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FROM THE FATHERS

"A BROTHER asked Abba Pcemen a question and said unto him, 'What shall I do? for my thoughts disturb me, and they say unto me, "Your sins are forgiven," and they make me pry into the shortcomings of the brethren.' Then Abba Pcemen spoke to him about Abba Isidore, who lived in a cell and wept over his soul, and his disciple used to live in another cell; and the disciple came to the Elder, and finding him weeping said unto him, 'My father, why are you weeping?' And the Elder said unto him, 'I am weeping for my sins.' Then the disciple said unto him, 'And do you have any sins, father?' And the Elder said unto him, 'Indeed I have, my son, and if I were permitted to see my sins, not three or even four men would suffice to weep with me for them.' Then Abba Pcemen said, 'Thus it is with the man who knows himself.'"

From the Paradise of the Fathers

"AS IT IS impossible for a starving man not to think of bread, so it is impossible for a man eager to be saved not to think of death and judgment."

Venerable John of the Ladder, + 603 A.D.

"AND MAN, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them (Ps. 48:12). In this verse the inspired author seems to me to be making a bitter lament that the rational being, entrusted also with sovereignty on earth, has slipped to the level of the brute beasts, wasting effort, working in opposition to salvation, chasing after vainglory, practising avarice, labouring to no good end. The human being's honour, after all, is virtue, pondering future realities, taking every step towards that life, and neglecting the concerns of the present. The life of brute beasts, you see, is confined to this present world; ours, on the contrary, is proceeding towards another and better one, which is also endless. These people, however, unaware of anything of future realities, are worse than the beasts."

Saint John Chrysostom, + 407A.D.

AT THE START of the Holy and Great Lent, we ask all our readers and supporters for their forgiveness for our sins and offences against them, and that they beseech the Lord God that He also grant us forgiveness of sins.

ON THE COVERING OF THE HEAD

"Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head" - 1 Cor. 11:5

ACCORDING to the teaching of the holy Apostle Paul, Orthodox women enter God's house with their heads covered. For two thousand years now this custom has been observed by faithful women, and passed down from one generation to another. This is not only a tradition of local Churches but of the Universal Church, and therefore,

whether we are in a Greek, Serbian or Russian church, the women have their heads covered. Recently we had a conversation with a woman who had recently been to Soviet Russia.* On a particular feastday she went to church with her head uncovered, and when she came up to venerate the Cross, the priest, seeing her head uncovered, refused to give her the Cross. To her excuses and justifications that she came from abroad and that she did not know the local customs and thought that one should only cover one's head to take Communion, the priest replied that all this was no excuse and that when in church she should always have her head covered and that he could not permit her to approach the Holy Cross.

Having the rule concerning women covering their heads in view, one cannot understand why in so many churches of the Russian diaspora, one sees women with uncovered heads. The reasons and excuses are usually along these lines; 1) scarves are not fashionable, 2) covering one's head ruins the hair style, 3) they say that there is no foundation for the custom of covering the head, 4) they ask why the Apostle Paul says heads should be covered, 5) and why it is only women that should cover their heads and not men as well.** And sometimes people simply do not care what the Church teaches, and even when given a reasoned answer to all their questions, they remain with their "I". We shall try to answer all these points here.

Worldly fashions must not have any effect on our church life. If we followed fashion, our services would last only fifteen minutes, everybody would be sitting down in church and we would play musical instruments there. Maybe a scarf would spoil a hair style, but for the sake of vanity we are willing to wear shoes with very high heels, etc. Thus we can bear discomfort for the sake of vanity, but not for the sake of God.

The fundamental reason for the covering of heads we find not in the later regulations of the Holy Church, but in the Sacred Scriptures themselves, in the New Testament. From her earliest years, in the Holy Temple, the All-holy Virgin Mary covered her head. According to a tradition of the church in Jerusalem the head-coverings were blue, and that is why with us on feastdays of the Theotokos the clergy wear blue vestments.*** The All-holy Theotokos wore a head-covering as a sign of her humility and obedience to the Will of God, which were made manifest on the day of the Annunciation. By wearing a head scarf, faithful women recall the image of the one, who was blessed to bear the Saviour Himself. If the Most Pure One, the Most Blessed One, herself had her head covered, are we going to regard imitating her as a humiliation? Every outward act, when accompanied by the right Christian disposition, brings a blessing upon the soul. The Holy Church knows well enough the nature of mankind, and the effect of the symbolic upon a person. The Saviour often preached through parables and symbols, so that it was clearer and more understandable to the people. And His Church also teaches us through images, colours, physical actions (making the sign of the Cross, prostrations, etc) to bring us closer to His Kingdom.

But why must only women cover their heads? This is not exactly the case - look at the Bishop. Isn't his head covered with the monastic veil, and during the Divine services with the mitre? For the clergy, the right to wear a head-covering is regarded as an award or honour. Women have only to put on their scarves once, but the clergy and the monastics have to keep putting them on and taking them off during the services.

So, we have no reason to break the church disciplines. When Greeks, converts, or just church-minded people come to our churches and see women with their heads uncovered, they are confused and bewildered. And we have no way to excuse it. We are approaching the thousand-year anniversary of the Baptism of Russia.** For a thousand years, Russian Orthodox women have been praying in Russian churches with their heads covered. So let us not ignore this small but significant custom. Let us recall the words of the Lord: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unfaithful in the least is unfaithful also in much" (Luke 16:11).

Father Peter

Translated from the Russian by Mrs Valentina Merritt of Brookwood

Editor's Footnotes:

- * The article was obviously written in the mid or late eighties, sometime before the Millennium celebrations of the Baptism of Russia in 1988, and when the Soviet regime was still in power.
- ** Fr Peter has been rather sparing in the instances of the excuses he has heard! One could add many more: that St Paul was only expressing the custom of his time and society, that wearing a scarf gives me a headache, that it prevents me from hearing properly, etc., etc. Like most excuses, these are either wrong or silly, or both.
- *** Within Orthodoxy, it is only the Russians that have a highly developed system of liturgical colours, and it was probably borrowed from the West, although that does not mean that it is in any way wrong. Over the course of her two-thousand year history, the Church has borrowed many things from many sources to express her teaching.

EDITOR'S AFTERWORD:

THE ARTICLE above was given us as a photocopy by the Sisters of the Annunciation Convent in London, and we do not know it's original provenance. Quite obviously it was written by a priest to a Russian congregation, and it is true that it is among the émigré Russians that laxity about women covering their heads in church seems first to have taken root. Sadly over the years since the article was written, this lax practice is spreading to other Orthodox peoples, perhaps first to those convert groups who consider aping what they perceive to be the Russian customs in all things, rather than searching out the true Tradition of the Church, is the mark of Orthodoxy.

Fr Peter confines himself to one aspect of the church dress code, but perhaps it should be added that there are others. In church both men and women are expected to dress modestly and not in a way to excite notice or to be provocative. They should therefore be decently covered and not wear shorts, minis, suntops, tightly fitting clothes or sexually provocative ones or the like. In many churches women are not permitted to wear trouser suits, as this is thought to be in contravention of the Biblical prohibition against cross-dressing. Actually it probably is not, as women's trouser suits were obviously not designed for men to wear! I remember the late and Ever-Memorable Metropolitan Philaret of New York being asked about this question with especial regard to the fact that in the early nineteenth century men in Balkan countries often wore a kind of kilt and women bag-pants after the Turkish fashion. His reply was this was in order as the important thing was that there should be a clear distinction between the

dress of men and women. However, in churches where they do not permit women to wear trouser suits one should respect their discipline and follow their rule, and in any case, as a "Practical Tip," women should only undoubtedly wear trousers with a long coat. (I will explain if the reason is not clear).

To return to the specific matter of head-coverings, one might add to Fr Peter's thoughts that there is a theological basis for the ruling, and as with the distinction required between men and women's clothing in general, it designates their different roles in the Church. The basis for this ruling is given in the Sacred Scriptures in St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (11:3): "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Such sentiments might raise howls of protest from militant feminists but they are an integral part of the Christian message, well rooted in the record of our creation, of the Fall, and of Christ's work of redemption, whereas feminist notions are but a fashion of this age and an understandable backlash against the repression of women.

Orthodoxy accepts the hierarchy as set forth by the Apostle and always has, but not the twisted interpretation put on it by those with a diminished understanding of Christianity. That the unwarranted repression of women in earlier generations in our society was not, as is often claimed by fundamentalists, based on Scripture, we need only look to the commentary of Saint John Chrysostom on this chapter in 1 Corinthians. He writes: "The head of Christ is God," and "Christ is the head of the man, and he of the woman." Therefore if we choose to take the term, "head," in like sense in all the clauses, the Son will be as far removed from the Father as we are from Him. Indeed, the woman will be as far removed from us as we are from the Word of God. And what the Son is to the Father, this both we are to the Son and the woman again to the man. And who can accept this? But you must understand the term "head" differently in the case of the man and the woman, from what you do in the case of Christ. Furthermore, in the case of the Father and the Son, we must understand it differently again. "How understand it differently?" says the objector. According to the occasion. For had Paul meant to speak of rule and subjection, as you say, he would not have brought forward the instance of a wife, but rather of a slave and a master. For what if the wife be in subjection to us? It is as a wife, as free, as equal in honour. And the Son also, though He did become obedient to the Father, it was as the Son of God, it was as God" [emphasis ours.].

In our society, views seem to be polarized. Liberals would deny any hierarchy or any concept of one being subject to the other (and so throw off their head-coverings); and conservatives (they are NOT traditionalists!) would impose a kind of feudal or even Islamic subjection on women. (Do their ideas perhaps indeed spring from the intermixture of Islamic and feudal ideas? It was at about the time of the Crusades, that the post-schism West seems to have embarked on a zig-zag and spiritually unsober course of alternately idolizing and demeaning women.) Both poles have forgotten the good Christian mean, and that being subject unto another, as well as being the "head" of another, are exercises of the Christian virtue of love.

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 last issue

IF ANYONE loves virginity or fervently honours the chastity of marriage, if anyone tames his anger and wants to have meekness as his companion, if he wishes to keep himself pure of envy or has zeal for any of the other virtues, he will easily and comfortably fulfil his pious intentions if he takes prayer as his guide, and with it paves the way of his life. For those who ask of the Lord chastity, righteousness, meekness and kindliness, it is impossible but that they should receive what they ask for. *Ask*, says the Lord, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened (Matt. 7:7). With these words and with these promises, the Lord persuades us to pray diligently, and in obedience to the Divine injunction it remains to us to pass our lives in hymnody and prayers, being zealous to please God in this inspirational way. Only by living in this way, shall we live life as man should. - *Chrysostom*.

Perhaps someone who is lazy does not want to pray with diligence and with attention, and thinks to justify himself with the Lord's words: Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father Which is in heaven (Matt. 7:21). I will answer this by saying that if I considered prayer alone was sufficient for salvation, then anyone could justly turn my words against me. But because I say that prayer is the glory of all the virtues, the root and foundation of the life of salvation, no one can use these words as a cover for his laziness with regard to prayer. Neither chastity on its own, nor care for the poor, nor kindness, nor any other of the praiseworthy acts can bring salvation; but rather all the virtues must be united in our soul, and prayer too as the root and as the foundation laid beneath them. Just as the base of a ship or of a house makes them sure and stable, so prayers make our life firm, without them {prayers} there is nothing we have which is good and unto salvation. - *Ibid*.

Just as at sunrise all the animals run away and hide in their lairs, so it is when prayer, like a sun ray, appears from our lips and our tongue; then the mind is enlightened, all the irrational and bestial passions make themselves scarce, disperse and hide in their holes, - we only have to pray as is fitting: with a vigilant soul and sound mind. Then if the devil is near, he is sent away; if a demon, he flees. *Ibid*.

Prayer is the *golden link between man*, the Christian, who is a stranger and sojourner on the earth, and the spiritual world, of which he is a member, and more than all else it is a link with God, the Fountain of life; it was from God that the soul came, and

it always returns to God through prayer. Prayer is greatly profitable to the one who prays: it grants peace to the soul; it not only grants peace to the one who prays (Peace I give unto you), but often it grants peace to the souls of our departed forefathers, fathers and brethren. See how important prayer is! - *St John of Cronstadt*.

The holy mother of all the virtues, prayer, invites: Come ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord (Ps. 33:11). I will teach you the fear of the Lord through experience itself; I will bring the feeling of it into your hearts. I will teach you the fear of those making a start, whereby each one is turned away from evil, even that pure fear of the Lord, which endures for ever and ever (see Ps. 18:9), that by which the Lord is feared by all that are round about Him (see Ps. 88:7), through which He is terrible even to the flaming Cherubim, and the most glorious, six-winged Seraphim. Abandon your vain and useless attachment to everything temporal, with which you will have to part in any case! Abandon seductive entertainments and pleasures! Abandon your idle talk, joking and garrulity, which devastate one's soul! Remember, observe and be convinced that you are here, on earth, as a temporary stranger, and that your homeland, your everlasting habitation, is Heaven. You need a faithful and strong leader to take you there. That leader is me, and there is none other. All the Saints who ascended from earth to Heaven, made their way in no other way but by me. I reveal to those who enter into union with me the fall and the sinfulness of man, and I deliver from them as from a deep pit. I reveal to them the princes of the air, their nets and chains, and I strike those princes and drive them away. I explain the Creator to the created one, and the Redeemer to the redeemed, reconciling man with God. I reveal to my disciple, to my beloved one, the boundless majesty of God; I bring him into a disposition of reverence and obedience before Him, such as the created must have before the Creator. I sow humility in the heart; I made the heart a fountain of an abundance of tears; I make my communicants communicants of the Divine grace. I do not abandon those whom I guide, until they come before the face of God, until they are united to God. God is the unfulfillable fulfilment of every desire both here and in the age to come. - Blessed Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov.

.... to be continued.

DECREE CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF FEASTS

By Saint John the Wonderworker of Shanghai

CLERGY and faithful are reminded that feast days were established in Old Testament times by the command of God - which God appointed and sanctified - as also were days of fasting and lamentation.

The Lord Jesus Christ, teaching the true understanding of the significance of a feast, did not abolish these but confirmed the observance of feast days, and from the beginning the New Testament Church of Christ observed holy days.

In establishing the yearly cycle of services, the Church designated feast days, giving special distinction to those which manifest Divine providence and which pour forth God's grace to this day. Along with these, the Church enjoins us to honour days commemorating significant events in the life of the Saviour and the Mother of God,

signs of God's mercy, and the memory of God-pleasers. The Church precisely established the significance and the order of their celebration, as also the days when these are held and, in special cases, their transfer to another day. When possible, the commemoration of the saints and sacred events are celebrated at the same time, so that Orthodox Christians may be united in the same thought and the same feeling, raising with one soul their prayers and praise. This does not, however, exclude the special local celebration of an event or saint known or specially revered in a particular locale.

In addition to major feast days, each parish has a patronal feast, i.e., a day when the sacred event or saint to whom the church is dedicated is celebrated. According to the Church typicon, patronal feasts hold equal rank with the Great Feasts of the Lord and the Mother of God, and they are marked with a corresponding service appointed for that particular day, which is a solemn and grace-filled occasion for those praying in the church and for its parish community.

For this reason, it is inadmissible to wilfully transfer a parish feast for the sake of convenience. Both the clergy and laity should be aware that transferring the celebration to another day does not make that day the parish feast; likewise, if a parish feast is not celebrated this does not lessen the spiritual significance, which is preserved regardless of how it is treated by either the clergy or the parishioners. Clergy and laity should try in every possible way to worthily observe their patronal feast, to gather in church and take part in the Divine services of that day. Those unable to make it to church even briefly on that day should transport themselves in mind and heart, and at least in this way receive in themselves the emanating rays of grace.

Extract from "Man of God," translated and compiled by Archpriest Peter Perekrestov, and published in 1994 by Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, Redding, California.

FROM THE SACRED CANONS

"IF ANY BISHOP, or Presbyter, or Deacon, or Subdeacon, or Reader, or Chanter fails to fast throughout the forty days of Holy Lent, or on Wednesday and on Friday, let him be deposed from office, unless he be prevented from doing so by reason of bodily illness. If, on the other hand, a layman fail to do so, let be excommunicated" [i.e. not allowed receive Communion for a period].

Canon 69 of the 85 Canons of the Holy and All-famed Apostles

THE COMING MONTH

THE FIRST WEEK of *Great Lent* is always kept by Orthodox Christians with particular solemnity. On Forgiveness Sunday (28th February/12th March this year) after Vespers the Paschal canon is chanted and the Book of Gospels and the Cross are placed on a lectern in the centre of the church. The faithful approach them and venerate them one by one, and then bow to the ground before each other in turn asking forgiveness of each other, with the formula: *Forgive me, a sinner, N.* And the response: *God forgiveth us.* Thus we clear our debts, and fulfil the Gospel precept (Matt. 6:14), and the next day begin our fast.

The Lenten weekday services are distinguished by the repetition of the *Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian*, at the end of each of the services, made with a prostration to the ground at the end of each of the three verses, followed by twelve deep bows, and then by the repetition of the whole prayer and a final prostration at the end (Text on pages 9 8c 10 of the Boston "Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians").

On the first four days of Lent, Monday to Thursday, we have Great Compline in the evening with a quarter portion of the *Great Canon of Repentance of St Andrew of Crete* read on each evening. This canon reviews the lives and works of all the Old Testament and New Testament righteous and the sinners, showing us how we have emulated the sinners and exhorting us rather to follow the way of the righteous. If anyone cannot attend church on these evenings, he should at least try to read the service attentively at home, so that he is at one with his Orthodox brethren.

On the Wednesday and Friday of the first, and of subsequent, weeks of the Great Fast, and on some feastdays, we have the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. During the penitential weekdays of Great Lent, it is thought inappropriate to celebrate the full Eucharist, and yet at the same time, the Church recognises that the faithful have need to be nourished by the reception of Holy Communion and therefore does not deny them the opportunity of doing so, but celebrates this special Liturgy. A Lamb (portion of prosphora which becomes the Body of Christ in the Liturgy) is prepared and consecrated at the full Liturgy on the Sunday, and is reserved for the Presanctified Liturgy, during which It is offered to the faithful. The service begins as a specially modified Vespers, and its ending is like an abbreviated Liturgy (without the Consecration prayers). On Saturdays in Lent, the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom is celebrated and on Sundays that of Saint Basil the Great. The appointment of the Presanctified Liturgy for weekdays in Lent is one of the clear indications that the Church calls us to partake of the Holy Mysteries frequently, even though in many parishes now this soul-profiting tradition has almost been lost and one will even hear the "preaching" of infrequent communion. Yet from the fact that we have the Presanctified Liturgy it is clear that the Church does not expect us to deny ourselves Communion for so long a period even as five days!

The first Saturday in Lent is a thanksgiving for the Miracle of St Theodore the Recruit with the koliva. This commemoration has been kept from the mid-fourth century. Then, the Emperor Julian the Apostate attempted to defile the fast that the Christians were keeping during Lent, by ordering that all the foods in the market should be such as had been offered to the idols. Of course, in accordance with the teaching set forth by Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians, chapter 8, this would not have defiled the Christians, but lest any of the weak should be scandalized, the Lord granted a way of deliverance to the Christians and ensured the fast could be kept strictly. He permitted the holy Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit to appear to the Bishop and tell him to instruct the people to cook koliva, boiled, sweetened wheat grain, and to live on that. Wheat would have been a commodity that people would have had at home, and so they were spared the necessity of shopping in the markets and buying the defiled foods. Thus, as always, the Lord condescends to our weaknesses, and makes a way for us out of temptations and trials. At the end of the Presanctified Liturgy on Friday (the Vespers for Saturday) a canon is chanted to Saint Theodore and koliva is blessed. The faithful wishing to obtain a blessing cook koliva and bring it to the church for this blessing. Every household should try to make an offering of koliva on this occasion that they also might receive the

blessing of being delivered from trials and temptations throughout the year. If, for some reason, you do not know how to prepare koliva, then now is the time to find out!

Another occasion when the faithful are encouraged to bring offerings is for the Friday evening chanting of the *Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God*. This is chanted, according to the Greek practice but not the Russian, on the first four Fridays in Lent during Little Compline, and on the fifth Friday during a special Mattins service. An icon of the Mother of God is placed on the lectern in the centre of the church, and the faithful bring flowers to adorn it. Before this icon, the Akathist is chanted. The service is linked to the celebration in the Lenten period of the Great Feast of the Annunciation, but it also proclaims the guidance and protection of the Mother of God which we experience in the days of our trial.

After the first week, we continue to have Great Compline on weekdays but not with the Canon of St Andrew. The first week is kept with particular solemnity and with the special commemorations so as to set the tone for the rest of the fast and to teach us how to contest during it.

Thereafter, each of the Sundays in Lent has a special significance. The first which celebrates the Restoration of the Holy Icons after the period of iconoclasm, is called the *Triumph of Orthodoxy*. The second celebrates *Saint Gregory Palamas* and his triumph over a later heresy. The third introducing the middle week of Lent is dedicated to *the Cross*. The fourth and fifth are commemorations of the great ascetic and teacher of the monastics, *St John of the Ladder*, and of the penitent, *St Mary of Egypt*. This year four of the five fall within March.

All these commemorations are part and parcel of the observance of the fast and are therefore movable observances, their date depending on the date of Easter. In March too, we have a Great Feast, whose observance is set by the fixed calendar, and that is *the Annunciation*, which falls every year on 25th March/7th April. It celebrates the appearance of the Archangel Gabriel to the All-holy Virgin and her conceiving the incarnate Word of God, as recorded in the first chapter of St Luke's Gospel. In truth it is therefore the festival of the Incarnation, the time when the Word became flesh, when, as the *troparion* of the festival proclaims, *the Son of God becometh the Virgins Son*.

Because this festival falls within Lent, despite its fundamental importance, it is kept only for two days, the second day of the festival being both its Leavetaking and the *Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel.* This year as the feast falls on a Friday, its second day will be on the fourth Saturday of the fast, a day on which we normally have a commemoration of the faithful departed. This year that remembrance of the dead is dispensed with on account of the festivity.

Normally in Great Lent, the second, third, fourth Saturdays of the fast are kept as *Soul Sabbaths* - (the Russians call them Forebears' Saturdays) - or days on which we prayerfully commemorate the faithful departed, our forebears. The first Saturday is, as said above, St Theodore Saturday, and the fifth is the *Saturday of the Laudation of the Mother of God*, but, this year, that falls within April. Two more Saturdays then follow before Pascha, which are technically not within Great Lent itself. The first is the day before Palm Sunday, and is called *Lazarus Saturday* as it is the day on which we commemorate the Raising of Lazarus as a pre-festival of the Lord's own arising. And the last is the last day of Passion Week, the day between Good Friday and Easter Day itself.

It is *the Great Sabbath*, the day on which the Lord rested in the tomb, and it is the only Saturday in the whole year in which we are permitted to fast strictly leaving aside even wine and oil.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"In the canon we say before Communion, it refers to the Lord as 'ever slain (first troparion, ninth ode), but doesn't this suggest that He did not rise again from the dead?" - K.M., Hillingdon.

No, this simply refers to the fact that the Lord was slain for us. He Himself had prophesied this in Luke 9:22. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the holy Apostle Paul speaks of Christ "our passover" sacrificed, i.e. slain, for us. In Revelation, St John sees the Lamb "as it had been slain," and later when he speaks of the book of life in chapter thirteen he refers it to the "Lamb slain." In Hebrews, Christ, as High Priest, is spoken of as One who offered sacrifice once, "when He offered up Himself." So the phrase, although perhaps not perfectly clear in English translation - (and remember we are reading most of our prayers and all of our Scriptures in translation) - simply reiterates that Christ was once slain, when He offered up Himself. Perhaps it would help you if we expanded it to "and is ever One Who had been slain," but this is clumsy and once one knows the meaning unnecessary. It does not mean and does not say that He is "ever dead," which would indeed be a blasphemous denial of the Resurrection.

One has to be a little careful about trying to shift all the emphasis from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection. I remember when I first became Orthodox, I was repeated told that the Western denominations emphasized the death of Christ and the Orthodox His Resurrection. Like many catch-phrases this had an element of truth in it perhaps a trace element! But it is a superficial observation and essentially wrong. Without the Crucifixion, there would have been no Resurrection; without the Crucifixion we should not have been saved. Without the Crucifixion, the Body and Blood of Christ which we receive in the Eucharist would not have been offered. And to suggest that Western Christians (even thirty years ago and more) placed more emphasis on the Crucifixion than the Orthodox is sheer folly. The Orthodox have two commemorations of the Cross each week, and specially observe them as fast days. They have a four major festivals of the Cross each year, one of them ranking as a Great Feast and highlighted by special Apostle and Gospel readings on both the Saturdays and Sundays with precede and which follow the feast itself - all of these readings referring to the Cross. The Cross is everywhere present in our worship. We make the sign of the Cross, people and things are blessed by the sign of the Cross, the water for Baptism is blessed thereby, even the elements in the Eucharist; crosses top our churches, are etched on the sacred vessels, are sewn or embroidered onto the vestments. Even in censing, we often cense things (the Holy Table for instance, the loaves, wheat, wine and oil at Artoclasia, the koliva, icons) crosswise. One could make a long list. The Cross is absolutely central in our worship, because we return time and again to the sacrifice Christ offered for us on the Cross. If one wishes to draw distinctions between the Orthodox and the post-schism Western perceptions, perhaps one could mention two points: a) that the "West" seems to concentrate it attention on the agony, the pain, the horror of the Cross, often verging on despair and hopelessness: Orthodox avoid this, always seeing the Cross as the instrument of our salvation; and b) in the Orthodox perception, always the light of the Resurrection shines through the Cross. The Cross is an ensign of victory. Thus even on Good Friday we chant: "Thou didst ransom us from the curse of the Law by Thy precious Blood. Nailed to the Cross and pierced with the spear, Thou didst pour forth immortality for men. O our Saviour, glory be to Thee." If Christ is not slain, then we are denied this blessing - it is after all "by death," the death on the Cross, that "He hath trampled down death" (*Paschal troparion*).

PAPAL VISIT TO EGYPT

DURING his recent visit to Egypt, Pope John Paul II addressed a Mass in Cairo's sports stadium; the service was attended by Muslim leaders, although Pope Shenouda III, the leader of the Coptic Christians (Monophysites), declined to attend. He courteously met the Roman Pontiff privately. The Orthodox Archbishop of the Church of Sinai, Damianos, exercised a similar correct reserve when the Pope visited St Catherine's Monastery at the foot of the Mountain. "The Sunday Telegraph" (27th February) reports that the Pope intended to pray within the monastery and appeal for a rapprochement between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the event, although he was received as a guest in the monastery and even presented with a painting of St Catherine by the fathers there, he was not allowed to conduct a service within the monastery precincts. Archbishop Damianos greeted the Pontiff and noted that it was the first visit by a Pope of Rome to the oldest monastery in Christendom, but when the Roman Catholic service began he discreetly withdrew. One can only rejoice that Orthodox church leaders are retreating from the mania for ecumenism that characterized their relations with Rome even a decade ago, when the slogan "One in 2,000" was being bandied around by people who should have had more sense. And one can only wonder how a man who claims to be Bishop of Rome and to occupy the same see as did Sts Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, and Martin the Confessor, can seriously contemplate a rapprochement between Judaism, Islam and Christianity. No true Christian soul would wish to stir up hatred against Jews or Muslims or to antagonize them, but what rapprochement can there be between their faiths and ours? We accept the Saviour to be the incarnate Only-Begotten Son of God, of one Essence with the Father, and place our trust in His claim that "no man cometh to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). Jews and Muslims reject these truths. If the Pope is seeking for rapprochement, does it mean that he is prepared to negotiate these truths? Any suggestion that he might, should not have endeared him to the Orthodox, and one wonders why Orthodox ecumenists do not pause to see where the Roman Church, with which they are so keen for union, has gone and, even more alarmingly, where it is now going under the leadership of this "conservative" Pontiff.

"A SOUL FOR EUROPE"

JACQUES SANTER, addressed the General Assembly of the *European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society*, in September 1998, asking the Commission to involve itself with "A Soul for Europe," a process to, among other things, "boost tolerance and pluralism." To give Europe a soul, he said, "involves more than merely reciting the principles behind integration - reconciliation, peace, solidarity, justice, liberty and human dignity. The principles must also be put into practice." M. Santer also

briefly mentioned the contribution of Judaism to European culture and spoke at greater length about Islam's "challenge to and enrichment of Europe." "It is now becoming urgent *for political reasons* (emphasis ours) to multiply our efforts to improve mutual understanding and intensive exchanges between Christianity and Islam, between the Christian churches and Muslim communities." He urged "intercultural and interfaith dialogue between Christianity, Judaism and Islam (to which it is right and proper to add Humanist tradition flowing from the Enlightenment)." It seems that M. Santer proposes the same syncretistic cocktail that the Pope is now advocating, although he goes further to include Humanism and is honest enough to admit that his purposes are political. He unashamedly invites the "Churches" to serve the purposes of the new European State, and in so doing calls them away from their primary concern which should be our sanctification. Sadly the (Ecumenical Patriarchate is listed as a consultative member of the EECCS.

ŒCUMENICAL PATRIARCH IN POLAND

AT THE END of January, the *Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I* visited Poland and was invited to address their Parliament. ENI bulletin 00-0029 says that his "visit coincided with the signing by Poland's seven biggest churches on 23 January of a document mutually recognising baptism." The bulletin does not state whether this means that the churches recognized each other's baptisms or simply recognised baptism per se, nor does it state at all whether the Patriarch or his representatives were signatories to this document, although presumably the Orthodox would be among the "seven biggest churches" in Poland. If it was the case that Orthodox signed a recognition of other Churches' baptism, this would be a further step away from Orthodoxy. However, in a seeming contrast to his Patriarchate's involvement in the EECCS (see item above) the Patriarch took the opportunity to state that the Orthodox Church "does not utilise worldly methods and powers" in response to the tensions and challenges of the contemporary world, and that She left "legal and administrative measures" to the state. With a rather scant regard for history, if with the highest idealistic motives, the Patriarch stated, "The Orthodox church has never desired, and does not desire, to acquire political power in order to compete with other political forces to impose God's dominion on society." Would that we could say that this had always and everywhere been the case! More justly he supported the Serbian Church and pointed out that She had condemned persecution of Kosovo Albanians, and he spoke of the Orthodox finding the proselytising activities of Roman Catholics and Protestants in the former Eastern bloc countries "hurtful."

KOSOVO AFTERMATH

THE DISTURBANCES that are occurring in Kosovo in the aftermath of Nato's assault on Yugoslavia have been widely reported in the press, and as might have been expected the assault has made a bad situation considerably worse. Some of the things that have come to light are:

Since the end of the war itself in June last year, more than a thousand people (Serbs, Roma, ethnic Turks and Albanians among them) have found refuge in the *Sts Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Seminary in Prizren*. They are seeking refuge from unruly Albanian gangs and paramilitaries who have been raiding the city. Before the war, Prizren was known as one of the exemplary multiethnic cities in the province, and

during the war it suffered no destruction. During the "peace" the city has been taken over by paramilitaries in KLA uniforms, forty Serbs have been murdered, the neighbouring village of Dojnice has been flattened, a Fr Chariton Lukic abducted, hundreds of Serbian homes have been burned there, and of the 10,000 Serbs that lived there before the Nato assault, only 200 remain.

All over Kosovo, icons have been systematically destroyed or desecrated in Orthodox churches. Crosses have been torn down, and valuable medieval frescoes defaced. Often the faces on the sacred personages are obliterated. Extremist Albanian organisations are held responsible for this vandalism and for many crimes in Kosovo, but are reported to be able to hide by working within the "Kosovo Protection Corps" and so enjoy UN protection.

On 8th February, the religious leaders in Kosovo, *Dr Rexhep Boja*, the Mufti and President of the Islamic Community, *His Grace Bishop Artemije of Raska and Prizren* the Orthodox hierarch, and *H.E. Marko Sopi* the Roman Catholic bishop, issued a joint statement expressing their concern about the slow and inefficient implementation of the Kosovo peace plan. They condemn "acts of hatred based on ethnicity or religious differences; the destruction of religious building and the destruction of graveyards; the expulsion of peoples from their homes; the obstruction of free right of return to their homes; acts of revenge; and the abuse of the media with the aim of spreading hatred." They "call upon all people of good will to takes responsibility for their own acts," and end: "Let us treat others as we would wish them to treat us."

Here in England, the *Committee for Peace in the Balkans* (Tel: 0171-275 0164) is holding a *Commemorative Rally on Friday 24th March*, one year after NATO bombing started. The rally will be at the Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 and will commence at 7 p.m. The Committee which is also setting aside Saturday 15th April as a *Day of Regional Action*, and Saturday 10th June for a National Conference in London, has issued this tally of the Nato war crimes:-

"NATO war crimes killed 2000 civilians including:

12 April - at least 14 passengers killed when NATO bombed a train in Grdelica

14 April - 75 Albanian refugees killed by NATO bombs

23 April - 17 media workers killed when Belgrade TV was bombed

17 April - 10 civilians lost their lives in Surdulica when NATO demolished their homes

1 May - 39 people died in Kuzane village, Kosovo, when NATO bombed a bus

7 May - 3 staff were killed when the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was bombed

14 May - 81 Albanians killed, including 26 children, when a refugee column was bombed in Korisa

20 May – NATO demolished the clinical and Hospital centre in Belgrade, killing 4 intensive care patients and injuring others

31 May - 13 were killed when 4 missiles hit a Surdulica hospital and nearby refugee shelter."

May God have mercy on our political leaders who have both been responsible for such destruction, and have left Kosovo and indeed the whole of the Balkans much less stable than they found it and done nothing to remove Milosevic from power.

THE HOLY LAND

JERICHO: News regarding the aftermath of the Moscow Patriarchate's seizure of the ROCA church holding in Jericho seems to have dried up. The last report to reach us, in "The Sentinel", suggests that as a short-term solution, the property was to be divided between the two Church communities, until a final agreement could be reached. We have also received an oral report that, in order help sort out the situation, a U.S. Congressional delegation visited the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad Synodal offices in New York City.

PATRIARCH DIODOROS: *Archdeacon Seraphim*, a clergyman of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, writes to say the report on page 18 of our January issue was misinformed. He says: "The Shepherd reports the Patriarch was barred from the Beit Jala Church of St Nicolas on his feast. The P. was not even there! There were 2 (or 3) there from the Patriarchate and they concelebrated but immediately afterwards were taken into the rectory for coffee/tea and did not go into the hall. On the Sunday of the Forefathers in Beit Sahour those who came from the Patriarchate were (I understand) barred from the church." We apologise if the report which we had taken from the national press was wrong.

Fr Seraphim also asks us to make clear that the Procession to Jordan is held on the eve of the feast of the Theophany and not on the day itself.

THYATEIRA ENCYCLICAL ON THE CELTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH'

HIS EMINENCE, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain (Œcumenical Patriarchate) issued an Encyclical Letter to his "Brethren and Fellow-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord," concerning the so-called "Celtic Orthodox Church." In eight clear paragraphs, Archbishop Gregorios gives a brief history of this body and of Stephen Robson, who, the Archbishop says, "underwent a ceremony of purported episcopal consecration in Brittany" in August 1999. He states emphatically that "neither the 'Celtic Orthodox Church' nor its 'British Eparchy' is recognised by any canonical Eastern Orthodox or Oriental Orthodox Church." He directs that the clergy of his Archdiocese are "to decline invitations to participate in any activities to which Stephen Robson or any of his clergy have been officially invited."

NEW POLISH CATHEDRAL

ENI Bulletin 00-0002 reports that the first new Orthodox church to be built in Warsaw for a century is to be erected near the capital's main airport. The cathedral church is to be built for the Orthodox Christians serving in Poland's armed forces and will accommodate 1,000 worshippers. The bulletin states that the Polish Orthodox Church, led by *Metropolitan Saiva*, numbers 570,000, and that there are an estimated 17,000 Orthodox soldiers and conscripts among Poland's 180,000 military personnel. The new church will not be built in the Russian style, with the distinctive Onion domes, but in Byzantine style following patterns used in the Peloponnese region of Greece.

SGOIS JUBILEE

READER ANDREW BOND has issued a commemorative mug to mark the thirty years work of the *Saint George Orthodox Information Service*. The Service, which is now run from "The White House," Mettingham, Nr Bungay, Suffolk, NR35 1TP, was founded by a small group of converts to Orthodoxy in London. For many years, it published "The Old Calendarist," and now produces "Orthodox News." SGOIS has also published numbers of icon cards, largely of British Saints, Christmas cards, pamphlets, and has throughout its 30 year history provided a useful enquiry service. They deserve our thanks and our prayers that their work may continue to open a contact with Orthodoxy for many.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

IOW BAPTISMS: On the feastday of Saint Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople, Saturday 6th/19th February, five Isle of Wight residents, who form the nascent Mission of St Boniface at Ryde, were received into Orthodoxy at Saint Edward's Church in Brookwood. The group was led by their former Anglican vicar, David Dale. He was sponsored by the Subdeacon, Prince Dmitri Galitzine, and was baptized along with Joseph Milford and Martin Smith, whose sponsors were John Russell and Haralampos Sofianopoulos. Mary Bowler, who is in her ninetieth year, and Barbara Woodford were, with Archbishop Mark's blessing, received by the œconomia of Chrismation, their sponsors being Anne Shaw and Valentina Merritt. At the Divine Liturgy all five newlyillumined received the Holy Mysteries for the first time. Their name-saints are respectively: St David of Wales, the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, St Martin of Tours, the holy Peer of the Apostles Mary Magdalene, and the Great Martyr Barbara. May the prayers of these saints, with those of St Edward, St Photius and St Boniface of Crediton ever sustain, guide and protect these newly enlisted warriors of Christ our God and bring them to salvation, and, now that a beginning has been made, may their little mission in Ryde be granted increase in due course.

On the eighth day after the Baptism, Saturday 13th/26th February, the feast of St Martinian (which was also the anniversary of the uncovering of the Sacred Relics of St Edward in 1931), the Divine Liturgy was celebrated for the first time at the little chapel which the St Boniface Mission uses in Ryde Cemetery on West Street. The members of the Saint Edward Brotherhood and the parishioners at Ryde were assisted by three members of the Brookwood congregation: Haralampos Sofianopoulos, Andrew Last and John Russell. We suspect that this was the first time that the Divine Liturgy had been celebrated publicly on the Isle of Wight since the Great Schism in the eleventh century, although it may have been celebrated there on occasion for the Russian Imperial Family who at the beginning of the century used often to holiday there as guests of Queen Victoria. If anyone has any information or archive material about this, we would be pleased to hear of it.

AT THE INVITATION of *Mrs Anne Walt*, the Anglican chaplain's wife and a senior lecturer in the Patients' Education Centre, Father Alexis gave a talk and answered the questions of the patients about the Faith at *Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne*, on Friday 25th February. The talk was scheduled for two o'clock and continued until 3.45 p.m. with a short break at three for coffee. Those attending showed a lively interest in the

subject and asked many questions. Some had obviously done some home study about Orthodoxy and about Russia and this made what at first seemed a rather daunting prospect much easier and enjoyable.

GIFTS TO SAINT EDWARD'S CHURCH: We are particularly grateful to *James and Valentina Merritt* for making and donating a glass-doored box with lining, for the display of the *Prayer Book of St John of Cronstadt*, which was given us late last year by *Matushka Iraida Svidich*. Because of this gift, we have now been able to display the Prayer Book, and other relics of the saint that we have, on the lectern near the Crucifix. Visitors will notice that we cover the glass with a cloth; this is because we have the book displayed open so that the signature of St John is visible, but we cover it lest the ink fades in the light. Those wishing to venerate it, may lift the cloth back momentarily.

Our thanks too to *Miss Elizabeth Meade*, our Sunday School teacher, who when recently visiting relations in the Sultanate of Oman, made a pilgrimage to the tomb of the *Righteous Prophet Job the Much Suffering*. She asked the custodians of the Shrine, who are Muslims, for a portion of the cloth which covers the saint's grave, and has given the cloth that was generously given her to our church.

PRACTICAL TIP

IN GREAT LENT, during the weekday services, we make many more prostrations to the ground than usual. If one cannot attend church, it would be an excellent idea to make some at home so as to be at one with the faithful praying in church. However, when making prostrations, one should not simply engage in them as a kind of spiritual callisthenics, although for hermits who lived a very sedentary life this may have been part of the reason for making prostrations - the Church looks after our bodies as well as our souls. In present-day church-life, however, it is more usual that we care for the body and neglect the soul. And so, when making prostrations, in lowering ourselves to the ground we should remember that we are abased on account of our sins, and in rising again to stand upright we should resolve truly to repent and live henceforward in an upright manner. By remembering these things we shall avoid a mere and spiritually deadening, ritual correctness.