

# FROM THE FATHERS

“KNOWING THEN the greatness of their [*the priests*'] danger, treat them with much consideration, for as Paul goes on to say: *They watch for your souls*, and not simply this, but *as having to render an account of them*. Because of this, you must treat them with honour. And should you join with others to insult them, then neither will your own affairs prosper. For as long as the helmsman is in good heart, those on board are safe. But if he be grieved by their abuse, and by their hostile behaviour, he can neither keep a good watch, nor perform his task properly, and unwillingly involves them in many disasters. And so likewise the priest. If he is held in honour by you, he will be able to take care of what relates to yourselves. But if you throw them into despondency, weakening their hands, and making them easily overcome, you expose both them and yourselves to the waves, however courageous they may be. ... You see, in the case of those who judge in the world outside, that all are subject to them, even those who may be superior to them in family, in conduct, or in intelligence. Yet out of respect for the king, who gives him his authority, they do not take this into consideration, but uphold the authority of the king, whoever the person who exercises it. And if there is such respect where a man [*the king*] grants them authority, are we to slight the authority of one who is appointed by God? And shall we despise his authority, and abuse him, and humiliate him with constant fault-finding? And, though forbidden to judge our brethren, shall we sharpen our tongues against the priests?”

ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM OF CONSTANTINOPLE, + 407 A.D.

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REPOSE OF OUR FOUNDRRESS  
& BENEFACTRESS,  
**MOTHER PELAGIA**  
OF LESNA CONVENT

*LAST MONTH, because she reposed in October, we published an article on a British convert to Holy Orthodoxy, **Abbess Mary of Gethsemane**, who, because she was for many years a spiritual mother to the sisters of our Convent in Willesden, is very close to our hearts. The repose on the feast this year of the Holy Cross (14th/27th September), of **Mother Pelagia of the Lesna Icon Convent**, impels us to publish a tribute to another British convert who also fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith, for whom we may be confident that there is laid up for her a crown of righteousness, as for one who loved His appearing (see 2 Tim. 4:7-8). Mother Pelagia died at the age of 94, having lived for 32 years in the monastic discipline.*

*At Saint Edward's, we commemorate Mother Pelagia as a foundress and benefactress. After the hierarchs who supported us in the founding of the community here, particularly **St Philaret the New Confessor of New York**, with whose blessing the Brotherhood was established and the Sacred Relics of St Edward enshrined, the **Ever-Memorable Metropolitan Vitaly**, who protected us from intrigues, and the **Ever-Memorable Bishop Gregory of Washington**, who supported us for many years and came to Britain to preside at the Enshrinement ceremonies, Mother Pelagia was undoubtedly our firmest and most constant support among men.*

*When any good work is undertaken, the devil opposes it, and often, as happened in the case of the reception and enshrinement of the **Sacred Relics of Saint Edward**, he finds people, moved by their passions or their light-mindedness, to aid him in his destructive work. So it was, we encountered many and various temptations, particularly in our first*

*years at Brookwood. Momentarily Mother Pelagia herself was swayed. She was instructed by a clergyman, who had evidently paid heed to the slanderers, to write to us and accuse us of misappropriating funds. But this clergyman was compelled, by a providential coincidence of events, to change his tack, and when it was pointed out to Mother that she had been led astray, she showed us an excellent example and immediately repented, continuing her material, and, more particularly, her spiritual support from then on to the very end of her days. And it happens that her daughter, Elizabeth, is the only member of our congregation at Brookwood who has been with us from the very beginning in March 1982. **God grant that Mother Pelagia now receive the crown laid up for her, rest with the Saints and Memory Eternal.** Now, the tribute from the Lesna Icon Convent sisters in Normandy themselves:-*

## ***Nun Pelagia (Hilda Winifred Allen)***

***31.01.1917-27.09.2011***

In Loving Memory of a Sister in Christ

Mother Pelagia, Hilda Allen in the world, entered the Lesna Monastery in the Fall of 1979. This was the final step of a long search for faith and for the Truth, revealed to her in the teachings of the Orthodox Church. Early on she rejected the religion of her family, of whom many were Protestant missionaries. She would often laughingly recall the Sundays of her childhood, when she would stay home to cook Sunday dinner, rather than attend services and Bible classes. Hilda preferred the preciseness of mathematics, which she studied at Southampton University, and the inspiration that fine music brings, becoming a proficient violinist. Not long before World War II, Miss Hilda Shilston married the conductor of her student orchestra, who worked for the British Council, and moved abroad. For many years she lead a rather colorful and adventurous life, moving from country to country, experiencing both wealth and need, dealing with the surveillance that was common behind the Iron Curtain, and narrowly escaping serious danger several times. She even

found herself a member of the Cairo symphony orchestra for a time, when the professional musicians were called up during the war. The Allens [*her married name*] had a very wide circle of friends, many of whom kept up with their friend Hilda and continued to visit her at the monastery. Two daughters were born over these years, and they shared in the wandering and adventures, until the family finally resettled back home in Great Britain. The girls went to school, and Hilda Allen resumed teaching mathematics.

Around this time she began to feel that something was lacking in her life, and she began to explore and read up on the history of religion and religious experience itself. This eventually led her to join the Anglican Church, the beginning of a journey that eventually brought her to the Orthodox Church. Like many English people of her generation, she came to Orthodoxy through the preaching of Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of the Moscow Patriarchate, and became a member of his parish in London. In time, however, she felt the need for a less vague, less ecumenical and more traditional teaching, and joined the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, being baptised with the name of Paraskeva. Her daughters followed in her footsteps, and Mother Pelagia often spoke of the profound joy of knowing that they, as well as all her grandchildren, were baptised Orthodox Christians. As her knowledge of the faith and her spiritual life deepened, she began to search for a more single-minded and dedicated way of life, and started to think about monasticism. Her children were grown and settled, while her marriage had ended, to a large degree because of her religious conversion. One evening, a late night BBC broadcast of the life of St. Pelagia the Harlot brought her to tears, and this was the turning point after which she begged her spiritual father for a blessing to enter a monastery. Originally she hoped to enter the Holy Nativity Convent in Boston, the only English speaking women's' monastic community within the Church Abroad at that time, but Boston refused to accept a 62 year old novice. She knew of no significant difference between the various Russian-speaking communities, and resorted to the traditional method of drawing lots, that God's will might be revealed. Her heart fell when the Lesna Monastery came up, as she had visited there earlier and hadn't liked it at all. But early in her Orthodox journey

she had grasped the spiritual importance of obedience. So, she arrived at Lesna in 1979 determined to bear it, no matter what.

The Lesna Monastery of the 1970s and 80s was a typical 19th century Russian religious community, or rather, what could be preserved of that over many years of revolution, persecution and wandering. Only Russian was spoken, only Slavonic used in the divine services, and though the convent preserved many fine traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia, it was all very much “word of mouth,” with little, if any, system or structure in place, especially when it came to dealing with a newcomer convert from another culture. Sr. Paraskeva was not, to put it mildly, met with open arms, and for a long, long time felt very much an outsider, accepted neither by the “old-timers” of the Russian emigration or the “new Russians” that were just starting to get out of the Soviet Union in those years. There were bright moments: she found a true spiritual mother and guide in Abbess Magdalina (Grabbe), and formed a lasting friendship with her successor, Abbess Athanasia (Guttenberger), and soon enough other English speaking novices began to enter Lesna. She came to know and love the complicated monastery services. There were visits from family and friends. She also clung to the hope that another English-speaking monastic community for women would eventually be founded within the Church Abroad and that she would be blessed to transfer there. Above all, there was the consolation of having completely renounced her own will and feeling that she was where the Lord meant her to be. But only a person with a truly profound and sincere desire for monastic life could have borne with the hardships of those early years. Experiencing so many different countries and cultures during her years abroad helped her cope with the unfathomable Russians, as did her great intelligence, wit, sense of irony and unforgettable, typically British sense of humor. Never very strong physically, Sr. Paraskeva nevertheless shared in the work of the monastery to the extent that she was able, cleaning the church, baking prosphora, driving, and much more. At the very start she set many rules for herself and clung to them unflinchingly with a true ascetic purpose. She was always present at the services and participated in the choir, she was always there for meals in the refectory, always prompt and cheerful at her tasks. She never, ever complained at the multitude of

minor hardships that make up monastery life: interrupted hours of sleep, noisy neighbors, unfamiliar food, annoying habits, seemingly unreasonable schedules. She was scrupulously obedient. Her separation from the world was complete. She struggled to limit herself in everything and to free herself of all superfluous possessions, and would not permit herself any secular reading or music. She always did her best to be kind and loving to all the sisters and laughed off what she couldn't change, keeping focused on what was truly important without distractions.

Such fervor didn't go unnoticed; Abbess Magdalina quickly came to love and value Sr. Paraskeva greatly. In English-speaking circles she soon became known for a spiritual wisdom far beyond her few monastic years. The Lesna sisters called her "*nasha anglichanka*" (our Englishwoman) and she finally found a real place for herself in the community. Sr. Paraskeva was tonsured a rasophore nun in 1981, and to the small schema in 1984, with the name of Pelagia, after the saintly monastic that had originally inspired her. M. Pelagia began to assist M. Athanasia in the administrative work of the monastery, and Matushka Abbess Magdalina died peacefully in 1987, feeling that she was leaving the monastery in their capable hands. In 1990 Archbishop Anthony of Geneva officially appointed her as Abbess Athanasia's assistant, bestowing a pectoral cross upon her, and the title of "*namestnitsa*" (prioress).

M. Pelagia fell gravely ill in 1993 and was never really able to return to a fully active life in the monastery. Abbess Athanasia retired that year, and many other changes came: there was a new abbess and new clergy, the Soviet Union disintegrated, and the monastery was suddenly full of novices from the former Soviet bloc, the information revolution and computer technology came to Lesna. No longer part of the monastery's administration, M. Pelagia was able to spend many hours with the monastery's novices, younger sisters, and English-speaking pilgrims, sharing her encyclopedic knowledge of the saints' lives and her special love for the saints of her native British Isles, and dispensing the wisdom that had been gained through her earlier struggles, trials and tribulations. She witnessed how the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, so long a bastion of traditional Orthodoxy, began to crack and crumble, as talk of reunification with the Moscow Patriarchate began. M. Pelagia remained

true to her principles and practices, and in those years, in spite of her increasing frailty, she seemed a pillar of prayer, monastic wisdom and traditional Orthodoxy to our community. Being dependent upon others did not prevent her from speaking out against compromise and false union, declaring that she would be bound by her conscience to leave Lesna, should the monastery submit to the Moscow Patriarchate. It was a great joy and relief to her when the Lesna Monastery decided to join the branch of the Catacomb Church under Archbishop Tikhon.

A visit to the very small, very spare cell where M. Pelagia spent most of the last few years of her life recalled to mind the life of her Saint Pelagia, who lived as a recluse on the Mount of Olives in the Holy Land. Her mind remained sharp almost to the very end, but she found it increasingly difficult to concentrate, and devoted herself largely to prayer. In January she told us that she would die this year and began to prepare still more seriously. She began to partake of Holy Communion more frequently, and towards the end, almost daily. When she was able, she spoke of an increasing joy, and even when she had difficulty in speaking, we could see that she knew us and was glad of our presence.

On the morning of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, when the Church chants, “Rejoice, thou Life-bearing Cross, invincible victory of piety, door to Paradise...”, M. Pelagia received Holy Communion for the last time. By the afternoon it became apparent that this would be her last day, and we gathered with Matushka Macrina [*the present Abbess*] and Fr. Evfimiy to chant the Canon for the Departure of the Soul. Mother Pelagia left us soon after. The 14th / 27th of September is also the day of the Appearance of the Lesna Icon, and we believe that the Most Holy Mother of God chose this day to call her handmaiden, who had served her so faithfully here at Lesna, to a new life, where there is neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor sighing, but life everlasting.

***THE TRIBUTE** above was published by the Sisters of the Lesna Icon Convent in Provemont, Normandy, who asked us to put it in the magazine - a thing which naturally we were more than ready to do. In a personal letter written an hour or so after Mother Pelagia's repose, the present prioress, **Mother Evfrosinia** said a little more about Mother Pelagia's last moments, writing:-*

“She received Holy Communion this morning, on the Feast, and we saw that she was weakening. After lunch we thought to call the doctor, as she seemed to be gasping for breath, but then she was able to have a little water and calmed down, and we decided to leave her in peace and just pray. At 16:45 Fr. Evfimiy came, and several of us, lead by Matushka Abbess Macrina, sang the Canon for the Departure of the Soul and the hymns to the Cross, which I know Mother Pelagia especially loved. Towards the end of the Canon she seemed to come to a little, and looked straight at me, and I knew she knew me. Fr. Evfimiy read the prayer of Absolution, blessed her, and went to begin Vespers. We said goodbye and kissed her, and M. Pelagia left us a few minutes later. It’s a great consolation that she departed so peacefully.”

*In another personal letter, Mother Evfrosinia writes: - “Mother Pelagia’s death was so exactly the painless, blameless Christian ending of our lives that we pray for, and she seemed so peaceful and content and even happy those last few days, that none of us can feel really sad, other than at the thought that we’ll miss her.”*

## ***The Funeral of Mother Pelagia***

THE FEAST of the Appearance of the miraculous Lesna Icon of the Mother of God coincides with that of the Holy Cross, and so customarily the sisters at the Convent keep it on the following Sunday. This year, they were expecting their ruling hierarch, **Archbishop Tikhon** to lead the celebration. Furthermore, Mother Pelagia had family and loved ones both here in Britain and in America, and arrangements had to be made for them to attend the funeral. For these reasons it was held over until Tuesday, 21st September / 4th October. Thus, her two daughters, Elizabeth Castle and Mary O’Brien, were able to attend, with her son-in-law Michael, and grand-daughters, Joanna, Catherine and Elizabeth, as well as her great-grandson, Nicolas. Her other son-in-law, Robert, was unable to come owing to an injury, and nor were her two grandsons, David and Andrew, able to make arrangements to attend. From our Brotherhood, Fr Alexis went, and Fr Gabriel Lawani and his presbytera, Helena,

from the Joy of all Who Sorrow Mission in Droylsden (Synod of Abp Kallinikos) also attended, travelling with Aquilina Coussmaker, one of our Brookwood parishioners. Other friends, including Katia Harwood, had also gathered at the Convent from England, others from Paris and from as far away as Geneva.

Archbishop Tikhon purposely postponed his departure for Russia, so that he might pay his respects when the coffin was brought into the church. He had earlier met the mourners as they enjoyed a snack breakfast, squeezed in between the end of the Liturgy and the funeral itself. Observing that there were clergymen and lay people from various Synods, many of them “ROCOR refugees” (those who found refuge with Traditionalist Hierarchs when the Synod under Metropolitan Lavr joined World Orthodoxy in 2006), he philosophically remarked, “We have been split up, but the important thing is that we are joined to Christ.”

The funeral itself was served by the Convent’s priests, **Hieromonks Fr Evfimy and Fr Damaskin**, and was chanted in both Slavonic and English by the Sisters. This itself was sobering - could we chant a service in French if someone of French origin was laid to rest here? The answer is no. We have neither the competence, nor the love. Respecting Mother Pelagia’s close links to our community at Brookwood, the Sisters asked Father Alexis to lead the coffin from the Convent to the cemetery at the far end of the village, and to perform the committal itself at the grave.

On returning to the Convent, we were treated to what can only be described as a sumptuous Mercy Meal in the *trapeza*, accompanied by the reading of the Life of St Pelagia the Penitent. Towards the end of the meal, Fr Evfimy chanted a *liti* for Mother Pelagia and blessed *koliva* in her memory. The care and devotion which Abbess Macrina and her sisterhood showed in arranging Mother Pelagia’s obsequies testify to the warm Christian love they hold for her in their hearts. That love, like that which we hold in our hearts for her, doubtless springs from the love that she herself had for the Saviour Christ. May He now grant her rest in a place of light, a place of green pasture, and a place of repose.



# TEACHING

## OF THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV

# ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS

FOR this righteous way consists not in those corruptible things on offer to us, lest our mind, descending from the better things, is buried in the corruptible; but it rather promises us certain wondrous and ineffable good things, which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man* (1 Cor. 2:9). And so *our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world* (Eph. 6:12). If in the present age there is darkness, then let us flee from it; and our flight must be in our thoughts. Let us have nothing at all in common with the enemies of God: for *whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God* (James 4:4); and who will aid those made enemies of God? Therefore let us set out to emulate our Fathers, and, like them, let us seek the treasury within our hearts, and, having found it, let us hold it fast, both *dressing it and keeping it* (see Gen. 2:15), for so it was appointed in the very beginning. Should another Nicodemus appear and begin to dispute about this, and say, how can one enter into the heart and act and live there? - in the same way as he once objected to the Saviour, *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* (John 3:4), such an one would hear even now that *the spirit bloweth where it listeth* (John 3:8). And if, with like unbelief, we should have doubts about the various points of this activity, how shall we achieve the realm of vision? For the ladder to vision is activity.

A brother asked Abba Agathon, saying: "Tell me, Abba, what is greater: bodily labour or interior vigilance?" The Abba replied: "Man is like a tree; bodily labour is the leaves, but interior vigilance is the fruit. Furthermore, according to the words of the Scriptures, *every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire* (Matt. 3:10). It is clear then that all our care should be concerning the fruit,

which is the guarding of the mind. However, for protection and adornment the leaves are also necessary, which are bodily labour.”

Wondrous is the sentence pronounced by the Saint on all those who do not possess the guarding of the mind, but boast only in their labours, for he says that *every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit*, that is the guarding of the mind, and which has only leaves, that is activity, *is hewn down and cast into the fire*. Father, your proclamation is awesome!

Thus, if you desire to possess as your own the illumination of the noetic light of spiritual understanding, so that you may journey without stumbling through the deep night of this world, and so that, in accordance with the prophetic saying, your steps might be rightly directed by the Lord and your way in the Gospel greatly desired (see Ps. 36:23), that you might ascend with flaming faith through desire and prayer to be made a communicant of the perfect Gospel precepts of the Lord; then I will show you the wondrous means and the attainment of spiritual proficiency, which does not require bodily labour or struggles, but spiritual labours of the mind and attentiveness of the thoughts, recollection with fear of and love for God. With this proficiency it will be in order for you to banish the hordes of the enemies. Thus, if you desire to maintain ascendancy over the passions, then, with prayer and with the aid of God, enter into yourself, fathom the depths of the heart, pursue those three powerful giants: forgetfulness, sloth, and ignorance, which form a reinforcement for the noetic aliens, and through which other evil passions enter in, through which also they work, live and grow strong in the souls of those who love leisure. Through great attentiveness and exertion of the mind, with the help from above which unknown to the many, you will ascend in this way, with great painstakingness and prayer, being delivered from the evil giants. Through diligence for true understanding, for recollection of the Word of God and for a good consent, - if such diligence, through the action of Grace, is assiduously inflamed and attentively maintained in the heart, - the traces therein of forgetfulness, ignorance and slothfulness will wiped out. (See Nikiforos the Monk: *On Watchfulness and the Guarding of the Heart*).

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

# The Coming Month

NOVEMBER, like August, falls neatly into two halves, because at mid month, Monday, 15th / 28th this year, the **Fast in preparation of the Saviour's Nativity** begins. This fast lasts forty days, but, because it falls in Winter, it is kept less strictly than the Great Lent. On every Saturday and Sunday, we are permitted fish, wine and oil; on Tuesdays and Thursdays we are permitted wine and oil, and the other three days are kept as f3s (see calendar insert). In this period, as in all fast periods, married couples are encouraged to abstain from marital intercourse, and all Orthodox people should limit travelling, entertainments and purely leisure activities, and concentrate on their spiritual life, by preparing and coming to confession, by more disciplined prayer and by increase spiritual reading.

Of course, for those of us living in the West, this is particularly difficult with the approach of what can only now be reasonably referred to as *Mammonmas*. There is a tremendous draw on people, especially those with small children, to participate in that festivity. Sometimes, perhaps, concessions have to be made, but we should make sure that they are made out of love for those close to us and so as not to gratuitously offend or hurt them, but that we do not do it from any carelessness on our part. For the children, especially when they are very small, one can make our Christmas especially festive so that they grow to love it and, when they are older, perhaps appreciate that we are not celebrating with a world engrossed with Mammon. We suggest that those who are conscientious discuss their particular problems in this regard with the priest to whom they confess. As with so many things in our Christian life, we must strive to do our very best, pray for strength, and repent of and confess our shortcomings and failings. What we should not do, if we consider ourselves Orthodox Christians, is simply ignore the precepts which the Church has provided for us as aids to our spiritual growth.

One Great Feast falls in November, that of the **Entry of the All-holy Theotokos into the Temple** (21st November / 4th December), which this year falls on a Sunday. In some churches, the Sunday service is omitted on such occasions, but in others the service for the Saviour's Resurrection from the dead is combined with that of the Great Feast. This feast, which because it tells of the dedication of the young Virgin to the ministry of the Lord is celebrated as a feast for all the monastics. It is one that undoubtedly has a particular significance for those of us who have been formed by the post-Protestant culture of the West. The generally accepted "wisdom" of our society is that "Mary" was simply a nice, good girl that the Lord chose to be the bearer of Christ (a kind of amalgam of Arianism and Nestorianism). The Orthodox teaching is something very different. The All-holy Virgin is confessed to be the culmination of the Old Testament prophesies. She is the woman foretold even in the very first verses of the Scriptures: Genesis 3:15. She was of the royal and high priestly lineage of the Chosen People of God, the old Israel. If it were not so, then our Saviour would have been, like so many others both before His time and after, a false messiah and not the One foretold by the prophets. But such a thought, for the Orthodox, is blasphemous. Even the building of the Temple, into which she enters on this day, bears witness to her. The second Temple, which replaced the Solomon's Temple, destroyed by the Babylonians, was consecrated, but many of the holy things from the first Temple, including the Ark of the Covenant had been lost. The Entry of the All-holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, as it were, perfected the consecration of that Temple, for she was the Ark of the New Covenant, not a casket bearing stone tablets, but a living Tabernacle bearing the Word of God Himself. Thus we keep this feast, and it foreshadows the greater feast of the Nativity, and so from this day in our church services, hymns for the Nativity are chanted.

Among the Saints celebrated this month we have:

The **Holy New Martyr Anastasius of Epirus, and the Venerable Daniel, the former Turk** (18th November / 1st December): Anastasius was with a group of Christians walking one day to the harvest in the fields. Among the group was his sister, and they were met by a party of Turks on horseback, led by the son of the Governor of Epirus,

Musa. Musa was struck by the beauty of Anastasius' sister and inflamed with lust for her. His attempt to abduct her was foiled when Anastasius threw himself at the young Turk, and allow his sister to escape. However, Musa then complained to his father, who had Musa arrested, and as happened in those days, he was given the chance of converting to Islam to exculpate himself. Neither threats nor promises would persuade him to renounce our Saviour, and so he was thrown into prison. However, the nobility of Anastasius' demeanour in these trials touched the heart of Musa, and curious about a Faith which gave him such strength, he went to visit Anastasius in prison. When the gaoler opened the door of his cell, Musa saw two young men in radiant apparel on either side of the martyr. Anastasius told him these were guardian angels come to watch over him and strengthen him. Musa was so cut to the heart that he fell at the martyr's feet, asking if he could become a Christian. Anastasius counseled him to wait, lest his conversion enrage his father even more and reprisals against the Christians of the region be instigated. On 18th November, 1750, Anastasius was beheaded for his confession of Christ. Musa took the opportunity, when travelling to a wedding feast in a nearby village, to visit the grave of the martyr. There he bowed down in prayer and was granted to see the Martyr in heavenly glory, who urged him to continue in his intention to seek Baptism. So, Musa left that region and went to the Peloponnese, where he found an Elder to counsel and direct him. Lest his Baptism enrage the Turkish authorities, he was directed to go to Venice, where there was a large Orthodox community, where he could be baptised without fear from his fellow countrymen. In Baptism he was renamed Demetrius, but he then moved to Corfu, where he received the monastic tonsure and the name, Daniel. He lived a strict ascetic life, but his heart was always filled with a desire also to die as a martyr, and so he went to Constantinople, intending to confess Christ there and confess that he had apostatized from Islam. However, the faithful there dissuaded him from a course which could have endangered the stability of their community there, and Father Daniel returned to his monastery in Corfu, where he dedicated a church to St Anastasius, and finished his earthly course in the martyrdom of the monastic life, and was also numbered among the Saints.

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## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*In reply to a question from P. J., Bray, Co Wicklow, Ireland:-*

REGARDING the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Orthodox consider it to be erroneous. First of all, our conception of original sin is different from the RC one. Their belief is that we are actually sinful because of Adam's fall, and some of their writers even imply that we are guilty of it - which would be extremely unjust. The Orthodox refer to Ancestral Sin rather than Original Sin, stressing that the sin was that of our forebears, not our own. We believe that we suffer the consequences of that sin, in that we are born into a world that has been stained by it, and that we have a propensity towards sin, our nature has been weakened by the fall, but we do not believe that we share in that sin or are guilty of it ourselves.

Because the RCs overemphasized the consequences of Adam's fall, they had somehow to exempt the Mother of God from those dire consequences, and so eventually they invented the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Although for centuries some of their own spiritual writers proposed this, others, including some whom they revere as saints, had fervently opposed it.

So for the Orthodox it is a correction to a problem that did not exist! Furthermore, for us it undermines the whole teaching on the incarnation of the Word of God. If the All-holy Virgin was somehow conceived differently from the rest of mankind, she was not truly human, but somehow super-human from her conception, and so being born of her our Saviour would not have become truly man - thus our hope of salvation would be shattered.

*THE ABOVE was the reply as sent at the time, but one could add that the erroneous dogma also demeans the All-Holy Virgin. Had she thus been specially "immaculately conceived," presumably she would*

*have been programmed to accept the proposal from the Archangel Gabriel, and her beautiful “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,” would have been the empty mouthings of an automaton. Where then would have been her virtue, or the value of her purity? Why then should we, the generations, call her blessed? or laud her excellence?*



# NEWS SECTION

## *ORTHODOX-ANGLICAN DIALOGUE*

THE AUTOCEPHALOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALBANIA issued the following report on 23rd September: “At the invitation of His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana and all Albania, the **Mixed Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue** held the meeting at the New Monastery of St. Vlash and the Theological Academy “Resurrection of Christ,” in the village of St. Vlash, near Durres, Albania from September 16-23, 2011. It is the first time the Commission met in our country. On Sunday, September 18, friends from the Orthodox and Anglican Churches attended the Divine Liturgy at the Orthodox Church of Annunciation in Tirana, where the orthodox hierarchs celebrated. **Bishop (sic) Kallistos Ware**, a renowned theologian and cochairman of the commission from Britain and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, gave the sermon. Over several centuries, the two churches have had friendly relations, and the direct theological dialogue began in Oxford in 1973. There have been three reports on theological topics of common interest. New discussions have begun regarding the responsibilities of Christians to protect God’s Creation and the environment as well as the human rights. The Orthodox Church was represented at the meeting by Metropolitan Kallistos of Dioclea, from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Metropolitan Seraphim of Zimbabwe from the Patriarchate of Alexandria, Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviste from the Romanian Patriarchate, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Kition from the Church of Cyprus, Bishop Ilia of the Church of Albania, as well as lay theologians and clergy from churches of Antioch, Russia, Serbia, Greece and Poland. The Anglican cochairman of

the commission was Bishop Roger Heft from Australia” (*highlighting ours*). It is unclear whether, on this occasion, there were any theological discussions or any ecumenical dialogue; it appears from this short report that the only topics covered were protecting God’s creation and human rights. However, profitable these discussions were for those participating, one suspects that the world, which they seem to seek to benefit, will be deaf to their wisdom. When the Anglican community is apparently tearing itself apart with disputes, and generally its people are speeding away from anything like traditional Christianity, one cannot help but wonder why the Orthodox participants do not better spend their energies in calling them to Orthodoxy.

## ***CHURCH IN OXFORD ROBBED***

THE CHURCH of **St Nicholas in Oxford** (MP) has recently been attacked by thieves in two separate incidents. On the night of Saturday, 22nd October, thieves got onto the roof of the church and stole the cross from the cupola at the front of the church. The theft was noticed after the Liturgy next day. However, that night thieves broke into the church itself and stole the following items: the reliquary box with particles of relics of various saints, two reliquary crosses kept in a case in the altar, a box containing a chalice, anointing brushes and a ladle, the baptismal box containing the holy chrism, a silver bowl used for water-blessing, the candle box with a locked but empty money box. From the Monday night, parishioners stayed through the night in the church to keep watch. On Tuesday night, 25th October, a further attempt was made to break into the church through the front door. The thieves, who came in a car, fled when they noticed that someone was inside the church. The police were called, but found nobody suspicious in the area. They have taken film from the security camera of the garage next to the church, which shows two people. They have not yet been identified. Mercifully, the Holy Altar was not disturbed or touched, and no icons were stolen or defaced. Since the thefts, additional security measures have been installed in the church. Showing great pastoral care and love, **His Eminence, Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh** sent the following letter to the parish pastor, **Fr Stephen Platt**: “I have learned with deep concern about the occurrence of the blasphemous sacrilege in our recently consecrated church of St. Nicholas in Oxford. Christ has been assaulted again by the weak faith and morals of people who in their wickedness have encroached upon the sacred,

and plundered our Orthodox holy things: the cross from the church dome, the particles of holy relics, sacred vessels and other holy things. In this distressing event for all of us let us humbly perceive a providential indication that we all need spiritual vigilance. Everything that has happened is a reminder of Christ's words, spoken in Gethsemane before his Passion: 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation' (Mt. 26:41). In this hard lesson for us, brothers and sisters, let us not be despondent, but rouse ourselves to a renewed spirit of repentance, prayer and church attendance in faith and devotion to Christ, who for our sins has borne mockery, suffering and the cross. With faith in the radiant resurrection of Christ, let us renew our church in Oxford through our humble labours and support. May the heavenly patron of our church, St Nicholas of Myra, accompany us in this task."

## ***CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS***

VISITORS to the Brotherhood will have noticed that new and fitting gates have been erected at the entrance to Saint Cyprian's Avenue. Unfortunately shortly after this was done, the lock was tampered with, and so an improved lock has been added to the gates, increasing security. Also at the junction of the Bagshot Road (A322) and Cemetery Pales, and a little way along the A322 from this junction, new cemetery signs have been erected, both of them indicating that, through the efforts of the present owners, **Erkin and Melanie Guney**, the Brookwood Cemetery is now a **Grade 1 Historic Park and Garden**. The owners tell us that they are also contemplating having CCTV within the cemetery. These things naturally increase the security of our own property, and at the present time we are also having the security system on the church itself upgraded by **Surrey Security Systems**.



“TAKE CARE to receive Holy Communion often, because nothing else will be so helpful in your journey as will Divine Communion.”

**BLESSED ELDER PHILOTHEOS (ZERVAKOS), + 1980 A.D.**

# SIR-UK NEWS

## ***BAPTISM AND WEDDING AT BROOKWOOD***

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava**, Moldavia, very briefly visited England on Saturday 25th September / 8th October, to celebrate a Baptism and Wedding at Saint Edward's. He arrived early in the morning, so that in the afternoon he could leave for Italy, where next day he was due to serve the Sunday Liturgy for the Traditionalist Orthodox Romanian parish in Rome. He was accompanied by the priest, **Fr Sebastian Mogirzan**, of the parish in Falticeni, Romania. The infant son of **Ioan and Mihaela Costin** of London, NW9, was baptised; his sponsor being **Daniela Gabriela Bigu**. The baby was named **David**, for the Prophet, King and Psalmist David, the ancestor of our Saviour.

Because of the shortage of time, the Wedding followed immediately after the Baptism. The groom was **Mihail Grigore** and the bride **Niculina Vieru**, and, after the ceremonies, refreshments were provided for all those who had participated. God grant **Many Years** to all those who received these blessings through the loving pastoral ministry of Bishop Sofronie.

## ***FUNERAL OF PETER STACEY***

THE FUNERAL of **Peter Stacey** was chanted at Saint Edward's Church on Thursday, 23rd September / 6th October. Although after a serious stroke, Peter had been an invalid for several years and was confined to a wheel-chair, his death on 23rd September (n.s.) was something of a shock. A few days before, on the Feast of the Enshrinement of Saint Edward's Relics, he had attended the Divine Liturgy and received the Holy Mysteries for the last time from the hand of **Bishop Ambrose**. Peter had been one of the founding members of the **Mission of St Werburgh in Congleton, Cheshire (ROCA)**. When that mission was closed down, and the Synod under Metropolitan Lavr joined the Moscow Patriarchate, the mission's faithful scattered in various (ecclesial) directions. Although they had first been received by **Archbishop Mark**, protesting the ecumenical activity of the Greek Archdiocese, to which they formerly belonged, some joined "World Orthodox" jurisdictions, some joined "World Orthodoxy"

willy-nilly by going along with the new direction taken by the Synod under Metropolitan Lavr, some turned to other Old Calendarist hierarchies. Two elected to follow the path that we had at Brookwood, and both in time moved to the South to be nearer Saint Edward's. Peter was one of these two. Until he was able to arrange a move, we used to take the Holy Mysteries to him in Congleton. He was later able to move to a care home in Woking, which proved unsatisfactory, but from there was re-accommodated at **Saint Augustine's Care Home in Addlestone**, which is beautifully run by an order of Roman Catholic sisters. In the last months of his life, he appears to have found a measure of peace, and was able to attend church regularly. Family members from Warwickshire, Kent and Devon, and a number of our own parishioners attended the funeral, and, after he had been laid to rest in our cemetery, they were offered refreshments in the main hall of the Old Mortuary chapel. May Peter's rest be with the Saints, whom he loved so much, and his *Memory Eternal!*

## ***CHURCHING AT SAINT EDWARD'S***

THE CHURCHING PRAYERS were read for **Elena Matthews** of Newbury, Berkshire, and for her infant son, **Thomas**, on her fortieth day on Monday, 18th / 31st October. The short service was held in the presence of Thomas' two young sisters, **Leah** and **Nina**. God grant them all to grow in Holy Orthodoxy, and *Many Years!*

## ***PRESENTATION AT SHAFTESBURY***

BILL OWEN, the abbey's personnel director, was appointed chairman of the **Friends of Shaftesbury Abbey** in August, taking over from **Anna McDowell**. On Friday, 21st October, a **Farewell Party** for Anna was held in the museum now attached to the Abbey site, and during the proceeding she was presented with an ornate bowl, locally hand-crafted, and a scarf, in appreciation of her long service to the historic site. The present state of the Abbey site grounds and the professional way in which the museum has been set up bear witness to her hard work and initiative. Fr Alexis, a life member of the Friends, attended the reception on behalf of our Brotherhood.

## ***CONVENT AGM***

THE TRUSTEES of the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden** held their AGM on Wednesday 5th October at three in the afternoon, with their accountant in attendance. The latest annual accounts both for the King Edward Orthodox Trust Company Limited, which administers our property at Brookwood, and for the Convent are now posted on the **Charity Commissioners' website**. After completing the necessary business matters, the sisters of the Convent invited all the participants to tea.

## ***NEW ICONS FOR THE CHURCH***

APPROPRIATELY on the feast of St Luke, the first iconographer, four hand-painted icons which had been ordered from the **Convent of St Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia, in Etna, California**, arrived at Brookwood. The four are of: The **Fourteen Venerable Elders of Optina** - a gift to Saint Edward's given anonymously; **St Lazarus the Four-day Dead and his sisters, the Myrrh-bearers, Mary and Martha of Bethany** - an icon which we commissioned in memory of **Christakis Cleovoullou**; the **Holy Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria**, the gift of **Mrs Madeline Antoniazzi**; and a smaller icon of the **Holy Martyrs Julitta and her infant son, Cyricus**.

## ***VOLUNTEERS***

IN MID-OCTOBER, **James Stanbridge** of Great Canbourne, in Cambridgeshire, stayed with us for the inside of a week to help out with the work here. He spent the greater part of his stay restoring many of the ageing wooden grave crosses in Saint Edward's Cemetery.

**Thomas Garland** from **Somerset** came, anonymously, for his Name Day celebration and both provided and cooked the meals on the eve of the day and on the day itself, leaving us with enough prepared meals for another day. We are extremely grateful for the support and help that these two parishioners have afforded us, helping to relieve a heavy work load that falls to the members of the Brotherhood.

## *GIFT OF AN ICON*

ON RETURN from a family holiday in Florida, the owner of Brookwood Cemetery, **Erkin Guney**, brought us a large low-relief Icon of the **Mother of God of the Passion**, worked without paints in various woods. Moved by his kindness, we have placed it in the main hall of the Old Mortuary.

## *VISITORS*

Wednesday, 5th October: On their way back from France, after the funeral of Mother Pelagia, **Fr Gabriel Lawani** and his presbytera, **Helena**, visited us. Fr Gabriel is the pastor of the **Mission of the Icon of the Mother of God, “Joy of All Who Sorrow”** (Synod of Archbishop Kallinikos) in Droylsden, Manchester.

On the same day, **Margaret, Viscountess Long of Wraxall**, a long time friend of the members of our Brotherhood, who has several times offered us hospitality in her own home in Castle Combe, managed to visit us for the first time. She was driven up from Wiltshire by **John Mills** of Sutton Benger. They visited the church, and exhibition room, and also looked round the grounds and the candle factory. Lady Long is an Orthodox Christian, and Mr Mills is the church warden of his local Anglican church. Unfortunately Fr Alexis had to leave before they did for another appointment, but their stay with us was most enjoyable, and one we hope will be repeated.

Friday, 7th October: **Margaret Hobbs** led a group of eight people, the **“Woking Walking Group,”** to see the church. They stayed about twenty minutes, before continuing their walk.

Saturday, 8th October: The **Armigerous Archpriest Peter Baulk** of the **ROCA-MP Church of the Dormition on Harvard Road, Gunnersbury, West London**, paid us a surprise visit, having been in the area visiting a parishioner. Fr Peter stayed some time discussing points of mutual interest with us, and looking at the changes that have been made in the church and grounds since his last visit some years ago. Fr Peter came just too late to meet Bishop Sofronie and receive his blessing.

Monday, 17th October: As we began the chanting of Vespers, we were joined by two visitors. One was the **Monk Nicodim of Kapsala** on the **Holy Mountain Athos**. The other was a fellow Romanian, now resident in this country and an English-speaker, who brought Father here and accompanied him as a translator. After Vespers, our guests were invited into the Brotherhood and given refreshments and we were blessed to receive instructional and edifying words from Fr Nicodim, and to learn something more of the life on Athos.

Friday, 21st October: **Mrs Jackie Mallyon**, an historian who has several times visited us and last came about eight years ago, brought a group of twelve elderly ladies to visit the church. They stayed for well over an hour and had many questions to ask.

Friday, 28th October: **Fr Protodeacon Christopher Birchall** of the **ROCA-MP Church of St Nicolas, in Vancouver, B.C., Canada**, visited us, spending the greater part of the afternoon with us and joining us for our evening meal. He told us much about the progress of his book, a history of the Church Abroad in Britain, and of present developments in church life as he had witnessed them. Fr Christopher, an English convert to Orthodoxy who has settled in Canada, was in England to attend the funeral of his father.

Tuesday, 1st November: Fr **Protopresbyter Stavrophore Milun Kostic** of **St Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in London** attended the Divine Liturgy at the **Convent of the Annunciation in London**, accompanied by two of his parishioners. After the Divine service, they were invited to breakfast with the Sisters, and “millions” of photographs were taken: in the chapel, in the refectory, in the garden, everywhere! Fr Milun tells us that he is going to translate our Brotherhood’s book, *“The Ark of Salvation,”* into Serbian, a thing which we very much appreciate and welcome. God help him in this undertaking.

## ***THE COMING CHRISTMAS***

WE were unable to book the Lord Pirbright Hall for the **Christmas Parish Breakfast** after the Divine Liturgy on 7th January, 2012, n.s., and so have booked the **Brookwood Memorial Hall** instead. This is, in fact, a little easier for those of you who travel to Brookwood by train, because it is only a brief walk from the station. Shortly a list will be put out asking you to contribute foods for this celebration, and we ask you, as you always do, to help by contributing generously.

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## **PRACTICAL TIP**

WHEN SOMEONE who has a ministry (as a clergyman, a godparent, parent or teacher) tries to instruct, admonish or correct you, there are several ways in which you may respond.

A) However unfortunately or clumsily he/she tries to do this, you may try to understand the purpose behind what is said and take it to heart, and thus be edified by it or at least draw something of profit from it.

B) You may simply ignore it, and get on with your life.

C) You may take exception to it, and attempt to persuade yourself that it does not apply to you, or that you have been misunderstood.

D) You may immediately take offence, perhaps make facetious comments about it on the spot, twist it to make it risible or a topic of gossip, or even denigrate the person who is thus trying to help you.

You are perfectly free to do any of these things. You have free will, - but you should be aware of the consequences. In the first instance, you will profit spiritually; in the second you most probably will not and may well be sinning (pride at the very least). In the third, unless you take up the matter in private with the person who spoke and seek further clarification, you will probably be harmed spiritually. In the last instance, you will undoubtedly be self-harming and harming others, those who listen to your scandal-mongering. Unless you repent thoroughly and deeply, you will certainly be falling away from Christ, and causing others to do so as well. You will have become a destroyer, rather than a builder.

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“ONE should not open one’s heart to another unnecessarily. Out of a thousand you will find only one that will preserve your secret.”

VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV THE WONDERWORKER, + 1833 A.D.