

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

"IT MUST BE carefully noted that sloth comes of insensibility and deceit of self-love, for over little love of God gives magnitude to the first, while self-love, miserably possessing the mind, engenders the other."

Saint Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, + 603 A.D.

"LISTLESSNESS - a most difficult passion to overcome - makes the body sluggish. When the body is sluggish, the soul also grows sluggish. When both have become thoroughly lax, self-indulgence induces a change in the body's temperament. Self-indulgence incites the appetite, appetite gives rise to pernicious desire, desire to the spirit of revolt, revolt to dormant recollections, recollection to imaginings, imagining to mental provocation, provocation to coupling with the thought provoked, and coupling to assent. Such assent to a diabolic provocation leads to actual sinning, either through the body or in various other ways. Thus we are defeated and thus we lapse."

Ven. Gregory of Sinai, + 1346 A.D.

"THIS IS THE DEMON of despondency fighting against you. He fights against everyone. He even fought against St Seraphim of Sarov and St Ephraim the Syrian, who wrote the prayer known to all, O Lord and Master of my life.... You see that he puts in the first place 'a spirit of idleness;' and as a result of idleness,' a spirit of despondency, give me not,' he says. This is a ferocious demon. He attacks you with sleep but attacks others when they are awake, with despondency and melancholy. He attacks each one however he can."

Ven. Barsanuphius of Optina, + 1913 A.D.

THE MYSTERY OF THE LITURGY

This article, which we began in the July issue and complete in this issue, by Archimandrite Athanasy, was translated from "The Mystery of the Liturgy" (in Russian), translated into French by N. Tikhomirova, & into English, with slight omissions & revisions, by Mother Pelagia of the Lesna Icon Convent, Provemont, Normandy, France.

LOVE

THIS PART of the Liturgy includes as it unfolds all those in the world who are not baptised. This world is enormous. Could the Saviour, going to Golgotha, forget the dark masses of those who have not the joy of mounting it with Him? No. He includes them as He goes, but only indirectly by the channel of the prayers of the faithful for them. "Pray, ye faithful, for the catechumens." It is true that all have not yet been catechised by the preaching of the Gospel, but the prayers of the faithful reach every people, every country, all those living - none is disinherited. All mankind of the whole

world is united at Golgotha, for at the moment when God suffers, all creation sighs, relieved of the burden of its sins.

And so our Liturgy is the universal mystery of Love, not our love, but that of God embracing the whole world. Every Christian, when he participates in the Liturgy, already participates by this means in the salvation of the whole world. His personal love for his brothers flows like a droplet in the ocean of God's love. He can then with a pure conscience approach that part which follows, the "Liturgy of the Faithful."

"Again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord." The faithful do not approach the nuptial banquet of the Lamb egoistically, but have before this prayed for the whole world. These [prayers] are only crumbs from the banquet, but they have fallen and satisfied suffering souls, although maybe we do not see the results of our prayers. This prayer of the faithful for the catechumens has been raised for many centuries, but the number of unbaptised people is still immeasurably great. However, this question should be considered in another way: that is, what would have happened if this prayer had not been made at all? No, the prayer of the faithful for the faithless is the salt of the earth. For Christ is "the Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world," and in the prayer of the faithful Christ Himself visits every man living on earth.

The "Liturgy of the Catechumens" concludes with a request that they leave the church. And this request is repeated several times with insistence by the deacon. Then the Liturgy stops for a few instants while all the catechumens depart. The sight of this is instructive. What does it betoken? It is a mystery. He who is not baptised does not have Christ within him. How could one communicate of His Body and Blood; how could one mount with Him to Golgotha if one has not Him Himself within, if one has not received this through Baptism?

Although all is created and sustained by Christ, although He has reached out to everyone, the difference between a baptised and an unbaptised person is as great as the difference between Heaven and earth. Only those who have entered the Church can have Him as their Head. Our responsibility is so great towards those who are not members! How burning should be our prayer for them at this moment of the Liturgy! And what an immense honour to be in the hands of God the instrument of the salvation of the whole world.

II. THE GREAT ENTRANCE AND THE EUCHARISTIC CANON FAITHFULNESS

NOW COMES the moment to prove one's fidelity to Christ. What does this fidelity consist of? One must know this exactly: Him, His work, His Person. When He taught He spoke to simple people in parables, but then explained them to His disciples. Then the time came when even His disciples could no longer understand. When He condemned Himself to suffering, beginning with the Entry into Jerusalem, His conduct became incomprehensible to them. When they thought that He would proclaim Himself King, He wept on seeing Jerusalem, which was glorifying Him on that day and would the next day turn away from Him. And now we, His faithful disciples, must understand that when we glorify Christ in the Cherubic Hymn as the King entering Jerusalem, at the same time we are accompanying Him to Golgotha. The Great

Entrance, when the Holy Gifts prepared on the table of the prothesis are solemnly transported to the altar, is at the same time precisely the way of Christ to Jerusalem seated on the foal of an ass and also His way to Golgotha under the weight of the Cross. That is why, at the same time as the people sing triumphantly to "receive the King of all," the priest, having closed the curtain, covering the "tomb," pronounces: "The noble Joseph, taking Thine immaculate Body down from the Tree...." We too, sensing this, feel a complex sentiment, simultaneously sorrowful and triumphant throughout the Cherubic Hymn. During the earthly life of Christ there was first the triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, then the funeral walk to Golgotha. But now, we faithful, having learned wisdom, at first weep with Christ over ourselves during the Cherubic Hymn, and then find renewed joy as we sing "that we may receive the King of all, escorted invisibly by the angelic orders."

How impressive is this moment when the Cherubicon is sung, for here is revealed the mystery of Christ the King. He hides Himself no longer. He allows His glorification as "King of all," although before He had quickly disappeared when the crowd wanted to proclaim him King. But now Christ places Himself confidently in the hands of the people. We, the faithful, understand Him to be King not of this world. And we escort Him with the Angels, as though He were carried on the shields of victory, held up by lances, just as in former times victorious warriors carried their king. The angels are really present; where else could they be but near their Lord? For at this moment there is an accomplishment: the very work for which the Son of God the Father descended to earth, the work of the salvation of fallen man. If the Angels are guardians of our life, how could they not participate in what is their principal role? They accompany Christ from the beginning of His ministry, as it is written in the Gospel, when His temptations from the devil in the desert had finished, the Angels drew near and served Him. That is why when the clergy come out with the Gospel, they are accompanied by the holy Angels, for which the priest prays silently: "Grant that with our entrance there may be an entrance also of holy Angels, with us serving Thee, and with us glorifying Thy goodness" [from the Prayer of the Little Entrance]. This is why this song is called the Cherubicon. And do we not experience after this prayer something like a change in our innermost feeling, an increase of piety and a deepening of prayer, as we leave aside all the cares of this world. How profound and striking is the mystery of our Liturgy!

PEACE

After the Cherubic Hymn comes the Litany of Oblation. Then begins the Eucharistic Canon, the most important part of the Liturgy, corresponding to Holy Week and Pascha. During the Cherubic hymn, we the faithful disciples of Christ, mounted Golgotha with Him. But now events seem to have reversed. One hears the words, "Take, eat..., Drink ye all of it...", pronounced as at the Mystical Supper. There we have one of the greatest mysteries. How could Christ, present at the Supper, offer to give His disciples His Body and Blood, as if they had already been sacrificed, even before Golgotha? For every mystery we know only the contents, but not how it happens. So here too, we know the fact that Christ offered Himself to the Apostles as food before Golgotha, but how it could be done it is not given us to understand.

He brings Himself in sacrifice; He is immolated before Judas delivers him, before the prayer at Gethsemane, before being condemned to die on the Cross. "It is Thou Who offerest and art offered" says the priest in the secret prayer during the Cherubicon. Thou wast seized, delivered, judged and crucified, and they thought that they had power and authority over Thee. But Thou hast humbled them by the fact that Thou didst condemn Thyself before their judgment. Thou hast delivered Thyself before their betrayal; Thou hast judged thyself before their condemnation, and Thou hast died before they killed Thee. And we now in the same way offer this bloodless sacrifice, thinking that it is we who offer it, when it is Thou and thou alone Who offerest Thyself and givest Thyself as food to the faithful. "For it Thou who offerest and art offered, who receivest and art Thyself received, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," says the priest, ending his secret prayer.

What is our role then, our position, when faced with this? We are with Thee, having accepted this Mystery through our faith, and that is why we proclaim with joy and triumph our "Credo," "I believe," the Symbol of the Faith, in which are disclosed all the mysteries of Thy revelation. Thou art sacrificed and we accept Thy sacrifice and accompany Thee, bringing from our side the most sublime thing that we can offer Thee - "A mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise." We also offer Thee a sacrifice - but in words, that is to say a sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of our thankful hearts, purified by Thy Blood. By this we witness that Thou hast not died in vain. We, here present, are the fruits of Thy sacrifice. This sacrifice. Thy sacrifice, resounds with the response, the sacrifice of praise, praise of Thy measureless sacrifice. Thine unbelievable act. Thy love which embraces all. But it is not we ourselves who bring this praise (for the human soul is not to be trusted, it is inconstant), it comes as a result of that heart-warming peace, the peace that thou givest us, as Thou didst promise us when Thou didst say, "Take, eat drink ye My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth." And so this peace, which is Thine, descends from Thee into our souls, gives us the right to sing to Thee with warmth, to bring Thee sacrifices of praise.

Such a fine harmony, such an astonishing mystery of peace unrolls itself before us in the Liturgy. What is this peace of Christ? Is it not the same as that of which the Angels sang at the Nativity? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." Two thousand years have passed since then, and there is no peace in the world. No, this peace, come down from the heavens at that time, being in essence celestial, has not reconciled earth with earth, but earth with Heaven. This peace has reconciled God with man. It has planted Him deeply within the heart of man, for it is written, "Our Christ, our peace." Only thanks to that is our participation in the Liturgy made possible. Thy priceless sacrifice has reconciled us with God, has appeased His righteous anger, has extinguished the threatening arrows of flame as with the Three Children in the furnace. It gives us the strength and courage to stand at the Liturgy in the middle of the fire of the glory of God, the flaming Cherubim, in the presence of the holiness of the saints. No, it is not we ourselves, it is Thy peace which brings grace to us, the sacrifice of praise. Without Thy sacrifice there could be no peace, without peace no grace to make us worthy to offer a sacrifice in turn, the responsive sacrifice of praise. Receive now our song of praise, which we are ready to chant to Thee unceasingly with the six-winged Angels, with the Cherubim, unendingly announcing the song of victory,

"singing, shouting, crying and saying:" "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord."

Yes, the peace of Christ appears as the basic principle of the liturgical chants. The "offering of peace" clothes the Liturgy all the time. So often we hear: "In peace let us pray to the Lord," and "Peace be unto all." We pray for "the peace from above," "that the whole day may be peaceful," "an Angel of peace," "peace for the whole world," "that we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance." All the Liturgy is pregnated with peace, just as the Vigils are with light. Vigils are celebrated in the shades of the night, beseeching God for light, and when the light of the day illumines the souls of believers, they, having already received the light of Christ, rejoice in the peace of Christ which gives them the right to participate, to be in communion with Him at the Mystical Supper and at Golgotha, at the Resurrection and at the Ascension - that is, to be participants at the Liturgy of this mystery of the peace of Christ.

From

"THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N. R. Antonov

Continuation

SECOND PART

The Order and Explanation of the Church Services

§ 46. The General Church Services. As we mentioned above, in paragraph four, all the church services can be divided into those which are offered at the request of individuals for special needs, and those which are for the whole Christian community. But not every Orthodox Christian is in a position to invite the clergy to serve special services for himself, and what is generally appointed in God's House, the Orthodox Church, would not be done if it depended on individual people requiring it! So the Church has appointed that there be special times when all worshippers can come to church and "pour out their prayers before the Lord." There are nine services which the Holy Church now serves for common prayer and which are celebrated at the appointed times: Vespers, Compline, Nocturns, Mattins, the First Hour, the Third Hour, the Sixth Hour, the Ninth Hour and the Typica. These are the daily services.

§ 27. What a Service is. The church services are composed according to particular plans, in which the prayer is divided into lections from the sacred Scriptures, hymns and rites, which impart some special meaning or idea. Thanks to the fact that each service in Orthodox worship follows a distinctive theme, each church service should be a harmonious, proper and skilful sacred production, which, through its words, chants and the impressions it induces, is intended to form in the souls of the worshippers a pious disposition, to strengthen their living faith in God, and to prepare the Orthodox Christian for the reception of Divine grace. To establish the guiding thought of each

service and to establish the bond between its component parts and this idea is the whole point of the study of liturgics. In the service books, the way in which one service or another is arranged is called the "order" or the "sequence" of the service.

§ 48. The Derivation of the Daily Services. The names of the daily services come from the time of day when they are appointed to be served. Thus for instance. Vespers is at the evening hour (in the Russian it refers more specifically to the evening meal); Compline is for the time after supper (in both Greek and Russian, the word used for this service means "after supper"); Nocturns is at midnight (again in both Greek and Russian the word derives from the word for midnight); Mattins is in the early morning; the Typica is at about the time of the midday meal (in the Russian this is immediately obvious from its name). The Hours are named after the hour of the day at which they should be read, but we must bear in mind that anciently the day was divided into twelve hours, beginning at sunrise and ending at sunset, and so the First Hour comes an hour after dawn; the Third at about nine in the morning, the Sixth and noon, and the Ninth at mid-afternoon.

The tradition of consecrating these particular times to prayer has very ancient origins in the Christian Church, and it was also inaugurated under the influence of the Old Testament custom of resorting to the Temple three times in the course of the day to pray at the offering of the sacrifices; in the morning, the noonday and at evening. So it is that, with regard to offering God glory, we read in the words of the Psalmist that it was done "evening, morning and noonday" (Ps. 54:19). The influence of the Old Testament Church is particularly evident in those services we call the Hours. Actually the Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours were consecrated to prayer already in Apostolic times (see Acts 2:3 & 15; 10:9 and 3:1). And this dedication of these times to prayer became more established in the course of time, especially when the significance of New Testament events was taken into consideration, for at the Third Hour we had the Descent of the Holy Spirit, at the Sixth the Passion of Jesus Christ, and at the Ninth His death upon the Cross.

Already in the first days of Christianity, besides these Hours, other times of the day and night were consecrated to prayer, in the morning, at the evening hour (at the going down of the sun), and at night at cockcrow. True, during the period of the persecutions these times were only observed privately, at home and quickly. They consisted for the most part of the reading of the psalms, and sometimes the prayer, "Our Father." During the persecutions (second and third centuries), more solemn prayer services were held only on Sundays, morning and evening. But over the course of time, with the conclusion of the persecutions, these private prayers at home, slotted into particular moments of the day or night, developed into the daily services of the whole community.

However, if as we have seen in the appointment of the times of the daily common services we have observed a certain influence from the Old Testament Church, then in the composition of the services themselves we observe that the Orthodox Church has been guided to commemorate Christian events which are associated with these times. For this reason, during these daily services, we do not only read the Old Testament psalms, but we also add prayers and hymns of specifically Christian derivation, in which the events commemorated at these times are recalled,

and through which the Church has imbued these services with a fullness of Christian meaning and significance.

§ 49. The Sacred Events Hymned at the Daily Services. Before we speak of these sacred events which are outlined in the daily services, let us clarify the question of how we should understand the significance of some sacred event or some person being brought to our attention or commemorated in the church services. This practice means in actuality that during the services prayers and portions from the Sacred Scriptures are read and chanted which either directly or obliquely (that is, by allusion or prophetically) relate the events in question or call upon the name of the saint; for instance, in this way we commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Apostles, Saint Nicolas the God-pleaser, or the Dormition of the Mother of God.

We shall speak of these events in detail and how they are reflected in the Christian prayers later on, but for now let us just consider the following things. Vespers is accounted the first of the daily services, because according to the Church's understanding the day begins with the evening, just as it was on the world's very first day, and because man's existence was prefaced by darkness, by evening, by twilight. At the evening service, - just as it was in the Jewish so it is in the Christian liturgy, - a clear portrayal is given of the creation of the world and of man. In addition to this, in the Orthodox Church, Vespers is dedicated to a remembrance of the fall of man and to awaiting salvation through Jesus Christ. Compline coincides with the time when we retire to sleep, and sleep reminds us of death, after which the resurrection will follow. For this reason in Orthodox services, the Compline services remind the worshippers of the awakening from eternal sleep, or more properly of the resurrection. From ages past, the midnight hour has been dedicated to prayer, for the Christian this is so because it was at this time that Jesus Christ made His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, and more especially because, in the parable of the Ten Virgins, it was in the middle of the night that the Bridegroom came as He will again at His second Coming. For these reasons at Nocturns we remember Jesus Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, His Second Coming and His dread Judgment. The time of Mattins, which brings with it light, courage and life, always inspires a feeling of thankfulness towards God, the Giver of life. It was for this reason that the Jews consecrated this time to God. In the Orthodox services, in the morning we glorify the coming of the Saviour into the world, bringing with Him new life for mankind. On the Hours, we commemorate these specifically Christian things: at the First Hour, Jesus Christ's judgment before the high priests, which took place at approximately this time, i.e. seven in the morning; at the Third Hour, the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, which occurred at about nine in the morning; at the Sixth Hour, the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, which fell at about twelve to two in the afternoon; at the Ninth Hour we commemorate His death upon the Cross, which took place at about three in the afternoon. Thus these sacred events serve as the occasion for the ordering of the first eight of the daily services. As regards the Typica, it is composed of a commemoration of all the earthly life of Jesus Christ and of the institution by Him of the Mystery of Holy Communion. The Typica or the Liturgy are in a very special sense the Christian service, making their appearance even before the others services and from the very beginning possessing the character of that service which unites into one the Christian community through the Mystery of Holy

Communion. [*The Typica is the service which is read on days when there is no Liturgy, so what Fr Antonov says here refers in the first instance to the Liturgy itself, and thus by association to the Typica - ed.*]

Originally all these services were served separately from each other, especially in the monasteries. In the course of time, they began to be grouped together, so that the gatherings were more widely spaced through the day, though without disturbing their order. So they would serve three services together in three goes: in the evening: the Ninth Hour, Vespers and Compline; in the early morning: Nocturns, Mattins and First Hour; and later in the morning: the Third Hour, the Sixth Hour and the Liturgy.

To be continued with "Other Sacred Commemorations in the Church Services"...

THE COMING MONTH

IN AUGUST, we celebrate the last two Great Feasts in the Church Year, the Transfiguration of the Lord (6th/19th) and the Dormition of the Mother of God (15th/28th). As most of our readers will know, for the first fourteen days of the month we keep a fast in preparation for the Dormition. The fast is short but is kept more strictly than the Apostles' fast and the Nativity one.

In August there are also Three Feasts of the Saviour. One of these, the second, is the Great Feast of the Transfiguration. The first is the Procession of the Honourable Wood of the Cross with which we begin the Dormition fast on 1st/ 14th of the month. The third is the festival of the Translation of the Icon of the Saviour Not made by Hands, the Holy Napkin, from Edessa to Constantinople, and this feast falls on the second day of the Dormition (16th/29th).

And towards the end of the month we have a feast, which is not counted among the Twelve Great Feasts, but which is usually celebrated with a Vigil, that of the Beheading of the Honourable Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John. This year this feast falls on a Wednesday, but even if it should not happen to fall on a fast day, it is kept by Orthodox Christians as a fast, so that we align ourselves with the ascetic, desert-loving St John, rather than with the pleasure-loving Herod and his cronies.

While we are thinking of fasting, we should note that this year the Dormition falls on a fastday as well, on a Wednesday. The practice then, as it is not a major festival of the Lord, is that we still fast, but are allowed fish, wine and oil with our food.

About these pre-eminent feasts we have said much in previous issues over the years, and so this year let us rather devote our space to the saints of the month:-

The Righteous Nonna (5th/18th) is one of those women for whom we only have one adequate word in English, although it is rather dated. She was a matron. She lived in the fourth century in Asia Minor, and from her infancy she was brought up as a Christian. She was given in marriage to a well-to-do pagan named Gregory. Through her prayers and exhortations she brought him to the Christian Faith. Subsequently her husband was consecrated as Bishop of Nazianzus, and Nonna became a deaconess. She is perhaps best known both for her devotion to prayer and as the mother of another Gregory, one of the greatest saints of the Church, Saint Gregory the Theologian. (In Western sources St Gregory the Theologian is often referred to as St

Gregory Nazianzus, but among the Orthodox his father, being Bishop of that city, is known by that title.) Through her prayers St Nonna once saved her son from a storm. She died peacefully in the year 374.

Saint Blane of Bute (10th/23rd) was the nephew of Saint Cathan and was born in Scotland in the sixth century. In his youth he went to Ireland, at that time a great centre of monasticism and learning, and there he was schooled under the spiritual direction of Saints Comgall and Cainnech (Kenneth). He spent seven years there and then returned to his native Scotland, where subsequently he was consecrated Bishop and engaged in missionary activities. He was known as a wonder-worker in his lifetime and two miracles of his have come down to our time in the records. Once, when his light went out, he clicked his fingers, as if striking a flint against steel, and a flame appeared from his finger-ends to light his lamp. Again at the end of his days, he made a pilgrimage to Rome, to the tombs of the Holy Apostles. In one city on his journey, he found a boy who had lived an extremely wicked life, had suffered from being blind in one eye, and had recently died. St Blane worked a triple miracle for him, he raised him from the dead, gave sight to his blinded eye, and brought him to repent of his former wicked ways and baptised him.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk (13th/26th) is one of the best loved saints of the Church of Russia. He was born in 1724 in a village called Korotsk, which is in the Novgorod region. He was born into a poor peasant family, but through his natural cleverness and application, he managed to win scholarships and receive an education. In his early thirties he was tonsured as a monk, and eventually he was consecrated as Bishop of Voronezh. Because of ill-health he retired after only seven years and eventually settled in the monastery at Zadonsk. From his retirement, he was able to help and direct many people spiritually. He was known also for his care for the poor and what we would now call the under-class. His sermons and homilies are also remarkable, especially so as they are couched in simple terms and use the every-day things of life to explain the deepest mysteries of the Orthodox Faith. He reposed in peace on 13th August, 1783, and so many were the miracles worked at his tomb that he was synodically glorified in 1861.

The life of the New Martyr Simeon the Jeweller of Trebizond (14th/27th) illustrates how, in His loving kindness, the Lord often uses the ugliest of situations to bring someone to salvation. In 1653, Simeon was in Constantinople, when the following unpleasant incident occurred. Three Christians in the City were travelling through the Jewish quarter. One of the Christians who was diminutive of stature happened to see a particularly tall and corpulent Jew and began to make fun of him. Quite naturally, after a time, the Jew became rather tired of this, and picked the offending man up, laid him over his shoulders and walked off with him. The Christian apparently began to panic and taking his knife stabbed the Jew in the back. For a while the Jew who was drunk and had released the his tormentor did not notice, but eventually he felt the pain and saw the flow of blood. A hue and cry ensued, and the Jews set out to apprehend the culprit. People from both communities gathered and took sides, and among the crowd was Simeon. Inadvisedly and callously he said, "What does it matter if a Jew dies?" Whereupon they turned on him and accused him of wounding their compatriot. They hauled him to the Vizier claiming to have witnessed his stabbing their friend. To quell the rising tension, the judge ordered that he be confined for forty days, and that if the

Jew died in that time, he should be guilty of murder and executed; if the Jew should live, he should be released but liable for his medical fees. The Jew lived for forty days and so Simeon was cleared of murder, but ten days later the Jew died. Again there was a clamour, and the murdered man's friends demanded that Simeon be executed. The Vizier, wishing to spare Simeon, offered that, should he embrace Islam, he would be spared. The Martyr, at this point, told him, "Even if you should subject me to ten thousand deaths, you will not be able to separate me from the faith and love of Christ." Upon this confession, he was sentenced to death and was taken to a place called Parma Caleh and there hanged from a plane tree, receiving the crown of martyrdom for his confession of the Faith.

Our Venerable Father John of Rila (18th/31st) is one of the greatest saints of the Bulgarian Church. He lived in the latter half of the ninth and beginning of the tenth centuries. He was born near Sofia, at a place called Skrino. His parents were poor, and when they had died and he no longer had responsibilities towards them, he retired to live as a hermit in the mountains, staying at first in a cave. Like the great Saint Antony, he suffered many things from the demons, but he persevered and overcame his temptations. Later he moved to Mount Rila, where he lived in a hollow tree, eating only the herbs and berries that he found in the vicinity. For many years, he was seen by no man, until by God's providence a shepherd looking for lost sheep came upon him. Then the Saint became known and people began to flock to him to ask his prayers, his spiritual counsel and his help in the difficulties of life. Such was his renown that the pious King Peter also resorted to him for counsel. A church and a monastery were built where he had lived previously as an unknown hermit. This monastery became one of the greatest spiritual centres in Bulgaria. The Saint ended his earthly course on 18th August, 946 A.D, when he was seventy years of age. His sacred relics were taken to Sofia, and later to Hungary, then to Trnovo and finally back again to Rila. These moves were often necessitated by the political situation in an area, which of course, was largely overrun by the Turks for a long period. The Saint has a second feastday on 19th October/1st November. It was because on this day in 1829 that Saint John of Cronstadt, the renowned Russian Wonderworker, was born that he was named John in honour of Saint John of Rila.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"Many branches of the Orthodox faith are not in communion with one another. To me, as someone (relatively) new to the Church, that is both confusing and distracting. Why, in Orthodoxy in particular, is there not common communion? How am I to know who is right and who is wrong and what advice would you give me about understanding the reasons for differences of opinion?" P.L, London, EC2

I think to understand the situation, we have to approach it from two different angles. First of all, you must bear in mind that for nearly a hundred years now the Orthodox Church has been living through extraordinary times; and circumstances, events, expediencies have thrown up some extraordinary responses.

Properly, all Orthodox Christians are and should be in full communion with each other. We see clearly that we are not. And so we must study what being in communion with each other means. I think for those of us who come from a Western

background we would tend to think that the model should be thus: all Orthodox Christians should be in communion with all others; if any who call themselves Orthodox are not, then it follows immediately, that they are not really Orthodox.

This is common-sense. But, unfortunately, it is not the mind and experience of the Church herself. The Church, knowing our various weaknesses (both individually and collectively) as fallen human beings, seeks to bring us to salvation by employing subtler distinctions. We have only to make a cursory study of Church history to find many instances of this. In the last hundred years or so, those instances have proliferated.

In brief, there are three main reasons for this proliferation:

- A) different responses to the enslavement of the church administration by the enemies of the Church, in particular, the Communists;
- B) different responses to the challenge posed the Church by ecumenism;
- C) what I can only call "jurisdictionalism." This last particularly affects the church in the lands which were not traditionally Orthodox, where different national Churches have set up church structures to care for their various peoples scattered about the world, without reference to each other. Thus in the West, in the place of one Church hierarchy, we have several.

To these three main causes, we can perhaps suggest a fourth:-

- D) different responses to the problems posed by our living in a post-Christian society and to pastoral matters. For instance, do we allow mixed marriages? Do we permit cremation or not? Non-Orthodox Christians to stand as sponsors at Baptisms? Children of unwedded parents to be baptised before their parents marry? Baptism by pouring or sprinkling? Priests to re-marry? More than one Liturgy to be celebrated by a priest in a single day? Liturgies to be served in the evening? Fasting disciplines to be curtailed? There are a host of such questions, each of a different weight. No one of the them has fortunately caused any split in communion to date, but they are all symptoms of a malaise which is slowly but inexorably pushing a wedge between what we can only refer to as traditionalist and non-traditionalist churches.

When a church finds that in any of these areas, she cannot in conscience agree with the practices of another church administration, naturally she draws their attention to this and hopes that correction will be made and a restoration of concord will ensue. But if this does not happen her only final recourse is to sever communion, to, as the term goes, "wall herself off" from what she perceives to be a wrong course. It must be emphasised that this does not mean that she considers that the other Church is not Orthodox or outside the Church. In walling herself off, such a Church even does not profess that she is necessarily right, but only that she awaits Synodical clarification, when freedom is granted the whole Church to decide on the matter dispassionately.

So these breaks in communion occur. They are regrettable, but they are also a lively reminder that as Orthodox Christians we are zealous to guard the deposit that has been handed down to us. We are not concerned with some outward or administrative unity at all costs, but are more concerned with that inner unity which springs from our unity in the Faith. It is because we see the profession of that Faith endangered by the various manifestations of church life I have mentioned above, that we are concerned - for without that Faith there would be no unity at all, just a vague amalgamation of interests. In the Liturgy, we preface the "Our Father" with the words "Having asked for the unity of the Faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend " Nowhere previously in the service have we specifically asked for "unity of the Faith and communion of the Holy Spirit" and yet the Holy Fathers, guided by that same Holy Spirit, obviously saw these two things inextricably linked, and they saw all the prayers of the Liturgy before this point as summed up in those words. That prayer and that gift give us boldness to say the Lord's Prayer together and, as follows immediately, to receive the Holy Gifts together.

At the beginning of this waffle, I mentioned approaching the question from two different angles. I have touched upon what one might call the outer aspect: the historical course of events and the administrative response to problems in church life. There is another approach, which brings us to the same answer.

In the Liturgy we are called upon to love one another "that with one mind we may confess" the Creed; later we ask that we be granted "with one mouth and one heart to glorify and hymn [the] all-honourable and majestic Name" of God; we approach the "Our Father" with the words I have already quoted. Unity of heart, mind and confession are fundamental to our receiving the Holy Gifts together. The disputes in Church life make such a unity of heart, mind and confession impossible. We must guard against judging those with whom we disagree, until their actions have been Synodically condemned, but we cannot hypocritically or carelessly receive with them, ignoring unity of heart, mind and confession.

Now how do you, as someone approaching Orthodoxy, distinguish who among the "competing" voices is following the right course. It is, of course, extremely difficult, and I cannot give you a complete answer. I can only indicate ways to go. First of all, pray, for the Lord does not wish to lead you from one error into another and He will guide you (perhaps by a tortuous route). Secondly study all you can, and as much as you can from primary sources - from the Scriptures and from the Holy Fathers, and try to see who more closely follows their teaching, but bear in mind the fallibility of your own understanding and so always be ready to re-assess your conclusions. Thirdly, take advice. Fourthly judge - this might seem an odd injunction from one who professes to follow Him Who told us not to judge! But as the Lord Himself made clear in other passages we are to judge certain things - and so judge which of the various groups is living in the tradition of the Fathers. Again, though, beware of your own fallibility. But look as far as is possible to the inner life of the various churches - not to their bank balances, their outward splendour or lack of, to the number of functions that they hold or events they sponsor, but to whether they are preaching Orthodoxy, whether they are pastorally caring for their flocks, whether they are inculcating a life of prayer and fasting, etc. etc. And lastly again, pray about it.

NEWS SECTION

SERBIAN PATRIARCH TO VISIT LONDON: His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia is due to visit London at the end of September. He will preside at the Divine Services at the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Sava, Lancaster Road, W11, on Sunday 29th September on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the consecration of the church.

NEW O.C.A. METROPOLITAN: On 22nd July at its All-American Council, the Orthodox Church in America appointed Archbishop Herman of Philadelphia as the successor to Metropolitan Theodosius. Born Joseph Swalko in 1932, the new Metropolitan Herman graduated from St Tikhon Seminary in 1963. He was ordained to the diaconate in March 1964 and a priest a month later. He was tonsured a monk in 1970 and given the name Herman. Ten months later he was elevated to be Abbot of St Tikhon's. Almost exactly a year later he was elected to the episcopate and ranked as Archimandrite. He was actually consecrated Bishop of Wilkes-Barre on 10th February, 1973, but remained to reside in the monastery. He was made Bishop of Philadelphia in 1981, and in 1994 was raised to the rank of Archbishop. Following the announcement of his appointment, Metropolitan Herman was formally greeted as the OCA's Primate by the other hierarchs and the members of the Council. He is to be formally installed at the St Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC on 7th - 8th September. Metropolitan Herman is in fact just under two years older than his predecessor. Metropolitan Theodosius.

RELIC RETURNED: A bone of the Protomartyr of Britain, Saint Alban, has been returned to the place of his martyrdom. Saint Alban was executed for his Faith, probably under the persecution raised by the Emperor Decius in the mid-third century. A portion of his sacred relics was subsequently given by the Pope to the Byzantine Princess Theophano, when she married the Holy Roman Emperor Otto II. She deposited the relics in the Church of St Pantaleon in Cologne, where she herself was laid to rest in 991 A.D. It is from among her portions of the martyr's relics that a piece has now been returned to St Alban's and placed in the Cathedral. Those relics which were earlier venerated at St Albans were lost at the time of the Reformation.

SERBIAN ORTHODOX UNDER MULTIPLE ATTACK: The desecration of churches, cemeteries and Christian monuments by Albanian extremists in Kosovo continues despite the presence of "Peacekeeping Forces" there. Over 100 churches and ten cemeteries have been desecrated, and yet no legal measures have been taken or arrests made. In the village churchyards of Siga and Brestovil, the remains of the departed have been exhumed and scattered around. On 10th June more than fifty tombstones in the Serbian Orthodox Cemetery in Orahovac were toppled; a week or so later the ancient Patriarchate at Pec was attacked by young Albanians throwing stones, and the nuns were verbally abused. At the end of June it was only through the intervention of UN police and KFOR that Albanians were stopped from holding a celebration party, playing loud music, alongside the Monastery of Dechani, where again the monastics were abused verbally. At the fourteenth century Monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian at Zociste there was a second arson attack. Until 1999, seven monks lived at the monastery. However, they were forced to flee and the sacred site was then looted and torched by Albanian militants. This year under the protection of KFOR, for this first time since that desecration, the Serbs were permitted to celebrate

the Divine Liturgy there on the church's feastday, 1st/14th July. Bishop Artemije later complained that during the divine service, worship was disrupted by the abusive behaviour of the local Albanians, and after the Serbian faithful had left the monastery was subjected to a second arson attack.

The attackers of the Serbian Orthodox heritage in Kosovo are apparently not only mindless vandals. Several reports have reached us that icons, manuscripts and various other priceless religious artefacts, some dating back to medieval times, have come to light on the European black market. It is apparent that those seeking to obliterate the evidences of the Christian heritage of Kosovo are also profiteering from their evil deeds.

Sadly the attacks on the Serbian Church do not stop there. Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro recently announced plans to hold a conference next year to bring together all the religious leaders in the Balkans, hoping that the conference will issue a common statement on religious and ethnic tolerance. Although it is apparent that the Metropolitan intended only that the religious leaders should discuss shared problems in an effort to bring peace to the area, enemies of the Serbian Church have represented this initiative as Serbian Orthodoxy taking an "ecumenical, interfaith turn." So not only does the Serbian Church suffer attacks on her people, her holy places and her property, but her integrity is impugned, and She suffers yet another Calvary.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

ARCHIEPISCOPAL VISIT: HIS GRACE ARCHBISHOP MARK will be visiting England for the Great Feast of the Dormition at the end of August (n.s.). D.V. He will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward Church, Brookwood, on Sunday 25th August (n.s.) at ten in the morning. During the Divine Liturgy there will be the ordination to the sacred priesthood of Fr Deacon Geoffrey Ready, who will serve at the Holy Trinity Mission in Belfast, Northern Ireland. After the service, all those who have attended are invited to a buffet meal in the Brotherhood House. If any of you are able to help in providing dishes for this, please volunteer your services to a member of the Sisterhood. As we shall be in the Dormition fast, the food provided should be fasting (i.e. vegan), although wine and oil are permitted, it being a Sunday. So, a date for your diaries:-

HIERARCHICAL DIVINE LITURGY
WITH ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD
SUNDAY 25th AUGUST, 10 a.m.

HIGHGROVE VISIT: This year, on Friday 28th June, at the kind invitation H.R.H Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, the Friends of Mount Athos held their meeting at Highgrove. His Royal Highness addressed the Society and met many of the members present. Father Silouan the superior of the Monastery of St Antony and St Cuthbert, Gatten, Shropshire, gave those present a spiritual talk. This year, because the size of the Orchard Room at Highgrove imposed limitations on numbers, only one person from each household was permitted. From our own community Father Hierodeacon Sabbas attended. As is now customary, the guests were given a tour of the beautiful gardens attached to the House.

BIRKENHEAD REVISITED: Over the weekend of 13th and 14th July, Fr Alexis visited the Saint Elizabeth Mission at the home of Fr Paul and Presbytera Elizabeth Elliott at Oxtou, Birkenhead. The little chapel was packed, and after the Divine Liturgy, at which both priests concelebrated, a new artophorion, donated by a family within the parish, was blessed. After the church celebration, everyone enjoyed a barbecue in the gardens.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY OPEN DAY will be held in the grounds around our church on Sunday 18th August between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. (followed by a short break before the Vigil for the Transfiguration). We were able to send some of you a flyer about this in the last issue but unfortunately there were not enough for all our readers. However, full details are available from Antony Montan, BCS's publicity agent, on 01483 232654. Latest news to reach us is that the Mayor of Woking will be a guest of honour.

KEOT Co Ltd AGM: The AGM of the charity which administers our property at Brookwood, the King Edward Orthodox Trust Company Limited, (registered charity no 284929/0) was held on Sunday 7th July immediately after the Divine Liturgy. The normal business was transacted, and the present directors are: Fr Alexis, Fr Peter Balk, Fr Nippon, Reader Gabriel Lawani and Mrs Elizabeth Castle; with Fr Hierodeacon Sabbas, Capt. Laurence Bloom-Davis, Mr Ivan Aleksic, Mrs Helena Lawani, Miss Grace Meeking, and Mrs Eleni Neamonitas as members.

WEEKLY FREEWILL OFFERINGS: The average weekly offerings, left in the almsbox at the back of the church, for the first six months of this year have been:- January- £305.79; February £358.41; March - £407.29; April £388.03; May - £259.88; and June - £282.44. May the Lord richly reward all who have thus contributed anonymously, and for a small congregation so generously, to our mission. In the same period, our Brotherhood "Orthodox Aid Fund" has given away £1,695.25 and US\$497 to various church and humanitarian charities. Our thanks to those whose donations have made this possible.

PRACTICAL TIP

ALWAYS REMEMBER that what we do in church or during our prayers at home is prayer. Whether we are celebrating as members of the clergy, serving in the altar, chanting in the choir, reading, helping with various things that have to be done, or even simply sitting and listening, we should do so with the utmost reverence and attention, offering what we are doing, as the very best we can, to God as an expression of prayer.