly used, but an increasingly obscene and depraved public platform for discussion that is destroying minds and souls.

On the Internet, one sees letters of condemnation, open attacks, references to matters that even two decades ago would have never have been mentioned—let alone discussed—in polite circles or in public, but which are now approached as though they were matters of perfectly upright concern. One encounters opinions expressed by persons who, were they under peer review or scrutiny, would, much to the benefit of society, never be heard. Individuals with no intellectual gifts whatsoever, no spiritual learning, and mediocre educational credentials, puffed up in their fantasies, put forth ideas that mislead their readers, introducing into the supposed body of knowledge, unfortunately, nonsense, inane speculation, and idiosyncratic personal views seldom worthy of a second thought, often while challenging sober spiritual voices or trained and competent scholars. Yet other contributors to the sewer of Internet gossip are beset by lascivious interests in the lives and affairs of others (Internet voyeurs and gossips); the mentally ill, sociopaths, borderline personalities seeking an identity in the relative anonymity of online “life,” and bored misfits, who can assail others with impunity in the fantasy world of cyberspace, hold court in various forums and lists, violating the protocols of civilized behaviour and returning anyone who indulges or shares their mental and social deficits to the primitivism of what Darwinians would call pre-social simianity. One cannot imagine the possibility of being an observant Orthodox traditionalist and participating in such things. Those who do, whether out of pathological interests or proclivities, or because they are addicted to the religious pornography of the Internet, are slowly destroying their Orthodox consciences and confirming arguments for the social devolution of man.

At the level of confession, the deontic dimensions of living a life of observant traditionalism within Orthodoxy—both with regard to what one “should” and “should not” do—must centre on religious tolerance within the context of preserving the integrity of our Faith and seeing, as the Sacred Canons dictate, that we do not compromise it in any way with an admixture of extraneous beliefs. We must develop the ability to stand firmly for the Faith, unmoved

and unaffected by sophomoric babble about “official” Orthodoxy (a product of the religious syncretism and the hokey, superficial, and worldly spirit of the ecumenical movement), unafraid to diagnose heresy for what it is, but, at the same time, ready to call those infected by heresy to correct belief, though without calling them heretics and without insulting them. We should treat unbelievers respectfully, enlightening them by our love and our proper behaviour. Above all, we must at all times avoid inflammatory fundamentalistic language, condemning people to Hell, and dismissing the worth of those who believe differently than we. These are things foreign to the ethos of our Faith. In addition, we must be careful not to appear parochial and to preach provincial and reactive tribalism (passing as “triumphant ethnicity”) and exalt local ecclesiastical prerogatives borne of human pride (and, subconsciously, human inferiorities), thinking somehow that the weakness of our human affinities, which God allows to us by condescension, are of greater import than the catholicity of the Church. Finally, we should never express our opinions about True Orthodoxy and observance in a contentious manner; rather, in following the Apostles Paul’s advice to St. Timothy, we must with inexorable patience “not strive, but be gentle unto all men.”

The refined life of Orthodox observance is not for those who are angry and aggressive, because we traditionalists must admit our weaknesses; it is not for those who would seek in the guise of traditionalism some path to importance or “special status”; and it is certainly not for those who feel that, in admitting, in their spiritual struggles, to being marred by uncleanness and imperfection, flawed by sin, and burdened with heavy consciences, they have lost, rather than gained (as they have). It is a life for those who wish to begin the divine ascent without prerogatives, pretensions, and presuppositions; for those who wish to prosper in spiritual pursuits by refining, first, their minds, bodies, thoughts, and personal desires; and for those who, by becoming good and decent people, have stepped up on the first rung of the ladder of Divine ascent

towards transformation or θεώσις, held above the ground of sin and ego by humble submission to Church law, to Holy Tradition, and to the guidance of those who, however imperfect they themselves may be, call others to upright, moral, lofty, and observant external lives, that they might, by God's Grace, ascend the ladder of the heart to the essence of existence, which lies in the inner life of the spirit. In response to those who spurn, dismiss, ridicule, or even despise this observant life, let us respond with the very refinement by which we are called to True Orthodoxy: with silence in the face of slander and personal attacks, commitment in reaction to condemnation, and firm but gentle confession in answering the prattle and deceitful words of any who would justify innovation and the abandonment of all that has, for two millennia, produced holiness and transformation in God.

Source: Orthodox Tradition, Volume XXIV (2007), Number 1, pp. 21-27, and taken from the former Synod in Resistance website.

Our apologies to readers that our "barbarian" computer has not managed to correctly transcribe the accents on the Greek words in the text.

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"ATTEND diligently, believing that the insults and disgraces received in behalf of the Lord are great, beneficial, and salutary for your soul. Bear them willingly, without anger, always saying, 'I deserve to suffer and endure for the Saviour. By tribulations and insults, I imitate the passion of my God.' Every time you remember those who have grieved you, pray for them with all your soul and in truth. Never utter a word against those who have thus obtained great benefits for you, but if someone praises or honours you, trouble yourself and pray that you may be spared this burden. In this way on every occasion that brings you glory and superiority, no matter how small, pray fervently with all your soul to God so that He will remove from you everything of this kind."

ABBA ESAIAS OF SCETIS, + C. 490 A.D.

Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

Explanation of the All-Night Vigil

§ 28. One of the distinguishing features of the Divine services on feast days is the celebration of an All-Night Vigil. It is so called because it is served on the eve of the feast and is composed of Vespers, Mattins and the First Hour. It is called an All-Night Vigil because in ancient times [and indeed today in many monastic communities] it began late in the evening and continued through the night until the break of dawn.

§ 29. **The beginning of the Vigil and the Proœmial Psalm.** At the beginning of the Vigil, the Royal Gates are opened and the priest censes the Holy Table and the sanctuary, and then stands before the Holy Table and exclaims: *Glory to the holy, consubstantial, life-creating and undivided Trinity, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.* Then, three times the faithful are called to worship and bow down before Christ, our King and our God. The choir then chants Psalm 103, *Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, Thou has been magnified exceedingly... How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast thou made them all.* [Usually in Russian practice only selected verses of the psalm are chanted]. In this psalm the wisdom of God in creating the world is shown forth. During this chanting, the priest censes the whole church, preceded by the deacon carrying a lighted candle. [Either immediately before the start of the service or during

this psalm, he reads the secret prayers appointed for Vespers]. At the end of the psalm the Royal Gates are closed and we begin the Great Litany.

§ 30. The Great and Little Litanies. These litanies are distinguished by the number of petitions on each. The deacon intones these petitions on behalf of the assembled faithful. There are in fact four litanies in regular use: the Great, the Little, the Threefold and the Litany of Supplication.

The Great Litany usually has about a dozen petitions. It is intoned by the deacon.

In peace let us pray to the Lord. This means that we must pray having been reconciled with all our neighbours, in spiritual peace, devoid of all anger and enmity, for otherwise our prayer will not be acceptable to God. The Lord said: *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift* (Matt. 5:23). Then follow the other petitions.

For the peace from above, and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord. Through these words we pray for that heavenly, divine peace which God grants to virtuous people in this life, and for the salvation of our souls in the life to come.

For the peace of the whole world, the good estate of the holy churches of God, and the union of all.... that is we pray for reconciliation throughout the world, for the good estate of Orthodox church communities and for the union of all people within the one flock of Christ. Such was the last prayer of our Saviour Himself.

For this holy house, and for them that with faith, reverence, and fear of God enter herein..... Now we pray for the safeguarding of the church in which we are gathered, and for all that frequent it.

For our Archbishop Kallinikos and our Bishop Ambrose, for the venerable Presbytery, the Diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and people.... We pray for the ruling hierarchs as those with the highest responsibilities within our Church, for the pastors, who have been appointed by the Lord Himself to pasture us unto our enlightenment with the word of God, to sanctify us through the administration of the Grace-filled Mysteries, and to lead us on a life according to the Gospels. We pray for the diaconate, and all the clergy (that is the readers, the chanters) who participate in the Divine services and for the people, by which we mean the other parishioners who are all our brothers in Christ.

For our Sovereign lady, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and all Her Royal House, this country and the faithful people that dwell therein.... We pray for the Sovereign and for the good estate of the country in which we live, that in the peaceful estate which they establish, we may continue our Church life unmolested.

For the deliverance of His Orthodox peoples everywhere from enemies visible and invisible, and for our confirmation in concord, brotherly love and piety.... In a world where, in so many places, our co-religionists are subject to wars and persecutions, we pray for them all, and we pray also that peace and concord be established between all Orthodox peoples, who, through the malice of the evil one, are often sinfully alienated from each other by human passions.

[In dealing with these last three petitions, we have naturally departed from a rather loose translation of Father Alexander's text, so as to adapt to our present usage rather than that used in pre-revolutionary Russia - ed.]

.... to be continued.



THE COMING MONTH

ON 5th / 18th October we celebrate the **Holy Hieromartyr Dionysius of Alexandria**. He was born to a wealthy pagan family sometime near the end of the second century, and converted to Christianity at a mature age. In a vision from God he was commanded to earnestly study the heresies facing the Christian Church so that he could refute them. He joined the Catechetical School of Alexandria and was a student of Origen and the Bishop Heraclas. In time, in view of his learning, he became leader of the school and was ordained a priest. When in A.D. 231 Heraclas reposed, he succeeded him as Bishop of Alexandria. In A.D. 249, a pagan mob in Alexandria rose up against the Christians, and hundreds were assaulted and killed for their refusal to deny their faith. The troubles of the Christians were compounded when, in January 250, the new Emperor Decius issued a decree of legal persecution. Out of fear many Christians denied their faith by offering a token pagan sacrifice, while others attempted to obtain false documents affirming that they had sacrificed when they had not. Many suffered martyrdom and many fled from the city into the desert, where most succumbed to exposure, hunger, thirst, or attacks by bandits or wild animals. The Saint himself was pursued by the prefect Sabinus, and spent three days in hiding before departing on the fourth night of the Decian decree with loyal brethren. When apprehended by a group of soldiers, he managed to escape with two of his followers, and lived in hiding in the Libyan desert until the end of the persecution the following year. He supported Pope Cornelius of Rome in the controversy which arose when Novatian, a presbyter of the Church at Rome, set up a schismatic church with a rigorist position on the readmittance of Christians who had apostatized during the persecution. In opposition to Novatian's teaching, Dionysius taught that those who repented might be re-admitted to communion. In A.D. 252, an outbreak of plague ravaged Alexan-

dria, and Dionysius, along with other priests and deacons, took it upon himself to assist the sick and dying, and provided food for the indigent from the church funds. The persecutions subsided somewhat under the Emperor Gallus, but were renewed under Valerian, and St Dionysius was imprisoned and then exiled. When Gallienus took the reins of Empire, he released all the believers who were in prison and brought back those in exile, and again permitted the opening of the churches, and for a period peace was restored. About A.D. 255, a controversy arose in the Church in Egypt, because certain teachers advocated the heresy of millenarianism - the false belief that Christ would return and reign on earth for a thousand years before the Dread Judgment. Saint Dionysius succeeded in checking this delusion through his teaching. Thus he was shown to be a caring pastor who provided for the material needs of his flock, and who countered the various false teachings which might have led them astray through his Orthodox teaching. He died in peace in the year 264, but is remembered as a hieromartyr because of the persecutions that he suffered from the external enemies of the Church. For his struggles, his wisdom and teaching, he is sometimes known as Saint Dionysius the Great.

Our **Venerable Father Arethas of the Kievan Caves Monastery** (24th October / 6th November) was from Polotsk. While living at the monastery, he fell into the sin of possessiveness and kept many precious things in his cell. One day robbers broke in and made off with them. Arethas was grieved by this loss and began to murmur against God. That he might be brought to repentance he was stricken with a serious illness. When at the very brink of death, he saw how both angels and demons had come for him and were arguing between themselves about his fate. The demons claimed that he belonged to them because of his avarice and complaints against God. Meanwhile, the angels called him to repentance: "Hapless man, if you had given thanks to God for the pilfered riches, this would have been accounted to you as charity." After this vision, the saint recovered. He spent his final days as

a recluse, repenting over his earlier sin, having now renounced everything earthly. Saint Arethas reposed not later than the year 1190. In the Iconographic Manuals, he is described in this way: “In appearance stooped over, beard similar in length to Kozmina, monastic robes.” He serves us as an example of repentance, and his life is a warning against the sin of possessiveness, a sin which is pervasive in our consumer society, but one which, perhaps, we often fail even to notice.

The Holy Great Virgin Martyr Paraskeve (28th October / 10th November) was the only daughter of Christian parents, Agathon and Politia, and from her early years she dedicated herself to God. She spent much of her time in prayer and the study of the Holy Scriptures. Her parents died when she was yet young, and she distributed all of her inheritance to the poor and consecrated her virginity to Christ. Given a special calling and emulating the holy Apostles, she began to preach to the pagans about Christ, converting many to Christianity. For this, she was arrested during the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161 A.D.) and was brought to trial. The saint fearlessly confessed herself a Christian. Neither enticements of honours and material possessions, nor threats of torture and death shook the firmness of the saint nor turned her from Christ. She was given over to bestial tortures. They put a red-hot helmet on her head and threw her in a cauldron filled with boiling oil and pitch. By the power of God the holy martyr remained unharmed. When the persecutor peered into the cauldron, St Paraskeve flicked a drop of the hot liquid in his face, and he was burned. He begged her for help, and the holy martyr healed him, so on this occasion she was set free. Traveling from one place to another to preach the Gospel, St Paraskeve arrived in a city where the governor was named Asclepius. Here again they tried the saint and sentenced her to death. They took her to an immense serpent living in a cave, so that it would kill her. But St Paraskeve made the sign of the Cross over the snake and it died. Asclepius and the citizens witnessed this miracle and believed in

Christ. She was again set free, and continued her preaching, but later in her missionary journeys, she was again arrested, endured fierce tortures and was beheaded in the year 140. Many miracles took place at the saint's tomb: the blind received sight, the lame walked, and barren women gave birth to children. It is not only in the past that the saint performed her miracles, but even today she helps those who call on her in faith. She is particularly called upon in prayer for those who have problems with their eyes, and sometimes is depicted in icons holding a small dish with eyes in it. Her name means preparation, and is the same as the Greek word for Friday, the day of preparation for the Sabbath, Saturday. Because of this, she is sometimes known among the Slavic peoples as Pyatnitsa, the Slavic word for Friday, which derives from the word "five," - Friday being the fifth weekday.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"In the Ark of Salvation (very good book), on page 14 it states 'This is the aim of the Christian life: to become gods by grace'. The reference to 'becoming gods' crops up in several other areas as well. I find this a moderately disturbing concept. I think mainly as it sits uneasily in my mind with the 'only one God' truth. I can see we can try and live as good a life as we can and live as God wants us to but not actually become gods? I have no doubt I am misunderstanding the point but it's been troubling me for a few weeks." - C.H., Farnham, Surrey

OH DEAR! I see you have a Protestant background... they only seem to read those bits of the Scriptures that they like! First, there is a difference between God Who is by Nature God, and those who become gods by grace, that is share in the life of the Divine. The RCs and the Protestants and their derivatives seem to believe at best that "Heaven" is a beatific vision (I suppose an everlasting

cinema) or that, at worse, we float around on clouds with little wings and harps!

The Orthodox believe that we become “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), thus deified, sharing in the life of God. None of us will become or challenge God by being God by Nature from All Eternity, but by grace, by His gift, we will share in His life. Thus in Psalm 81 (82 in the Protestant version) we have “God stood in the congregation of the gods,” and a few verses down, “I said: Ye are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High.” And our Saviour Himself says, answering His accusers; “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods” (see John 10:34-38). Thus He draws a distinction between His being God, and our becoming gods by grace, but He does not deny the latter. And in the feast of the Ascension we see a man, Jesus Christ, seated on the Throne of Glory. In Him, we will share in that glory.

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NEWS from the communities in England
of the ***True Orthodox Church of Greece,***
under the care of ***Bishop Ambrose.***

BLESSING IN THE MIDST OF DISASTERS

THEIR GRACES, **Bishop Ambrose of Methoni** and **Bishop Photios of Marathon** paid a pastoral visit to England at the end of August and beginning of September (church calendar). On the day that they arrived, Wednesday, 10th September, n.s., they were collected from the airport by the Brotherhood’s **Hierodeacon Sabbas**, but on that same day Fr Alexis was admitted to **St Thomas Hospital, Westminster**, for an emergency operation for a detached retina. Fr **Economos Stephen Fretwell**

was also due to have hospital treatment at **St Peter's, Chertsey** for his heart condition the next day. **Fr Thomas's** glandular fever was still active, and the hierarchs must have thought they had walked into a sick ward. That evening, with their blessing, the Vigil Service for the **Beheading of St John the Baptist** was simply chanted as a reader's service, with the Bishops in prayerful attendance. As the ordination to the priesthood of **Fr Borislav Popov** had been appointed for the next day, and the priests who serve at Brookwood were both incapacitated, **Fr Gabriel Lawani** heroically drove down from Manchester for the service, and the ordination went ahead. During it, His Grace Bishop Ambrose gave an address explaining the nature of the priesthood and the rôle of the priest's wife, his presbytera, and he distributed laminated icon prints of St John the Baptist, which he had brought from Greece, to all the participants in the Divine service. **Mother Vikentia**, the superior of the Convent in London, and **Mother Ioanna** attended the ordination Liturgy. Afterwards, the main hall in the Old Mortuary was crowded to overflowing with the parishioners who shared a buffet meal, kindly prepared by various volunteers and helpers. During this the two Bishops had the opportunity to meet and talk with our people. After the celebration, Bishop Photios went to stay with **Priestmonk Augustine** at the **St Michael's parish house in Guildford**, and Bishop Ambrose was taken to London, where he had matters to attend to. For the Sunday services, Bishop Photios served at Guildford. Meanwhile at the Vigil on Saturday evening and the Liturgy on Sunday morning, Bishop Ambrose celebrated at the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden**, assisted at the Liturgy by Hierodeacon Sabbas. Later in the day he travelled to Guildford where, in the presence of the two Bishops, the faithful held a parish meeting. Both hierarchs returned to Brookwood for the Vigil for the **Deposition of the Relics of St Edward** on the Monday evening. On the day of the feast, they concelebrated the Divine Liturgy, assisted by Fathers Alexis, Stephen and Borislav and Fr Hierodeacon Sabbas. At the end of the Liturgy, Bishop Ambrose gave a moving homily on the Orthodox teaching concerning sacred relics and St Edward's support of

the monastic life. At the usual buffet parish meal afterwards we were joined by Fr Augustine, who kindly contributed some home-made foods for the occasion. In the afternoon, the Bishops, Fr Augustine, our **Fr Niphon** and **Alex Spiroglou**, the renowned photographer, were taken by **Ioan Turcu** to Winchester, where they venerated the holy places in the Cathedral, and visited the Hospital of St Cross and Bishop Ambrose's old school, Winchester College. They returned late in the evening, and early next day Brotherhood members took the two Bishops to Heathrow for their return flight to Greece. In addition to the various illnesses, both Bishops lost their mobile phones while in London, the deacon got lost in London while on his Bishop taxiing duties, we had the office shredder pack up, and the sewage treatment system broke down while the hierarchs were here. We also had a great deal of extra correspondence to deal with because of the court case impending against us. Nonetheless, through the kindness, good humour and condescension of the Bishops, and with the help and support of all the faithful who joined us in church and contributed in various ways, we felt at the end of the ten days that we had snatched blessings from a series of disasters and trials.

WE ASK the support of your daily prayers for the newly ordained priest, Fr Borislav Popov, his presbytera Marina and their family, and we extend our special thanks to Fr Gabriel Lawani, who, despite the fact that **Presbytera Helena** is also not well at the moment, journeyed down from the North to make up the deficiency of priests here on the ordination day and stayed over the weekend to support Fr Borislav in serving his first Liturgies.

VISITORS

MARGARET HOBBS brought a small group of retired nurses to see the church on Tuesday, 9th September. The nurses were all formerly community nurses attached to St Peter's Hospital, and they showed a lively interest and asked many questions.

FATHER EVFIMY and Mother Evfrosinia of the **Lesna Icon Convent in Normandy, France**, visited us on Saturday, 20th September, kindly bringing with them as usual provisions for our Brotherhood. They were *en route* to the parish under their Synod in Guildford, where Fr Evfimy was due to serve next day.

DONATIONS TO GOOD CAUSES

FROM FUNDS collected from our parishioners and readers, when he visited last month we were able to give **His Grace Bishop Ambrose** the equivalent of **£1,506.06** in American dollars for his **Missions in Africa**, and the equivalent of **£547.98** in euros for the **Saint Philaret the Merciful Orthodox Women's Guild in Greece**, which runs soup kitchens for the needy in the present crisis there. Since then a further very generous donation has been made for the Women's Guild soup kitchens, which we will send on with any other monies we receive.

Bishop Ambrose thanked us personally for the gift to support the African Mission, and on 11th / 24th September, we received this beautiful letter of thanks from **His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili** regarding the donation to the Women's Guild:

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ and Children in the Lord, may the Grace of our All-Merciful Saviour ever abound in your hearts. Amen!

We have received, through His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone, your generous donations for our poverty-stricken brethren in Greece.

We fervently thank you for your love; we are moved by your concern for our brethren in Christ who are suffering in various ways during the protracted crisis through which our homeland is passing.

May our Saviour, Who alone is Merciful and loves mankind, abundantly recompense you with heavenly things for your gift of earthly things, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

*Gratefully Yours,
The Least Servant of the Flock of Christ,
Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.*

PRESS COVERAGE

WOKING NEWS & MAIL published two short articles about our community on 11th September. Both were by **Royer Slater**, and one, in his weekly “Things to do in Surrey” column, concerned the feast of Saint Edward and the exposition of his sacred relics, suggesting that readers might “find a piece of tranquility” here. The other, headed “Brotherhood going Greek,” reported the impending visit of Their Graces, Bishop Ambrose of Methoni and Bishop Photios of Marathon to the Brotherhood and Fr Borislav’s ordination.

CARVED ICON DONATED

A BEAUTIFULLY CARVED wooden, bas-relief icon of the holy **Peers of the Apostles Cyril & Methodius, the teachers of the Slavs**, has been donated to St Edward’s Church by a parishioner, **Valentina Alexandrova**. The icon was crafted in her native Bulgaria, by a friend who specializes in church wood carving.

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“JUST AS there is a bad zeal of bitterness, which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal, which separates from vices and leads to God and life eternal.”

VEN. BENEDICT OF NURSIA, + 543 A.D.

PRACTICAL TIP

THIS MONTH, in our “From the Fathers” section, we have posted two quotations regarding the significance of incense. It is also a good and laudable custom for the faithful to burn incense in their own homes. For this you will need a small hand censer, rather than the large one on chains used in churches. Each day, having lighted the charcoal and put the incense alongside it, ask God’s blessing, and then you may cense the icon corner in each room of the house in the form of the Cross, and also the four walls of each room, praying as you do so for God’s protection of the house and the family. The lingering fragrance of the incense will remind you that your home also should be a house of prayer, and that you should not confine your praying to the occasional times when you go to church. Incense may also be lit when you say your morning and evening prayers. Those of you who know our Convent in London will be aware that whenever you enter you can smell incense. This is not only because the chapel is within the house, but because the sisters there adhere to this pious custom and cense their house.

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“LET US NOT be overcome by unbelief and give ourselves up to all kinds of cares, anxieties, imaginations, day-dreaming, subterfuges and manoeuvring to guard ourselves from our enemies and to work against their ill-will or evil intentions. This is forbidden by the Lord, Who says: *Do not resist injury*. When oppressed by difficult and painful circumstances, let us have recourse to God in prayer; for in His complete power are we and our enemies and our circumstances and the circumstances of all men. He can by His absolute power and supremacy dispose of and annihilate all the greatest difficulties. Let us pray for our enemies with great care, and by this prayer obliterate their malice from their hearts and replace it with love.”

SAINT IGNATIUS (BRIANCHANINOV) OF THE CAUCASUS, + 1867 A.D.