

# FROM THE FATHERS

“MARK whatever lies rumour spreads, for the fruitless conversations excited by fabricated hearsay are always idle. What conversation is to be deemed idle, if not that which is ignorant of reason and the messenger of falsehood, which has as its aim either to fabricate ridiculous tales or to expound dubious ones as if they were certain? There are men of this type, too, while they thrive on fiction, they do not know how to beware of a lie. Let them listen to the Lord saying: ‘The mouth that lieth destroyeth the soul’ (Wis. 1:11).”

SAINT PETER CHRYSOLOGUS,  
ARCHBISHOP OF RAVENNA, + 450 A.D.

“IN ADDITION to voluntary suffering, you must also accept that which comes against your will - I mean slander, material losses and sickness. For if you do not accept these but rebel against them, you are like someone who wants to eat his bread only with honey, never with salt. Such a man does not always have pleasure as his companion, but always has nausea as his neighbour.”

VEN. ELIAS THE PRESBYTER, C11TH - C12TH

“DO NOT KEEP COMPANY with those who enkindle in you suspicions about your fellow beings, for such suspicions are false, destructive and utterly deceitful. They are ploys through which the demons

try to engulf the souls of those progressing in virtue. For there is only one way in which the demons can thrust them into the pit of perdition and active sin, and that is by persuading them to harbour evil suspicions about the outward behaviour and inner state of their neighbour."

NIKITAS STITHATOS, DISCIPLE OF ST SIMEON  
THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, C11TH



*On the Occasion of the Commemoration of St. Gregory Palamas (14th November)*

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIND INTO THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST\*

**by Professor George Mantzarides**  
(School of Theology, University of Thessaloniki)

*"Having purified thy mind by ascetical struggles on Athos, O Gregory, thou didst live an Angelic way of life."<sup>1</sup>*

THE STRUGGLE to purify one's mind and the effort to ensure its proper orientation usually pass unnoticed in our era, or are regarded as superfluous luxuries that do not concern the simple Christian.

Indeed, those motivated by the spirit of what they suppose to be "practical" Christianity treat such matters as misleading theories that actually divert the believer from his primary task.

Only practical religion, which confines itself to obvious needs and seeks to deal with them immediately, is viewed as authentic Christianity or genuine Orthodoxy.

This is combined, moreover, with man's impatience to see and admire the results of his activities instantaneously, something to which he has been inured by machines, which serve him but which also have such a great influence on his life.

We take great pains to acquire machines, we get around by means of machines, we think with machines, and in the end we become machines ourselves, “in the image and likeness” of the machines that we manufacture. Machines do not have a mind that requires purification and correct orientation.

We forget that we do have to purify our minds and orient them correctly. And machines need our minds purified and correctly oriented, so that they might function properly and not turn against us.

As well, today, when machines dominate our lives more than at any other time, the need to purify and orient our minds correctly is becoming more pressing.

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All of the evil in the world originates from our minds. The mind, furthermore, constitutes the loftiest aspect of our existence. God’s creation of man “in His image” is imprinted first and foremost in the mind. The mind is the “mirror” that reflects its Creator.

When the mind of man is directed towards God, it receives Divine Light and itself becomes light. However, when it turns away from God, it loses its light, becomes darkened, and wallows in darkness. It is enslaved to the cares and concerns of this world, is alienated by its tumult and turmoil, and forgets God and itself.

“Be still, and know that I am God,”<sup>2</sup> says the Spirit of God through the mouth of the Psalmist. When we come to know Who God is, then we learn also what a true man is.

Just like God, says St. Gregory Palamas, so also the human mind, created “in the image of God,” has essence and energy.

The energy of the mind is thought. When a man’s mind is darkened, his thought, which wallows in darkness, is held captive by sensations and passions and becomes bestial or demonic. “For, the mind that withdraws from God becomes either bestial or demonic and, having departed from the principles of its nature..., gives itself over to carnal desires and knows no limit to pleasure.”<sup>3</sup>

This is what happened at the fall of man. And it continues to happen with all of Adam's descendants. The fall of the first man dragged all of humanity down with it.

This is why the advent of the New Adam, Christ, was necessary: that He might become the first fruits of the new creation, the Church. And He gave His commandments, which are the light of the new life that the Faithful are called to live.

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Christ dwells in man through the Mysteries of the Church: Baptism, Chrismation, and the Divine Eucharist. This does not mean that Christ transforms man automatically, in some mechanical way. Man continues to retain his nature.

Christ opens the path of renewal and offers His Grace for man to follow this path of his own free will. If man does not wish to assimilate the Grace of God, if he does not strive to coordinate his will with the will of God and to order his life in accordance with God's commandments, Grace remains infertile.

"We have the mind of Christ,"<sup>4</sup> says the Apostle Paul. The Christian, that is, has the mind and the thoughts of Christ.

Just as a mirror, says St. Gregory Palamas, when it receives a ray of the sun, creates its own ray, so also the mind of man, when it receives the Light of Christ, itself becomes light, and radiates this light also to other people.

But in order for a mirror to radiate the sun's light, it must be clean. If it is muddy or blackened, no matter how much light may fall on it, that light is not reflected.

The same thing happens with the human mind. When it is darkened or muddy, the light of Christ, the mind of Christ, is not reflected in it.

Sin darkens the mind of man and the passions heap up mud on it. Thus, man lives bereft of God and His Grace. He becomes either bestial or demonic: bestial, by rolling in mud himself; and demonic, by luring others into this mud and becoming a breeding-ground of pollution and destruction.

How much we suffer from these diseases, especially today! How much we make ourselves victims of these diseases!

If we are to correct this unhealthy spiritual condition, we must cleanse and purify our mind. “Having purified his mind by ascetical struggles,” St. Gregory became a recipient and herald of the Light of Grace.

Our first priority is to emulate the Saint as assiduously as we can.

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The amendment of the mind, as St. Gregory Palamas teaches, begins with its return to itself. Unless a man detaches the energy of his mind, that is, his thoughts and reasonings, from the passions and sin, unless he becomes calm and returns in repentance to himself and God, he will be unable to find the true wealth that he has received.

In his interpretation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, St. Gregory says that a man’s wealth is his mind. When a man deviates into a sinful life, his mind is dissipated and cleaves to the passions. He becomes spiritually famished, and he cannot be saved unless he repents and returns to God.

The repentance and return of our mind to God does not come about through any movement towards infinity. It does not come about even through any movement directed outside ourselves.

It comes about through a return to ourselves. It comes about through the return of the energy of our mind, thought, and reasonings to “the hidden man of the heart.”<sup>5</sup> It comes about through a personal encounter and union with God, Who abides within us in order to purify our minds and hearts and to make them bright with the light of His Divine glory.

Since we have been baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity and have been incorporated into the Church of Christ, we have Christ Himself within us. For this reason, moreover, we bear His Name and are called Christians.

This, however, entails that we behave in a commensurate manner towards Christ and the icons of Christ who are our fellow men.

In the Gospel passage about the Last Judgment, it is emphasized that the judgment of men by Christ will be based on the love that they have shown towards Him.

At that time, He will say to those on His right hand: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me food; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.”<sup>6</sup>

And to the puzzlement of the righteous as to when they saw Christ hungry and gave Him food, or thirsty and gave Him to drink, or a stranger and sheltered Him, Christ’s reply will be: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”<sup>7</sup>

We find Christ Himself in the person of our neighbour. For this reason, love for our neighbour, which is love for Christ Himself, is of fundamental importance in Christian life.

But Christ, Who is found in the person of our neighbour, is found also in us—in each one of us. And when we forget Him, He knocks on the door of our heart, so that we might open the door for Him to enter and dine with us.<sup>8</sup>

Christ’s food, His drink, His shelter, His clothing, and His rest are to be found in our heart. They are to be found in the place where our mind is supposed to be concentrated.

When we dissipate our mind in passions and amusements, when we exhaust it in worldly cares and wean it away from its spiritual nourishment, when we let it wander homeless in the misery and confusion of a life of sin, we leave the Christ within us hungry and thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned.

And when we do not show love towards Christ, Who knocks on the door of our heart, we naturally do not show love, either, when He approaches us in the person of our neighbour.

Man's love for God or his neighbour is born or dies within his own heart: in the "hidden man of the heart," where St. Gregory Palamas, like all of the Saints of our Church, concentrated his purified mind.

When the mind of man is drawn away from the passions and sin, when it becomes calm and returns to the heart in prayer and repentance, it encounters Christ and is illumined by His light.

This is why the prayer that is bound up with the gathering of the mind is restricted to just one phrase, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me," so that the mind might not be distracted, but rather, concentrate on the Name of Christ and on beseeching His mercy.

Thus is the sin within a man obliterated and thus Christian life bears fruit. Thus does one accomplish the "life-giving mortification" of his will and thoughts & their incorporation in the boundless horizons of Divine freedom. Thus can he say, with the Apostle Paul: "We have the mind of Christ."

It was from the darkened mind of man that all of the evils in the world began and continue to find being. For this reason, their eradication is possible only with the illumination of the mind by the Light of Christ—by its transformation into the likeness of Christ.

By his ascetic struggles, St. Gregory Palamas realized this inner transformation in his own life, and he calls everyone to such a transformation on the day of his commemoration.

The Saints, says St. Basil the Great, "are set forth as animate icons of a Godly way of life, so that we might emulate their good deeds."<sup>9</sup>

If we wish to honour the memory of St. Gregory, we are called to emulate his deeds to the best of our ability.

Let us cleanse our minds as much as we can and allow them— as he, too, allowed his—to be guided to God and to be illumined by His uncreated Light.

St. Gregory was very great; we are utterly insignificant. But when we do even the very least that we can, we will be entitled to approach the

Saint and say to him:

***“As a mind standing before the Primordial Mind, direct our mind to Him, O Father, that we may cry: Rejoice, O Herald of Grace.”***<sup>10</sup>

\* Source: "Orthodoxi Martyria" (Cyprus), No. 45 (Winter 1995), pp. 21-25.

We took this from the Synod in Resistance website, who had supplied the present title.

**Notes:** 1) Idiomelon of the Lity. 2) Psalm 45:11 (Septuagint). 3) Homily 51, §6 (ed. S. Oikonomou), p. 114. 4) I Cor. 2:16. 5) 1 Peter 3:4. 6) Matt. 25:34-36. 7) Matt. 25:40. 8) Rev. 3:20. 9) Epistle 2, §3, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 32, col. 228C. 10) Contakion of St. Gregory Palamas.



## **ON MONASTICISM**

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

*Continuation*

THE ORDER for tonsure to the Little Schema is laid down in a special service named, **“The Order of the Little Schema, That is of the Mantia.”** According to the typicon, this service is appointed to take place during the Divine Liturgy after the Entrance with the Gospel, but in practice at the present time it is more often done at the end of Vespers or the All-Night Vigil. The one who is to receive the habit confesses all his sins to the monastery’s spiritual father, for all his past life from his very youth, and he prepares to receive the communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. During the reading of the Hours before the Liturgy, the one desiring to be tonsured is led by the ecclesiarch before the holy doors, where he makes a prostration, then he prostrates to the two choirs [*properly in Orthodox churches there would be a choir on each side of the church, and they chant antiphonally - ed.*], and to the Abbot. Then

he goes into the narthex, and takes off all his usual cloths, wearing only a single hair shirt or a robe specially made for the tonsure which reaches down to the ground. This signifies the complete laying aside of his corrupt deeds, and he stands there in the entrance **“ungirded, barefooted and bareheaded.”** The order of the tonsure itself begins with the chanting of compunctionate hymns, which are taken from the service for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, because this whole rite serves as a symbolical representation of the return of the prodigal son to the paternal home and to the Father Who loves His children:

**“Thy fatherly embrace hasten Thou to open unto me, who have spent my life in prodigality. In the inexhaustible treasury of Thy compassions, O Saviour, disdain not now a heart which is impoverished. For to Thee, O Lord, I cry out in compunction: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee.”**

The brethren of the monastery chant this troparion, going out two by two into the entrance, with lighted candles in their hands, to meet the candidate for tonsure, and then to lead him back into the church. He comes in, bowing low, following them all, among his elders and the ecclesiarch, wearing the one hair-shirt or smock, ungirded and barefoot. Those accompanying him usually hold their mantias over him to cover him. Having entered the church he makes a prostration to the ground towards the East, in the centre of the church he makes a second similar prostration, and approaching the Royal Doors he falls down before the altar and lies there in the deepest heartfelt compunction, as if not daring to rise and lift up his eyes to Heaven. As the chanting of the troparions finishes, the Abbot comes out to meet him, and in a loud voice speaks to the one lying there before him:

**“The Kind-hearted God, as a father who loveth his children, beholding thy lowliness and true repentance, O child, receiveth thee in repentance as He did the Prodigal Son, as from thy very heart thou fallest down before Him.”**

With these words the Abbot extends his hand and raises him up. He stands, humbly bowing his head before the altar. Then the Abbot begins to put to him the appointed questions:

**“Why hast thou come hither, brother, falling down before the holy altar and before this holy assembly?”**

The Abbot knows why he has come, but he asks this so that the desire of his heart may be made manifest to all.

**“I am desirous of the life of asceticism, honourable father,”** the candidate answers.

**“Dost thou desire to be deserving of the Angelic Habit and to be ranked in the company of the monastics?”**

**Yes, God working with me, honourable father,”** he replies.

Then the Abbot tests him, posing a range of questions: **“Of thine own good will comest thou to the Lord?”** Is he prepared to renounce the world for the commandments of the Lord? Will he abide in the monastery and the ascetic life until his very last breath? Will he keep himself in chastity, sobriety and piety even unto death? Will he maintain obedience to the superior and all the brethren even unto death? Will he endure the strain and voluntary poverty for Christ’s sake even unto death? Will he endure every affliction and the restraint of the monastic life for the sake of the Heavenly Kingdom?

To each of these questions, the candidate humbly replies: **“Yes, God working with me, honourable father,”** and in this way he makes his monastic vows.

At the end of this, the Abbot reads a long instruction on how a true monk should live, and then asks him if he actually desires to be such. **“Yes, God working with me,”** he replies again.

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



EVERY EVENT is like a bazaar. He who knows how to bargain makes a good profit; he who does not makes a loss.

VEN. MARK THE ASCETIC, C5TH

# A TIMELY LETTER

*THE FOLLOWING LETTER by a monk in Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville (ROCA-MP), has already been widely posted on the internet, but deserves the widest possible dissemination and so we include it here, for those of you without internet connection. It reads:*

THIS LETTER is a concerned voice from a soul who has always belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR [now ROCA-MP - ed.]).

In 2001, the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR stated in an Epistle that, “During these days of universal apostasy, which, through the pan-heresy of ecumenism, has even infected most of the Local Orthodox Churches, we must stand united, that the enemy of our salvation may not use our divisions to destroy the voice of our confession in the homeland and the diaspora.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Sadly enough this voice of confession is not heard anymore. Instead, ROCOR/MP moves closer and closer toward the ecumenical Orthodox hierarchs and clergy, while rejecting the True Orthodox Christians, with whom we once confessed our unity. We promised to defend the Truth, but who reached out to support Vladyka [Bishop] Diomid in his lonely fight for the Truth? Who spoke up against the un-Christian World Summit of Religious Leaders in Moscow in 2006? Why are our spiritual leaders silent?

It is well-known that the Moscow Patriarchate together with World Orthodoxy participates in the ecumenical movement. It is also well-known that the Moscow Patriarchate still believes in the salvific act of the Declaration of 1927. And still our hierarchs state that ROCOR, under His Eminence Metropolitan Agafangel, together with all other True Orthodox Churches, who have walled themselves off “during these days of universal apostasy” are outside the Church and their sacraments invalid. How can this be when we ourselves just recently confessed our unity with them?

We are canonical and in the Church. That is our main argument. And yet, the soul is in dire agony, feeling that something is completely wrong. Fr. Seraphim Rose explains it the following way:

“The apostasy of our times, to a degree unique in Christian history, is proceeding not primarily by false teachings or canonical deviations, but rather by a false understanding of Orthodoxy on the part of those who may even be perfectly Orthodox in their dogmatic teaching and canonical situation. A correct ‘Orthodoxy’ deprived of the spirit of true Christianity - this is the meaning of Sergianism, and it cannot be fought by calling it a ‘heresy,’ which it is not, nor by detailing its canonical irregularities, which are only incidental to something much more important.”<sup>[2]</sup>

Obviously, apostasy is not only a deviation from the canons, but first of all a deviation from the spirit of Orthodoxy. Besides the example of Sergianism, one can also mention the New Calendar. Neither of these two can, strictly speaking, be considered heresies. And yet, we know very well the damage they have both caused the Orthodox Church. Canoncity and apostasy can and do, therefore, easily go hand in hand.

Today obedience is no longer understood as a God-pleasing obedience to Christ and His Church, but rather as a complete submission to Church authority, regardless of its teaching. Salvation is no longer attained by following the conscience of the Church of Christ and one’s own conscience, but by blind obedience to the official Church authorities. To be, not in the Church of Christ, but in today’s World Orthodoxy, has become the absolute criterion for salvation.

These Church authorities are, therefore, not interested in believers who follow their conscience according to the conscience of the Church. We are not only asked not to think, but made not to think.

In the Church of Christ, though, there can be no violence on the conscience. Such violence breaks people morally and creates a spiritual apathy, depriving them of the ability to freely and truly follow Christ. Every Christian must follow his conscience, should it be even unto death. One, though, must do so in a truly Orthodox manner with Christian love, humility and moderation.

We must try to understand that most of the believers, who are not following World Orthodoxy, are acting by their own conscience and the conscience of the Church. Seeing that World Orthodoxy does not have the correct and saving confession of the faith, many sober and pious faithful have walled themselves off, not from the Church of Christ, but from apostasy. The Old Calendar Movement is therefore not a heresy, neither is it a schism, but a walling off from falsehood.

Having accepted the position of the official Church leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy, together with their spirit of apostasy and conformism, the spiritual leaders of ROCOR/MP have not only compromised themselves in the saddest way, but have also deeply disappointed many of its faithful, as well as many of our pious brothers and sisters inside the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy itself, who expected to see this Champion of Truth courageously expose all falsehood. The pain of witnessing this fall is intensified even more when one is asked to accept it as a glorious victory. The tragedy of ROCOR/MP, therefore, is not so much its formal union with the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy, but its wholehearted acceptance of their path and spirit.

If our Christian life is to be truly pleasing to God, both a Christian loving heart and a true confession of Faith must be present. It is not only a question of where, but also of how one confesses his faith. Without a Christian loving and humble heart, one's "confession of Faith" will have no justification in the eyes of God, but will only harm oneself and the sacred unity of the Church. On the other hand, if we reject the salvific Truths, Traditions and spirit of the Church, or perhaps just indifferently follow along, then that will equally endanger our salvation. Both extremes lack the "spirit of true Christianity" - the divine Love of God - and should be avoided. Apostasy, therefore, is simply the deviation from the Royal Path of Christian love towards God and man manifested in heresies and the lack of the spirit of true Christianity.

We observe that World Orthodoxy is getting more and more infected by "the pan-heresy of ecumenism," estranging itself from the spirit of Christianity, while preserving the outward forms of the Church. This has been prophesied by the Holy Fathers and Holy Scripture and the pro-

cess began a long time ago. That is why many pious Orthodox Christians are quietly stepping aside, in order to protect themselves. Many faithful in World Orthodoxy itself are also slowly beginning to lose patience.

This letter is a concerned and quiet voice. Such voices, though, are labeled as proud, rebellious and full of self-deceit.

World Orthodoxy has taken its course. It is a course based on the wide path of love for this world. It is not the narrow path of the Cross and it is not a path which should be followed.

*Monk Theophan, Holy Trinity Monastery,  
Jordanville, N.Y., USA; Sts Cyprian & Justina, October 2/15, 2010.*

<sup>[1]</sup> Living Orthodoxy, Epistle of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2001. #126, vol. XXI # 6, p.26, left column, last par., line 5. <sup>[2]</sup> Andreyev Ivan: "Russia's Catacomb Saints, Lives of the New Martyrs". Saint Herman of Alaska Press, Platina, 1982, p. 257, par. 2.



## THE COMING MONTH

NOVEMBER, like August, is split in two: half of it falls in a fast period and half does not, because on 15th / 28th November, - this year a Sunday, - we begin **the forty day fast of the Nativity**. The food fasting in this fast is not so strict as that in the Great Lent. Generally on Tuesdays and Thursdays we are permitted oil and wine (alcohol), and on Saturdays and Sundays fish is also permitted. In some usages the fast becomes stricter after the feast of St Spiridon on 12th /25th December and fish is not then permitted on the weekends, but in other practices this period of stricter fasting is confined to the five days of the fore-feast (20th - 24th December on the Church calendar; 2nd - 6th January on the civil calendar). Always the day before Christmas is kept with particular strictness, and some do not eat at all on that day until they see the first star (the Bethlehem Star); others count the placing of the candle before the icon of the feast in the centre of the church at the end of the Liturgy on that day

(it is properly an evening Liturgy, following and linked to Vespers) as the first star. But we are already straying into December.

As with all the fasts of the church, it is hardly sufficient to restrict ourselves to the question of diet, although this is important and, as it were, the framework of the whole edifice of the fast. During the fast, we should come to confession, we should devote more of our time to spiritual reading and prayer, we should pay particular attention to the practice of the virtues and especially almsgiving. To help us in these endeavours, we should avoid distractions and entertainments as much as possible. Married couples also refrain from marital intercourse during the fasting periods, in accordance with the Apostle's teaching (1 Cor. 7:5), and as a first step in that striving for virginity which is essential to our Christian life.

Although this fast is not so strict as the one before Pascha, it is, perhaps, in present-day circumstances one harder to keep for Orthodox lay-people, because contemporary Yuletide celebrations seem to fill December with social engagements. The celebrations then seem to be dropped, even before the New Calendar Christmas has run two days, for the January sales to begin - yet another imposition of slavery to Mammon. However, conscientious Orthodox Christians should be assiduous to keep the fast as strictly as possible. While you do not want, and should not, cause hurt and family strife by a pharisaical strictness, one can and should avoid the countless office parties, lunches and "celebrations" that crowd the calendar at this time of year, and are more often than not in any case occasions for sin. If one does break the fast one should confess it, and perhaps do something along the lines of the lady I heard mention last year, who, for family reasons had broken a fast, but then afterwards kept another day as a fast when it was not appointed by the Church.

Two very important feasts also fall in November. The first is the **Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and all the Bodiless Powers of Heaven**, which this year falls on a Sunday (8th/21st). The Synaxis of all the Bodiless Powers naturally also includes the **Holy Guardian Angel** of each one of us, Orthodox Christians, given us at our Baptism. Thus we should annually particularly honour and celebrate this festival.

The second is numbered among the Twelve Great Feasts, and is the **Entry of the All-Holy Theotokos into the Temple** (21st November / 4th December). This feast, on which the infant Virgin was taken to the Temple by her parents, Joachim and Anna, in fulfilment of their vow, and dedicated to the Lord, is itself a preparation for the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God which was manifest at His Birth in Bethlehem of Judah. Because of this, during the Vigil for this festival we begin to chant the Christmas katavasiae - the hymns at the end of each ode of the canon. The first one begins boldly: **“Christ is born! give ye glory! Christ from heaven, meet ye Him! Christ is on earth, be ye exalted!”**

Among the saints we celebrate in November we have:-

**The Holy Martyr Hermenegild** (1st / 14th): Leovigild, Arian King of the Visigoths in Spain, had two sons, Hermenegild and Recared, who reigned conjointly with him. All were Arians, but Hermenegild married a pious and Orthodox Christian, the daughter of Sigebert, a Frankish King, and by her holy example was converted to the true Faith. His father, on hearing this, denounced him as a renegade, and attempted to seize him. Hermenegild tried to rally the Catholics of Spain in his defense, but they were then too weak to make any stand; and after a two years' fruitless struggle, Hermenegild surrendered on the assurance of a free pardon. Once he was safely in his power, the king had him loaded with fetters and cast into a foul dungeon. Tortures and bribes were in turn employed to shake his faith, but Hermenegild wrote to his father that he regarded the crown as nothing, and preferred to lose it and life itself rather than betray the truth of God. On Easter night, an Arian bishop was sent to him, and promised him his father's pardon if he would receive Communion from his hands. Hermenegild refused even once, and to save his life, to receive the Mysteries from an heretical clergyman, and knelt with joy for his death-stroke, praying for his persecutors. The same night a light streaming from his cell told the Christians keeping vigil nearby that the martyr had won his crown and was celebrating the Lord's Pascha with the Saints in glory. Seeing the miracles that had occurred after his son's cruel death, King Leovigild repented on his death-bed, and he told Recared to seek out Saint Leander, the Orthodox Bishop, whom also he himself had persecuted. Recared should follow Hermenegild's example,

said the king, and he received by the bishop into the Church. Recared did so; and after his father's death the new king laboured so earnestly for the extirpation of Arianism that he brought over the whole nation of the Visigoths to the Church. Saint Gregory the Great, who corresponded with St Leander, attributes this conversion of so many from heresy to Orthodoxy to the intercessions of the holy Martyr Hermenegild. In the West, the memory of the Saint, who received the crown of martyrdom in A.D. 586, was celebrated on 13th April, the more likely date of his death, but in our contemporary Orthodox calendars he celebrates on 1st November, along with the **Unmercenary Healers, Cosmas and Damian of Asia**.

The **Venerable Sergius of Malopinega** (16th / 29th) lived in the sixteenth century. His father, Marcian Stephanovich Nekliud, was descended from Novgorodian nobles. Together with other fellow citizens he left their native-place setting off "to the side of the icy sea," when Great Novgorod was finally subjugated to the power of Moscow by Ivan III. There in the far North, Marcian Stephanovich married Apollinaria, a maiden from a rich and noble family. The pious spouses raised their son Simeon (the name in the world of our saint) in the fear of God, and they gave him a fine education. In their declining years, as was the custom among the pious, Marcian and Apollinaria by mutual agreement went to monasteries. Marcian (in monasticism Matthew) was afterwards abbot of the Resurrection monastery in the city of Keurola. Apollinaria died a schema-nun with the name Pelagia. Their son, Simeon, was ordained presbyter at the canonical age of thirty to serve the churches of the Transfiguration of the Lord and the Great Martyr George in the Malopinega district. He served as a parish priest until deep old age, and during that time with apostolic zeal he laboured for the conversion of the pagan Chudi people in that region. The Chronicle notes that "he possessed a kindly soul and pure mind, a courageous heart, humility and quiet strength, love for truth, and was merciful to the poor to the point of self-denial." In the final year of his life, he took the schema with the name Sergius, and reposed on 16th November, A.D. 1585. In accordance with the saint's wishes, he was laid to rest near the altar of the Transfiguration Church. Later, a chapel was built over his grave. Numerous miracles at the grave of the saint were recorded.

**Saint Amphilochius of Iconium** (23rd November / 6th December) was a Cappadocian, from a well-to-do family, and may well have been a kinsman of Saint Gregory the Theologian. He was certainly a close associate of Saint Basil the Great, who dedicated his work, “On the Holy Spirit,” to Saint Amphilochius. As a young man, Amphilochius retired to a remote place and took up the life of a monastic, but miraculously he was chosen by God to be the Bishop of Iconium. One night at prayer he saw an angel, who told him to go to that city and shepherd the flock entrusted to him. Regarding this as a demonic delusion and temptation, he did not do so. The injunction was repeated three nights in a row, and so the saint then insisted the angel first pray with him, believing that if the apparition were one of the fallen angels it would refuse to do so. However, the Angel chanted the doxology with the Saint, and then taking him by the hand led him to a church, which was full of a congregation clothed in white. There, by the angels, he was consecrated as Bishop. At daybreak he left the church to return to his cave, and on the way met a group of Bishops who were seeking him so that they might consecrate him as Bishop of Iconium, when he saw their intent he confessed to them the miraculous occurrence the previous night. Hearing of this the Bishops refrained from consecrating one who had been consecrated by the heavenly hosts. As Bishop of Iconium, the saint was a staunch upholder of Orthodoxy and he is particularly remembered for his contest against the Arian heretics and the Macedonians, heretics who did not accept the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. On one occasion he had an audience with the Emperor Theodosius, and entreated him to disallow Arian worship in the cities, so that their error should not spread. Wishing not to appear harsh or unfair, the Emperor, though Orthodox himself, refused the Saint’s request. Some time later, the Saint again approached the Emperor, greeting him with the customary reverence, but completely ignoring his son, Arcadius, who had recently been made co-Emperor. This infuriated Theodosius, who remonstrated with him. Saint Amphilochius replied that just as Theodosius could not bear to see his son, who reigned with him, slighted, nor could the Heavenly Father suffer His Son, Who is of one throne and honour with Him, to be slighted. The Emperor was corrected. He rose from his throne and prostrated before the Saint, asking his forgiveness. The Saint participated in the Holy and Second Œcumenical Council in

A.D. 381, and, after a life-time of struggles for the Faith, he ended his earthly course in the year 394, or soon thereafter.



## **NEWS SECTION**

### ***ROCA-MP / OCA COMMISSIONS***

**OCA News** published a communique of the Commissions of the **Russian Church Abroad** [*i.e. ROCA-MP, the Synod of Metropolitan Hilarion*] and the **Orthodox Church in America** on 7th October. It stated: “On October 5, 2010, the first joint meeting of the Commissions of the Orthodox Church in America and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia [*again ROCA-MP*] was held at St. Seraphim Church in Sea Cliff, NY..... The main goal of these meetings was to discuss and resolve issues that have in the past stood in the way of full Eucharistic communion and to come to an understanding of how we can pray and work together in the future. The representatives of the Orthodox Church in America were the Commission Chairman, His Grace Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania; Archpriest Alexander Garklavs; Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky; Archpriest John Erickson; Hegumen Alexander (Pihach) and Alexis Liberovsky, consultant. Representing the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia were the Commission Chairman, His Grace Bishop George of Mayfield, Vicar of the Eastern American Diocese; Archimandrite Luke (Murianka); Commission Secretary Archpriest Alexander Lebedeff; Archpriest David Moser and Priest Peter Jackson. Archpriest Serafim Gan participated as a consultant.... Archpriest Alexander Lebedeff presented his paper “The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Orthodox Church in America Relations – Past, Present and Future.” Alexis Liberovsky, OCA archivist, then gave a presentation on the history of the Orthodox Church in America. These presentations were followed by fruitful and wide-ranging discussions among the members of these commissions.” Rather oddly, although this was purportedly the first of a proposed series of commissions, and the draft statement which this commission drew up was to “be submitted for approval to their respective Synods of Bishops regarding the history and present relations of the two Churches and proposals for the future,” the same news item continues: “On October 6, the feast of St. Innocent of Moscow, Enlightener of America,

the meetings began following the Divine Liturgy at the Church of Our Lady of Kazan in Sea Cliff (OCA), celebrated by Bishop Tikhon assisted by Deacon Nicholas Olhovskiy (ROCOR), at which clergy of both Churches communed.” This would seem to demonstrate that the two jurisdictions already enjoy full eucharistic communion, and one wonders why a commission was needed “to discuss and resolve issues that have in the past stood in the way of full Eucharistic communion and to come to an understanding of how we can pray and work together in the future.” Furthermore, as the OCA received its autocephaly from the Moscow Patriarchate and is in full communion with that Patriarchate, and the ROCA-MP is now an integral part of the Patriarchate, one wonders what breach of communion there can be between them. And again, the ROCA-MP website reported that “On October 22, 2010, an akathist was performed (*sic*) before the Icon of the Mother of God “Pantassa” which is known for healing cancer, at Holy Protection Cathedral in New York. The service was led by His Grace Bishop Michael of New York and New Jersey (Orthodox Church in America) along with His Grace Bishop Jerome of Manhattan of the Russian Church Abroad, and the Cathedral and visiting clergymen.” So at the highest level, the episcopate, the two jurisdictions are celebrating together. What need then the commissions?



## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“I HAVE a theological question that came to me a few weeks ago during my Lenten reading and perhaps it is the sort of thing you might prefer to think about and deal with in a Shepherd article. It concerns the nature of and reasons for sacrifice, both Christ’s and OT sacrifices. Perhaps Orthodoxy doesn’t go a great deal on sacrifice and atonement, but it is there in the scriptures. I can see why God should want to become man and experience human life - and death - in His great love for mankind, but why would it be necessary for Him to be put to death in the form of a sacrifice? Could He not have triumphed over sin and death and freed the souls in Hades simply by dying a natural death? It only seems to make sense in the context of the OT requirement for sacrifices - and here I wonder why God required animals to be sacrificed. Once again, I can see that God might accept sacrifices (albeit reluctantly) as a concession to*

*the spiritual immaturity of humans, who at that time were only able to express their relationship with God by offering life back to Him, but His instructions in Leviticus seem very detailed and quite specific that the sacrifice of life is necessary, and, for that matter, Able's sacrifice of animals seems to have been more acceptable to God than Cain's offering of vegetables & crops (which is where my train of thought started off!). - T. G., Clevedon, Somerset.*

I HAVE no idea why you sent a theological question to me, who am not a theologian. Maybe you should have sent it to Archbishop Chrysostomos. I can only hazard some thoughts which I hope may be helpful to you, but please, DO NOT for a moment think that these are necessarily the teaching of the Church.

I think for a start that you are wrong about Cain and Abel and their sacrifices - it was not the fact that Abel offered animals in sacrifice and Cain crops, but it was the dispositions of their hearts which determined that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable and Cain's not. See Genesis 4:7.

Now the ultimate answer is, of course, that God could have chosen to save us in any way He wished. And why He chose the particular way He did, we shall never know for sure in this life, because we cannot know the thoughts of God.

But I think we may have some tiny insights. Can I just list them?

I think you are wrong when you say that "Perhaps Orthodoxy doesn't go a great deal on sacrifice and atonement, but it is there in the scriptures." If it is there in the Scriptures, then Orthodoxy goes a great deal on it, never you mind! The Scriptures are Orthodoxy's. However, it is the understanding of these concepts that is important. Orthodoxy does not have a strictly juridical view of them as do Roman Catholicism and therefore classical Protestantism.

You ask about sacrifice, and again I have an impression you have begun from the wrong end, although you do modify this in part of your letter. Sacrifice has both good and bad connotations in the Scriptures and in the understanding of the Orthodox. In the bad sense, like bad ritual, bad prayer, it is simply a matter of form, and so the Lord proclaims, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." True sacrifice is a mercy, an act of love. Surely at its best it is an expression of love - whenever we love we sacrifice for the beloved. As you say, the sacrifice of a life was perhaps thought of as the sacrifice of the most precious thing one could give. Our Saviour Himself endorses this view is speaking of the sacrifice of one's own life for another - "Greater love hath no man....." And, of course, He showed that greatest love, by laying down His life for His beloved - us! So perhaps the emphasis on sacrifice in the Old Testament is not God mandating that He wanted

blood, but His condescension to the understanding of man who wished to offer the most precious thing he could conceive of. I remember seeing a Muslim interment in the cemetery here once, and when the coffin was lowered into the grave, the men there, - there were only men, - took a watering can and each walked the length of the grave, pouring water on the coffin, then handed it to the next man do the same. It looked odd! But then I reflected that, if one came from a desert country, the most precious offering one could make would be water. So perhaps it was thus with Old Testament Israel, - they were attempting to offer the most precious thing. Maybe the initiative was theirs, and God accepted it. After all, in the report on Abel and Cain - the first sacrifice - it nowhere says that the Lord required their offerings. It seems to have been their initiative.

Of course, and we must not let this slip, the OT sacrifices were forerunners of the one Sacrifice of the NT which replaced them, our Saviour's death upon the Cross, that supreme act of laying down one's life for the beloved. Why it could not be a natural death is, of course, that then it would not have been "laying down" His life. It would not have been manifest as a voluntary act of love... everyone dies and most not because they love, but simply because their time runs out.

I hope this helps a little, or at least gives you some leads, but please remember that these are just the ramblings of a theological nincompoop. If you find a more compelling & more Orthodox answer, forget everything that is said here.



# ***SIR-UK NEWS***

## ***BAPTISM AT BROOKWOOD***

IOAN BIOSA, a young Romanian living in North London, was baptized at St Edward's Church on 17th / 30th October, and named after St John the Baptist. The celebrant was **Archimandrite Chiprian**; and **Adrian Stefan**, a nephew of the ever-memorable **Metropolitan Sylvester** of the Traditionalist Romanian hierarchy, stood as his sponsor. May the newly-illuminated Ioan be kept in the faith of a pure confession all the days of his life.

## ***WEDDING AT ST BONIFACE MISSION***

MARTIN SMITH and **Christine Habens** were married on the Sunday of the Fathers of the Seventh Council, 11th / 24th October. Because our temporary chapel is a little too small to conduct a marriage service, **Fr Jonathan Redvers-Harris**, the incumbent of **All Saints Anglican Church in Ryde**, again offered us hospitality by allowing us to use his beautiful church. As Martin is our usual choir, Antony Bell and Melanie Swan chanted for us, using appropriate Slavonic chants. After the service, the congregation of family and friends were invited to Christine's home for refreshments and wedding cake. May our Saviour indeed grant unto the newly-weds the blessings of the promise, and *Many Years!*

## ***FUNERAL AT BROOKWOOD***

ONE of the most long-standing and beloved members of the congregation at the Convent of the Annunciation, **Tabitha Oliver**, reposed in the Lord on 3rd / 16th October. She had been born in the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem, and her Armenian name was Takouhi, but she was baptized into the Orthodox Church and given the name, Tabitha. At the age of seven she joined the **Russian Orthodox Convent School in Bethany**, and subsequently became a novice at the **Gethsemane Convent**, where, because she was gifted with an exceptionally beautiful voice, she became the choir conductress. However, she did not continue in the monastic life, and became a nurse, working in Jerusalem and Gaza. In 1952, she emigrated to England, where she married an Englishman, and is the mother of two children, Nicholas and Tamara, and the grandmother of Lucy and Elise. For over fifty years she was a parishioner at the **Convent of the Annunciation in London**, reunited with the sisters whom she had known in the Holy Land, and she sang in their choir until, in the last years of her life, old age and infirmity prevented her continuing this valuable service for the sisters. To the end of her life, even during her long illness, her devotion to Orthodoxy, and her love of the church hymns was evident. On the day before her death, she was anointed with the Holy Unction at the **Brentwood Care Centre**, and she reposed early the next morning. Her funeral was chanted at St Edward's Church on 14th / 27th October, and she was laid to rest in the Orthodox Cemetery here. After the interment, the family laid on a Mercy Meal for the many mourners in the Old Mortuary hall, very nicely providing fasting foods for the Orthodox, & some other foods for her non-Orthodox friends. May Tabitha's rest be with the Saints and her *Memory Eternal.*

## ***VISITORS***

IGUMEN MATTHEI of the **St Nicolas Monastery in Tomsk, Siberia**, visited Saint Edward's with a group of pilgrims on 5th October, n.s. Before the shrine of St Edward, they chanted the canon to the holy Martyr, and Fr Matthei anointed the pilgrims with oil from the lampada that burns there. This small pilgrimage was organized by **Christina Chernova** of the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral parish in Ennismore Gardens**, and on 16th October, she came again, this time with a smaller group of about four pilgrims.

ARCHIMANDRITE AKAKIOS, the abbot of the **Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery, in Etna, California**, arrived in England & came to stay at the Brotherhood on Wednesday 27th October, on his way back to America from Greece & Romania. On the following day he visited the Annunciation Convent in London for High Tea, & left for Denver, on the Friday morning. To have Fr Akakios here to pray with us & share his experiences with us was a great blessing.

On Sunday 18th / 31st October, the feast of St Luke, **Father Deacon Nikolai Petrov** from the Traditionalist Church in Bulgaria attended the Divine Liturgy at Brookwood. Unfortunately Fr Nikolai arrived too late to serve, but he received the Divine Mysteries with us, and brought us greetings and beeswax candles from **His Grace Bishop Fotii**.

**SIX Swedish Undertakers** visited our Church on 6th October, as part of a tour of the whole Cemetery. They spent about thirty minutes visiting the church and Exhibition Room and asked questions about Orthodox Christian burial practices. They were brought by **John Clarke**.

## ***FATHER CHIPRIAN'S MOVEMENTS***

ARCHIMANDRITE CHIPRIAN recently made two brief trips abroad. He went to Greece to participate in the festal celebrations of the dedication festival of the **Sacred Monastery of Sts Cyprian and Justina**, and a few days after his return to England, he went to Bucharest to attend the consecration of the **Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God** there. This church is the seat of **His Grace Bishop Flavian** of the **Traditional Romanian Hierarchy**, and it was there, in a community which was destroyed during Communist times and which the new Church replaces, that Fr Chiprain received his grounding in the monastic life. Our visitor, Fr Akakios of Etna (see above) had also attended these two celebrations, the reason for his visiting Europe.