



FROM THE FATHERS

“WHEN she, she who for our sake took care to nurse Christ our God from birth, had passed the age of being nursed, and she was three years old, her blessed parents brought the Temple of God to the Temple. And they dedicated her as an offering to God, as promised before her birth, and they brought her there with glory and honour, as was fitting. Many virgins went before her and accompanied her with brilliant lamps, as the king and prophet, the forefather of the immaculate Virgin, foretold and said from the beginning, *The virgins ... shall be brought unto the King, those near her [her friends] brought unto Thee* (Ps. 44:13), for the prophet said this before the presentation, about the virgins who went and accompanied her. And this prophesy is to be understood not only about them, but also about the virgin souls subsequently following her path, whom she calls friends. And even if they are all imperfect in friendship and resemblance to her, the souls of the saints are nevertheless called her friends by the grace and goodness of her Child the Lord, as the King and Creator of all did not consider it inappropriate to call His brethren pleasing and friends (see Matt. 12:49-50, Luke 8:21, Jn 20:17). For in fact all the souls of the just, who by a life of purity are enabled to become even His friends, will be made worthy of her intercession, and by grace they are brought to her King and Son and led into the heavenly Holy of Holies, whereas her Son entered in as a forerunner on our behalf, according to the word of the Apostle Paul (Heb. 9:12), so also the all-holy Mother of the Lord entered into the heavenly resting place before all, and the other souls of the saints are led there subsequently by her intercession.”

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

The following parable was intended to show us the necessity of prayer, confession and fasting in preparing properly to receive the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ. It also shows us the importance of the Nativity Fast, which begins this year on Monday, 5th / 28th November, in preparing for the Great Feast of our Saviour's Birth in Bethlehem, when the Rich-est of strangers comes into our village, this world, and seeks hospitality in our house, our life.

The Rich Traveller

BY ARCHIMANDRITE SERAPHIM (ALEKSIEV)

INTO a remote and beautiful mountain village there came an unusual stranger for his summer vacation. He was a very rich man. He was travelling alone, and, being quite tired, he wanted to find a place to stay and rest. He had the intention of rewarding the people who could give him a quiet and pleasant stay. Since he had countless riches, he wanted to give his cordial hosts a present that they had never even dreamed of.

He saw what seemed to be a beautiful house situated on a wonderful spot and decided to ask for shelter there. He knocked on the door, but when it was opened and he was invited to come in, he instinctively shrank away. An unbearably foul-smelling air reached him from inside. What was the matter? The home of these people and their pigsty were under the same roof. Without even mentioning the reason for his visit, the traveller excused himself and went back out into the yard.

He went along the clear river which was running through the village. Close by was another beautiful, newly built house which attracted his attention, and he decided to knock at its door. However, the owner of this home was a very cruel man. When he saw a stranger approaching the gates, he set his dogs on him and did not even let him come into his yard.

The traveller sought shelter in a third house as well. The people there invited him kindly, and he went inside. But after he saw that everything in this home was lying around in disorder, covered with dust and soot, and buried in waste and cobwebs, he decided that he would not be able to find the peace he longed-for.

By that time, he was so tired that he decided to stay in the next, fourth house no matter what its condition. But there, besides the untidiness and the dirt, he noticed something else. There were signs of bedbugs on the walls, and he could not stand the parasites. Also, fleas crawled all over him, so he hurried to get out of there, too.

In this way he went about the whole village, but he could not find a clean home where he could rest peacefully...

At the end of the village, exhausted, he dropped by a small house in which, as it turned out, lived a good housewife. There he was met with great cordiality and with friendly, smiling faces. The moment he entered one of the rooms, he noticed that everything there was simple, but clean and well ordered. The windows were shining with cleanliness. There were no cobwebs in the corners. The boards of the floor were recently cleaned. The air in the room was fresh. It was evident that the fragrance of the near fields and forests was often allowed to come into the house through the open windows.

The traveller sighed with relief and stayed in this home. At last he had found a quiet, pleasant place to rest. It was there that he left his magnificent gift.

Dear readers, have you asked yourselves: if our Saviour were to come, He Who is bringing the greatest gift--His heavenly grace with which He makes our souls happy and saves them--and if He were to seek a shelter for Himself in our souls, where could He find a place fit for rest? Saint Macarius of Egypt says: "Just as God has created the heavens and the earth for man to inhabit, so He has created the body and the soul of man to be His abode, that is why the Apostle says, His "house we are" (Hebrews 3:6).

Jesus Christ, this Wondrous Heavenly Guest, often comes among us and wishes to enter the roof of our soul. He appears among us through the unfathomable mystery of Holy Communion. He knocks on every door, longs to come into every home, desires to talk with every heart, wants to make every believing soul happy and to give it His heavenly gift...

From: *The Forgotten Medicine: The Mystery of Repentance*

Archimandrite Seraphim (Aleksiev), who reposed in 1993, was the spiritual son and guardian of the spiritual testament of Saint Seraphim (Sobolev) of Bulgaria.

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The Entry into the Temple of our All-holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

FROM THE "NASTOLNAYA KNIGA"*
OF S. V. BULGAKOV**

WHEN the Most Holy Virgin reached three years old, her parents, true to their vow to the Lord to dedicate the child born to them to Him (see entry for 9th September), led by young maidens "adorned with virtues," "with candles in their hands," and accompanied by kinsfolk and those close to them, "with rejoicing" solemnly led their most pure daughter into the Temple in Jerusalem "to be schooled by Divine grace" before the Lord.

Although, as the church hymns express it, at that time the Most Holy Virgin, was yet still only "three years old in the body," she had already reached "many years in the spirit," although still "a child according to the flesh she was already perfect in soul." She

regarded the Lord's Temple as a paradisiacal abode of the glory of God, as a most desired place of refuge, for which Her soul thirsted more than for her parental home, and therefore she entered into the Temple majestically and with gladness.

The Holy Virgin was placed on the first step of the Temple and to the wonder of all, with none supporting her, being spurred on by the spirit of love for God, she climbed confidently up the fifteen steps of the Temple. Angels of God invisibly surrounded her and ministered unto her. Seized by a sacred delight, the High Priest Zacharias, "having blessed her, received" the holy child "as one as great as the dwelling place of God", and according to a special revelation of God, led her into the Holy of Holies where even the High Priest entered but once a year. Not only were all the participants in this festival struck with amazement, but also "the angels, seeing the entry of the Most Pure Virgin were filled with wonder, how the Virgin entered with glory into the Holy of Holies."

Having left their daughter in the Temple, Saints Joachim and Anna returned to their own home, rejoicing and thanking God, Who had granted that they fulfil the vow they had made to Him.

The holy infant, while living in the Temple, devoted all her time to prayer, to the reading the word of God and to Godly reflections. As was appropriate for her sex, she also occupied her time with needle craft, especially loving to make the sacred vestments for those serving in the Temple. As she grew older, she undertook other labours about the Temple, serving the needy, the maimed and the infirm, to whom tradition tells us, she also gave all her food, being nourished herself only on "that most glorious" bread "from heaven," which was brought by the angels," with whom she "held converse."

Living at the Temple and devoting all her time to pious occupations, the Most Holy Virgin was in soul and body, in mind and heart, in thought and desire ever before the all-pervading, omniscient Lord God and by His almighty will, fostered within herself

a living and firm faith in the word of the Lord, a fervent love for the Lord and for her neighbours, a totally complete surrender to the will of God, the deepest humility and meekness, patience past searching out and obedience to the word of the Lord. “Advancing in wisdom and grace,” she by her exalted qualities surpassed all her peers, “presenting herself,” as St John of Damascus teaches, as an example of the best and purest life in comparison with others.

In the early years of her life she was bereaved of her parents (see entry for 9th Sept.), and after the loss of them, she, with all her soul and with all the desires of a pure heart, commended herself all the more to the one God, and sought comfort and consolation only in Him.

As she grew up and was strengthened in spirit, so the asceticism in her life made increase; with a love of labour she increased her Godly reflections and prayers, and she went from strength to strength, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit grew in her. The “All-holy Spirit Who sanctifies all things, sanctified her abiding in the Temple, her being nourished with the heavenly food,” “that she might become the divine throne of the Master of all, His palace, resting-place, and radiant dwelling,” and “the dwelling place of Him who was begotten of the Father without change before the ages, for the salvation of our souls.”

As though emulating her heavenly companions in purity and as if foreknowing the greatness fore-ordained for her, she firmly resolved to remain a virgin forever and, when she reached her maturity, she betrothed herself to God, having made a sacred vow of perpetual virginity. She became the first in the world to thus remain a virgin, because before her in the Old Testament there had never been a case of a maiden forever remaining unmarried and preferring virginity to the married life. When the time came for the Most Holy Virgin, according to the custom current then, to leave the sacred abode of her pious upbringing and like other virgins to be given in marriage, she, “who possessed purity of soul and goodness,” revealed to the High Priest and the priests her vow, and with their counsel and consent, for the maintaining of her virgin-

ity, she, who at that time she was eleven years old, was betrothed to her kinsman, the righteous Joseph, who was advanced in age, and she went to his house which was in Nazareth and moved from the Temple.

As she continued her life the Most Holy Virgin Mary, according to the testimony of Saint Ambrose of Milan, “was a virgin not only in the flesh, but also in the spirit, lowly of heart, divinely wise in her words, not hasty to speak, chaste in her conversations; she caused no one offense, wished everyone good, did not disdain the poor, and did not mock any. Her appearance was a reflection of an internal perfection; all her days she continued in fasting; she gave herself over to sleep only as much as need required, and even then while her body rested, her spirit was vigilant, rehearsing during sleep something she had read or reflecting on some intention to be fulfilled, or on some new thing to be accomplished. She left the house only for worship, and then only when accompanied by her kinsfolk; nonetheless, even when she was outside the house and accompanied by the others, she was the best protection for herself. Others protected only her body, but she maintained her moral rectitude herself.”

In the church hymns for this day the Most Holy Virgin “is piously praised,” as “the most pure Virgin,” “more honourable and more glorious than the hosts on high,” “the preaching of the prophets, the glory of the apostles, the praise of the martyrs, and the renewal of all the earthborn,” “the bridal chamber of God the Word,” “the dwelling place of the King of All,” “the Mother of God,” “our glory and salvation.” On the present “joyful day,” calling “the assembly of the faithful” to this praise of the Most Holy Virgin, the holy Church together with those assembled “on this all honourable feast” teaches us to fulfil our own pious vows through the example of Saints Joachim and Anna, and She gives us the deeply instructive example of the upbringing of the Most Holy Virgin to instruct us regarding our duties to our children, that we must, as early as possible and as often as possible, take them to God’s church,

teach them to complete their prayers at home, instruct them in the law of the Lord, and according to their maturity to develop within themselves love for their neighbour and a love of struggle, thus to inspire obedience in them to church precepts, and to waken and strengthen in them the spirit of piety and the fear of God.

The origin of the establishment of this feast of the Entry of the Ever-Virgin Mary into the Temple is not known with complete accuracy. Saint Gregory of Nyssa (4th century) first mentions it. In the ninth century, George of Nicomedia composed the stichera, which we now sing on this feast.

* *Nastolnaya Kniga* - literally "the book on the table," in fact it is a encyclopedic series of volumes for the ministers of the Church, describing the feasts, the services, and giving instructions regarding pastoral and liturgical matters.

** S. V. Bulgakov is to be distinguished from S. N. Bulgakov. Some of the teachings of the latter were condemned as heretical by the Russian Church Abroad, and the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate pronounced them as alien to the Orthodox Faith. No such condemnation touches the teaching of S. V. Bulgakov.



“THE canonical rule for fasting is useful indeed and by all means to be observed, but unless this is followed by temperate eating habits it will be unable to attain to the goal of integrity. For when the emptiness that comes from long fasts is followed by bodily satiety, the result is a period of heaviness rather than chaste purity. Integrity of mind is closely connected with an empty stomach. Whoever is not content with maintaining a constant and even temperance does not possess an enduring and chaste purity. Even the strictest fasts are nullified when a period of relaxation and abundance follows them, and they immediately descend into the vice of gluttony. Better is a reasonable and modest daily repast than harsh and lengthy fasts now and again.”

VEN. JOHN CASSIAN THE ROMAN, + 435 A.D.

Teaching on the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church

BY ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER RUDAKOV

PUBLISHED IN 1890 IN SAINT PETERSBURG

Note: In what follows we have expanded on Fr Alexander's original text to make things clearer for contemporary readers.

Repentance

§ 98. Repentance in Apostolic Times and in the First Centuries of Christianity. Repentance, understood in its essential meaning, as the knowledge of one's sins and feeling compunction for them is naturally bound up with correcting one's life purposefully, and it always has been and always will be thus. But repentance [or confession] understood as one of the Mysteries, implies the confession of one's sins and receiving absolution through the ministry of the priests, and in various ages it has taken various outward forms.

In Apostolic times, and generally in the first three centuries of the Christian era, if one had sins that were not grievous, one confessed them in private before the priests. But if one had fallen into grievous and manifest sins, then you were temporarily fully excommunicated from the Church. When the person who had fallen had manifested sincere repentance and a desire to be reunited to the Church, then he was required to confess before the whole Church, and then, according to Her decree he had to undertake various probationary steps in order to demonstrate the soundness of his repentance. The length of this probationary period was not always the same, but depended on the gravity of his transgression. Sometimes the penitent was subjected to such a trial for a year, sometimes for seven, sometimes for fifteen, and sometimes even

until the end of his life. However, this time of repenting was often shortened in consideration of the sincerity of those who were repenting, and equally according to the pastoral discretion of the confessor who would provide them with a document of reconciliation, in which it showed that on account of the sufficiency of their repentance, it was requested that they be received again by the Church. How one came to repentance and crossed over from the ranks of the penitents was effected was by nothing other than prayer and the laying on of hands, or more exactly the final absolution of the sins rehearsed before the whole Church and then through the prayer and laying-on of hands of the Bishop, as the president of the Church. Sundays were often the days on which such a triumphant absolution of sins was imparted, however more especially they used to choose for this the day of the Passion of Christ (Friday), on which He shed His Divine blood for the sins of the whole world.

The Introduction of Private Confession. At the end of the third century, repentance began to take on the character of a more private confession. One of the principal ways this change came about was on account of the appearance of the schism of the Novatians. Two priests, Novatius of Rome and Novatius of Carthage, moved the people to accept that they could not be in communion with any who had renounced the Faith during the time of the persecution of Decius, and they openly taught that those who had fallen into such a grave sin after their Baptism could in no way be granted absolution. The Church, in condemning their teaching, and staving off the reproaches of the heretics and temptation for the weak, gave leave to the Bishops to appoint certain presbyters, known for their life and their experience, and commission them to receive confession of sins in private of those who could not cope with confession before the whole community. To some extent also this was because of a lessening of zeal among the penitents, and the even more unfortunate incidents when many began to pervert open confession, using it not unto their own edification and not unto condemning themselves, but as an occasion for speaking evil

and contemptuously of their neighbours, and so as a consequence they generally established that communal confession be replaced by private confession before the priests.

§ 99. **Confession in the Orthodox Church at the Present Time.** Practices vary in various local traditions, but best practice follows the following course. Those who wish to receive the Mysterion of Confession set aside a period of preparation, and for several days they try to attend the church services, maintain a fast, read the Scriptures and examine their past life to come to a knowledge of their sins and to sorrow for them. Having laid this foundation, they contact the priest to arrange their confession. Usually the priest hears the confession in front of a lectern on which he has placed the symbols of our redemption, the Lord's Cross and the Gospel Book, according to whose teaching we vowed at Baptism to conduct our lives, and according to which we shall be judged by the Lord after death. The penitent humbly reverences the Holy Cross and the Gospel, as if he were standing before the Lord Himself, Who is both his Redeemer and his Judge. The priest then reads an exhortation to the penitent, indicating his rôle as being that of a witness, and to arouse within him heartfelt compunction and a lively hope in the mercy of God, and to exhort him to confess his sins sincerely. In some places he will ask the penitent questions, firstly regarding his Faith, without which deliverance from sins cannot be granted, and then about the things that trouble his conscience. The penitent is required to confess everything in which he recognises that he stands guilty before the Lord, hiding nothing, without embroidering things, and without excusing himself. In other instances, although the penitent is required to do this, you will find the priest does not prompt him with questions, hoping that he will speak directly from his heart. When the confession of sins has ended, the priest may give the penitent advice or instructions for the correcting of his life. Sometimes he will impose upon him an *epitimea*, - a course of discipline to teach and correct his ways, to heal him, just as a doctor might prescribe a course of medicines or exercise. Finally the priest will place his

stole over the head of the penitent, as a sign of the mercy of God being poured out upon him, and read a prayer reconciling him and reuniting him to the Church, for sin separates us from the company of those being saved. As he ends this prayer he also makes the sign of the Cross over the head of the penitent. It should be noted that in certain churches, confession is often heard less formally than is indicated here, and in some an informal talk and counseling will lead to the more formal practice outlined above.

.... to be continued with *“The Priesthood”*



BOOK REVIEW

The Minor Clergy of the Orthodox Church

John Ramsey

CreateSpace, 2016

I MUST say that I was particularly interested and intrigued when I first saw this book by John Ramsey¹ at Brookwood. I believe that we have long needed an evaluation of the place of the minor orders in current Orthodox practice. Several key questions often arise in discussion, primarily ~

- are sub-deacons subject to the same marriage requirements and restrictions of deacons and priests?
- how is it that boys and men are often given a blessing to vest to an order to which they have not been ordained or tonsured? ~ for example, choir masters or cantors vested as readers, altar servers vested as sub-deacons ~ and how appropriate is it?

- what are the specific duties of those in minor orders, and who (and who is not) qualified for ordination and/or tonsuring?

At the outset, despite some hesitation regarding the book, I must say that there are many things to recommend it. The text is richly sourced from the writings of the Fathers and from the canons of the Œcumenical and other Councils of the Church. The author clearly identifies the liturgical roles of the various orders, although he appears to give mixed messages regarding the handling of the sacred vessels by sub-deacons. He is particularly clear in his argument for deaconesses having no rôle within the Altar, but acting as ‘servants’ to the deacons, assisting with the catechism and baptism of female candidates.

One of the problems, however, is that a great deal of the text relates to clergy in general, irrespective of whether the argument for the various orders being considered clergy (as referred to in the Fathers and Councils) has been adequately made.

There are, additionally, some elements which might give any Orthodox reader pause for thought. Mr. Ramsey refers to the Saints and Fathers of the Church by name throughout², without using indicators of their rank or standing in the Church ~ Saint, Apostle, Father, Archbishop and so on.

Further he often places a personal, modernistic, ‘gloss’ to his understanding of how (or even whether) specific Canons should and might be applied. Thus, for example, in the section regarding the life-style expectations of the clergy ~ leaving weddings when dancing starts or actors appear, participating in general entertainments ~ Mr. Ramsey writes, “The rules make good sense...but in practice some leniency may be required because maintaining the spiritual values in a modern society can be rather socially isolating and difficult.”³

The author has adopted some idiosyncrasies of lexis – using, for example Chancel (when I take it he means the Altar). In

western cruciform church architecture the chancel is east of the crossing (and Rood screen if there is one) but west of the sanctuary (the nearest equivalent to the Orthodox Altar). No English-speaking Orthodox writer uses this term; in the same way the use of lector rather than reader is irritating.

Despite some meandering arguments, the final conclusions seem sound, although not always clearly substantiated ~ perhaps most importantly, that the correct ownership of liturgical functions, particularly of reading and singing, to those specifically set apart for those purposes, allow for the restoration of a rich and purposeful and appropriate role for the laity; further, that the ‘full reality’ of the Divine Liturgy, in particular, can be most clearly and spiritually accessed when all orders are in place.

Archimandrite Daniel

Fr Daniel’s Footnotes:

1. I understand that the author is Fr Patrick Ramsey, a hieromonk in the ROCA-MP jurisdiction under Archbishop Mark of Berlin, but he has published under his secular name.
2. *Cyprian, Paul, John Chrysostom and so on.*
3. *The Minor Orders of the Orthodox Church, p 35.*
4. *ibid. p 63*



“WE MUST either be poor as He was, and so live with Him, or share what we have with those who are poor for His sake, and so be saved through them. Let us acquire merciful hearts and give positive proof of brotherly love and of devotion towards the Father and Master of all. You will never find a more acceptable time to do this than these days of the fast. If you join almsgiving to fasting you will blot out every sin, venerate the saving Passion with boldness, join in the rejoicing of Christ’s Resurrection and gain eternal redemption.”

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS, + 1359 A.D.

THE COMING MONTH

IN THE SECTIONS above we have included pieces on the **Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple** (21st November / 4th December), the principal feast in the month of November, and something on the fast, because it is on 15th / 28th November that we begin the forty day **Nativity Fast** preparing for Christmas.

Among the Saints celebrated, we have **Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, Bishop of Neocæsarea** (17th / 30th), who was born in Neocæsarea in Asia Minor into a pagan family. Having received a fine education, from his youth he strived for the truth, but the wisdom of the classical teachers was not able to quench his thirst. He read the Holy Gospels, and therein found what his soul thirsted for and became a Christian. Subsequently he went to Alexandria to study and attended the Catechetical School, where Origen taught and St Gregory became his student, greatly revering his learning, although of course Origen later fell away from the straight path. The ascetic life of St Gregory and his virtue aroused envy among his less dedicated peers, and they decided to shame him. Once, when he was conversing in the city square, a notorious harlot came up to him and demanded payment for the sin he had supposedly committed with her. Initially, St Gregory gently remonstrated with her, saying that she perhaps mistook him for someone else. But, being in the pay of others, she would not be quieted. He then asked a friend to give her the money. Just as the woman took the unjust payment, she immediately fell to the ground in a demonic fit, and the fraud became evident. The Saint said a prayer over her, and the demon left her. When, later, he returned to Asia Minor, the saint fled from the worldly affairs and went into the wilderness, and by prayer and fasting he attained a high spiritual state and the gifts of clairvoyance and prophecy. St Gregory loved life in the wilderness and wanted to remain in solitude until the end of his days, but the Lord willed otherwise. The bishop of Amasea, Phaidimos, having learned of his virtue, decided to consecrate him Bishop of Neocæsarea. But hav-

ing seen this in the spirit, the saint hid himself. Then Phaidimos ordained the absent saint as Bishop of Neocæsarea, beseeching the Lord that He Himself would sanctify the unusual ordination. Saint Gregory perceived the extraordinary event as a manifestation of the will of God and, as is recorded by Saint Gregory of Nyssa, accepted it. At that time, the heresy of Sabellius and Paul of Samosata, a false teaching regarding the Holy Trinity, began to spread. Saint Gregory prayed fervently and diligently, imploring God and His All-holy Mother to reveal to him the true faith. The All-Immaculate Theotokos appeared to him with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and at the command of the Mother of God, the beloved disciple taught the saint how to confess the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity correctly. St Gregory recorded everything that St John revealed to him. This Symbol of the Faith (Creed) is treasured by the Church to this day. The preaching of the saint was direct, lively and fruitful. He worked many miracles in the name of Christ: he healed the sick, he helped the needy, he settled disputes and complaints. During the Decian persecution, St Gregory led his disciples to a faraway mountain. A certain pagan, knowing of their hiding place, informed the persecutors. Soldiers surrounded the mountain. The saint went out into an open place, raised up his hands to heaven and ordered his deacon to do the same. The soldiers searched the whole mountain, and they went several times right past those praying, without seeing them. They gave up and reported that there was nowhere to hide on the mountain, no one was there, and that they had only seen two trees standing there together. The informer realized the Saint had been hidden miraculously and repented, and he became a fervent Christian. When the persecution ended and he was able to lead his flock, the saint returned to Neocæsarea. With his blessing church feasts were inaugurated in honour of the martyrs who had suffered for Christ. By his saintly life, his preaching, working of miracles and his guidance of his flock, the saint steadily increased the number of converts to Christ. It is said that when Saint Gregory first ascended his cathedra, there were only seventeen Christians in Neocæsarea. At his death in A.D. 266, only seventeen pagans remained in the city.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

Three questions sent from M.G. by email:

FIRST, does it [becoming Orthodox] require one to be baptised with a new name, thereby abandoning the given name from one's parents?

Well, this depends somewhat on circumstances. You are actually given your name when you become a catechumen, and if you have a name which is a Saint's name, then you may elect to keep that. I have known several converts, though, who made their decision to change their name, so as to emphasise that they were changing, and this even though they had Christians' names. But that, of course, is not necessary. If you do not have a Saint's name, then usually you either choose one or rather you choose a Saint to be named after, or you are given one.

Secondly, can I ask whether one can remain in communion with one's neighbours in a local Protestant church or at least attend it on Sunday from time to time, given local Orthodox churches are few and far between.

In the strict sense, of course you cannot stay in communion with the Protestants: that would be like a man entering into marriage while having an adulterous relationship with a lover. With regard to the sacraments, Mysteries, we have no communion with anyone outside the Church. This both to guard ourselves from error and to call others into the Ark of Salvation. You may, of course, have friends and friendly relations with people who are of different faiths, and should do so. Regarding attending services of the heterodox, we do not do so for the purposes of worship, because how can we join in something that we believe is defective? In thus abstaining, we should not judge the people who do worship in those churches, we should rather pray for them. It may be all they can aspire to, and in this day and age we should be thank-

ful that anyone goes to any reasonably conservative church. It may be a step for them on the path of salvation. I am sure that had I not been an Anglican by upbringing, I would never have become Orthodox. Sometimes, though, of course, one attends their services for familial or social reasons - family weddings and funerals and the like - but in doing so Orthodox Christians should be careful not to participate in any way other than in showing love to the people concerned by being there. Regarding being far from a church: When I first contacted an Orthodox priest, Fr Mark Meyrick (later Archimandrite David), I lived in Somerset which was then void of any Orthodox presence, and he told me I should move to London - which I did. Also committed Orthodox Christians should and do make efforts to get to church as often as possible. Our Fr Borislav lives in Kent and yet comes with his family of five; another parishioner here comes nearly every week from Folkestone - it is a case of having to "set Jerusalem above all other, as at the head of my joy" (Ps. 136:8). Hard but necessary.

Thirdly, does becoming Orthodox amount to abandoning one's own heritage of Gothic architecture, the English hymns and other aspects of being English, including celebrating Christmas on a different date from the rest of one's family or is there some way to remain in touch with one's heritage?

The answer here is yes and no! At the deepest level in your religious life you will have to abandon these things, but you can, naturally, still maintain an interest in them. There are Orthodox who are interested in a multitude of things; the Church does not demand a sectarian locking oneself away from everything that is not specifically Hers, only that we attempt to do so from that which is sinful. Here you have raised several matters and they are not all the same.

A love of Gothic architecture, for instance, does not necessarily drag you away from Orthodoxy, though you will probably in time come to see that Byzantine architecture gives a better expression to the Faith.

Some English hymns are good, many Christmas Carols (the old ones, not the modern rubbish) are uplifting. Some of course are banal, some have erroneous teaching within them, some are calculated to do something which is quite foreign to our way of worship - i.e., to give you a good sing-song and “raise the spirits.” Whereas the Orthodox way is to “seek peace and pursue it” (Ps. 33:14), “to be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 45:10). Only in its very worst manifestations does Orthodox worship degenerate into sing-song or theatre.

Regarding aspects of being English, of course this is a very broad spectrum of things. Some will have to be abandoned, some you will naturally shed as you make progress in Orthodoxy, and some should be retained. Patriotism is not a sin, although nationalism is. So you may remain loyal to your country and love the best aspects of her culture. Having myself lived among a variety of non-English people for fifty years and on two continents, I can observe aspects of “Englishness” which are inimical to the Faith: a certain not coming straight or honestly, a desire to cut corners, etc., etc. These things people of other nations also exhibit of course, but whatever nation we belong to we have to strive to realize the potential we have been granted and live as belonging to the One New Nation named after Christ. Again throughout your life you will need discretion and guidance here. It will be no good turning up at the Judgment and saying: “I am English / Greek / Russian!” or whatever, and expect that to be a passport! Many of the early martyrs, when asked by their persecutors what nationality they were responded: “I am a Christian.”

On the more specific question about Christmas, naturally you will have to celebrate it with your brothers in Christ on the Church calendar. However, if you have non-Orthodox relatives, it would be churlish and un-Christian not to respect their celebration. Nothing in Orthodoxy requires one to be a prat! So, asking them to respect your fast, it would be natural for you to join in their celebration on a social and familial level. This is, of course,

getting more and more difficult, because the “Western Christmas” now seems to extend from about the beginning of November until 25th December, and involve endless parties, meals, and socials, but 98% of this is not in honour of the New-Born Saviour but worship of the god Mammon. This week, on going to the Convent for the Feast of the Mother of God’s Nativity, we passed a pub with a sign, wishing us a Merry Christmas - 96 days even before their Christmas! Obviously what they were hoping to hear was not “Jingle Bells” but jingling tills!

God bless you, ... also remember God does not expect you to be perfect when you take up the path to Orthodoxy, but He does expect you to be trying to be perfect at the very end of the course.



NEWS from the Richmond Diocese of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece

WEDDING AT SAINT EDWARD’S

OVER the first weekend in November (n.s.) we were visited by **Archimandrite Serapion** from Romania. While here he celebrated the marriage service of **Daniel Claudiu Oara** and **Elena Haiducu**, and after the celebration of the Mysterion, refreshments were offered to all who attended before they went on to a more formal reception. On the Sunday, Fr Serapion celebrated the Divine Liturgy with our local clergy, and after that service and a very short break he stayed in church until Vespers hearing confessions of the Romanian faithful.

IGUMEN JOHN FROM AUSTRALIA

ON Thursday, 13th October, **Igumen John** (Smelic), a clergyman of the **Russian Orthodox Church Abroad** in Australia, arrived in England and was met at Heathrow by our Brotherhood clergy. Fr John was making a stop-over on his way to Odessa, where he was required to attend a meeting of the **Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad**, under the presidency of **His Eminence Metropolitan Agafangel**. On the day after his arrival in the United Kingdom, he accompanied our clergy to the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden**, where with them he celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the feast of the Protection of the Mother of God. At the end of that service, **Mother Vikentia** and her sisters, as usual, offered us hospitality at a communal breakfast, and then Fr John left with **Matias and Liggy Fagerlund** to stay at their farm in East Anglia for a few days before continuing on his way to Ukraine. We have since heard that after the Synodal meeting, Fr John was consecrated as **Bishop of Melbourne**. *Eis polla eti Despota!*

TWO GENEROUS ROMANIANS

A MEMBER of the Romanian congregation which attends our church recently donated a Bishop's throne for the high place in our church with six seats for the clergy and three icon stands for the main body of the church. All these were carved by the **Mobilier Sculptat** works in Târgu Neamț, and they were delivered to us by **Daniel Ciuperpcovici** and set up by the Romanians working that day on the mortuary restoration. They arrived on St Pelagia's day. Sadly that same day, we heard from Bishop Ambrose of the sudden death of **Preoteasa Elena**, the wife of the priest, **Fr Simeon**, who runs Mobilier Sculptat. May our anonymous donor be granted things heavenly for things earthly, and may Preoteasa find rest with the saints. These beautiful furnishings will always be a memorial of her here.

As second donation from another Romanian parishioner, who also wishes to remain anonymous, is the **titanium Cross** which will

be erected on the mortuary turret. It has now been blessed and will be put up as soon as the work allows. The Cross was sourced and ordered through our architect, **Irina Aldersley** of **Euline Ltd**, and the remarkable thing about this was that it was delivered from Romania within about two weeks. Would that British concerns would act with such efficiency!

AND A GENEROUS ENGLISHMAN

PETER BUTT, who serves as reader in our parish, noticed some time ago the cumbersomeness of the booklets which we use when celebrating the **Liturgy of St James**. He voluntarily undertook the laborious work of reproducing them in a much more user-friendly and attractive format for our clergy and for the choir members. We owe him a depth of gratitude. Through the prayers of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of God, may Peter also be richly rewarded.

CONVENT AGM

ON the feast day of the Protection (1st / 14th October), the Annual General Meeting of the trustees of the **Convent of the Annunciation** was held in their dining hall. The trustees were helped through the official business by **Darren Harding** of **Richard Place Dobson**, their accountants, and in due time the accounts of their charity will be put up on the Charity Commissioners' website.

MORTUARY RESTORATION PROGRESS

The Mortuary project is taking much longer than we anticipated, but largely because at the same time as the essential restoration work was being completed, we decided to remodel the interior lay-out of the building to make the main hall more spacious to accommodate our growing congregation. We have been aided in both

these aspects of the work by the continued flow of donations from our parishioners and our readers, for which we are extremely grateful. We should also mention that the **Alan Evans Memorial Trust** has given us a substantial grant. And both the *Brookwood News*, the newsletter of **Brookwood Village Community**, and the *Brookwood Express*, that of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society**, have mentioned our appeal in their recent issues, for which we thank them.

SERIOUS ILLNESS OF A FOUNDER

ONE of the people who helped us immensely in the early days of our Brotherhood and during the court proceedings regarding the sacred relics of Saint Edward, **Brother Isaac Lambertsen**, has recently been taken seriously ill and required operations and hospital treatment. For many years he has been resident at the Synodal Residence of the old Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia in New York City, where he has served as a reader and chanter. On several occasions he visited us in the United Kingdom making pilgrimages to many of the holy places in this country, and he is perhaps best known throughout the Orthodox world for his composition of services to many of the Saints, especially those of the Pre-schism West. Anticipating that his present condition might prove fatal, he was tonsured as a monk and given the name **Joseph** after **St Joseph of Thessalonica**, who was one of the most renowned hymnographers in the Orthodox Church. We ask the faithful to remember the newly tonsured **Father Joseph** in their prayers.

VISITORS

Friday, 30th September: **His Eminence, Metropolitan Kyrikos** and the **Priestmonk Sozomenos** paid us a visit en route from the airport to their parish in Birmingham. They were driven here by one of the parishioners. They were offered refreshments in the exhibition room after visiting the shrine of Saint Edward, and briefly shown the restoration work then in progress. In our visitors' book, His Eminence wrote: "Through the commemoration of the Royal Saint Edward the Martyr, may the Lord help us to do his holy will. Amen."

Monday, 3rd October: A group of eight **Rotarians**, some English, some American, visited the church and exhibition; they were going to pay their respects at the American War Graves on the other side of the cemetery.

Saturday, 8th October: **Margaret Hobbs** brought the **Norwich Rosary Cemetery Group** to see the cemetery and our church. There were about twenty people in the group and they spent some time in the church, asking questions about our worship.

Friday, 14th October: **Protopresbyter Victor Melehov** and his presbytera, **Lucy**, unexpectedly visited us. Fr Victor is in the Russian True Orthodox Church and they were brought by one of their parishioners from Guildford.

PRACTICAL TIP

IN THE *Teaching on the Divine Services* section above, Fr Alexander gave us teaching on the Mysterion of Repentance or Confession. It may therefore be appropriate to give some less exalted, but nonetheless still vital, information on how to confess. We are often told that we should be honest and straightforward and confess fully, and that we should not blame or denounce others or expose their failings in our confession. This is wholly true, but one notices that there are other more basic things which are also very important. First, one should speak clearly so that the priest can hear you. There seems to be a tendency for people, perhaps through embarrassment, to whisper or even just mouth their words. This itself is a sin if it is done so that priest should not hear. Secondly, you should be as concise as possible; especially is this the case when there are many others awaiting confession. Why sin against them at the very moment you are confessing? If you need a long talk, then arrange to see the priest privately as some other time. Thirdly, there is no need to be emotional when you confess; some cry at confession and then immediately after turn back to “real life” and gossip with others as if they were the most carefree people in the world. Fourthly, do not seek to make an impression, either good or bad, on your confessor, - you are simply telling the physician your symptoms and ailments. I recall one lady, years ago, who used to come to confession as if she were auditioning for the rôle of the Scottish Widow in the adverts, but immediately threw that off as soon as she walked away. She may win an Oscar one day! And lastly (at least for now), do not unnecessarily enter into conversation with the confessor. If you really want to know how he feels, how his children are doing at school, where he went on holiday, then give him a phone call some other time and show your concern for him then.