

The Shepherd ***An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine***

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FROM THE FATHERS

"WHO ARE the "two or three" who begin gathering together in the name of Christ, and in whose midst the Lord is (Matt. 18:20)? Are not the three: man, wife and child, since a wife is joined to a man by God?"

Saint Clement of Alexandria, + c 215 A.D.

"THE LAWS* are unequal and irregular. Why did they restrain the woman but indulge the man? A woman who practises evil against her husband's bed is guilty of adultery, and for this the legal penalties are very severe, but a husband committing fornication against his wife, has he no account to give? I do not accept this legislation, nor do I approve this custom. They who made the law were men, and their legislation is hard on women.... This is not how God acts. He says: 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' - the first time there is a commandment to which a promise is joined, 'that it may be well with thee.' See the equality of the legislation. There is one Maker of man and woman; one and the same debt is owed by children to both parents."

Saint Gregory the Theologian, Archbishop of Constantinople, + 389 AD.

** This evidently refers to the secular laws of St Gregory's time.*

"IF MARRIAGE itself needs to be sanctified by the priestly veil and blessing, how is it possible to speak of a marriage where there is no agreement in faith?"

Saint Ambrose of Milan, +397 A.D.

"SOME of the things which we do for the sake of God are done in obedience to the commandments; others are done not in obedience to the commandments but, so to speak, as a voluntary offering. For example, we are required by the commandments to love God and our neighbour, to love our enemies, not to commit adultery or murder and so on. And when we transgress these commandments, we are condemned. But we are not commanded to live as virgins, to abstain from marriage, to renounce possessions, to withdraw into solitude and so forth. These are of the nature of gifts, so that if through weakness we are unable to fulfil some of the commandments, we may by these free gifts propitiate our blessed Master."

Venerable Maximus the Confessor, + 662 A.D.

ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE;

ON THE FAMILY

Bishop Mitrophan of Boston

FOR GENERAL INSTRUCTION, and particularly for the instruction of the young, I would like to draw your attention to one of the most serious questions of our times, to the distortion of the understanding of marriage and of the family in Christian society.

In contemporary society, a certain evil power has radically twisted our understanding of marriage and of marital chastity. Television programmes, films at the cinema, cynical advertising, teachers in schools and colleges - all these are moral murderers, transgressors with their preaching of "free love" and their voiding of the fifth commandment ("Honour thy father and thy mother, that it might be well with thee, and that thy days may be long upon the earth"), premarital relations among the young - all these things make it almost impossible for a man to maintain a reverent and pure attitude towards his wife as towards a future mother. In this respect, it is not only our Christian youth, but the majority of their parents as well, who do not have a correct understanding of Christian marriage.

MARRIAGE IS NOT CO-HABITATION; IT IS NOT simply THE MEANS OF PRESERVING A PERSON FROM SINNING, from sexual immorality.

MARRIAGE is a Divine institution, as is clear both from the Bible (Gen. 1:27; 2:24) and from the Saviour's words: *He said unto them (the Pharisees): "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh"* (Matt. 19:4-5). Through the mysterion [sacrament] of marriage, husband and wife reach the fullness of mankind, sacramentally "two in one flesh." *"This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and His Church"* (read Ephesians 5:24-33).

MARRIAGE, this great mysterion [sacrament] (this great mystery) is the union of two lives in the image of the union of Christ with the Church. In the mysterion of marriage, in the marital union, there is depicted the Divine UNION BETWEEN THE LORD, Who sacrificed Himself for His Church, AND THE CHURCH, which constitutes His Body and lives through His Grace. MARRIAGE, the family itself, is a house church (Col. 4:15); it is a living cell within the Church organism, the Body of Christ; it is the first school of Love; it is an ascesis of great Christian activity. *"Husbands, love your wives, even as ~ Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her"*

The PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE is not simply personal, but is the CHURCH'S PURPOSE. Those who enter marriage do not so for themselves but for the Church, and that they might serve her unto the edification of the Church of God, that thereby they might co-operate in the increase of Christ's ideal upon earth. MARRIAGE is a union in mutual sanctification. The Apostle Paul himself shows this when he says that the unbelieving husband is sanctified, led to salvation, by the believing wife. Marriage has as its aim the mutual perfection of the two: husband and wife, who morally influence each other, help each other in developing within themselves moral strength and spiritual power.

WHEN ENTERING INTO MARRIAGE, in God's presence a person takes on himself responsibility for another life. This responsibility follows him everywhere and he cannot escape it anywhere; to flee from this responsibility means to flee from God Himself. The religious growth of husband and wife in their subsequent family life consists only in following the course of deepening and broadening their mutual responsibility for each other and for other lives, for the lives of their children. In Christian marriage an individual lays down his soul for ANOTHER, he promises to live his life for the OTHER, he renounces all personal self-love. Who is this OTHER? It is, at

the beginning, the husband or wife, and thereafter, the children. The husband and wife want (and indeed must) devote their life, as that of the best of servants, to the persons of their children, so that they may instil in the children the sacred task of serving the Church, it being the Body of Christ.

As a reflection of Christ's union with the Church, marriage manifests itself in the husband's and wife's mutual denial of themselves for the future benefit of the child, who must become one of the future builders of the Church on earth. The father and mother, the husband and wife, carry the enormous responsibility to guard themselves with even greater vigilance than they did before marriage, so that they "walk purely and blamelessly in their children's eyes." The husband and wife, the father and mother are morally obliged to remember that every one of their bad words, every one of their bad actions will be repeated by the souls of those same people, whom, in future, they should dedicate to the world and the Church.

Thus, MARRIAGE is the union of two lives, NOT JUST FOR THE SAKE of co-habitation, but for the highest moral purposes and aims. Grounded in a mutual, moral self-restraint, a certain unity of will is established in marriage, which grants family life a grace-filled harmony, peace and concord. We have already emphasized that marriage is a school of Love. And what is this Love? It is self-denial. The Love which is nurtured within the marriage thereafter necessarily goes out beyond the family circle and touches all. And that marriage is such a school and concerning the reality of the self-denial, we hear in the words of the Order of the Crowning [*the Marriage Service -ed.*] itself: "O holy Martyrs, who have fought the good fight and received your crowns, entreat the Lord that He have mercy on our souls." The marriage crowns are wreaths of victory over sensuality, for a normal marriage is perfected in chaste mindedness.

It is grievous and painful to observe the perversion of the holy mystery of marriage among those for whom its purpose is fleshly gratification and the mirage of pleasure. This results in a pitiful picture of life: an enormous percentage of divorces, coming to blows over the ongoing misunderstandings in the family, a family life spiritually empty, children emotionally malformed, and parents suffering.

One often hears complaints about how stressful life is. But who is at fault in this respect? Isn't it the people themselves? A failure to think things through, light-mindedness, and a failure with regard to one's sense of duty, one's sense of honour and one's sense of responsibility - these things are the normal companions both of the parents and of the "fruit of their sowing," their children.

Rather let our children and grandchildren be our joy and the vindication of our life. May Christ, the True Light, Which enlighteneth every one that draweth nigh unto Him, help us all in this.

Translated from the Russian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: His Grace Bishop Mitrophan himself is no stranger to family life. He was born in Brest, the fifteenth of a family of sixteen children. He later married and had two daughters and six grandchildren. He was ordained priest in 1935. In the war his hometown was taken by the Germans and in 1944 Fr Mitrophan left his native-land, travelling to Poland, Austria, Germany, Africa and eventually the United States. His

wife of 55 years, Alexandra Semeonovna died in 1989, and in 1992 Fr Mitrophan received the monastic tonsure and was consecrated as Bishop of Boston, a vicar bishop to the Metropolitan See of New York. Although now in deep old age, Bishop Mitrophan continues his pastoral work, and a collection of his writings (in English) has recently been published by Troitsa Press, under the title "Path to a Meaningful and Fruitful life."

BRIEF MISSIONARY NEWS FROM MADAGASCAR AND MAURITIUS

HIS GRACE, Bishop Nectarios of Madagascar recently sent us the following news release about the missionary work of his diocese:-

WITH THE HELP of our Lord Jesus Christ, the year 2000 was a fruitful one for our Mission in Madagascar. Over 1500 Malagasy people were baptized into our Holy Orthodox Faith in our various parishes throughout Madagascar. In addition to this, many schools and churches have been built within the last year. Our philanthropic work continued throughout the year 2000 with the distribution of food, clothing, and medicines to many poor Orthodox families. We also offered ongoing support to our many orphans for whom we provide food as well as educational and medical assistance.

Most importantly however, we were blessed in the year 2000, with the establishment of the first Orthodox parish in the island of Mauritius. On the 9th of October, 2000, the Orthodox Church of Mauritius was registered and officially recognised by the government of Mauritius. Mauritius belongs to the Diocese of Madagascar and in previous years there was never any formal Orthodox presence on the island.

With the blessing of *Patriarch Petros of Alexandria*, Bishop Nectarios of Madagascar made his first official visit to Mauritius during the period, 15-22 December, 2000. Whilst in Mauritius, the Bishop met all the members of our new Orthodox Parish (of which there are over fifty), visited the various ministers and members of parliament and performed the first Baptisms and Divine Liturgy. These are all truly historical and significant events for our Church, for they occurred for the first time ever in Mauritius.

We hope that in the future, suitable donors will be found to help us purchase land and build the first Orthodox church in Mauritius.

We wish you all a blessed New Year 2001, and ask that you pray for us and for our mission work in Madagascar and Mauritius.

CONCERNING PRAYER

its inner Qualities and Outer Effects

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

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

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

Translation by Mrs Valentina B. Merritt of Brookwood, Surrey

Continuation from the last issue

2. Particular Prayful Activities

The Sign of the Cross

Let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
looking unto Jesus ,Who ... endured the Cross,
despising the shame (Hebrews 12:1-2).

THE SIGN of the Cross, made with faith by a movement of the hand or in any other way, is the same as the name of Jesus Christ the Crucified pronounced with a movement of the mouth - *The Catechism of St Philaret of Moscow*.

INSTEAD of a shield, defend yourself with the sign of the Cross, sealing your members and the heart. Make the sign of the Cross upon yourself not only with the hand but in every activity impress it upon your thoughts, both in your coming in and your going out, at every time, in sitting down, and in arising, upon your bed, and in undertaking any service, before all else seal yourself (with the sign of the Cross) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit - *Venerable Ephraim the Syrian*.

NO ONE should be ashamed of the honourable sign, the source of good, the means by which we live and have existence; rather like a crown we should bear the cross of Christ. For all our mysteries (sacraments) are effected thereby - *Saint John Chrysostom*.

IT SAYS in the ancient Prologue: "For many people are unaware of the fact that, when making the Cross, they are simply waving about in front of their faces and labouring in vain because they do not make the sign of the Cross properly over their persons, and the demons rejoice observing them waving about thus. When one crosses himself properly, he places his hand on his forehead and on the stomach, on the right shoulder and then on the left, and the Angels then rejoice seeing the Cross truly signed upon these persons."

MAKING the sign of the Cross carelessly can never be justified. For with the sign of the Cross we confess our Faith in the crucified Lord Jesus Christ and we commemorate His passion upon the Cross. For this reason making the sign of the Cross is the Lord's work, and in the Sacred Scriptures it is said: "*Cursed is the man that doeth the work of the Lord carelessly*" (Jer. 48:10). One cannot confess his Faith through

incoherent, inattentive reading and mumbling. Then how can one confess Christ's sufferings waving his hand about? Indeed, is it right that we do this, that we make the Cross carelessly, and at the same time want to demonstrate that we are confessing the Cross of Christ? Can slovenliness be permitted in confessing the sufferings of Christ? We confess Christ's sufferings and at the very same time are too lazy to raise our hand and delineate the Cross of Christ properly!

THE SIGN of the Cross, made in the accepted way, represents the whole essence of the Christian Faith: the tri-unity of the Divine Being, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the unconfused and indivisible union within Him of the two Natures, the Divine and the human, His redemption of us from sin by the Cross, the gift to us in Christ of the blessing and all the power necessary for life and piety, and of all the good things that we beseech of God; for it is said: "He *that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things*" (Romans 8:32). Wherefore with what attention, understanding and feeling we should make the sign of the Cross! - *Saint John of Cronstadt*.

[The Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity are confessed by our holding the thumb, index finger and middle finger of the right hand together at their tips, and the Two Natures of Christ are confessed by our folding the ring and little finger into the palm, as we make the sign of the Cross -ed.]

Standing in Prayer

'When ye stand praying, forgive...' (Mark 11:25).

THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE of the practice of praying while in a standing position is this: Jesus Christ said to the disciples, "Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46) - *Saint John of Cronstadt*.

THE CUSTOM of standing signifies that we stand before the King of kings as His servants, ready to fulfil His will; the custom of sitting signifies the mercy of the Lord towards those His servants who keep vigil and wait upon Him, their Lord, and it also reminds us of the following words of His from the parable: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He will gird Himself and make them to sit down and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37). And from the word of God the basis of our making prostrations is Jesus Christ, Who "kneeled down and prayed" (Luke 22:41). - *Saint John of Cronstadt*.

AS A BABY, Saint Nicolas remained standing in the font for three hours to the glory of the All-Holy Trinity, and yet grown men cannot stand with the fear of God, with reverence and with attention, for one hour in church. And if they do stand, they do it like insensitive statues; they have ears but they do not listen to what is read or chanted, and if they do happen to hear they pay no attention - *Saint Dimitri of Rostov*.

Prostrations

(Jesus Christ) kneeled down and prayed (Luke 22:41).

CONSTANT VIGIL together with reading, and followed by frequent prostrations, will swiftly bring progress in spiritual good things - (sweetness of the heart) - to the zealous - *Venerable Isaac the Syrian*.

FROM MAKING PROSTRATIONS the body will be somewhat relieved and warmed, and the heart will come to a state of contrition; in such a condition the ascetic is able to pray more sincerely, warmly and attentively. One will experience a completely different taste in praying, when they are read after prostrations - *Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov*.

DO NOT be concerned about the quantity of prostrations; all one's attention should be turned to the quality of the prayer one is making with the prostrations. A small amount of prostrations, done properly as described above, will have a better effect on the body itself (to say nothing about the soul), than a large number done with haste, without attention, and just for the sake of the number of them - *Ibid*.

TO EDIFY our beloved brethren, we should not be silent about what follows:- prostrations, made for the sake of their quantity, without the right frame of mind and without activity of the heart, are more harmful than profitable - *Ibid*.

... to be continued with "Veneration of Icons." 10

THE COMING MONTH

IN FEBRUARY this year, there are two main things to which we should pay attention: the Great Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, which falls every year on 2nd/15th of the month, and the beginning of Great Lent, which naturally varies with the date of Easter, but this year starts on Monday 13th/26th.

The Meeting celebrates the event recorded in St Luke's Gospel, chapter two, when the Infant Saviour was brought to the Temple in fulfilment of the Old Testament Law to be presented, and His meeting with the Righteous Simeon (who, since that event is known as the God-receiver) and the Prophetess Anna. Because in speaking with the Virgin Mother, Simeon foretold her sufferings at the Saviour's Passion, this feast is the link between the Nativity cycle of feasts and the passion/paschal one, and it falls about halfway between the two. It was also at this festival that we were given the beautiful prayer, known in the West as the Nunc Dimittis, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart," which is said every evening at Vespers and which the faithful use as a part of their thanksgiving prayers after receiving Holy Communion. Simeon was praying that his earthly life might close, having lived for an extraordinarily long time so that he might see the Lord's salvation in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen Him at the end of each day in His providential care for us throughout the day, and in the Mystery of the Eucharist in the partaking of His Body and Blood. Also the evening represents the brevity of this earthly life, which ends in death represented by night. Death is followed by the life of the Age to come, signified by the dawning of the new day. So our repeating the Righteous Simeon's prayer reminds us of our approaching death and always to live, looking forward to eternal life. Like Simeon we proclaim Christ to be the Glory of "Thy people Israel," that is the people of the True Church, and "a light of revelation for the nations," thus recognising the Church's missionary vocation to reveal that Light to those outside the Church.

During Great Lent and Passion Week which follows it, we abstain from eating meat and dairy products, and except for the Great Feasts of the Annunciation and Palm Sunday even fish; we also abstain from drinking alcohol, except on Saturdays (the

Sabbath) and Sundays (the Day of the Resurrection, the Lord's day). Properly on weekdays we should only eat one meal a day and that towards evening, but few have the spiritual strength to fast so strictly, and one should take advice before attempting this. But our fasting is not simply dietary, we should also abstain from entertainments, from travelling more than is necessary, from making important changes in our life (except of course in repenting itself); married couples refrain from marital intercourse. All these things are to ground us; to stop the busy whirl of the world and give ourselves "space" in which you come to self-knowledge and therefore the knowledge of God. As the Prophet King and Psalmist says: *Be still, and know that I am God.*

That stillness must not simply be emptiness though - that would drive us to distraction, and so the Church also encourages us to spend more time in spiritual reading and in prayer, so that we strengthen these aspects of our life, and that the strengthening might be carried over from the fast into the weeks and months that follow. The church services on weekdays in Lent, take on a completely different character, they are generally longer, and more solemn, and at various times, notably at the Prayer of Saint Ephraim, we make prostrations to the ground. The full Divine Liturgy is not celebrated on the weekdays in Lent, but only the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, a modified form of Vespers during which the Holy Mysteries, consecrated at the Divine Liturgy on the previous Sunday, are imparted to the faithful for their strengthening in the struggle.

We are also encouraged to practice the virtues during this period. Of course, this should be done throughout the year, but the lenten periods are times when we pay particular attention to this aspect of our lives. In the hurly-burly of the rest of our life, often this is sadly neglected. Lent brings it back to our attention, again in the hope that having been strengthened in the virtues in the course of the fast we maintain that strength for some time afterwards. It is a training period. Among the virtues, that of almsgiving is particularly enjoined upon the faithful. This is one of the easiest virtues to practice; if we cannot even give away money we are unlikely to excel at loving our enemies, or curbing anger, or ousting resentment. Almsgiving also reminds us that our fasting is not some kind of self-centred fakirish practice, some self-obsessed system of self-improvement. It is, rather, a way of preparing our heart to love God and to love our neighbour.

Lastly every Orthodox Christian ought to go to confession at least once during the Great Fast. This, not only that we might be cleansed of our sins through the sacramental grace of the Mystery, but also because we are the world's best self-deceivers. We often kid ourselves that we are making progress, that we have dealt with certain problems or forgiven others, until we see ourselves in the mirror of confession, and until another, the priest as our witness, assesses our situation from an independent viewpoint.

The First Week of the Great Fast, although a struggle, is one of the most beautiful periods in the whole Church Year. Usually even relatively lax Orthodox try to keep it, Cross week in the middle of the fast, and Passion week at the end, with some degree of application. The First Week opens with the Rite of Forgiveness after Vespers on Sunday afternoon, during which we bow to the ground before the other members of the congregation individually and ask their forgiveness for our sins against them. These sins are not only those which we may have committed directly against them,

such as lying to them, saying hurtful things to them, stealing from them, slandering them, gossiping, etc., but also the sins that we might consider private, because even these affect our neighbours adversely. By committing them we spiritually weaken ourselves, and thus we become weak links in the chain of the community life of the monastery or parish; we have in this way let the others down.

At Great Compline, on each of the first four days of the fast (Monday to Thursday evenings), a quarter of the Great Canon of Repentance of Saint Andrew of Crete is read, and on the fifth evening, the Friday, here at Brookwood we follow the Greek practice of chanting the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God, a practice linked to the celebration of the Annunciation, a feast which usually falls in Lent. Those who simply cannot get to church would be well advised to read at least a portion of these services at home with their prayers, so that even if physically they cannot be there they are joined spiritually with the congregation of the believers throughout the Orthodox world.

The last day of the First Week is a thanksgiving, and on it we remember a miracle worked through the intercessions of the Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit in the mid-fourth century, during the reign of Julian the Apostate. The impious emperor had planned to defile the fast of the Christians by only permitting foods offered to his idols to be marketed. Had he taken the trouble to read I Corinthians chapter 8, he would have known he was going to lose on this one! However, lest one of the weak ones should be scandalized and the fast seem to be broken, the Great Martyr Theodore appeared to the Bishop in a dream and ordered that the Christians eat koliva, boiled wheat sweetened with honey (things that they would have had in their food stores and did not have to buy), and so they avoided eating the defiled foods. To this day, we bless and eat koliva on this day in commemoration of the miracle. This emphasizes to us how important it is to try and keep the fast, for had it not been important, just some optional practice, the Saint surely would not have worked his miracle and the generations of the Orthodox throughout so many centuries would not have celebrated the miracle year after year.

Among the Saints we have in February are the following:-

Saint Severus, Bishop of Avranches (1st/14th) lived in the sixth century and was the child of Christian parents. In his youth he was hired out to a pagan nobleman, Corbecan, to care for his horses. The boy loved to pasture the horses near a small church dedicated to St Martin, claiming that the pasture was sweeter there, but really because of his love for God's house. Unable to bear the sight of the sufferings of the poor, Severus would give such alms as he could to them, and one winter's day he returned at night to his master's house, stripped of all his clothing save his breeches, having given his clothes to the poor. The master was enraged and drove him out of the house to sleep with the horses. However, in time, the gentleness and goodness of the lad made such an impression on Corbecan that he received instruction in the Christian Faith and with his whole household he was baptized. Severus eventually took up the life of a hermit, but was in time joined by disciples so that a small monastic house was established. For the needs of the brethren Severus was ordained priest. Later, much against his will, he was dragged from his monastery and consecrated Bishop for the town of Avranches. He ministered to his flock wisely and zealously for a number of years, but then yearning to prepare for his end in his desert solitude, he arranged for a

successor to be consecrated in his place, and returned to his hermit's cell in the forest. After his repose, his sacred relics were taken to Rouen.

The Venerable Martinian, Zoe and the Virgin Photine (13th/26th). St Martinian took up the eremitical life in his youth, but was for many years tried by the carnal passions. Through prayer, fasting and struggle he overcame these temptations, and he lived in the desert for some twenty-five years. Hearing of his victory over the sins of the flesh, a certain prostitute, Zoe, decided to go and attempt to lead him into sin, thinking of this as a challenge. However, seeing the danger of falling, Martinian stepped barefoot onto the glowing embers of his fire, reminding himself of the fires of Gehenna. When she saw this, the harlot was brought to repentance and fell at his feet begging forgiveness. The saint instructed her and sent her to join St Paula's Convent in Bethlehem where about twelve years later, having lived a life of the severest asceticism, she ended her earthly course in the monastic discipline. Fearing that he might be approached by women again and put to the test, St Martinian settled on a small rocky island, where he could be completely alone. However, he was tempted again. Near his island a ship was wrecked and the sole survivor was a young maiden, Photine; who thus arrived on his island. Having instructed her, Martinian threw himself into the sea, and the Lord, seeing his good intention, sent a dolphin to take him to dry land. The Saint died two years later in Athens at the beginning of the fifth century. St Photine chose to remain on the island and died there six years later, following the example of the blessed Martinian.

Saint Finan (17th February/2nd March) was the second Bishop of Lindisfarne, succeeding the great Saint Aidan. Finan was born in Ireland and had been a monk at St Columba's monastery on Iona. He was a man of most holy life and a watchful pastor of the flock entrusted to his care. On Lindisfarne he erected a cathedral church, and when the Prince Peada of Mercia came to Northumbria, he brought him to the Christian faith, baptizing him and his attendants. At the prince's request, he returned with him to Mercia, and preached the Gospel in those regions, ordaining priests for the newly illumined flock there. After the death of Peada's father, an inveterate pagan called Penda, Finan was able to consecrate the first bishop for the Mercians. He was also instrumental in converting and baptizing Sigebert, King of the East Saxons, whose kingdom had earlier been evangelized but had largely reverted to paganism. Thus the holy man was responsible for the spiritual enlightenment of three of the ancient Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in what is now called England. St Finan died in A.D. 661, and was succeeded by St Colman as Bishop of Lindisfarne.

MOSCOW BOYCOTTS PATRIARCHAL SUMMIT

PATRIARCH ALEXEY II of Moscow was the only one of the leaders of sixteen autocephalous Orthodox Churches not to attend a meeting held at the new-style Christmas, at Iznik in Turkey, the ancient site of Nicaea, where the First and Seventh Œcumenical Councils were held. In a seven page statement the church leaders endorsed ecumenism and dialogue with other Christians, but focused much of their concern on splits within Orthodoxy. Edmund Doogue commenting for Ecumenical News International, says that this was "apparently aimed at Old Calendarists in most Balkan countries, the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile, and dissident groups in countries such as the Ukraine, Bulgaria and Montenegro." It is thought that Turkey's

eagerness to join the European Union made this meeting and the serving of an Orthodox Liturgy on the ancient Christian site possible, although the church itself is now used as a museum. Endorsement of ecumenism and the veiled condemnation of traditionalist Orthodox hierarchies, indiscriminately lumping them together with political schismatics, seems to be the constant message of these Patriarchal summits. It is odd to witness the condescension of the hierarchs to those whose belief-systems are hurtling away from Orthodoxy with ever increasing velocity, and their lack of patience with Orthodox believers, who, whether they be mistaken or not, are striving to remain faithful to the tradition they have received. The fact that Patriarch Alexey of Moscow did not attend this meeting does not suggest that his administration does not endorse ecumenism and is not ready to condemn the "dissidents." In August 2000, the Sobor of the Moscow Church committed itself to ecumenism, and called for disciplinary measures against those who "deliberately distort the task of the Orthodox Church in her witness before the non-Orthodox world and consciously slander the Church authorities, accusing them of the 'betrayal' of Orthodoxy." Rather Moscow's boycott of the latest summit is a reflection of the soured relations between their Patriarchate and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

MOSCOW AND CONSTANTINOPE

IN OUR LAST ISSUE, we mentioned the contention between these two Patriarchates regarding the Church in Estonia, where there are now rival hierarchies. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I's support of Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma's efforts to establish a united Orthodox Church in the Ukraine has also upset the Patriarchate of Moscow, which sees the Ukraine as falling within its territory. Back in 1991, the Ecumenical Patriarch had expressed a contrary idea, "recognising as the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church only those areas within its border in 1593" and thus excluding the Ukraine. As one of our correspondents remarks: "If true, this seems very bad news. The implications are appalling, e.g., it would mean Constantinople in any dispute with the Serbian Church could suddenly claim Bosnia, etc. etc."

SERBIAN CHURCH DYNAMITED

THE SAINT ILIJA (Elias) THE PROPHET CHURCH in the village of Cernica, near Gnjilane, Kosovo, was dynamited on 15th January last year, becoming the 77th church or monastery to be destroyed in Kosovo since the arrival of the "peacekeeping" troops in June 1999. The church had been considered one of the jewels of Serbian sacred architecture in the region.

ENGLISH PRIEST FOR SINGAPORE

AN ENGLISHMAN and former member of our Brotherhood at Brookwood, Father Daniel Toyne, has been ordained as the Orthodox priest for Singapore. Fr Daniel was baptized at the Sacred Monastery of Sts Cyprian and Justina in Greece in the late seventies. On his return to England, he joined the ROCA diocese in this country and led the choir for the Saint Gregory the Great English-language parish in London, which is now sadly defunct. Later for a short period he tried his monastic vocation at St Edward's, but left and eventually found a teaching position in Singapore, where he has now lived for a number of years. In November last year, he was tonsured a rasophor

monk by an Athonite monk, Father Thomas, and was then ordained to the diaconate in the Monastery of the Theotokos Full of Grace in Trezina on the Greek island of Poros. While in Greece, he served at the Russian church in Athens. In January this year, he was ordained priest by Metropolitan Nikitas (Œcumenical Patriarchate) in his Cathedral of St Luke the Evangelist in Hong Kong. The Singapore parish which Father Daniel will serve comprises Orthodox Christians from various ethnic and jurisdictional backgrounds and includes a number of converts to Orthodoxy. May the Lord God grant that through the ministry of Father Daniel the mission there might be granted increase; and to His newly ordained priest: Many Years!

ROMANOV PRINCESS DIES

HER HIGHNESS Princess Vera Constantinovna of Russia died on Thursday, 29th December/11th January, the feast of the Holy Innocents, at the Tolstoy Foundation, Valley Cottage in New York State, and was laid to rest at the Novo-Diveevo Russian Orthodox Convent cemetery, at Nanuet, NY. The Princess, who was devoted to the Church, was 95 years old. For those of us fortunate enough to have known her, perhaps the greatest impression she made was by her unpretentiousness. She was the daughter of the renowned poet, Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovitch, whose father was the brother of the slain Tsar-Liberator, Alexander II. Three of her brothers, Sts John, Constantine and Igor, died as martyrs, being thrown down the mineshaft at Alapaev with the Venerable New Martyr, Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia and others. Princess Vera's sister was Abbess Tamara of the Mount of Olives Convent outside Jerusalem. May the handmaiden of God, Vera Constantinovna, now be granted rest with the Saints and *Memory Eternal*.

MISSION'S FIRST LITURGY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

FATHER PETER BAULK, the priest in charge of the English language ROCA parishes in Ireland, visited the faithful of the Holy Trinity Orthodox Mission in Northern Ireland in December, celebrating the first Liturgy for the fledgling mission there on 10th December. Father Peter also blessed the garden chapel at The Shepherd's Gate, the home of Deacon Geoffrey and Diaconissa Jolan Ready, in Bangor, Co Down - a significant place, it is hoped, to begin the rekindling of Orthodoxy in Ulster, as Bangor was one of the principal monastic and missionary centres of the early western Church. During his visit, Father Peter also visited members of the mission, receiving two more catechumens. Father Peter hopes to serve regularly in Northern Ireland, as also at Stradbally in the Republic, and the mission has acquired a property within Belfast City, where a larger chapel is to be blessed, which, it is hoped, will become the centre of the mission. Prayers are asked for the people of the Holy Trinity Mission and that the regular Liturgies, combined with their already established schedule of reader services, will be a step towards the establishment of a permanent Orthodox presence in Belfast.

SAINT ANTONY'S MONASTERY RESTORATION

EGYPT announced in December last year that the Monastery of Saint Antony the Great, founded in the fourth century and now in the hands of Coptic monks is to be restored. The monastery is built on the slopes of Mount Al-Galala in the Zaafarana region, near the cave in which Saint Antony struggled. Most of the present building,

however, dates from the twelfth or thirteen centuries, when the monastery was no longer in Orthodox hands.

ASSYRIAN PRIEST FACES TRIAL

FATHER YUSUF AKBULUT, the Assyrian priest in Diyarbakir went on trial in Turkey in December last year, accused of provoking hatred, for telling people about the genocide of his people, a Christian minority, by the Turks in 1915. The trial has raised questions in the Swedish parliament about Turkey's eligibility for membership of the European Union. Fr Yusuf had been interviewed by reporters from a Turkish newspaper with reference to the deliberations in the U.S. Congress regarding the Armenian Genocide Resolution. The British Government still refuses to accept the fact of the Armenian Genocide by the Turks.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

CHRISTMAS: This year, we were joined at the Christmas Liturgy on Sunday 25th December/7th January, by Father Hierodeacon Nilus of the ancient Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. Father Nilus, an English convert to Holy Orthodoxy, was in this country in connection with the Sinai, Byzantium, Russia icon exhibition at the Courtauld, to which, later in the week, he welcomed members of the Brotherhood. The Parish Feast after the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day was enhanced through the good initiative of Mr Robert Eades of Pirbright, the father of our Fr Hierodeacon Sabbas. He brought his portable organ so that he could accompany the Carol Singing, which in previous years had been rather subdued (perhaps because this is Surrey!). He also went to the trouble of preparing hymn sheets for people to sing from. His efforts were greatly appreciated by all. One blessing leads to another, and hearing of the use of the keyboard, a friend from Farnborough, who is also one of the committee members of the Brookwood Cemetery Society, Mrs Janice Hingston gave us a beautiful electronic keyboard, which will be used not so much for sing-songs (these are rare here in the Deadlands!) but to help in arranging the church chants.

THEOPHANY AT CHERTSEY: As is now our well-established custom, after the Divine Liturgy on the Great Feast of the Theophany, we went to Chertsey to the site of the ancient monastery, founded in the seventh century by Saint Erkonwald, to bless the waters. For the ceremony, our little congregation was joined by Rev. Tim Hillier and the Rev. Fiona Windsor of St Peter's Shared Church in the town and by other local people. After the blessing they invited us back to their church hall, where they had prepared hot soup, rolls, butter, cheese and fruit for everyone. We are deeply grateful to them for this hospitality, and hope that as, last year, they will visit us in the Summer at Brookwood. After the repast, which was all the more delicious for being so unexpected, we briefly visited the animal sanctuary at Abbey Bridge, where we were asked by Mrs Mary Haigh, who runs it with her husband, Robin, whether next year we could serve the Blessing of the Waters by the stretch of river bordering their property as a blessing for their animals.

NEW HAND-PAINTED ICON: Within the last month, an icon commissioned in prayerful memory of Cassiane, the infant daughter of Deacon Geoffrey and Diaconissa Jolan Ready, who died, newly baptised, as a one-day old infant on Lazarus Saturday

last year, has arrived from the Convent of Saint Elizabeth in Etna, California. The icon depicts baby Cassiane's name-saint, Saint Cassiane the Hymnographer, holding a scroll with the opening words of the renowned hymn, which is sung each year at Passiontide. At the time of going to press, the icon is being photographed. We are grateful to Deacon Geoffrey and Diaconissa for the gift of this beautiful icon and to the sisters in Etna, who painted it for us.

SAINT PANTELEIMON ICON: Donations towards the commission of an icon of the Great Martyr raised a total of £445, and we are in the process of ordering the icon. Our thanks to all those of our readers who contributed to this appeal. May the Saint's prayers help you in every circumstance and particularly in times of sickness.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Our Sunday School teacher, Miss Elizabeth Meade, has taken several months leave to visit Australia. During her absence Mrs Elena Holden and Mrs Magdalena Antoniazzi have kindly agreed to share the work of running the Sunday school.

ORTHODOX AID FUND: In the year 2000, we gave donations from this fund to various church and humanitarian charities totalling £2,882.40 or US\$ 1,633.00. Sadly these totals represent only 58% and 54% respectively of what we were able to give last year. Although this is somewhat disappointing we suspect that overall the donations to the Brotherhood have not decreased substantially but that last year a greater amount was earmarked for the King Edward Orthodox Trust, because of the works that we had done on the Brotherhood property. Thus less was available to allocate to other charitable needs. We ask our readers to help us do better in the first year of the New Millennium, 2001, and we thank all those who have made possible these gifts to other needy causes. May God's blessing be upon you.

NEW HOUSE FUND: Although in our October 2000 issue, we simply mentioned that we were looking into the possibility of building a custom-built house for the Monastic Brotherhood here, this seems to have caught the imagination of many of our readers. We did not even announce the opening of an appeal and yet, glory be to God, already £8,750 has been donated by our readers, earmarked for the new building. We are extremely grateful to those who have responded in this way. Of course, if the building does materialize we shall need many times as much as this again, but the spontaneous way in which this money was given is very encouraging, when, as at the beginning here, we are contemplating taking on a huge responsibility and financial commitment and have nothing but good intentions. In 1981, we agreed to purchase this property having only £200 in hand, and through God's mercies and the prayers of St Edward, we have been blessed to establish what we have and to write off our debts. We hope and pray that the generosity that has already been shown through the "New House Fund" indicates that we might be blessed to do the same again. We must emphasize, however, that at the moment, we have only tentative ideas and no firm plans. We will keep readers informed as and when matters develop.

PRACTICAL TIP

GREAT LENT is approaching and will begin in mid-February. To prepare us for the fast, the Church gives us four Sundays before the fast starts which instruct us how to approach the fast, in what light to see it. Nonetheless, year after year, many of us

wrong-foot it, perhaps because we simply see these Sundays, their Gospel lections, the services based on those readings and the homilies we hear in church, as a kind of liturgical rite that we customarily go through and nothing more. Thus we do not take their messages deeply to heart. Do not waste those four Sundays and the intervening three weeks. Reflect again and again on what is taught us; back up the church observance (which for many of us is minimal in any case) with spiritual reading during the week. The Fathers often likened the fast to an arena of athletic contest, and no athlete, who hopes to win, enters the stadium without first training.