

# *The Shepherd*

## *An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine*

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*Christ is born,  
give ye glory!*

*GREETINGS to all our readers on the Great Feasts of the Nativity and the Theophany. During these festal days, unto you mercy, and peace and love be multiplied.*

### FROM THE FATHERS

"CONCERNING the Word of God becoming man, among many other things in the Old Testament this word of Esaias is sufficient, I am coming to gather all the nations. And in the Gospel: The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

*Venerable Pachomius the Great of Egypt, 292-346 A.D.*

"HE WAS A BABY, He was a Child, so that you might be a perfect man; He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, that you might be loosed from the snares of death; He was in a manger, that you might be in the altar; He on earth, that you might be among the stars. He had no place at the inn, that you might have many mansions in the Heavens."

*Saint Ambrose of Milan, 339-397 A.D.*

"THESE SHEPHERDS symbolize the spiritual shepherds, the hierarchs. For the hierarchs ought to guard their flock and play their shepherds' pipes, that is, sing of spiritual things and teach the people, so that the people will be deemed worthy of seeing and hearing divine things."

*Blessed Theophylact of Ochrid, c.1050 - c.1108 A.D.*

"SUCH SPLENDOR of heavenly glory was revealed to the simple shepherds of Bethlehem. Up till then, such glory could only be seen by chosen individuals, and this is the first instance that we find in Holy Scripture of a whole group of mortal men's clearly seeing and hearing the immortal, angelic host. This is a sign that, with Christ's coming on earth, heaven is wide open to all who seek it in purity of heart."

*Saint Nikolai Velimirovic, 1880 - 1956 A.D.*

## THE TWO GENEALOGIES OF JOSEPH THE CARPENTER

THOSE WHO READ the Holy Gospels are sometimes brought up sharply by the two genealogies of the Righteous Joseph, as set forth by the Apostle Matthew (1:1-16) and by the Apostle Luke (3:23-38). Both are genealogies of one and the same person, but they differ completely in their composition.

From Christianity's first centuries (in the fourth and in the fifth centuries) attention was paid to these two differing genealogies of Virgin Mary's righteous betrothed, and already in those times theologians, historians and holy fathers of the Church applied themselves to the questions that arise therefrom.

It is clear that the genealogy set forth by the Apostle Matthew represents a factual family-tree of Joseph according to birth. However, that given by the Apostle Luke represents a juridical or legal genealogy according to the record. Both genealogies are necessary and correct with regard to Joseph's descent. The two genealogies derive from the instances of complicated marriages.

Normally, every Jew had one genealogy according to his birth from his father, and it was both factually and legally correct. But in some instances, where there were compound marriages, the law required that they also maintain a juridical descent conditional on descent from a "second father" Such is the case with Joseph; as we know from sacred Tradition and from the commentaries of the holy fathers of the Church, his two separate genealogies derive from the following incidents: Joseph was born from the second marriage of his mother Elias [Heli], the father of Joseph according to Luke's genealogy, died without children. Jacob, Joseph's father according to Matthew's genealogy therefore married Elias' widowed spouse, and from them Joseph was born. Furthermore, Elias and Jacob were [half] brothers according to the flesh, of one womb, from one mother; although they had different fathers (see diagram).

This comes about because of an ancient Jewish law, according to which the children from a second husband, the brother of the first, are numbered in the genealogy of the first. This law was called Jevamot or Levirate, established in the time of Moses, and deeply entrenched in the life of the Jewish peoples. A brother was obliged to marry the widow of a brother who had died childless, even if he were already married. Because of this, people were often twice married, thrice married or even more. And with the wife, the property and the "estate" of his departed brother was transferred to the brother, i.e., his inheritance and all he possessed. There follow several formulations of this law from the Bible -Genesis 38:7-8: "Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and as her brother-in-law marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother." Deuteronomy 25:5-6: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel."

This "raising up seed unto a brother" was a constant occurrence in the life of the Jewish people, particularly so until the time of the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we all know from the Gospels, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, thought to snare the Saviour by posing the Levirate problem: "Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother (Deut. 25:5). Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed; and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife" (Mark 12:19-23). See also Matthew 22:23-33 and Luke 20:27-38.

The Law required, it bound, the brother to take to wife the widow of his departed brother regardless of his marital situation, and no one was permitted to refuse to comply, but if the brother did refuse, the Law appointed that he be publicly disgraced in the following way: "Let his bride (that is, his brother's wife) go up to the gate unto the Elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he doth not desire to be married to me. Then the Elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him; and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the Elders (that is, of all), and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed" (Deut. 25:7-10). And here is the addendum in the Talmud (Treatise on Jevamot, the Levirate): - "Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Simeon (teachers of Israel) taught that everyone must cry after such a man "Shoe-loosed one, shoe-loosed one!" In earlier times this was something like the way the guttersnipes act And the woman in this way gained her leave ["khalitsa"], that is she received an official written permission to marry whom she would, except the priests, although until being granted this leave she was required only to enter into a marriage with the brother of her departed husband, her brother-in-law.

On account of this Levirate law, one person might have two genealogies. Thus for Joseph there was one actual genealogy according to his birth, which Matthew sets forth (1:1-16), which runs through Jacob the real father of Joseph, who was descended from King David; and the other; according to the record, set forth by Luke (3:23-37) through Elias the first husband of his mother, who was also descended from King David by another line.

How can we confirm that Joseph was born of a Levirate marriage, and that this explains the two differing genealogies? We find this in the teaching of our holy Gregory the Theologian, the fourth century Archbishop of Constantinople. It is in these words that the Saint proclaims this: "It was decreed by Moses, that if a Jew died leaving no seed, then, so that his memory should not be wiped out from among the people, one of his brothers, or one of those nearest to the deceased, was obliged to take his wife, consenting thereto, and possessions, and to raise up seed and the house of him that had died. And regarding the God-man, I will reveal something hidden. Matthan who was descended from Solomon, was married to Esthene, but after his

death Esthene married one of the descendants of Nathan who was called Matthat. And she bore sons, to one Jacob, and to the other Elias.\* After the death of Elias, because he did not leave descendants, both his house and his wife were quickly taken by Jacob, who alone was born to his father, and who begat to his [half] brother the valiant son, Joseph. Thus Joseph was the son of Jacob, but the Law ascribed him to Elias. And one of the Evangelists, Matthew, traces his actual descent, and the other; Luke, the legal descent. This beautiful agreement of the Evangelists puts a stop for you to any worry on this account (Works of Our Father Among the Saints Gregory the Theologian).\*\*

Footnotes:

\* *From these words of St Gregory the Theologian we may conclude that Matthan had no male children, because "She (Esthene) bore sons: to one (Matthan) Jacob, and to the other (Matthat) Elias" - and she bore them from Matthat. And did Matthan have no female children? Concerning this Gregory the Theologian says nothing at all. The assumption that Matthan had female children is important, and will be significant in what follows.*

\*\* *In St Gregory the Theologian's works in this place, the name Melchi stands in place of Matthat. Thus there comes a manifest confusion of the names. Melchi cannot be the father of Jacob nor of Bias because he appears as the great-grandfather of Bias.*

*In his time it was noticed that Saint John of Damascus uses a listing from the Gospel of St Luke in which the same confusion of names in the genealogy is manifest the name Levi is there found before the name Melchi, and the name Matthat is completely passed by. One must suppose that Saint Gregory the Theologian, living considerably earlier, had in his possession the very same listing that John of Damascus had, because he has exactly the same misunderstanding regarding the names in Luke's genealogy. This confusion of the names in the works of such memorable holy Fathers passed unnoticed in several subsequent works and writings of the Church, and in particular in the Russian "Chetii-Minei" [a collection of lives of saints, according to the days of the month - ed.], which in turn has proved a source of mistakes in subsequent studies, which on this question put their trust in the Chetii-Minei.*

Here is the extract from the Chetii-Minei:

26th December

*Joseph the Betrothed of the All-pure Virgin Theotokos*

"Saint Joseph was of Royal lineage, of the house of David and Solomon, the grandson of Matthat, and the great-grandson of Eleazar; the son of Jacob by nature and of Elias according to the Law. For his grandfather Matthat died having begat his father Jacob. Matthat's wife, the mother of Jacob, took Melchi, from the tribe of Nathan, the son of David and she bore Elias. Elias took a wife and died childless, and after him Jacob, being his brother from the same mother but not of the same father, took his wife. Because the Law enjoined that should anyone die without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up seed to his brother; according to this law Jacob took his brother's wife, and therefrom Saint Joseph the Betrothed was begotten, and Joseph is therefore said to be the son of both: by nature the son of Jacob, and by the Law the son of Elias."

## King David



**Joseph the Carpenter**

**Joseph the Carpenter**

The errors consist in the fact that everywhere where the name Matthat is used here Matthan should be used, and in place of Melchi should be Matthat. To verify this, we request that you examine this extract from the Chetii-Minei alongside both genealogies from the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, or the diagram reproduced here.

\*\*\* Elias and Jacob are brothers having one mother (of one womb) although different fathers.

The Left-hand Column is the Genealogy according to the Law, according to the juridical record. It is taken from Luke 3:23-38, and there are 41 generations from David to Joseph the Carpenter. It represents the priestly lineage.

The Right-hand Column is the Genealogy according to birth, the actual lineage. It is taken from Matthew 1:1-16, and there are 26 generations from David to Joseph the Carpenter. It represents the Royal lineage.

This article is the work of A. Merzliukin, and was published in Russian in Paris in 1955

It is one of a series of articles published in booklet form.

*Translator's note:* We have included the author's footnotes concerning the confusion of names, even though they might seem unnecessarily complicated to most readers, but they indicate that errors do occur in the writings of the Fathers and that a critical analysis of them, in order to come to the truth of a matter, is not, as many suppose, impious or untraditional.

# CONCERNING PRAYER

## Its Inner Qualities and Outer Effects

Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)

According to the Teaching of the Sacred Scriptures,  
the Holy Fathers, and the Teachers and Writers of the Church

A Translation from a Booklet Published  
by the Russian Skete of the Prophet Elias on Mount Athos.

Translation by Mrs Valentina B. Merritt of Brookwood, Surrey

*Continuation from the last issue*

### 7. Humility and Meekness

*They will raise up their humble supplication  
before the face of the Lord (Jeremias 36:7).*

*Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart (Matt 11:29).*

ALL you who are beginning to serve the Lord in prayer, learn to be like Him, meek, humble and of a sincere heart - *Saint John of Cronstadt.*

*O GOD, be merciful unto me, the sinner, the publican cried out, and he left the Temple more justified than the Pharisee (see Luke 8:13). So it was that the words were manifest as higher than deeds, and what he said surpassed his actions. One showed off his righteousness, fasting, tithing, and the other said words, without any deeds, and was granted forgiveness of all his sins. Why is it thus? Because God was not only listening to the words, but was the more paying attention to the feeling with which they were pronounced, and finding him broken-hearted and humble, He had mercy and showed him His wonted love for man. I say this, not that we should sin, but that we should be humble-minded -Saint John Chrysostom..*

HOW does one incline the mercy of God? This is how: Establish prayer in your heart, and add humility and meekness thereunto. For the Lord says: *Learn of Me, for I and meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls (Matt. 11:29).* And David chants: *A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise (Ps. 50:17).* The Lord loves nothing so much as a meek and humble soul - *Ibid.*

DO NOT SAY: I am sinful, and have no boldness, and do not dare to pray. He has boldness, who thinks that he has no boldness; and on the contrary, he who thinks that he has boldness, like the Pharisee, loses power on account of his boldness. He who considers himself to be rejected and without boldness, the same, like the Publican, will be best heard - *Ibid.*

REPENTANCE is that which, when completed by the prayer of contrition, brings the unremitting supplication for the forgiveness of that which is past and concern to be safeguarded in the future close to God. For this reason the Lord showed support for our weakness to be in prayer, saying: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation (Matt. 26:41).* Because the Lord knows, that even unto death He will not deprive us of

the freedom to turn away from virtue to vice, He has given us the precept of being diligent and struggling always in prayer - *Venerable Isaac the Syrian*.

IT IS NOT deeds that open the doors of the locked heart, but rather that the heart is broken and the soul humble, when one conquers the passions by humility - *Ibid*.

ONE of the Saints wrote: "If one does not consider himself a sinner, his prayer will not be accepted by the Lord" - *Ibid*.

WHEN YOU STAND before God in prayer; in your thoughts make yourself like an ant, like a dumb child. Before God, do not speak things from your own learning, but as it were with the thoughts of an infant draw near to Him, and walk before Him so that He vouchsafes you His fatherly providence, such as fathers have for their own children, for it is written: The Lord preserveth the infants - *Ibid*.

DO YOU DESIRE to master prayer to God? Then make mercy your own in the heart, which is commanded us that we might imitate the Heavenly Father and achieve the perfection of grace. Force your heart toward mercy and goodness; submerge all your soul and clothe it in these characteristics, until you experience within yourself love of man, like unto that of Him, Who makes His sun shine *on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust* (Matt. 5:45) - *Blessed Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov*.

WHEN, from the heart, you forgive all your neighbours their sins: then all your own sins will be revealed unto you. You will observe, how greatly you are in need of the kind-heartedness of God, how much all mankind needs it: you will weep before God for yourself and for mankind - *Ibid.*

WITH AFFLICTION of heart abide in communication, and with the labour of prayer and with the disposition of the heart, and through your supplications a fountain of mercy will be opened up unto you - *Venerable Isaac the Syrian.*

MAY you always have a care for the preponderance of mercies. A cruel and unmerciful heart is never cleansed. A merciful man is the physician of his own soul, because like a strong wind he blows the dark passions out of himself - *Ibid.*

NOTHING can bring the heart close to God as does mercy, and nothing leads to such quiet in the soul as voluntary poverty - *Ibid.*

IF YOU are clothed in all meekness and freedom from anger, you will not have much trouble in loosing your mind from captivity - *"The Ladder" of Venerable John Climacus.*

WHEN SOMEONE goes with a peaceful disposition, he scoops up spiritual gifts as if with a spoon - *Venerable Seraphim of Sarov.*

WHEN A MAN strives to possess within a humble heart and a mind not puffed up but rather peaceful, then all the enemy's machinations are ineffectual; for where there is peace of mind, there the Lord God Himself abides: His place hath been made in peace (Ps. 75:2) - *Ibid.*

WHATEVER you do to avenge a brother, who has wronged you, it will all be a temptation for you (and will disturb you) at the time of prayer - *Venerable Nilus of Sinai.*

PRAYER is the manifestation (the issuance, the breaking through) of joy and thanksgiving - *Ibid.*

THOSE WHO collected to themselves the sorrows (of this age) and thoughts of evil memories, and persist in prayer (with this disposition) are like those who draw water and pour it into a cask with holes in it - *Ibid.*

... to be continued with *"The Exterior Activity of Prayer."*

## BOOK REVIEW

Nadieszda Kizenko:

### A PRODIGAL SAINT - FATHER JOHN OF KRONSTADT AND THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, 376 pages; ISBN 0-271-01976-X

VIRTUALLY every contemporary writer in Russia commented on Saint John of Kronstadt: admirers wrote the first biographies, radicals the first attacks (which were then repeated in Western countries). After his death major lives -anticipating his glorification - like Sursky's were compiled in the emigration, while the Soviets vented their fury on the memory of this "villain" of the pre-revolutionary period.

Professor Kizenko has given us something new however This book attempts to place the saint - and it is clear that she regards him as one and that she is a believer - in his historical context and to reveal him as a priest and man. She not only uses the published sources mentioned above, but primary materials never before analysed. These comprise the personal diaries he kept from 1856-1908 without a break, letters he received, of which 10,000 survived, and the archives of the Department of Police.

This book, then, is not a "Saints Life" but an academic study by a historian. Not everything in it is edifying. Why should Orthodox Christians bother with it?

I think there are several good reasons why they should. Orthodox lives of saints, especially recent ones, usually aim to edify, to provide spiritual reading-matter and to refute any claims made against the subject's sanctity. They are therefore very positive - the saint often emerges in childhood as fully developed spiritually, with no further mistakes to be made or struggles undertaken. It is as though the saint is already in the Glory of God's presence. But perhaps this is not true of all saints, and perhaps this approach does not always help us.

Kizenko's book is not intended for "spiritual reading," yet I found it more inspiring even than Sursky's great work. To begin with, the quotations from Father John's diaries reveal his awesome struggles. He grew up in the Russia far north in great poverty - at the end of school terms he would walk home hundreds of miles barefoot to save his boots - and he did not find this poverty a "noble" thing. He was not "naturally" the smiling, gregarious, ascetic lover of the poor which we picture him to be. In the words of the author, "it nearly killed Father John" to give away anything rather than save it, peasant-fashion for a rainy day). He was also "naturally" one who loved solitude and hated crowds - but was always surrounded by them; one who found married life fraught with irritations and obstacles to his spiritual path, one who loved good food and drink (especially sweet food and wine!). The changes in himself had to be achieved through God's grace and his own constant and costly effort.

And Orthodox living today can identify with his passions. He was not a monk but a man who every night returned to his family (a wife and several female relatives, none of whom sound congenial people). He even struggled (in a priest's house!) to get fasting food prepared on the right days. Without shame, he poured out his struggles, all his earthly and weak thoughts and resentments, into his diary It is almost indecent to read such intimate notes except that they must have been preserved for a purpose.

And in the end - unlike most of us - he triumphed over everything which held him back from God his Saviour.

"A Prodigal Saint" is full of such treasures. One chapter explores the letters he received, and the 10,000 examined are only a tiny fraction of the original number, and reveals a whole unknown world of nineteenth century Russia. There are requests for healings and for money and for spiritual advice. Foreigners write: Jews, Poles and Muslims. A semi-literate peasant writes from central Russia to request Father John to personally thank the Tsar for an award he has received for good bee keeping. A middle class woman in need of money asks him to pray that she will win a large lottery prize, as this will save him the money she would otherwise have to ask him for! (Perhaps fortunately, Father John's reply has not been preserved - he hated lotteries!). A priest in Odessa, who has spent a tranquil life on Athos, asks the saint to advise him on

problems he suddenly encounters hearing confessions (the letter goes into hair-raising detail). Without exaggeration, he was regarded by believers as the "Pastor of All Russia."

Another chapter deals with the deluded "Ioannites" who developed sectarian characteristics and whose name was used in the Soviet period to condemn anyone who was Orthodox and Monarchist.

Then there is the fantastic saga of his charitable works, in which we learn their radical origin. Father John taught, without any equivocation, that wealth -meaning ANY surplus - meant robbing the poor. He likened money to water in the heating system of a house: "it warms us but does NOT belong to us." This part of the book deserves careful study.

Then we come to the great change in Father John's thinking brought on by the slaying of the Tsar Alexander II. Father John was not politically correct. Though a critic of society and its workings, he was not a dissident. He believed that active revolutionaries should simply be put to death. He many times blessed the banners of the Orthodox-monarchist "Union of the Russian People." As one contemporary liberal writer said, this was "a slap in the face of public taste," and his enemies: the liberals, Bolsheviks, Tolstoyans et al. never forgot it.

Finally, Kizenko gives us an interesting comparative analysis of the glorifications of Father John by the Russian Church Abroad (1964) and the Moscow Patriarchate (1990). This is very illuminating but I will not give the game away! Those who buy the book will find out.

Of course there are faults in the book but they are few. One would have liked to know more about Father John's published works (which are many) and more details about the mystery of the fate of his relics. I say nothing about the style of the book; the author writes using the usual conventions of modern academic discourse, supposedly "value free," and one just has to ignore all this because in the end it doesn't matter. All who are lovers of Saint John of Kronstadt or who have any interest in pre-revolutionary Orthodox Russia should read this book.

*Contributed by John M. Harwood, Edmonton, Middlesex.*

## THE COMING MONTH

CHRISTMAS naturally dominates the month of December. All of the month falls either within the fast, by which we prepare for Christmas, or within the seven-day festival itself. Christmas itself is also preceded by a five-day fore-festival, during which period special hymns are appointed in the daily services to prepare us for the Saviour's Birth, and during which the fast is somewhat stricter than it has been for the previous thirty-five days. Among the Greeks, many of the faithful start keeping the stricter fast even earlier, beginning immediately after the commemoration of Saint Spiridon of Tremython on 12th/25th.

In addition to this, the two Sundays which fall immediately before Christmas day are dedicated to the Old Testament forebears and ancestors of the Lord, and within the feast there are the following special commemorations:-

- a) the Synaxis of the All-holy Mother of God on the second day, 26th December;
- b) the feast of the Holy Innocents on 29th December;
- c) the commemoration of the Kinsmen of the Saviour (St Joseph the Betrothed, St James the Brother of God, and the holy Prophet, King and Psalmist David) on the Sunday after Christmas Day.

This year, because Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, the Sunday after Christmas falls outside the feast itself, on 1st January (on the church calendar), and thus on the day of the Lord's Circumcision. This day is also the Sunday before the Theophany. So that too many commemorations do not fall on the one day, the Church typicon provides that the service for the Kinsmen of the Lord be transferred and chanted on the second day of the feast along with the commemoration of the All-holy Virgin.

The fact that the Nativity falls on a Sunday also alters the order of the services for the festival, although nothing is appointed to be chanted of the usual Sunday service. The Royal Hours are usually read on the day before Christmas, but this year they are shifted to 23rd, and are followed by the Typica with no celebration of the Liturgy on that day. On the Saturday, Christmas Eve, we have the usual order of services with the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.

We begin the services for the day of the Nativity with the Vigil on Saturday evening, during the Vespers of which there eight Old Testament readings foretelling Christ's birth at Bethlehem. On the day of the feast, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great.

Among the Russians and those who follow Russian usage, the order is slightly different. Vespers for the festival is appended to the Saturday Liturgy, and the Vigil begins, as it would on a weekday, with Great Compline.

All of these liturgical prescriptions are to emphasise to us the importance of the Saviour's birth. They set it apart from the other celebrations throughout the year as something special. They must be seen as a framework or skeleton (something essential to hold the body up), on which the body of the service is supported. That body is composed of Scriptural readings, hymns and supplications. These we should pay attention to, because it is from these that we shall derive our spiritual nourishment and learn about the many significances of our celebration.

After receiving the Divine Mysteries at the Christmas Liturgy (or; if prevented from doing so, after taking the antidoron), we break the fast that we have been keeping for forty days and thereafter the Church does not appoint any fasting at all until the day before Theophany (5th/18th January), which in preparation for that feast is kept as a strict fast, even though it fall on a Thursday this year

In addition to the various Christmas celebrations in December; we have the two most beloved Wonder-workers among the Saints: Saint Nicolas of Myra in Lycia on 6th/19th, and St Spiridon of Tremythos on 12th/25th. They were almost exact contemporaries, St Nicolas dying in 342 A.D. and St Spiridon in 348. Both attended the First Œcumenical Council, and so would have met each other St Nicolas' see was on the south coast of what is now Turkey and St Spiridon's on the island of Cyprus,

although his sacred relics are now enshrined on Corfu and those of St Nicolas are in Bari, Italy. The lives of both are distinguished by the multitude of the miracles that they worked, and that wonder-working charisma continued even after their deaths unto this day. St Spiridon now shares his day with Saint Herman of Alaska, a saint the every detail of whose life seems to be the exact opposite of St Spiridon's - (St Spiridon lived at the period when the Church was first established, St Herman in the last generations before the "Constantinian" period of history was destroyed; St Spiridon was married and subsequently became a Bishop, St Herman became a monk in his youth; St Spiridon lived in the Mediterranean world and St Herman in Russia and then Alaska; St Spiridon attended the First Council, met prelates and Emperors, St Herman lived among simple Aleut converts to Orthodoxy) -and yet interiorly their zeal for Orthodoxy unites them, as does their meekness and their love for those spiritually entrusted to their care. The fact that their feasts now fall together highlights for us how Orthodoxy shines through many cultures and ages, and yet in the heart creates the same Christ-like features in all peoples.

*THE MAJORITY of the problems of life - sorrows, inner difficulties - of which one hears during confession, are due to the fact that men live outside the Church, yet appeal to the Church for the solution of their difficulties. They have no determination to change their life. They do not even give a thought to this - that is why the Church is helpless in such cases.*

*From "The Diary of a Russian Priest  
Father Alexander Elchaninov*

## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*"I would appreciate your views on a certain debate we were having in our Religious Education lectures for our PGCE course. Our lecture advised us to omit the details in the story of Noah's ark with younger children in case it might upset them (the thought of God destroying the earth). As an Orthodox Christian how do you think that I should approach subjects such as these in the Bible, without causing any of the children any distress? J.B, Middlesex.*

MY VIEWS about anything are not very important, but as you asked for them regarding the Noah's ark contention, I think the idea that the story might upset young children silly. I was reminded of a situation about thirty years ago, when the girlfriend of a friend of mine, who was a Methodist and was studying to teach RE at Primary School level, told me that they were instructed not to mention God to the children, as it was a concept too big for them. I asked at what age we could comprehend God, perhaps it should be left until they are over 18, or perhaps 50; I would think that at 90 one is unlikely to be able to take it on board, so perhaps He should be omitted from Religious Education altogether!

More to the point of your question, I think the idea of omitting the story of Noah, and presumably the sacrifice of Isaac, and a host of other things, including the

Crucifixion, silly for two reasons. First of all, because children need to see what might be the dark side of religion and of the reality of things. If they are brought up with a sanitised, "sugar and spice and all things nice" view of life they will be ill equipped to cope with life's difficulties when later they will surely befall them. They will grow up interested only in what is pleasant to themselves, and thus self-centred and self-obsessed; and do we not see this in fact?

Secondly, children in general are a lot tougher emotionally than we credit them for. For generations children of Christian backgrounds, and of Jewish, have grown up on these histories and they have not been harmed. Even when we step into the secular world, we see that children's stories, fairy tales and the like, often have a very dark and sinister side (Red Riding Hood, to name but one). Children are well able to take these things on board, and it helps them to grow into whole people.

Having said the above, of course, one must take care in the presentation of the stories. In the Noah case, for instance, one must stress that God was not primarily interested in destroying the earth, although He was prepared to do that, even though He had made it and loved and cared for it, but that He was striving to destroy sin, which is something that He did not make and which is the true evil in the world. This way too the children will begin to learn that destroying something is not always destructive.

## APPEAL FROM BETHANY

SISTERS Martha and Maria from the Orthodox School in Bethany issued the following appeal on 16th November this year, in the midst of the continuing hostilities in the Holy Land:-

Dear friends,

It is hard to keep silent much longer The people of Beit Jala, in particular the Orthodox Christian neighbourhoods, are being mercilessly hammered by the Israeli military Over the past few weeks homes and property have suffered extensive damage due to shelling from Israeli tanks and helicopter gunships. The attacks took a more ominous turn this past Sunday, when an attack began in broad daylight The Orthodox Church of St Nicolas (built over the cell St Nicolas of Myra lived in for three years when on pilgrimage to the Holy Land) had been packed with worshippers attending the memorial service of a prominent local citizen. Some parishioners went to a house next to the church following services for coffee and to offer condolences to the family Suddenly the shooting began and 9 people were wounded including a 13 year old boy who was shot in the head.

Last evenings attack was even more severe. Israeli shelling began about 4.30 p.m. and a heavy shooting barrage began after 11 p.m. The house of the former housemother of the Orthodox School of Bethany, Miss Regina AbuTom, had all her windows shot out. Everyone in the house across from her was wounded and is now in hospital. Another nearby home, belonging to the family of Damian El Alla, parishioners of St Nicolas, was completely destroyed. In the most outrageous attack, a German doctor; the husband of a Palestinian woman, was killed as he tried to run into the street to help a Palestinian police officer who lay wounded.

The relatives of many nuns of the Convent of St Mary Magdalene and the Convent of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives live in Beit Jala and the surrounding areas. Many people are now homeless or in dire financial straits because of the damage done to their homes and property. As we approach the Feast day of St Nicholas we ask for your increased prayers for the innocent people of the Holy Land now undergoing such suffering. For those who are able to help financially please send contributions to:

Orthodox School of Bethany, P.O. Box 20607, JERUSALEM, Israel.

Cheques should be made out to "Orthodox School of Bethany" and earmarked for the Beit Djala Relief Fund.

*(N.B. We have reproduced this appeal substantially as it reached us from an internet posting, although there seem to be eccentric spellings and punctuation - perhaps evidence of the urgency with which it was issued - ed.)*

## ASSEMBLY OF SERBIAN HIERARCHS

HIS HOLINESS, PAVLE, the Patriarch of Serbia, headed an extraordinary session of the Holy Assembly of Bishops, held in Belgrade between 1st and 3rd November. All the Serbian Orthodox hierarchs attended with the exception of one from Central America. The hierarchs gave thanks to God for the fact that they were meeting in a free country for the first time in 60 years, and then turned their attention to the pressing need for church-educational work among their peoples. The Assembly made several provisions regarding seminary training and they appointed a committee to attend to the issue of providing religious teaching in elementary and secondary schools. Bishop Ignjatije of Branicevo was given the task of composing a programme of instruction.

## ROCA "SOBOR"

THE "SOBOR," or full assembly, of the Hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad met in New York City in the second half of October. At the end of their session they published a Letter to "the Beloved Children of the Church in the Homeland [Russia] and in the Diaspora." The letter welcomes the glorification of the New Martyrs by the Moscow Patriarchal Sobor earlier this year; but expresses regret that the Patriarchate evidences "the absence of any understanding of the position of the Russian Church Abroad," and protests their forced confiscation of church properties of which the Church Abroad has been custodian for decades. The ROCA bishops also regretted Moscow's continued allegiance to Ecumenism and that they had not offered "an honest assessment of the anti-ecclesial actions of Metropolitan Sergius" [Sergianism]. Lastly the hierarchs call the faithful to preserve personal piety saying: "Frequently among us the critical stand against social vices, against the retreat of today's world from divine and moral laws, begets an inattentive attitude towards one's personal spiritual peace, and as a result the level of personal piety falls. So it happens that, while criticising apostasy, we ourselves become participants in the universal abandonment of piety."

On his return to his see, Archbishop Mark sent a circular letter to the clergy of his diocese giving more details of the proceedings. The hierarchs established a commission to investigate the problems of the unity of the Russian Church; this comprises Archbishop Mark himself, Bishops Michael and Gabriel, Archpriests Nikolai Artemov and Peter Perekrestov, and Deacon Paul Ivanov.

For the diocese itself, the hierarchs resolved next year to consecrate Hegoumen Agapit of the Monastery of St Job of Pochaev in Munich as a vicar [suffragan] bishop for Archbishop Mark. Here in England, Mother Vikentia has been appointed by the Bishops' Assembly as the superior of the Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden, succeeding Abbess Seraphima.

Bishop Ambrose of Vevey has been made ruling hierarch of the Western European diocese and raised to the rank of Archbishop; and Bishop Kyrill of Seattle has been appointed as successor of the late Archbishop Antony in the diocese of San Francisco and Western America. Archimandrite Peter (Lukianov), the inspector of the Holy Trinity Seminary at Jordanville has been made Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical

Mission in Jerusalem, and Hegoumen Alexis (Biron) will relinquish his post there for a posting in Berlin.

Archbishop Mark's letter ends with the news that after Pascha 2001 the Wonderworking Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God will visit the diocese.

Another news item from the Sobor relates that the hierarchs have endorsed the glorification of the Blessed Hierarchs Ignatius Brianchaninov, Theophan the Recluse, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow and the Elder Feofil of Kiev. These blessed ones have already been canonized by the Moscow Patriarchate.

During their session the hierarchs also addressed a letter to His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia, asking him to use his good offices to help heal the wounds and re-establish unity between the various parts of the Russian Church.

## ŒCUMENICAL PATRIARCH VISITS ROMANIA

HIS ALL HOLINESS Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople paid a fraternal visit to Romania in mid-October; where he met and talked with the Patriarch of Romania, Teoctist, and was awarded a diploma *Honoris Causa*, by the Academy of Romania. This was presented to His All-Holiness by the Academy's President, Eugen Simion. The Œcumenical Patriarch was also received by the President of the republic, Emil Constantinescu, at the Cotroceni Palace, and he gave the President an icon.

## PALESTINIAN CHURCH LEADER ACCUSES ISRAEL

ARCHIMANDRITE THEODOSIOS HANNA, of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, has accused Israel of practising "ethnic cleansing" against Palestinians. He was speaking at a public briefing at the Geneva headquarters of the World Council of Churches on 19th October, and representing the Patriarch Diodoros I of Jerusalem. Fr Theodosios said: "Israel is practising ethnic cleansing against the Arabs - Muslim and Christian. Everyone thinks that there is a conflict between Arabs and Israelis. It is not a conflict between Arabs and Israelis, but an occupation by Israel." He was one of a delegation which included Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and Dr Marwan Bishar, a Nazareth journalist and research fellow at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* in Paris. Three other Palestinian delegates, who had been invited to Geneva, were unable to attend because of the Israeli military's closure of Palestinian territories. (Source ENI Bulletin 0382)

## DIRECT REFERENCE TO GOD HARD IN EU

THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES (CEC) has expressed concern that no reference is made to Europe's Christian heritage in the text of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, agreed at Biarritz, France, on 14th October. A reference to this heritage in the draft was removed at the insistence of the French premier; Lionel Jospin. The legal advisor to the Commission of Catholic Bishops from the EU, Silvio Marcus-Helmons, said: "We have to keep a low profile nowadays, and we know a direct reference to God would be hard for member states to accept ... but if labour unions and political parties are explicitly recognized, why shouldn't churches be as well? Religion constitutes one of the roots of West European culture." Marcus-Helmons, who teaches at Belgium's Catholic University of Leuven, added: "There's a

movement in Western Europe now to reject everything religious as contrary to the new understanding of liberty."

## BROOKWOOD NEWS

**FIRE at Brotherhood House:** On Monday, 20th November; there was a chimney fire at the house early in the morning. Some damage was done to the underside of part of the roof, and one room was filled with smoke. Praise be to God, no one was hurt and we managed to deal with the fire ourselves. Except for cleaning up, the incident was under control before we began Mattins, at the end of which we chanted a Thanksgiving Moleben for our safe deliverance from fatality or serious injury. The damage has subsequently been made good by Silver Tower Services, and on 6th December we are having the chimney professionally lined and modified to be safer and more efficient. We have also taken the precaution of putting smoke alarms in all the rooms.

**GIFT of an Icon:** Our former parishioner, Demetrius Howes, who now lives on Cyprus, recently visited Brookwood, and brought with him a hand-painted icon of Saint Benedict of Norcia, the Cœnobiarch of the West. At the present time, we are having the icon photographed so that we can make prints from it.

**ICON APPEAL:** Our appeal for funds to commission an icon of the Great Martyr Panteleimon the Healer for Saint Edwards has so far raised £215. We shall be receiving donations until the end of the year and then will order the icon with the funds raised, so, if you would like to give, please send your donations within the next two weeks.

## PRACTICAL TIP

*AS WE APPROACH the civil New Year, and begin new diaries, make sure that you mark in the principal Church celebrations, the times of fasts, name-days, and days when you should attend church, so that you can arrange the other things in your life around this, to avoid holidaying in fast periods, or missing a Vigil because of having a dinner party or the like. The Psalmist speaks for the soul when he says: "If I set not Jerusalem above all other, as at the head of my joy..." - one small way that we can begin to do this is to put our church observance as the starting point for the coming year, rather than just allowing to God the leftovers of a life, otherwise devoted to self, mammon, entertainment or worldly concerns. During the year, commitments might arise which cause you to fail in this regard, but at least you will have set the parameters of your life for 2001 with regard to that which is beneficial for your soul, and any failures will bring you the blessing of an opportunity to humble yourself.*