

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

VOLUME XX NUMBER 9 MAY 2000

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

FROM THE FATHERS

"BUT WHY did *a cloud receive Him?* (Acts 1:9). This too was a sure sign that He went up to Heaven. Not fire, as in the case of Elias, nor a fiery chariot, but *a cloud received Him*, which was a symbol of Heaven, as the Prophet says, *Who appointeth the clouds for His ascent* (Ps. 103:4); it is of the Father Himself that this is said. Therefore he says *on a cloud*, the symbol, he would say, of the Divine power, for no other power is seen to appear on a cloud. Hear again what another Prophet says, *The Lord sitteth upon a light cloud* (Es. 19:1)."

Saint John Chrysostom, 354-407 A.D.

"HE [Christ] was *carried up into heaven* (Luke 24:51). It is written of Elias that he *was carried up as it were into heaven* (4 Kings 2:11). For Elias only seemed as if he were carried up into heaven. But the Saviour ascended into heaven itself as the Forerunner of all men, to appear before the face of God together with His holy Flesh, and to reveal His Flesh co-enthroned with the Father. And now our nature in Christ is worshipped by the whole angelic host."

Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria - eleventh century

"AND THAT REPENTANCE and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47)... But why does it say: *beginning at Jerusalem?* Because it was in Jerusalem that the great Sacrifice was brought for the whole of mankind, and because it was there that the light of the Resurrection shone over the tomb. In a mysterious sense, then, - if Jerusalem represents the mind of man - it is clear that repentance and humility must begin in the understanding, and thence spread to the whole inner man. Pride of mind cast Satan into hell; pride of mind separated Adam and Eve from God; pride of mind moved the Pharisees and Scribes to kill the Lord. Pride of mind is the greatest breeding-ground of sin to this day. If a man's mind does not kneel before Christ, his knees will not bow. He who has begun to calm his mind with repentance, the same has begun to heal his deepest wound."

Saint Nicolas Velimirovic, 1880-1956

THE OPTINA ELDERS ON SPIRITUALISM

THE MONASTERY of Optina Poustin [*Hermitage*], founded five hundred years ago by Opta, a repentant former head of outlaws, was a real spiritual centre for Orthodox Russia in its golden age. There many desperate and wounded souls found consolation. Most Orthodox believers know the names of the Elders [Startsi] very well: Saints Leo (1768-1841), Macarius (1788-1860), Ambrose (1812-1891), Anatoly (Zertsalov) (1824-1894), Joseph (1837-1911), Barsonouphius (1845-1913), Anatoly "the Younger" (Potapov) (1855-1922) and Nectarius (1853-1928). St Nectarius entrusted his spiritual children to the hieromonk Nikon (1888-1931), the last staretz of the "old" Optina. This happened in the Spring of 1923, after the Elder Nectarius's arrest and exile. The Elder Nikon guided them, both monks and laymen, until the total devastation of the holy Monastery. It was to the Elders that pilgrims from every corner of Russia came for consolation, encouragement, advice and exhortation. What are the Startsi [Elders], then? People usually think that a "staretz" is just an old wise man [*The Russian word, like the English translation Elder, is related to the word for old, starii - ed.*] But in Orthodox asceticism, the term "staretz" is filled with a deep and mystical sense. Startsi [*plural of staretz*] are ascetics, zealots, who have obtained gifts of the Holy Spirit for their God-pleasing life. The gifts are spiritual reasoning, prophecy, healing and working various miracles. The startsi had followers, disciples, who adopted their spiritual experience. From the twenties of the 19th century, Optina was a spiritual centre where younger startsi inherited this gift from older ones. The influence of the Optina startsi spread far and wide beyond the monastery wall.

Today Optina Poustin is being built again on the ruins of the glorious monastery, and Optina's light is again illuminating souls with the Light of Christ's truth. The letters of the Optina startsi to clergymen and laymen and their talks are being published again. The lives of these great zealots for Orthodoxy have been written. These books explain many problems concerning Christian ethics and morality to modern man; the startsi themselves are living examples of the Christian life and the sanctity of the revered Elders is a testimony to the authenticity of their teachings. Revealing God's will to the people, directing them during their lives, the Elders also warned them against dangers and destructive passions.

Saint Ambrose of Optina, when answering a letter concerning spiritualism, whose writer was worried about her children's passion for it, wrote: "Your worry is justified. Spiritualism is but a new delusion and a new diabolic fascination. The very word 'spiritus' shows that this teaching concerns man's contacts with spirits, and certainly it is with those of darkness, not of the light. The Apostle Paul writes; 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed' (Gal. 1:8). The Apostle mentions here not the good angels, who do not preach anything contrary to the evangelical and Apostolic teaching; it is clear that he speaks about the angels of darkness, thrown down from Heaven, that obtain the appearance of angels of light to deceive the thoughtless; and the Apostle also says: 'Satan himself is transformed into an angel of Christ. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness' (2 Cor. 11:14-15). The Apostle's words apply directly to the preachers of spiritualism, who say that by means of spiritualism godless ones become very religious. But if you look attentively at the spiritual state of these false believers, it

will be clear to you that in this state they are much more dangerous for those who contact them, than they had been earlier. Anyone would flee from obvious atheists, but people having false belief as a mask and with souls full of old and new delusions cannot be recognized at once, even by experienced people. The Apostle says: 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever' (Heb. 13:8). This means that the teaching that the Holy Spirit imparted through the Apostles and the Fathers of the Universal Synods must last to the end of time. All new teachings are but new delusions, brought in by the ancient enemy, the hater and slanderer of man, as the holy Apostle Peter says: '... the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Peter 5:8). In spiritualism this enemy masks himself in calling up the dead, who seem to explain the Evangelic teaching more clearly. But this is the enemy's deception and a delusion for the people, because people believe in the spirits of darkness who thus appear in the form of the dead. There is a different testimony for the holy souls in the Orthodox Church. It is the manifest, uncorrupted relics of the Saints. Sinful souls, according to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, are imprisoned in Hades and have no authority to teach others, or even to leave Hades, where they await Judgment Day in terrible groanings. Thus, it is not the souls of the dead that are called up and appear, but the spirits of sinful darkness and the seducers of mankind."

The Elder Barsonouphius, who was blessed by St Ambrose to enter Optina, told his spiritual children about the devil's traps: "In 1881, or even earlier, when spiritualism had just begun spreading, I managed to read the following: it was in Paris that for the first time spiritualist séances were organised by persons of high social standing. To prove that the forces, acting there, did not contradict God's will, they did it in a church. They put a sheet of paper and a pencil on the communion-table. Suddenly a terrible crack appeared in the main cupola. The pencil raised itself and began writing. They read the inscription: 'I believe in Christ,' but "who came in the flesh" was not added. The evil spirit strives to turn people from God, but does it very cunningly. If it had written something against God, people would not have contacted him. But in this case, all were deceived, and spiritualism began spreading everywhere from Paris. Here in Russia we also have many followers of this delusion. Having read this discovery, as they say, I marvelled at people's light-mindedness, which leads them so easily into the enemy's power, and the latter uses all his evil will and activity to destroy them."

It is certain that if one does not comprehend the essence of spiritualism, he will see nothing dangerous or forbidden in these séances; but if one has a true and fervent belief in God, it will help him to recognize and terrify the evil spirits. When he was a student of a Moscow gymnasium [*grammar school*], the Elder Barsonouphius' beloved Nikon did not read the books of the Holy Fathers and did not understand the dangers of spiritualism. One day young Nicolas - that was the lay name of the Elder Nikon - and his brother John, who was two years younger, decided to make an experiment with a moving saucer. The brothers took a large sheet of paper, wrote letters and numbers on it, and marked off one corner. They drew a mark on the saucer, put it in the marked-off corner, sat one opposite the other and touched the saucer with their fingers. The brothers did it until the saucer began moving, faster and faster. It either just moved over the paper, or stopped pointing at a letter with its mark. At first the letters made senseless words, but at last the brothers read something which they later tried to

forget for a long time. The brothers went to the icon, fell on their knees and prayed, and after that they took up their experiment again. But now the saucer would not move. At last it began moving very quickly and returned to the marked off area. The brothers prayed again, and the saucer returned to the same corner again. Then they turned to the saucer, as if it were alive, and asked what the matter was. The saucer answered, "I can't speak." "Why?" "Because you believe in God." And even though earlier the saucer had "mentioned" some man's name and "said" that "he" lived there and was now suffering and so on, the brothers understood that they had contacted Satan. They became afraid of this contact, burned the paper, broke the saucer and from that time on never repeated such experiments.

St Ambrose's spiritual son, the Elder Nectarius, was a great opponent to spiritualism: "Educated people are especially fascinated with spiritualism, believing sincerely that they can find salvation. But no! That is the cause of their sickness." He also said: "mysticism is a multi-coloured rainbow. It stands with one end in the sea and with the other on land. And it looks like a bow. Learned mysticists say that we stand on the earth, which is dirty, and that they have reached the sea high sphere..." And the Elder explained that in that, in the books of the Holy Fathers, the sea symbolizes all that is not secure and firm, but is full of passions.

The Elder Nectarius' wise words about spiritualism made a prominent spiritualist, V. Bykov, give up this destructive delusion, and become an Orthodox writer and zealot. These words also concern all other mystic teachings, for example, theosophy. And concerning the non-Orthodox confessions, the Elder said the following: "Heavenly Wisdom created for Himself a house of seven columns. Orthodoxy has all of them. But Heavenly Wisdom has other abodes - with six or fewer columns, and accordingly there exist various grades of God's grace." He prophesied: "In the last times, the world will be encircled with iron and paper. In the days of Noah it was thus: the Flood came nearer, Noah knew about it and told people, but they did not believe him. He hired workers to build the Ark, but they while building the Ark, did not come to believe him either. So they only received the salary for their work, but they were not saved. Those days are the prototype of ours. The Ark is the Church. Only those who are in the Church are saved."

Evgenii Lukianov

This article was translated by Mother Maria Nenarokova and her translation was revised by Fr Michael Nedelsky and the editor. The piece was given us for publication by the Reader Alexey Axyonov from Moscow, who recently visited England and read a paper at an International Conference on English and Russian Literature, held at St John's College in Durham. While in England, Reader Alexey visited our Brotherhood and the Annunciation Convent. In the Brotherhood Church, we are blessed to have a portion of the sacred relics of the Elder, Saint Nectarius of Optina.

From the Writings of SAINT JOHN OF SHANGHAI THE WONDERWORKER

An Aide-memoire for the Church Altar-Servers

WHAT is Church Altar-Serving?

Church altar-serving is a sacrificial service to God in church according to one's abilities for those persons who have not entered on the higher steps of the priesthood.

Of what does this sacrifice and service to God consist?

Altar-servers should offer to God:

1. The time spent in their altar-serving;
2. Of their will - in their voluntary readiness to fulfil everything in the services as is demanded;
3. Of their mind - in paying attention during the Divine services;
4. Of their heart - through their love for the Church and the Divine services;
5. Of their physical strength - which will be expended in the fulfilment of their duties;
6. Of their spiritual qualities - humility and submission;
7. Of their soul - by the burning prayer within them.

Altar-serving is a ministry unto God in that it is a taking part in God's service. The altar-servers must bear in mind that they are not serving the hierarch or the priest, but the Lord God Himself, Him Who receives the ministry and doxology of the countless multitudes of Angels, but Who, in His goodness, nonetheless also receives the service of our hearts, as it were the widow's two mites. Therefore every duty and obligation during the Divine service is something sacred and worthy of respect.

The altar-servers must be aware that they have been deemed worthy of the greatest honour: to take part in the service of the King of kings, Whom the Angels serve with trembling.

Whom do the Altar-servers represent during Divine service?

Because our Divine service on earth is a portrayal of the Heavenly Divine service, during it the Hierarch represents Christ Himself, the priests the Apostles, the deacons the Seraphim and Cherubim, and the servers the Archangels and the Angels, who invisibly served Christ during His earthly life and eternally give glory in the Heavens.

Therefore, just as there is a strict order among the Angels in Heaven and the lesser are subject to the senior ones, so a strict order must be maintained among the altar-servers. The younger ones must fulfil any directions, given them by the older ones, with any contradiction, in exactly the same way as the Angels speedily fulfil the orders given them by the senior Angels.

At the same time one should not jostle for seniority among the altar-servers, but must remember the Lord's words: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be

your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26-27).

You must willingly fulfil every appointed work that you may hear from the Lord: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21).

Translated from "Slova", an anthology of the sermons of St John of Shanghai and San Francisco (1896-1966), published by Russkiy Pastyr in 1994

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

4. Prayer's Greatness

*All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer,
believing, ye shall receive (Matthew 21:22)
What things soever ye desire, when ye pray,
believe that ye shall receive them (Mark 11:24)*

1. Faith and Constancy

*Men ought always to pray and not to faint (Luke 18:1)
Continuing instant in prayer (Romans 12:12).*

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING in praying, and that which one should be most concerned about, is a living, evident faith in the Lord; represent Him vividly before yourself and within yourself, and then whatever you ask for Christ Jesus' sake in the Holy Spirit will be bestowed upon you. Ask simply without any doubts, and then God will be everything for you, creating great and wondrous things in the space of a moment, just as the sign of the Cross effects great powers - *Saint John of Cronstadt*.

Ask for that which is worthy of God, and *do not cease beseeching*, until you receive it. In this regard, the Lord spoke the parable about the man who received bread from his friend at midnight through his persistence (Luke 11:15) - St Basil the Great.

Therefore beseech the Lord persistently concerning all those things that *pertain to your salvation* and to the achievement of good, and assuredly you will receive them. But at the same time, you must be aware that on your side you must also *do everything within your power*: cry out to God for help, that He might be a helper for you. For if, due to his inconstancy, anyone surrenders himself to lusts (those

things contrary to the commandments), then God does not help him and does not hear his prayers, because he has already made himself alien to God through sin - *Ibid*.

Whether you receive what you ask for, or whether you do not receive it, abide in prayer. And be grateful not only when you receive, but also when you do not receive. For not to receive, when God desires that, is no less a good thing than to receive. For *we know not what is to our profit*, as God knows. This is why both receiving and not receiving should be considered equal blessings, and we must thank God both for the one and for the other - *St John Chrysostom*.

Do not say, after spending a long time at prayer, that nothing has been gained; for you have already gained something *by spending time at prayer*. And what higher good is there for a man to cling to the Lord and persevere in unceasing union with Him? - *Ven. John of the Ladder*.

With regard to the *fulfilment of those things which you ask* of God in prayer, you must believe that it is as easy for the Lord to fulfil your every word, and in fact incomparably more easy, as it is for you to pronounce the words; and if there is a word there is a deed, for the Lord has no words without deeds, for, according to His word (Esaias 55:11), His words do not return to Him void. Constantly remember in prayer that God is Being - all things are from Him: a thought about anything, a word about anything, an action, everything - because He is the most wise, almighty and all-good - *St John of Cronstadt*.

However many times have I prayed with *faith*, *God has always heard me*, and has fulfilled my prayer - *Ibid*.

Sometimes, at the time of prayer, there are moments of deadening darkness and oppression of heart, which come from lack of faith (lack of faith is a darkening). Do not lose heart during these moments, but remember that although the Divine light has been cut off from you, yet it shines in God in all its radiance and greatness; it shines in the Church of God, both heavenly and earthly, and in the material world, in which *His Ever-Existing Power and Divinity* are manifest (Romans 1:20) - *Ibid*.

What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them (Mark 11:24), the Lord proclaims. Therefore, leaving aside every doubt and double-mindedness, remain in unceasing prayers before the Lord, Who commands us *always to pray and not to faint* (Mark 11:24), that is not to be cast down on account of the constriction of prayer, which, especially at the beginning, is distressing, unbearable for the mind which is used to wandering everywhere - *Blessed Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov*.

Prayer, being converse with God, is itself the highest good; indeed so great is it that a man might pray, and the Merciful God does not fulfil his prayer but leaves the petition at his prayer, so that he should not lose that, that he should not be deprived of this higher blessing [*i.e. praying itself*] when to receive the blessing he asked for would be incomparably a lesser thing - *Ibid*.

We often ask God for what is harmful to us, and for that which is contrary to His holy will. People who ask God to deliver them from their cross, from affliction, illness and other distresses, without realizing that it is incomparably more beneficial for them to be in a state of misfortune rather than in one of good fortune, are just like

small children who go and ask their mothers to excuse them from bathing, which is very wholesome for them. The physician knows what is dangerous and what is profitable for his patient, but often the patient will ask the physician to give him ice instead of medicine, but a discerning physician will not do so. Before God we are all like patients, like children, not knowing what is to our benefit, and we often ask for that which could bring us spiritual death; this God, being a Kind-hearted Father and the One Who takes good care of us, does not desire, and therefore He does not wish to grant what is asked by His sons: a stone instead of bread, a serpent instead of fish, a scorpion instead of an egg (Luke 11:11). It is for this reason that, when asking for temporal blessings, we should ask thus: "O Lord, if it pleaseth Thy holy will and is profitable for me, grant my petition, and if not, may Thy will be done." The Son of God gave us an example of this, when, before His voluntary Passion, He prayed to His Heavenly Father thus: *O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt* (Matt. 26:39). - *St Tikhon of Zadonsk*.

The loquacity (Matt. 6:7-8) which the Lord condemns in the prayers of the pagans, consists in the multitude of petitions for temporal blessings, such as fill the prayers of the pagans, in the oratorical mode of expression in which their petitions are couched (this, according to the interpretation of the Blessed Theophylactos of Bulgaria), in a certain rhetorical adornment, in the physical sonority and power of the sounds, all of which have the same effect upon God as they can have on the hearing and the nerves of us, men of flesh. In condemning this loquacity, the Lord does not condemn continuance in prayer, as some of the heretics contend. He Himself blessed continuance in prayer, Himself abiding long in prayer. He *continued all night in prayer to God* (Luke 6:12), as the Gospel tells us of the Lord - *Blessed Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov*.

Hasten to prayer, O soul thirsting for salvation, hasten to follow the Saviour, accompanied by the limitless number of His disciples. Call after Him in prayer like the woman of Canaan (Matt. 15:22); do not be embittered if for a long time He pays no attention; with good heart and with humility bear the afflictions and the humiliations, that He sends you in prayer's way. To succeed in unceasing prayer, the help that temptation affords is necessary. According to your faith, for your humility, for your persistence in prayer, He will grant you the comfort of the healing of the daughter demonized by the actions of the passion, that is, the healing of your thoughts and feelings, converting them from passionate ones to passionless ones, from sinful ones into holy ones, from carnal ones into spiritual ones. Amen - *Ibid*.

... to be continued with "Reverent Attention."

HAVING MOUNTED upon heaven's clouds, O Christ,
Thou didst leave peace unto those upon the earth;
and Thou didst ascend and sit
at the Father's right hand on high,
since Thou art one in essence
with Him and the Spirit, Lord;
for though Thou hadst appeared in the flesh,
Thou hadst never changed.
Wherefore Thou now waitest till the last consummation,

when Thou shalt return to judge
all of mankind upon the earth.
O Thou most righteous Judge and Lord,
since Thou art a most merciful God,
do Thou spare our souls and do Thou grant to us,
Thy lowly servants, the pardon of our failings and our sins.

*Sessional Hymn, plagal of the fourth tone,
from the Mattins Service of the Ascension*

THE COMING MONTH

MAY rejoices in one Great Feast this year, the *Lord's Ascension* (Thursday 26th May/8th June), leaving the festival of *Pentecost-Trinity* to June (5th/18th). In accordance with the Scriptures, the Ascension falls on the fortieth day after Pascha, because it was forty days after His resurrection from the dead that our Saviour ascended bodily into Heaven.

Until the Ascension, we keep all the forty days as a celebration of the Resurrection, Pascha being the longest as well as the most important festival in the Church Year. However, the Church knows our human frailty and distractedness, and therefore the forty days are not all kept uniformly. That would become tedious for us; we are not yet ready for such continual rejoicing. The first week of the festival, *Bright Week*, is kept with particular festivity, the doors of the icon screen are left open throughout this week, the services every day are almost identical with that on Pascha night. Time and again, the paschal troparion, *Christ is risen from the dead*, is chanted.

Then the celebration becomes more muted, although still the Sundays are particularly emphasized and have special paschal features; each one is also dedicated to an event which instructs us concerning the Resurrection. The first two Sundays after the day of Pascha itself commemorate events surrounding the Resurrection of Christ, the *Doubting and Believing of Thomas*, and the coming of the *Ointment-bearing Women to the Tomb*. Then follow three Sundays which indicate how the power of the Resurrection is granted to us, through water - Baptism, to raise us up from our physical and spiritual infirmity. This is reiterated in all three Sunday Gospel readings, the *Raising of the Paralytic* (John 5:1-15); the *Meeting with the Samaritan Woman* (John 4:5-42), and the *Healing of the Man Born Blind* (John 9:1-38). In each of these it is also emphasized that the victory over sin and death has been won for us by one of our own kind, a Man. And in the last of these special Gospel reading, by the way in which He heals the Blind Man, the Lord Jesus Christ indicates clearly to us that He is God, for the One Who took dust of the earth and created man in the beginning is He Who now makes clay with dust of the earth and His spittle, and makes eyes for a man who had none.

Again regarding our frailty, the Church has instituted the *feast of Mid-Pentecost*, which lasts for eight days, from the Wednesday of the fourth week of Pascha to the Wednesday of the fifth week. This year this falls between 11/24th May and 18th/31st. The Church realizes that, such is our spiritual weakness, that we flounder even when celebrating! To raise our spirits and refresh us, we have this feast. This should give us something to reflect upon. In our secular age, even those who are churchgoers tend to

think that one of their first recourses, if they feel wearied or overwrought, is to slacken off their church attendance. Sometimes, it has to be admitted, this is a benefit; but it is not the general rule, it should not be our first option, and it is not what the Church teaches us by inaugurating this festival - that points us to greater church observance, not less. The Church does so, because She fully realizes that our weariness is wiped away and our souls are refreshed by drawing closer to God and not by withdrawing from Him. The way we live nowadays, one would think that the opposite is true. And so we have Mid-Pentecost with the blessing of waters and another out-pouring of grace.

A mention should perhaps be made of the name of the feast. Because after the Sunday of Pentecost-Trinity, the Sundays throughout the rest of the year are numbered "after Pentecost," we have a tendency to think of that period as Pentecost, and wonder why Mid-Pentecost falls before it begins. In fact that long period of the year is as the Sundays are numbered *after* Pentecost. Pentecost itself is the fifty day period between Pascha and Pentecost Sunday, and so Mid-Pentecost falls in the middle of this earlier period.

Among the saints in May, we have:

The *New Martyr Maria of Crete* (1st/14th May) was born of pious and Orthodox parents in the village of Kato Phourni, and as a young girl she became the object of the desire of an Albanian Turk who was serving as a constable in her neighbourhood. He began to woo her with gifts and flatteries, but, although he was rich, realizing that to marry him would mean abandoning her Faith and converting to Islam, Maria took great pains to avoid him and did not respond to his advances. In time the Turk's "love" for her turned into a cruel hatred, and using the arms available to him as constable, he set about to kill her. On a certain day, he saw her in a mulberry tree, collecting its leaves to feed the silkworms, he fired at her and pierced her heart. The Life tells us that "the blessed one fell from the tree, branch by branch, as a fowl downed by a hunter." Saint Maria, who is surnamed Methymopoula, was thus slain in the early days of May (probably either the 1st or the 3rd) in the year 1826.

The *Hieromartyr Modus* (11th/24th) was a presbyter in the town of Amphipolis in Macedonia, and he suffered during the reign of Diocletian. During the celebration of a pagan festival in his town, the Saint was inflamed by zeal, and called upon the participants to abandon the worship of their idols and to turn to the True God. He was set upon and beaten, and eventually given over to torture in an attempt to make him deny the Saviour. Finally he was sent to the town of Byzantium - it was a custom at that time to send prisoners to other towns, where it was thought that without local support they would more readily weaken and abandon their principles. In Byzantium, St Mocius was beheaded and gained the crown of martyrdom. When, subsequently, the Emperor St Constantine the Great re-founded Byzantium as his imperial city, renaming it Constantinople, a church was built at the place where St Mocius had contested for the faith.

The *New Hieromartyrs Pachomius of Chernigov and Avercius of Zhitomir* (15th/28th May) were brothers according to the flesh, and the elder, Peter, was a pupil at the Kazan Theological Academy, when its rector was the Ever-memorable Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky), later First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad,

and it was by Metropolitan Antony that he was tonsured a monk and renamed Pachomius. He was consecrated Bishop in 1911, and at the Great Council of the Russian Church of 1917-18 he delivered a report concerning the procedures for electing a Patriarch. After the Revolution, such was his zeal to comfort his flock, that he visited all the churches in his diocese travelling on foot. Eventually he was arrested to be released in 1923, but he was not permitted to return to his diocese. His younger brother, Procopius, was teaching New Testament at Vilna Theological Seminary, and was subsequently tonsured with the monastic name of Avercius and made Bishop of Zhitomir. When in 1927, Metropolitan Sergius issued his infamous declaration, the two brother Archbishops were among the first to raise their voices in protest, against this betrayal of the Church' integrity. They were arrested, and Archbishop Pachomius was sent to the Solovki concentration camp, and transferred in 1931 to the Mai-Guba slave-labour camp where they were building the Baltic-White Sea Canal. This broke his health and the next year, he was sent to a camp for invalids at Kuzema. Both Bishops disappeared into the "Soviet vastnesses" and died in the late thirties as confessors of the Faith. They are commemorated on 15th May because it is the nameday of the New Hieromartyr Pachomius, the festival day of Saint Pachomius the Great.

Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury (19th May/1st June) was one of the greatest of the English saints. His parents, Heorstan and Kynedrith, were of noble lineage, and their son was educated at the ancient monastery of Glastonbury in Somerset. He then entered service at the court of King Athelstan, but his peers were jealous of his evident abilities and contrived to have him disgraced, and so he moved to Winchester and was received into the monastic life there by Saint Alphege the Elder, then bishop of that city. Later he was able to re-enter the royal service under King Edmund, who appointed him abbot of Glastonbury. As abbot, he set about setting the monastery, which had fallen into a state of sad decay, in order, and he revitalized its monastic life. He enjoyed the confidence of Kings Edmund and Edred, but when the latter was succeeded by King Edwy, an unruly and wayward youth, Dunstan again fell into disfavour, and went into exile in Flanders. Happily Edwy's reign was short, and he was succeeded by his younger brother Edgar, who, because of his wise rule and the establishment of good order and peace throughout his kingdom, was called the Peaceable. Saint Dunstan was recalled from exile and became the king's closest advisor. He was consecrated as bishop of Worcester, the first see to become vacant in the new King's reign, but was soon afterwards translated to the cathedra of London, and finally raised to the Metropolitan See of Canterbury, as Archbishop. Along with Sts Ethelwold of Winchester and Oswald of Worcester, he was responsible for a beneficial reform of the monastic life throughout the country. Monasteries that had been destroyed by the Danes were rebuilt, and those whose practice had become lax were put in order. In these beneficial works the three hierarchs were assisted by the ready support of their pious King Edgar. However, the Saint did not curry favour with the King, and when the latter fell into the vice of lasciviousness, the Archbishop sternly rebuked him and would not permit him to be crowned for a number of years. This the King accepted, and he was eventually crowned, as the first-crowned King of all England, at Bath in Somerset, Saint Dunstan officiating. The coronation service which was largely compiled by the Saint is the basis of that still used for our Kings and Queens. King Edgar died quite suddenly, and was succeeded by his elder son, St Edward the Martyr, who was crowned at Kingston-on-Thames in Surrey. Saint Dunstan,

who served as Archbishop of Canterbury for twenty-seven years, and was probably the greatest hierarch to hold that position, lived through to see the martyrdom of St Edward and the succession of his unworthy half-brother, Ethelred the Unready. He ended his earthly course on 19th May, 988, and was laid to rest at the Cathedral Church in Canterbury. Besides his necessary reform of the monastic life in the country and his masterful and beneficial administration of the Church, he was known as a wonderworker in his lifetime and after is falling asleep. Because of his close spiritual relationship with our Saint Edward, we have his icon next to the Martyr's shrine at Brookwood.

FROM THE SACRED CANONS

"THERE ARE MANY persons, not of good character, who think that they have a right to bring charges against the Fathers and Bishops on any grounds. Such men must not be given credence."

Canon 8 of the 141 canons of Holy Regional Council of Carthage, 418/419AD.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"I've noticed that often on Orthodox crucifixes, there is a little skull at the base of the cross, why is this?" - E.K., Sudbury.

The skull is that of Adam. Christ died to raise up Adam and his descendants. Tradition tells us that the place where He was crucified was over the grave of Adam, thus making absolutely clear that He had come to raise up Adam. When the rocks were split at His crucifixion (Matt. 27:51-53), one fissure, to be seen to this day at Golgotha, is immediately below the place where the Cross stood, so that Adam might be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Thus the skull is depicted on the icons of the Crucifixion to show us yet again God's love towards us. He came to raise up Adam, but He came not in some generalized and vague way just to Earth, but to the very place where Adam's mortal remains lay. So He comes to each one of us to find us and raise us up from the death of our sinfulness. The skull is there, then, as a declaration of God's love towards us.

POPE'S MEETING WITH PATRIARCH DIODOROS

DURING his recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, *His Holiness Pope John Paul II* had a 45 minute private meeting with *His Beatitude Patriarch Diodoros I of Jerusalem*, and a further meeting was hosted by the Patriarch which enabled the Pope to meet representatives of the Christian communities in the Holy City. This has been described as "ecumenical," although it seems from reports that it was so only in the completely acceptable sense that Christians of various denominations were present, and in that the meeting called for "fraternal cooperation" among the various Christian bodies that they might together face the "practical difficulties" of life in a city which is now fractured by controversies and conflicts. The Apostolic Nuncio in the Holy Land, *Archbishop Pietro Sambì*, suggested that the meeting end with the various religious

leaders saying the Lord's Prayer together, each in their own language -(this New Babel fad has become something of a commonplace in ecumenical gatherings in the West). Apparently in Christianity's homeland, we are happy to report, it did not go down so well; - only the Latin, *Pater Noster*, could be heard.

NEW ARCHBISHOP OF PRAGUE ENTHRONED

ARCHBISHOP KRYSTOF was enthroned as the Archbishop of Prague, in succession to the late Metropolitan Dorotej, at the *Saints Cyril and Methodius Cathedral in Prague* on 25th March this year. His election had proved controversial and raised certain conflicts within the Czech and Slovak Church, but it seems these difficulties had been resolved before his enthronement, as all members of the hierarchy participated in the ceremony. A Church Council was due to meet on 14th April to elect a Metropolitan for the Church, which has four dioceses, 180 parishes and about 200,000 members and it now embraces the two separate republics of the Czech lands and Slovakia, which formerly made up Czechoslovakia. Archbishop Krystof was ordained priest in 1974, but only professed as a monk in 1987 after receiving his doctorate in theology in Athens university. A year later he was appointed Bishop of Olomouc-Brno.

ATHONITE FATHERS MAKE THEIR CONCERN KNOWN TO THEIR PATRIARCH

THE SACRED COMMUNITY of the Holy Mountain Athos addressed a letter to *His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople, the Œcumenical Patriarch*, expressing their concern over statements which he had made in addressing the Pope and which compromise Orthodox. The Athonite fathers also spoke of their distress at the continued occurrence of instances of common prayer with the non-Orthodox, and the Patriarch's endorsement of a periodical which promotes syncretism. The letter was sent in May last year to the Patriarch, and the full text of it, in an English translation, is to be found in the April/May 2000 issue of "*Orthodox Outlook*" (42 Withen's Lane, Wallasey, Wirral, L45 7NN; Tel: 0151 639 6509; Fax 0151 200 6359; E-mail: pancratios.outlook@mcm.com).

FESTIVAL OF THE ANNUNCIATION

FOR THIS, the dedication festival of the Convent in London, *Archbishop Mark* visited England. On the eve of the feast, the evening of Thursday, 24th March/6th April, he presided at the Vigil Service at the Convent, assisted by Fathers Alexis, Peter Baulk and Hierodeacon Sabbas. After the chanting of the service, *Abbess Seraphima and her sisters* prepared a supper for their guests. In the morning, for the Hours and the Divine Liturgy, we were joined by *Protodeacon Georg Kobro* from Munich. After a festive meal, to which all the participants were invited, approximately seventy of the congregation reassembled at the grave of the late Abbess Elisabeth in Gunnersbury Cemetery, where the Archbishop served a short memorial service for her and blessed the newly-erected memorial Cross on her grave. The festival fell in a brief two-day Spring between two Winters, and thus we were able to have the outdoor, graveside service in warm Springtime sunshine. Later that same day, the Archbishop celebrated the mystery of Holy Unction at the new Russian Church on Harvard Road, assisted by Fathers Alexis, Vadim Zakrevsky and Thomas Hardy, with Protodeacon Georg.

On the Saturday morning, the Archbishop came to Brookwood, where for the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and at this service we were joined by *Archpriest Milun Kostic and Protodeacon George Cekerevac of St Sava's Serbian Orthodox Church*. At the end of the Divine Liturgy the Archbishop preached on the role of the Angels and that of man. After the Parish Breakfast and speaking with those of the congregation that wished to ask his counsel, he returned to London, where he celebrated the Sunday services with the congregation at Harvard Road.

SERBIAN CHURCH REFUSES COMMUNION TO ABORTIONISTS

THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH issued a decree on 15th March, ordering that doctors and midwives who perform, or assist during, abortions should be refused communion in the churches of all their dioceses. The decree, in accord with patristic teaching and the sacred canons, points out that "abortion is a grievous sin before God, condemned by the Scriptures."

RUSSIAN PRIEST RITUALLY MURDERED

THE PRIESTMONK GREGORY (secular name Gennady Mikhailovich Yakovlev) of the diocese of Krasnoyarsk in Siberia was brutally murdered in his home on 21st March this year. A man entered his house, stabbed Fr Gregory in the chest and neck, and then decapitated him with a pocket knife. The murderer then took the priest's head, still dripping with blood, into the chapel there, carried it into the sanctuary, and walked round the Holy Table with it, before depositing it on the Holy Table in some bizarre and profane ritual. The murderer, Roman Krishkin, was known to the priest, who had offered him shelter and help, but he claimed that he had been instructed by the Hindu god Krishna to execute him in this way. The Hare Krishna movement in Russia has expressed deep concern about the murder and fear that it could ignite hostility to their sect. Father Gregory was born in 1949 in the Irkutsk province. After school he served in the navy, and then studied history at Odessa State University where he graduated in 1978. The same year he was baptised, and subsequently he was ordained deacon and priest. In 1994 he was entrusted with arranging the transfer of the sacred of *St Innocent of Irkutsk* back to that city, and he was professed as a monk the following year. The announcement of this horrible crime from the Press Service of the Krasnoyarsk Diocese (MP) ends: "May the Lord receive the soul of God's servant, the monastic priest Gregory Yakovlev into His heavenly dwelling, as a true son of the Orthodox Church, forgiving him all his transgression through his martyr's death."

COMMON DATE FOR EASTER

THE STANDING CONFERENCE of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have been engaged in a dialogue studying a the prospect for a common date for Easter. They have endorsed the 1997 *Aleppo Statement* [Source: *The Sentinel*, Vol V, no 5]. Whether this will have any further ramifications in "Real Life," remains to be seen. One suspects that any move to abandon the Patristic paschalion will rouse objections even from among some New Calendarist Orthodox, and that we might end up with further calendar schisms within the Orthodox world.

THE RUSSIAN CHURCH IN BELGRADE

"PRAVOSLAVNAYA RUS" (1/14 Feb, 2000), published by the *Holy Trinity Monastery at Jordanville* carries an article about the *Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in Belgrade*, which was built in the nineteen-twenties. It is at this church that the renowned last leader of the White Army, *General Peter N. Wrangel* is laid to rest. The article tells us that daily services at the church have continued for decades, even through the bombardment of the city in the Second World War. However, the NATO assault on Yugoslavia last year ended this good record; the church was bomb-damaged and had to be restored. After the necessary restoration, on the festival of the Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian, 1st/14th November, last year, *Patriarch Pavle of Serbia* visited the church and re-instituted the round of daily services by serving the Divine Liturgy there and the Lesser Blessing of Waters. Until the evacuation from Serbia of the Russian émigrés in the Autumn of 1944, the church was under the spiritual and canonical protection of the hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad, and many of the clergy of that church were ordained to the priesthood or consecrated to the episcopate there. With the seizure of power by the Communists, the church was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Moscow and since 1950, the rectors of the parish have been three Fathers Tarasyev: grandfather, father and son.

The same issue of the magazine contains a short history of Orthodoxy in Albania, with the news that in 1992, Metropolitan Amphilochije of the Serbian Church visited the town of Shkoder in Albania, where he has established a Slavonic Orthodox Community dedicated to Saint John-Vladimir, a king of Serbia who died as a martyr in 1015, and is commemorated by the Orthodox Church on 22nd May.

MISSION IN HAITI

FATHER JEAN-CHENIER DUMAIS of the *Orthodox Mission Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Haiti* has sent us an appeal, telling us of their need for a vehicle. In 1996 Father Daniel Mackenzie of Miami gave them a van, but they were unable to accept it because of the cost of importing it and of customs clearance. Later they were offered a jeep, but met similar problems. Now the mission is trying raise funds so that they can obtain a vehicle. Donations may be sent directly to Father Jean, at *Boite Postale 1555, Port-au-Prince, HAITI*, or to the Brotherhood in Brookwood and we undertake to send them on for you.

PRACTICAL TIP

THE PRINCIPAL SERVICE for Christians is called the Thanksgiving or the Eucharist, and his should indicate to us the importance of giving thanks. Thanksgiving should distinguish us, the Christians, from all the other peoples upon earth. We now live in a society where giving thanks, or simply saying thank-you in the social context, is something that is almost completely ignored. Nobody thinks to thank you if you hold a door open for them or make way for them; people do not respond when given presents or help by thanking their benefactors. Perhaps it is because our only concern is ourself and we simply take for granted the things that are done for us. Such an attitude is profoundly un-Christian and is perhaps to be expected among people who have broken loose from their Christian roots, but those of us who are professing

Christians should therefore make all the more effort to make opportunities to thank people. We have a mission to bring others to Christ. In this day and age this can hardly be done by preaching; certainly people will not want us to sound off continually by expatiating on jurisdictional problems or our own variously perceived concepts of correctness within Orthodoxy. But being gracious (not in the unctuous sense), being polite and courteous, of which saying thanks is a part, might touch a heart. The early Christians, during the persecutions, were often apprehended because of the modesty of their dress and conduct. If we seriously took up saying thank-you, we should be noticeable in a society fleeing from Christ. It would also have a profound effect on us, and turn us from being so self-centred and self-interested, to people who begin to see everything that happens to them as a blessing, who begin to give thanks in all sincerity to God.