



Greetings to all our readers on the Great Feasts of our Saviour's Nativity and the Holy Theophany. May you be deemed worthy to celebrate them with true spiritual joy, and may the light of their teaching illumine your way in the Coming Year.



## FROM THE FATHERS

“WHILE the secular census (Luke 2:1) is referred to, the spiritual is implied; to be made known not to the king of the earth, but to the King of Heaven. It is a profession of faith, an enrolment of souls. The ancient enrolment of the synagogue is ended, while the new one of the Church has begun. Lastly, that you may know that this census is of Christ, not of Augustus, *the whole world* is ordered to be enrolled. Who could decree the enrolment of the world, unless He Who had dominion over the whole world? Not of Augustus, but of the Lord, was it said: *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*” (Ps. 23:1).

“SO that ye might know this was an enrolment of righteousness, Joseph and Mary came to it, that is, the righteous man and the Virgin, he who served the Word and she who bore Him.”

TWO QUOTES FROM ST AMBROSE OF MILAN, + 397 A.D.

“AS the Son of God by being born of a virgin showed that the dignity of virginity was pleasing to Him, so also being now about to take flesh He chose to be born during the most peaceful period of time, teaching us also to seek after peace, and deigning to visit those who loved peace. There could be no greater sign of the peace of this time than this, that the whole world could be enrolled under one census; the world, whose ruler was Augustus, had now, about the time of the birth of Christ, reigned for twelve years amid such peace that the words of the prophet (Esaias 2:4) seemed literally fulfilled.”

VENERABLE BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

“AN ENROLMENT took place (Luke 2:1) for this reason: so that, as everyone went to their ancestral city, the Virgin too would go up to Bethlehem, her own ancestral city, and thus the Lord would be born in Bethlehem, and the prophecy (Mic. 5:2) fulfilled. When the One God intended to bring to an end the worship of many gods, it was fitting that the one king, Cæsar, should rule, rather than many kings. And Christ also was enrolled with them all, for it was fitting that the Lord too should be enrolled with the whole world, to sanctify all those who were enrolled, and thus to abolish slavery. Just as He abolished circumcision by Himself undergoing circumcision, so too He brought to an end the enslavement of our human nature when He Himself was enrolled as a slave. For we who are servants of the Lord are no longer the slaves of men, as the Apostle Paul says, *Be not ye the slaves of men* (1 Cor. 7:23). Even if we are slaves in the body, we are still freemen in the spirit, for there is no chain with which our masters can drag us away into their impiety.”

SAINT THEOPHYLACT OF OCHRID, + 1107/8 A.D.

“CHRIST was born to bring peace on earth. Therefore, anyone who murmurs and is discontented with his situation does not experience this feast.”

VEN. ANATOLY OF OPTINA, + 1894 A.D.

# THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

## *The Feast of Divine Humility*

By the Ever-Memorable Archbishop Averky  
of Jordanville, + 1976 A.D.

*BEHOLD, I am come ... to do Thy will, O God, so spake the Only-Begotten Son of God, the Word of God, God-Emmanuel in God's Pre-eternal Counsel (see Ps. 39:7-11; Heb. 10:5-9).*

For, because of His tender-hearted mercy, the Lord Pantocrator *could not endure to behold the race of man tormented by the devil*, and therefore, as the Church gratefully cries out to Him, *Thou didst come, and didst save us* (Prayer for the Great Blessing of Waters).

And herein is perfected *the great mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh* (1 Tim. 3:16).

*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

How then, and in what circumstances, did this great and wondrous event come about?

It was not in luxurious, regal chambers, nor in splendour, wealth or celebrity that the Incarnate Son of God appeared on earth, but in a cave, and instead of an infant's cradle, He was laid in a manger. He passed all His life on earth, not having *where to lay His head* (Matt. 8:20). And being constantly persecuted by the scribes and Pharisees, after being abandoned even by His closest disciples, He was given over to an ignominious death, being nailed to a cross.

He *emptied Himself*, as the Holy Apostle teaches, *and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and be-*

*ing found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient even unto death, the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7-8).*

The very incarnation and coming into the world of the Incarnate Son of God, as we see, was sealed with the deepest humility, such as we can hardly imagine.

*For what is meaner than a cave? And what is lowlier than swaddling clothes? Yet in them the riches of Thy Divinity shone forth, so chants the Holy Church compunctionately on the day of Christ's Nativity (Hypakoë after the Third Ode of the Canon).*

This is why the great ascetic of the first ages of Christianity, the Venerable Isaac the Syrian, characterises humility as the highest Christian virtue, speaking of it expressively and vividly: *Humble-mindedness is the raiment of God. The Word Who became man clothed Himself in it, and therein He spoke to us (Homily 53; in the English translation, this quote is found in Homily 77).*

For this reason, the Nativity of Christ is the feast of the Divine humility, which before anything else instructs us all that humility is the foremost Christian virtue and that without it it is impossible to be saved.

The great righteous one of All-Russia, who has recently been glorified by us, the holy Father John of Cronstadt, speaks of this beautifully in his inspiring homily on the Nativity of Christ, given in 1906:

“Let us consider the goodness, righteousness and wisdom of God, which is manifested in the mystery of the incarnation of God: *the great mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.* How is this a mystery? Precisely because God was manifest in the flesh, He emptied Himself, *took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;* and in every respect became a man, *He humbled Himself, and became obedient (to the Father) even unto death, the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7-8).* Do you see the saving mystery? For your salvation, for the healing of your pride, lack of faith, disobedience and guilefulness, the beginningless, infinite, almighty God and Creator **emptied Himself**, so that He might teach you meekness, obedience, patience, guilelessness, kindheartedness and compassion. See how He teaches you by His own

example, and not only teaches but is ready to grant you all the Divine strengths, so that you might completely change for the better, and recover all the treasured lineaments of the image of God: the simplicity and guilelessness of a child, meekness, humility and obedience, a firm and unshakable faith in God and His works, and so that you abandon evil faithlessness, conceit, high opinion, wandering thoughts, self-will, grasping, killing. Behold, what is now being worked out around us: who retains the likeness of man, but he who is called a Christian? And who is like a ferocious beast, which tears apart and devours his offering?"

What would the saint, the Righteous John of Cronstadt have said in our days, if he had seen the dreadful, unrelenting, self-opinionated pride of contemporary people, among whom we can also count those who consider themselves "Christians" and even "Orthodox Christians"? People do not in the least want to humble themselves in meekness, guilelessness, kindheartedness and compassion, not only before each other, but even not before God Himself, before the God-revealed teaching of the Word of God, before the voice of the Holy Church, before her sacred canons and saving precepts.

Do we not see above, a most horrible and destructive pride, which accounts itself as the highest authority especially in matters of the Faith and regarding the Church, which changes the rules and decrees of the Church, to write for itself its own, personal precepts!

Such a mentality could not be worse or more pernicious, under the influence of which they strive to put our holy Faith and the Church in subjection to the conditions of this world, which lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19), or to make the Church a tool for their own passions, using her for their own benefit, for achieving their own, personal, egotistical aims, and, under the authority of the Church, covering the evidence of their personal scores with their enemies and those who oppose them. And, alas, all this is widespread nowadays.

The flaming call to humility in the last Nativity sermon of our holy and righteous father John [of Cronstadt], given by him in 1907, must sound for us with even greater force:-

“Earthly kings, surrounded by the splendour of your rank, come in thought to Bethlehem, bow your crown-bearing heads to that manger in which the true and eternal King of kings lies, and cast your crowns at its foot, humble yourselves and recognize that you are made from dust and to dust you will return, and confess before Him, the Humble Infant, that it was from Him that you were granted dominion and power over the peoples, that you are His assistants, and that your thrones are sustained by Him, that without faith in Him, you and your thrones are just sticks shaken in the wind; that without faith in Him even your ministers are as rotting husks on whom it will be impossible to rely.”

This is precisely the basis of the proper, correct monarchist world view, which many in our time did not wish to recognise completely, blasphemously placing the Monarch and the monarchist principle itself above the Faith and the Church. Yet this is the one hope and firm basis for every authority in general, without which that authority will not be a legitimate, God-established authority, an authority from God, but simply an usurpation, from which one could not expect any genuine good.

Saint John extends his flaming appeal much further, to all those people who, on account of their calling and the high position they occupy, might use their importance and authority to gain greater influence over the community of people.

“You learned ones of this world,” he calls out, “who hold forth from positions in the top government institutions and the like, you who are teaching and learning, especially in the highest academic establishments, and in a spirit of mutiny and insubmission to the authorities turn from, and are the very worse with regard to, God” - (St John has in view here the contemporary student disorders which we experienced then) - “I send even you to the Bethlehem manger: cast aside your pride before your Creator and Saviour and the one true Teacher, and humble yourselves before the One, Who brought peace upon earth from the Heavenly Father and a blessing for the people, Who was obedient to the earthly Cæsar. Do not forget that He said to the mutinous and arrogant ones, that He is the Stone which shall break whomsoever shall fall upon it, and shall grind to powder him on whomsoever it shall fall” (see Matt. 21:44).

We must recognise this well and remember! True humility is not, as some mistakenly think, some sort of weakness, faint-heartedness or man-pleasing (this last is especially harshly judged by the Word of God, as being a betrayal of God, see for instance: Galatians 1:10; Jeremias 17:5). In giving us such an exalted example of humility, the Lord Jesus Christ even said: *Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart* (Matt. 11:29), yet He decisively and sternly denounced the peoples' vices, and particularly the most evil of these, the hypocrisy of the Jewish scribes and Pharisees, in which the destructive and demonic pride, which at the very end brought the Son of God Himself to the Cross, was so much more clearly manifest. And thus it was that emulating Him, the Chief Shepherd, being himself full of the spirit of meekness and humility, our great pastor for All-Russia [St John of Cronstadt], in bearing his pastoral ministry, did not fear openly and forcefully to denounce the great and the glorious of this world, being himself foreign to any kind of man-pleasing.

But woe unto those incorrigible arrogant ones, who while not having any such right, make themselves judges of other people, including the pastors of the Church themselves - (how often we see this nowadays!) - laying on them the severest condemnation, oftentimes about things about which they do not know and do not understand, manifesting themselves as completely ignorant of all that pertains to our holy Faith and the Church, being themselves in spirit far from the Church and alien to the true Gospel teaching and a real Orthodox and churchly self-awareness.

For *woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight* (Esaias 5:21), as the holy Prophet announced in the name of God even in the Old Testament.

See how from this boundless pride, which depends upon and serves only one's own sinful passions, self-love, love of honour, love of authority, sensuality and mercenariness, - even though it (this pride) masks itself with every kind of well-sounding slogan, and even clothes itself in the guise of a sham humility (nowadays how pervasive this is!), - the contemporary world suffers terribly, bowling along towards its end, which has been foretold in the Scriptures.

For those who do not have the spirit of Christ's humility within, there is not, and there cannot be, any real joy in the feast of the Nativity of Christ, as though for them Christ had not been born; and this festival remains for them only a customary and traditional "seasonal" feast, without any inner substance, as we can see everywhere in contemporary soulless society.

And only for those, who humbly accept the teaching of the true Church of Christ and voluntarily bear upon themselves the yoke of obedience to her, trampling down and rooting out of themselves every manifestation of selfish pride, is the present festival really a day of great joy: the words of the fullest jubilation reverberate in the Nativity hymn radiantly and joyously in their hearts: *Christ is born, give ye glory. Christ is come from heaven, receive ye Him. Christ is on earth, be ye exalted!*



## *A Miracle Which Confirms the Traditional Church Calendar\**

### *A Miracle of St. John (Maximovitch) Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco*

(1896-1966)

ARCHBISHOP JOHN was a contemporary Saint,<sup>1</sup> an exceptional spiritual personality of the twentieth century, a veritable gift of Grace in a drought-stricken era, at a time when, although so much is being spoken and written about Orthodox spiritual life, the Orthodox Faith, sanctity, etc., there is a tragic dearth of individuals who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, embody these matters in word and deed.

The Blessed *Vladika* John, endowed by our Lord with exceptional talents, made himself a treasury of the Christian virtues: his guilelessness and his voluntary folly for Christ's sake showed him to be a precious



diamond of Christ's Church, a Spirit-bearing prophet, a strict ascetic, an indefatigable practitioner of prayer, an indomitable striver after the Kingdom of Heaven, an uncompromising guardian of Holy Tradition, and a militant champion of the true Orthodox Faith.

He excelled in these endeavours and became beloved by the rational sheep of the People of God as a peacemaker, a minister of reconciliation, merciful, righteous, meek, quiet, patient, persevering, a teacher, a good shepherd, a steward of Grace and a bestower thereof to his brethren, both those nearby and those far away; for before him he beheld only brothers, although many of them schemed against him, slandered him, and persecuted him.

He was truly a living and inexhaustible well-spring of holiness, and for this reason, even after his death, his healings, his cures, and his diverse and innumerable miraculous interventions continue to attest to his sanctity, the authenticity of his witness, his God-sent presence, and his action in these last times of apostasy and falling away from the true standard and criterion of the Orthodox Faith and the Orthodox way of life.

A very impressive document published on the twentieth anniversary of his repose urged, as did many other such testimonies, that the sanctity of this holy man be officially proclaimed. It said, among other things:

Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch (1896-1966) was regarded as a Saint during his own lifetime. Manifesting many forms of Orthodox sanctity, he was at once a God-inspired theologian and a fool-for-Christ, a zealous missionary hierarch and a feeder of the poor, a severe ascetic and a loving father to orphans. Like Moses, he delivered his flock out of oppression, bringing them from Communist China to the free world; like the first Apostles, he was a wonderworker who performed countless miracles and healings. A man of intense and ceaseless prayer, he was acknowledged by many to be a genuine Holy Elder in the tradition of the great Russian *starsi*. Possessing the gift of clairvoyance, he would respond to people's thoughts before they had expressed them, and would mystically hear and answer their prayers across great distances. It was not, however, his amazing acts of clairvoyance and healing which

first of all drew people to him; instead, it was the abundant Christ-like love that flowed from him. He has not ceased to give this love, and it is still being reciprocated today, even by those who never knew him during his life.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

The following Grace-filled and miraculous incident, which occurred four years after his blessed repose, emphasizes and attests to his scrupulous adherence, throughout his earthly life, to the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

The Orthodox Tradition has been dreadfully assailed by the ecumenical movement, which had its inception at the beginning of the twentieth century, with all of its disagreeable concomitants (innovations, modernism, the introduction of the New Calendar, the recognition of heretics, joint prayer and liturgical communion with them, etc.), and we are witnesses on a daily basis to the tragic consequences of this panheretical policy.

The Holy Archbishop John expressed his opposition to the panheresy of ecumenism, condemning the spirit of innovationism as this was displayed in the Orthodox world after 1920 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the ringleader in pro-heretical activities.

Thus, in his report on all the Autocephalous Churches, which was read at the Second *Sobor* of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad at Sremski Karlovci, Yugoslavia, in 1938, and which took as its principal subject “The Decline of the Patriarchate of Constantinople,” the Saint said, *inter alia*:

The moral prestige of the Patriarchs of Constantinople has, likewise, fallen very low in view of their extreme instability when it comes to Church affairs. Thus, Patriarch Meletios IV (Metaxakis) convened a ‘Pan-Orthodox Synod,’ with representatives from different Churches, which decided upon the introduction of the New Calendar. This decision brought about a terrible schism among Orthodox Christians.... Having lost its significance as a pillar of truth, and having become a source of division by its own doing, and being possessed, at the same time, by an

inordinate love of power, [the Œcumenical Patriarchate] presents a pitiful spectacle, which reminds one of the worst periods in the history of the throne of Constantinople.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

The following incident was taken from the collection of St. John's miracles published in a special edition of the American periodical *The Orthodox Word*<sup>4</sup> on the twentieth anniversary of his repose. This miracle, like two others that come after it, was sent for publication on 2/15 April 1986 by the one who witnessed it, and who signed her name as "Sinful Nun Nadezhda, Seattle, Washington." It occurred at the beginning of 1970. It was also printed in a book put out by the same publishers under the title *Blessed John the Wonder-Worker* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1987, pp. 296-297) as miracle no. 36 in a series numbering altogether a hundred miracles. It is entitled "Protection of Three Orthodox Boys, 1. Adam Russell"

I was a newly baptized Orthodox Christian, pregnant with my first child. I was twenty-three years old. Like many converts who never knew Vladika John, after reading his Life—the healings he worked while alive, the orphans he saved, the troubled people he helped, the Orthodox communities he started single-handedly among the French, Dutch, Chinese, Irish, Phillipinos [*sic*], Japanese, etc.—I developed an immense love and devotion towards him. So, when I prayed to God, His Mother and the Saints for direction, I always included Blessed John in my prayers.

Living across the street from the St. Nicholas church rectory in Seattle where Blessed John died, I felt honoured to know a "modern saint" and privileged to participate in the *Pannikhida* for him every Thursday in the little room where he died. With reverence I kissed the chair in which he died, his *kamilavka*, episcopal robes and *chotki*. One of his spiritual children, George Kalfov, was usually there, singing with the old priest Andrew.

As a convert, I believed in the Orthodox Church but didn't understand the importance of the Old Calendar. So, while pregnant, knowing my child would be born around Christmas, I prayed to God's Mother and St. John for my child to be born on the 'True Christmas.' December 25th

[according to the New Calendar] came and went, and January 7th [Christmas according to the Old Calendar] approached. I was getting excited but never dreamed I would experience the things that were ahead of me!

I could no longer walk up the rectory stairs because it was my last month before delivery, so I prayed even more fervently to Vladika. A few days before January 7th I awoke to a strange phenomenon. (My husband Melchisedek was sleeping beside me.) My room was completely engulfed in beautiful, unusual white light. I thought I was awake and yet I felt so strange, as if I was [*sic*] in Paradise. A nun in white knelt before my bed, next to the baby basinette—I couldn't see her face because she was prostrating. And then I saw him—Vladika—all in his glowing white robes, standing in my doorway. I knew it was him because I thought of him. He was short; his face was brilliant although he hid it by the hallway partition, and with his right hand he blessed me. This vision lasted only an instant. I believe that the nun in white was St. Elizabeth Feodorovna [the Grand Duchess and New Martyr] because I thought of her, too.

At 3 a.m. on January 7th, 1970 [Christmas according to the Orthodox Calendar], my labour pains started, and to my joy by 4 p.m. our son Adam was born. I glorified God, the Theotokos and of course Saints John and Elizabeth!

I will try to remain faithful to the Old Calendar, and to me it is no question!

## Notes

\* Cf. *Orthodoxos Entasis kai Martyria*, Nos. 22-23 (January-June 1991), pp. 286-290.

1. See the short biography in *Agios Kiprianos*, Nos. 209-211 (May-July 1986), pp. 39-40, and also: Saint John the Wonderworker.

2. *Orthodox News*, No. 11 (July 1986), p. 1.

3. *The Orthodox Word*, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (45) (July-August 1972), p. 177.

4. *The Orthodox Word*, Vol. XXII, No. 2 (127) (March-April 1986), pp. 75-76. It should be noted that in the year before his repose, St. John gave his blessing for the publication of the first issue of the periodical in question.

**Taken from the Synod in Resistance website:  
< [www.synodinresistance.org](http://www.synodinresistance.org) >**

# TEACHING

## OF THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV

# ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS

BEFORE all else it is needful that you maintain three things: first, complete freedom from care about everything, whether blessed, or not blessed and vain, - that is, you should be dead in relation to all this; secondly, a pure conscience, as we said above, so that your conscience does not reproach you with anything; and thirdly, complete detachment, so that your thought not incline to attachment to anything worldly at all. Then sit alone, in a special and quiet place, in a corner, close the door, and withdraw your mind from every temporal and vain thing, then allow your beard to fall upon your chest, hold the attention of your heart and of the eyes of perception with the mind, restrain your breathing somewhat, and holding your mind thus, strive in your thought to find where your heart is, that your mind might wholly be there. In the beginning you will find darkness there and deep blindness and hardness, but later, when you hold such attention constantly day and night, you will find, O the wonder, unceasing joy; because the mind, having struggled in this work, will find the place of the heart, and then immediately it will behold therein such things as it never saw and never knew. For it beholds, found within the heart, another environment and itself is entirely radiant and full of good sense and discrimination. And at this time and thereafter, from wherever some thought might arise or appear, before it has come to realization, the mind immediately expels it and invokes the name of Jesus, that is: Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me. And from this point onwards the mind of man begins to have hatred of the demons and unremittingly wars against them, rousing its natural anger against them, pursuing them, beating them and destroying them. For the rest, what usually happens is that you recognise this, with the aid of God through experience, by means of holding the attention of your mind and holding Jesus in the heart, that is this prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ*, and what follows. For one of the Fathers says: *Sit in your cell, and it will teach you everything.*

... to be continued.

# The Coming Month

IN December we devote the whole month, one way or another, to the **Nativity of the Saviour**, because the first twenty-four days fall within the fast by which we prepare ourselves spiritually for the feast, and the Great Feast of the Nativity itself is kept for seven days, beginning on the 25th, and ending on the 31st of the month.

This year, because Christmas Day itself falls on a Monday, the **Royal Hours** which are usually read on the eve of the feast are read instead on the preceding Friday. There is also a difference in practice between the Greek and Russian ways of celebrating the feast day this year. Among the Greeks, the Vigil service for the feast on Sunday evening begins with Vespers, whereas the Russians, using a practice used by the Greeks only when the feast day falls on a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday, begin the Vigil with Great Compline, and so they chant Vespers immediately after the Sunday morning Liturgy. Throughout the seven days of the feast itself, and indeed up to, but not including the eve of the Theophany, there are no fasting days.

Among the saints we celebrate in December, we have two of the greatest and most beloved saints of the Orthodox, the hierarchs and wonderworkers, **Nicolas of Myra in Lycia** (6th / 19th) and **Spiridon of Trimythus in Cyprus** (12th / 25th), whose sacred relics are now enshrined on the island of Corfu. These saints are so beloved of the Orthodox that their feasts are usually celebrated with a Vigil. Also we celebrate:-

The **Venerable John the Hesychast** (3rd / 16th) was born in A.D. 454 in Nicopolis, in the Roman province of Armenia Prima, to a wealthy noble family, whose sons were noted statesmen, military commanders, municipal magistrates, and officials in the imperial administration. His parents, Encratus and Euphemia, were Christians, and from early childhood he received a Christian upbringing. Upon the death of his parents he received a large inheritance. Devoting himself to God, he established

in Nicopolis a church dedicated to the All-holy Theotokos and, in his eighteenth year (471), he entered the monastic life, gathering ten brothers to found a coenobium. During his entire youth he refrained from excessive food or sleep, conducted himself in a modest and humble fashion, and served as an example for the members of his congregation, whom he prepared for monastic life. His fame reached the Metropolitan of Sebastea, and after having had him serve in all the lower ecclesiastical ranks, he consecrated him Bishop of Colonia, upon the request of the inhabitants of that city. Even in this post, he continued the ascetic life of a monk. Nine years after his appointment as bishop, his brother-in-law Pasinicus was appointed governor of the province, and began to trouble the Church over which Saint John presided. Despite John's requests that he desist from such acts, the situation worsened from day to day, especially after the death of Mary, John's sister. Eventually, John resolved to go to Constantinople, to intercede there on behalf of his church. After he had settled all the affairs of his church (ca. March 491), with the help of Euphemius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who fought for his case, he decided to retire to the holy city of Jerusalem where he would live as an anchorite. A divine revelation led him to the Monastery of Saint Sabbas, where he arrived in 491 at the age of 38, and where he lived in monastic obedience as a novice, without revealing that he was a Bishop. Subsequently, seeing his virtue, Saint Sabbas decided have him ordained him as a priest. He took John with him to Jerusalem and presented him to the Patriarch Elias, so that the latter would ordain him. Now John was forced to secretly reveal to the Patriarch that he was not only a priest, but a Bishop, a fact which he had sought to conceal until then, in order to serve the fathers in the lavra as long as he was capable of this. The ordination therefore did not take place, and, by order of the Patriarch, from then on John was permitted to live as a recluse in his cell, exempt from the obligation to attend the church, and without need to come into contact with anybody, except for his attendant. John lived as a hesychast in his cell for 48 years, until his death on 8th January, A.D. 559. At the beginning of his period of hesychia, Sabbas and all the monks of the lavra learned about John's life prior to his arrival, his former wealth, and his term of episcopacy. John did not leave his cell even for Saint Sabbas' funeral (A.D. 532)

in the twenty-fourth year of his seclusion. This long period of seclusion was interrupted only once, for seven months (beginning in February 547 A.D.), when the Origenists took control of the monastery. The venerable John was like a solid rock to whom the monks turned to receive advice, a blessing, a prayer, and guidance during time of crisis. The holy elder was known as a wonder-worker and as one who possessed the gift of healing. His reputation spread far and wide. His admirers and the pilgrims who came to him for advice and counsel included Aetherius, the Metropolitan of Ephesus; he was the one who informed Saint Sabbas that John had already been a bishop, and of his life prior to his arrival at the lavra. Another admirer was Basilina, a woman of Cappadocian origin, who was a deaconess of the Great Church of Constantinople. She came to him accompanied by a nephew of exalted rank, who had embraced the heresy of Severus, the leader of the Monophysites. The deaconess asked John to uproot the Monophysite heresy from the heart of the youth, in which he was successful. John was granted the grace of prophecy, and like other saints, he foresaw the day of his death.

**Saint Egwin, Bishop of Worcester** (30th December / 12th January) was born into the royal house of Ethelred, king of Mercia. From his earliest years he dedicated himself to the things of God, giving himself to study and to the watchful custody of the movements of his heart and senses. He was said to be just, prudent and resolute, and despite the opportunities that might have opened to him on account of his royal lineage, he dedicated himself to the Church. When Oftfor, the second Bishop of Worcester died in about A.D. 692, the faithful demanded that Egwin become their Bishop. He guided the see of Worcester pastorally until he incurred the enmity of some of his flock for his severity against vice, and for those very virtues for which they had once demanded that he be consecrated as their Bishop. They denounced him to the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Taking the opportunity to retire from his archpastoral responsibilities, he resolved to make a pilgrimage to Rome, to the tombs of the Holy Apostles. Before leaving England, he is said to have locked his feet in fetters and to have thrown the key into the River Avon. Miraculously, this key appeared in the belly of a fish



he bought at a market in Rome, thus demonstrating his innocence. Because of this miracle, the Pope reinstated Egwin in his episcopal throne. He founded the abbey of Evesham under the patronage of the All-holy Theotokos because she had appeared there, seen first by the herdsman Eof and then by the Saint himself. Probably about A.D. 709, Egwin undertook another pilgrimage to Rome in the company of Kings Cenred of Mercia and Offa of the East Saxons, who had themselves resigned their royal dignity to dedicate their lives to the Church. It is recorded that, on this occasion, Egwin received considerable privileges for his foundation from Pope Constantine. Towards the end of his days, Saint Egwin retired again from his see, and went to live in retirement in the monastery community he had founded at Evesham. There he died and was laid to rest. Evesham became one of the great shrines of the Mother of God in England. In 941, as a result of the devastation caused by the Danish incursions, the monastery was taken over by secular clergy, but was restored to the monastics in the reforms initiated by Saints Dunstan and Ethelwold in the reign of King Edgar the Peaceable. The Saint's sacred relics were taken up and enshrined on 10th September, A.D. 1039, at the insistence of Ælward, the Bishop of London, who had been saved from shipwreck by the intercessions of the Saint and had then vowed to do this. After the Norman Conquest, as happened with so many of the earlier saints and as part of the "reformation" which was instigated then, the sacred relics of Saint Egwin were subjected to testing by fire, but they were preserved, testifying yet again to the sanctity of the holy Bishop.



“THE CHANTING, or psalmody, that is done in churches is in the nature of begging God to be conciliated regarding our sins. Whoever begs and prayerfully supplicates must have a humble and contrite manner; but to cry out manifests a manner that is audacious and irreverent. On this account the present Canon (75 of the Sixth Œcumenical Council) commands that those who chant in churches refrain from forcing their nature to shriek, but also from saying anything else that is unsuitable in church. But what are the things that are unsuitable for the church? The expositor Zonaras replies that they are womanish elements and warblings (which is the same as saying trills, and an excessive variation or modulation in melodies....).”

FROM “THE RUDDER”

# POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“ACCORDING to the Tradition of the East, James the Brother of our Lord was a brother by Joseph’s first marriage. The R.C.s say No - that he [Joseph] always led a pure, chaste life.” P.J., Bray, Ireland.*

YOU are correct that we, the Orthodox, believe that the holy Apostle James, the Brother of God, was a son of Saint Joseph the Betrothed by his first marriage, as were Joses, Simon and Judas (Matt. 13:55), and there were sisters also. I think that the problem arises for Roman Catholics in a misunderstanding of the concept of chastity. For an Orthodox Christian there is nothing unchaste in normal, loving, sexual relations between married partners. Sin and unchastity only enter the picture if the sexual relationship between them is somehow abusive or perverted, or if it transgresses Orthodox fasting disciplines. And, of course, sexual relations outside of marriage, however seemingly loving, are unchaste and sinful. But it seems that, at least in the popular understanding, for the Roman Catholics all sexual relations are considered to some degree unchaste, and thus, I suppose, in order to preserve the “honour” of Saint Joseph the Betrothed, they have to devise the idea that he had never had sexual relations before his betrothal to the All-holy Theotokos (and it would necessarily follow that he never did afterwards also, and so presumably they believe he died a virgin). They do this in much the same way that they also devised regarding the Theotokos the idea that she was “immaculately conceived,” to counteract the consequences of their unbalanced view of “original,” or as we Orthodox should say, “ancestral” sin. Such a concept of marital relations, of course, runs completely counter to the teaching of the holy Apostle Paul that “marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled,” and would call into question why we have the Mysterion of Holy Matrimony in church. Indeed, in the marriage service itself, we pray that the spouses may live in chastity. Chastity is not equated in our understanding with virginity or even celibacy. In the Orthodox understanding, although virginity is always seen as the higher calling, a man or woman may, and indeed should, live a married life and yet be considered chaste.

# HOUSE BLESSINGS

AT THE FEAST of Theophany it is customary for the houses of the faithful to be blessed by the priest, and to put this in context in good time, it seemed appropriate to note all the various house blessings that we have in the Orthodox Church.

Although this will not apply to many in our times, there is a  **blessing on the site before the building of a house is started**. This is the service which the late Metropolitan Lavr celebrated for us back in May, 2006, although the service was slightly shortened because of the Metropolitan's evident failing health at that time. The white Cross that you first see when you approach the Brotherhood, is the Cross which was then set up at the centre of the site of the new Monastic House, and which the Metropolitan blessed.

The **second blessing is when one takes up residence in a new house** - this can be literally a newly-built house or when one first moves into a new home. In this ceremony each room is sprinkled with holy water, the four outer walls are marked with holy oil in the form of a Cross, and the rooms are censed. This in some way shadows the initiation of a person into the Church, through Baptism and Chrismation. During this blessing, the Gospel lection about our Saviour's visit to the home of Zacchæus the publican is read. This, of course, is a call to the residents of the new home to live a life of repentance therein. For the Brotherhood at Brookwood, this blessing was served by Bishop Ambrose of Methoni.

The **third blessing** is the one which prompted this short essay, **that at Theophany with the newly blessed waters**. In Orthodox countries, after the Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany, the parish priest would normally simply visit each house in his village or neighbourhood, blessing each room in the house, while the faithful chanted the *troparion* of the festival. In the circumstances in which we live in the diaspora, this cannot usually be done, and so arrangements have to be made for the priest to visit homes in the days after the feast to bless them. As this in-

volves a special journey, it is customary for him to serve a short *moleben* (service of supplication) at each home, instead of simply chanting the *troparion* alone. The form of service which we use is one that the late Archimandrite Nicanor handed down to us, but there may well be other variations of usage.

Then we have the **monthly blessing of the house**, simply done by the head of the household sprinkling each room with the holy water blessed in church at the beginning of each month at the Lesser Blessing of Waters. This may be repeated if some hurt or disaster befalls the house or if there has been a serious disruption in the family or strong temptations.

And lastly, in many households it is customary, usually for the mother, **to cense each room every day**. This is done with a hand censer and one may use incense or the fragrant herbs blessed at Dormition or the palms from Palm Sunday. It emphasizes that the family home, like the parish church itself, is a house of prayer, and reminds us of that fact.



## NEWS SECTION

### ***PATRIARCH MAXIM OF BULGARIA REPOSES***

HIS HOLINESS, **Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria** reposed on Tuesday, 6th November, in a hospital in Sofia; he was 98 years of age. He was born Marin Naidenov Minkov on 29th October, 1914, in the mountain village of Oreshak, in the northern part of central Bulgaria. He became a novice monk in late childhood and studied Theology at the Sofia Seminary. In 1938, he entered Sofia University's theology department and was ordained a priest in 1941, subsequently adopting the monastic name Maxim. After the establishment of communist rule, in 1950 Fr Maxim was sent to represent the Bulgarian Church in Russia. Returning home in 1955, he became secretary-general of the Bulgarian Orthodox Synod. During the communist regime he rose through the Church hierarchy and was elected Patriarch on 4th July, 1971. After the fall of

communism his involvement with the regime caused a schism within the New Calendarist Church there. This is an entirely separate issue from the walling-off of the Traditionalist Orthodox Christians under Bishop Photii of Triaditsa for reasons of faith, and the schism between the two groupings of New Calendarists, though at times discreditable, has been brought to an end. The press reports that the main highlight of Maxim's Patriarchate was the visit by **Pope John Paul II** to Bulgaria in 2002. Though the Patriarch, something of a conservative within his Church, had been lukewarm about the visit, his meeting with the Pontiff was seen by Orthodox ecumenists as helping to improve relations between Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers. The funeral was chanted in the St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia, and the Patriarch was laid to rest in the Troyan Monastery near the village in which he had been born. May his rest now be with the Saints and his *Memory Eternal*.

### ***NEW OCA METROPOLITAN***

**THE Orthodox Church in America** has elected a new Primate, **Metropolitan Tikhon**. His Beatitude was elected on Tuesday, 13th November at the **17th All-American Council**, held at the Holy Trinity Church in Parma, Ohio, to succeed **Metropolitan Jonah**, who stood down as the Primate of the OCA earlier in the year at the request of his fellow hierarchs. Born Marc R. Mollard in Boston in 1966, the eldest of three children born to Francois and Elizabeth Mollard, the new Metropolitan was received into the Orthodox Church from Episcopalianism in 1989, and the same year began studies at Saint Tikhon's Seminary, South Canaan, PA. A year later he entered the monastic community at Saint Tikhon's Monastery as a novice. He was awarded the Master of Divinity degree from Saint Tikhon's Seminary in 1993, after which he was appointed first Instructor and later Senior Lecturer in Old Testament Studies. In 1995, he was tonsured to the Little Schema with the name Tikhon, in honour of **Saint Tikhon the Patriarch of Moscow**, who, because of his earlier ministry there, is revered in the States as an Enlightener of North America. Later that year, he was ordained to the diaconate and

priesthood at Saint Tikhon's Monastery. In 1998, he was elevated to the rank of hegoumen (abbot), and in 2000 to that of Archimandrite. In December 2002, he was named Deputy Abbot of Saint Tikhon's Monastery. In February 2004, he was consecrated to the episcopacy at Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church. In May 2012, he was elevated to the dignity of Archbishop, serving as Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania until his present elevation to the OCA's primatial see.



# SIR-UK NEWS

## *ARMY RECEPTION*

MEMBERS of the Brotherhood were invited to attend a Reception and Briefing by the **Army Engagement Team** at the **H.G. Wells Conference Centre in Woking** on Thursday, 1st November. In view of the fact that we live almost on “army territory” - about a mile from the Pirbright Camp and near the ranges, - and that we have received several gifts of firewood from the army, three members of the Brotherhood attended the reception. The proceedings were led by **Brigadier S. P. Wolsey**, who commands the military in Surrey, Sussex and Kent, and were opened by the **Mayor of Woking, Cllr Michael Smith**, who struck just the right note in his address, expressing our respect for the armed forces, yet mentioning concern over some recent engagements. After a reception, a presentation was made about the place of the army in the twenty-first century and its future by means of film footage, slides and explanations from the officers on the platform. At the end, time was given for questions from the floor, and then there was an opportunity for meeting with, and a less formal questioning of, the officers while refreshments were offered to the participants. The event was very well attended, and was extremely instructive.

## ***BURIAL AT SAINT EDWARD'S***

THE BURIAL of **Eirian Mary Sobolev** took place at our cemetery on Friday, 9th November (n.s.). The deceased, a convert to Holy Orthodoxy, was aged 88, and had been blind and infirm for several years. She was latterly a member of the **Paris Exarchate deanery** in this country, and her funeral was held at the **Antiochian Cathedral of St George in Regents Park, London**. Because the priest from London was unable at the last moment to come down to Brookwood, the Brotherhood clergy chanted the committal. About twelve mourners attended Mary on her last journey, and they afterwards joined us in the Old Mortuary for tea and biscuits, before making their way back to London.

## ***PRAYERS FOR THE NEW-BORN***

THE FIRST and Eighth Day Prayers for the newly born daughter of **Constantin and Elena Ungurianu** were read at their home in Kingsbury, North London, on Monday 6th / 19th November. The little girl was named **Maria** in honour of the Mother of God, and will celebrate her Name day on the approaching Great Feast of the Entrance of the Virgin into the Temple, 21st November / 4th December.

## ***THE "BUTTERBALL" CROSS***

ON FRIDAY, 23rd November n.s., the siblings of the late **Peter "Butterball" Stacey**, who is laid to rest in our cemetery, came and erected a hand-crafted Cross over his grave. The Cross, a Russian-style one, had been made by Peter's brother-in-law, **Peter Long**. Peter's brother **Michael**, and his sisters, **Margaret** and **Barbara**, and their spouses gathered from Kent, Warwickshire and even Devon for the occasion, and when they had set the Cross up, Brotherhood members joined them and blessed it. None of Peter's relatives are Orthodox Christians, and yet it

was edifying to see how they showed their love for him and their reverence for his memory in this way, when we see the graves of so many who do have Orthodox Christian families are neglected and left without memorials or attention. After the blessing the family were shown the church, before setting off to have lunch together and going their separate ways.

## ***VISITORS***

FATHER EVFIMY and **Mother Evfrosinia** of the **Lesna Icon Convent in France** paid us a very brief visit on Sunday, 3rd November n.s. on their way back home after celebrating the Divine Liturgy for their people in Guildford. They very kindly brought us a selection of Russian preserves from the Convent and a huge bag of other provisions.

On Monday, 19th November, **Priestmonk Irodion of St Anne's Skete, Mount Athos**, visited us, accompanied by two Romanian friends. They were shown the church and the exhibition and given hospitality by the Brotherhood.

**Alexey Koloydenko** led a small group of parishioners from the **Russian Orthodox Church of the Dormition, Harvard Road, West London** to visit our church on Thursday 9th / 22nd November. They were particularly interested in venerating the sacred relics that we hold in the church and, it being the feast of St Nectarius of Pentapolis, while they were here they chanted an *Akathist* to the saint before his icon in the centre of the church. They also very kindly brought us some provisions.

On Sunday, 25th November, **Protosinghel Horoloubie** with a translator very briefly visited us just before Vespers. He was from the Suceava region in Romania, and a member of the Patriarchate clergy.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **PRACTICAL TIP**

As the secular New Year is nearly upon us, either obtain a Church Diary (on sale at the back of our church!) or mark your secular ones with the principal feasts and celebrations of the coming year, and also the fasting periods, so that, before you make other arrangements, you can be as sure as possible that you will not be holidaying in the fasts or missing church observances.