

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

VOLUME XXXIII NUMBER 4 DECEMBER 2002

WE WARMLY GREET

*all our readers on the Great Feasts of Our Saviour's Nativity
and Holy Theophany, hoping that the illumination of these festivals
will shine in your hearts and minds throughout the Coming Year.*

FROM THE FATHERS

"IF CHRIST IS GOD, as indeed He is, but took not human nature upon Him, then our state is as strangers to salvation. Let us, then, worship Him as God, and believe that He also was become man. It does not profit us to speak of the man without the Godhead, nor is there salvation in refusing to confess the manhood together with the Godhead. Let us confess the presence of the King and Physician; for Jesus the King, when about to become our Physician, girded Himself about with the apron of humanity, and He healed that which was sick"

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, c.315-386A.D.

"'HE SHALL COME DOWN like rain upon a fleece' (Ps. 71:6). Here the very mystery of the glorious Nativity is expounded. That Lord of virtues before Whose face the earth trembles and is shaken, and every creature is in disarray because He cannot in any sense be endured when He chooses to be recognised in His full power, sought to descend gently into the womb of a maiden with no din, like rain upon the fleece of a lamb. This was to demonstrate His moral strength all the more by restraining His indescribable power. As Paul has it: 'Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men' (Phil. 2:6f). But let us ponder the nature of the comparison attached to this great event. Fleeces are the wool of sheep; they take in water in such a way that they do not split or tear, and again they discharge the water without damage to themselves. So if any of you remain sceptical, give ear to this verse. You should be ashamed to withhold that belief in the highest Godhead which His lowest creatures manifest. Next comes: 'and like rain-drops that fall upon the earth, 'that is, they fall most gently like dew. If you ponder this with mind unsullied, you will have no hesitation about the virgin birth."

Flavius Magnus Aurelian Cassiodorus, c. 490-c. 580 A.D.

"THE WALL, which separated heaven from earth, is broken down; the weapon which barred the way to the Tree of life is disappeared! To man who had sinned his Creator comes, calling him into His embrace. In the words of the Apostle, the Holy Spirit cries out: 'Be ye reconciled to God in Christ' (see 2 Cor. 5:19). It is not you who have sinned who have come to God, but the Son of God, against Whom you sinned, has come to you! He calls all to Himself, He grants forgiveness to all who but thirst for it."

Saint John of Shanghai the Wonderworker, 1896-1966 A.D.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

By St Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894)

GLORY TO THEE, O LORD! And so, once more we have finally arrived at the radiant days of the celebration of the birth of Christ: let us now be gay and happy. The Holy Church, to exalt our joy throughout these days, has purposely appointed a period of fasting before their arrival, a certain degree of constraint on our part that we might feel ourselves as it were freed when we enter upon these holy days. Yet, at the same time, the Church in no way wants us simply to give ourselves over to gratification of the feelings and to physical pleasures. Rather, from days of old, these days [*those of the feast of the Nativity until Theophany - ed.*] have been called holy, and this means that our very happiness during these days should pertain to the holiness that the days themselves possess. And that we should not become forgetful during our rejoicing, the Church has placed into our mouths a short song to the glory of the new-born Christ, which tempers our physical demands and lifts our spirits, by indicating those activities which are worthy of these days: "Christ is born, give ye glory!" Glorify Christ then, and give glory in such a way that through this praising your soul and heart become filled with a tender sweetness, and so that through this any desire for any other activity promising any other consolation be stilled.

Glorify Christ; this does not mean to compose long odes of praise to Christ. No, but if when thinking or hearing about the birth of Christ the Saviour, you involuntarily exclaim from the depths of your soul, Glory to Thee, O Lord, that Christ was born! - then this is enough. This will be a silent song of the heart, which nevertheless will soar up to heaven and reach God. Just go over a little more clearly in your mind what has been done for you by the Lord, and you will see how natural it is to give glory in such a manner. In order that it be easier for us, let us make comparisons with the following cases. A king promises freedom to one imprisoned and fettered in bonds. The prisoner waits one day, then another; he waits for months and years.... He does not see its fulfilment, but he does not lose hope, trusting in the king's word. Finally, hopeful signs are perceived, that it will be soon, very soon. His attention strains; he hears the sound of those nearing with happy discourse, and suddenly the bolts of his cell fall away, and the deliverer enters. Involuntarily, the prisoner exclaims, "Glory to Thee, O Lord!" The end of my imprisonment has finally come; soon I shall see God's light. Another case: he is sick, covered with sores, weakened in all his members; he has tried all the medicines again and again, and changed one physician for another; his patience is exhausted; he is on the point of yielding to grieving without hope. Others say to him: "There is still the most skilled physician, he cures everyone and particularly of such maladies as yours. We asked him; he promised to come." The stricken one believes; hope rises within him, and he begins to await the arrival of the promised one. An hour passes, then another, and several more. Worry again begins to gnaw at his soul. Then, towards evening, someone drives up. He is coming. The door opens and the one expected comes in. "Glory to Thee, O Lord!" the patient exclaims. Here is yet another case: a menacing cloud passes over us; a darkness covers the face of the earth; thunder then shakes the foundations of the hills and lightning cuts through the sky from one end to the other; everyone is seized with fear as a result - in a word, the end of the word has

arrived! When, however, later the thunder storm passes, and the sky clears, each one, sighing in relief, says, "Glory to Thee, O Lord!"

Bring these examples near your heart, and you will see that our story is contained in the these. The menacing cloud of God's wrath was over us, but the Lord, the Peacemaker, came and dispelled this cloud. We were covered with the sores of sins and passions, and the Physician of souls and Healer came. We were in the bonds of slavery, the Liberator came and removed our fetters from us. Bring all this closer to your hearts, and receive it with your feeling, and you will be unable to restrain yourself from exclaiming, "Glory to Thee, O Lord, that Christ hath been born!"

I am not trying with increased fervour to convey this happiness to you in words. It is not possible for any words. That which was done by the Lord, Whose birth we are now contemplating, concerns each one of us. Those who associate with Him receive from Him freedom, healing, peace. They come to possess all this and taste its sweetness. Those who experience this for themselves, for them there is no need to say, "Rejoice!" because it is impossible for them not to rejoice. He who is bound hand and foot, no matter how much you say to him "Rejoice in your deliverance," will not rejoice. For him who is covered with the sores of sins, whence comes the joy of healing? How is he to breathe freely, who is threatened by the severe threat of God's wrath? To such one can only say: "Go ye to the Infant in swaddling bands, lying in the manger, and seek in Him deliverance from the evils which possess you, for that Infant is Christ, the Saviour of the world."

It would be good to see all rejoicing only in this happiness, and not seeking other happinesses, but not all Israelites make up the whole of Israel. At this time, empty enjoyments which inflame the passions will start: vain wandering of the eyes, giddiness from dancing and the like, and empty wandering from one house to the next. No matter how much you might say, "Become more modest," those who like all this will stop up their ears and will not listen, - and always the holy days of celebration end with making the merciful God avert His eyes from us and say, "All these celebrations are abominations unto Me." And it is really so. Many of our socially accepted forms of enjoyment are truly pagan abominations, that is to say, they have been directly carried over to us from the pagan world; and there are others, which, although they appeared later, are still thoroughly permeated with the spirit of paganism. It is as if they were purposely multiplied to immense numbers during the holy days of the Nativity and Pascha. In allowing ourselves to be captivated by them, we give cause for the prince of this world, Satan, our torturer, God's antagonist, to say to God: "What hast Thou done to me through Thy birth and resurrection? Still everybody cometh to me!" But let us have the words of the fiftieth psalm resound more frequently in the depths of our hearts: the Lord will "be justified in Thy words and prevail when Thou art judged."

We are being allured by enlightened Europe. Yes, it was from there that the pagan abominations previously banished from the world have been restored; from there they passed over and are continuing to pass over unto us. Having inhaled some of this infernal vapour, we reel as madmen, not remembering what we really are. But let us recall the year 1812. Why was it that the French invaded us? God sent them to destroy that evil which we had received from them. Russia repented, and God had mercy upon her. And now it seems that this lesson is beginning to be forgotten. Of

course, if we come to our senses, nothing will happen; but if we do not recover our senses, who knows, perhaps the Lord will again send us such teachers as before to return us to our true state of feeling and to put us on the path of recovery. Such is the law of God's truth: to treat the disease of sin with that which causes one to commit sins. These are not empty words but a truth, which has been affirmed by the voice of the Church. Know, ye Orthodox Christians, that the Lord will not be abused; and, seeing this is so, rejoice and be glad in these days with reverent fear. Bless the holy days with holy deeds and in enjoyment such that anybody observing you would say, "They are celebrating the Nativity holy days," and not that you are indulging in some form of wild and monstrous sporting like the impious and the depraved who do not know God. Glory to God!

Modified from a translation published in "Orthodox Life" (Jordanville, New York, November-December 1959). In the final paragraph, St Theophan is addressing the people of his own time and culture, calling them to repentance using a recent event in their history: the Napoleonic invasion of Russia. His words proved prophetic: the Lord did indeed send other "teachers" when, in 1917 and subsequently, their people did not return to the ancient piety of their fathers. In our own day, and in our own society, we see the Lord still sending "teachers" that we might see the horror of our shallowness and, rather than keeping the festival by partying and self-indulgence, try again to rejoice and be glad in these days with reverent fear and to bless the holy days with holy deeds.

Adapted from

"THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N. R. Antonov

Continuation

§ 57. The Litany of Fervent Supplication. This litany is so named because our entreaties are intensified, and to each of the petitions which the deacon pronounces, the chanters respond with a threefold "Lord, have mercy." It runs as follows:-

* Let us all say with our whole soul and our whole mind, let us say. This petition calls us to address the Lord with particular intensity, and the things that we are to bring before Him are set out in the following entreaties.

* O Lord Almighty, God of our fathers, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy. We beseech the Lord to hearken unto our fervent entreaties, and remind ourselves Whom we are addressing, gaining trust from the remembrance of the mercies He showed our fathers in ages past.

* Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy. And we call down His mercy in response to each of the following prayers.

* Again we pray for the Orthodox episcopate of the suffering Church of Russia, for our master the Most Reverend Metropolitan Lavr and our master the Most

Reverend Archbishop Mark, and for all our brotherhood in Christ. This petition, like the one on the Litany of Peace, asks mercy for those within the Church who have a particular responsibility for our salvation, the Bishops and clergy, and indeed for all our brethren, who are struggling with us, who need our aid in their struggle and aid us by their struggles in piety.

* Again we pray Thee, look down with mercy upon our Church; strengthen, establish and increase her, and for evermore defend her against the wiles of her enemies; do Thou cast down all dissension, schism, heresy, apostasy and unbelief; and spread abroad in our land, and in every place, piety, devotion and zeal for Orthodoxy; illumine those in ignorance and error, and those enslaved to sin, and soften and hardness of their hearts, that they may come to know Thee; help them and us to live holy and blameless lives, and root the saving faith firmly and make it bear fruit in our hearts, we fervently entreat Thee, hearken and have mercy. Now we pray more particularly for the needs of the Church in our time, and for the conversion of the erring and those who have not yet come to Christ.

* Again we pray for our sovereign lady. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and all her Royal House, this country and the faithful people who dwell herein. We pray, as we did in the Litany of Peace, for the civil authorities, that they may be granted to establish such peace and order that we enjoy the freedom to exercise our Faith.

* Again we pray for the salvation and preservation of the holy places, homes, and lives of our brethren in the Holy Land & the Balkans, for the deliverance of His Orthodox peoples everywhere from enemies visible and invisible, and for our confirmation in concord, brotherly love, and piety. We repeat our prayers for those of our Orthodox brethren who are particularly suffering at this time because of disturbances and conflicts, and that such upsets might not sever the bond of brotherly love that unites Orthodox Christians everywhere.

* Again we pray for our brethren, priests, priest-monks, deacons, monks, nuns and all our brotherhood in Christ. In the Russian practice the deacons, monks and nuns are not specifically mentioned in this petition, but here all Orthodox, from every tradition, pray for all those who in the various vocations of church-life are striving to serve the Lord.

* Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, pardon and remission of sins of the servants/handmaidens of God, N. or M., and all who celebrate this sacred feast. In this petition we mention by name those for whom special prayers are offered on a particular day, for instance, those who are celebrating their namedays, or the anniversaries of their marriages, ordinations or tonsure. In some practices, the petition ends with the phrase, "and the brethren of this holy house," meaning the members of the particular congregation in which the prayers are being offered.

* Again we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable most holy Patriarchs, for pious and Orthodox Kings and right-believing Queens, the founders and benefactors of all churches and monasteries, ... insert commemorations for all our fathers and brethren gone to their rest before us, those that lie here and the Orthodox everywhere. In this petition, bearing in mind that the Church comprises not only those who live on this earth but also the many more who have already ended their earthly

course, in our love for them we remember them in prayer. Sometimes in place of "of all churches and monasteries," we say "of this holy house." Here at Brookwood we use the broader usage, because as yet there are not many "founders and benefactors" of our church who have reposed.

* Again we pray for those that bear fruit and do good works in this holy and all-honourable house, for those that labour, those that chant and the people here present, who await of Thee great and rich mercy. Those that "bear fruit" are those which make material and financial sacrifices for the church, those that literally bring fruit, in making offerings of prosphoras, wine, oil, incense and candles for the church, as well as those who spiritually bear fruit for the good of the church by their supportive prayers. Those who "do good works" are those who help with the upkeep of the church and its adornment and appointments, and those who offer their services to the church community by reading in church, chanting, altar serving, cleaning, lighting and tending the lamps, and the various other ministries which are essential to the daily running of the church and its services. We also include those who simply come and who await of God great and rich mercy. According to the most ancient interpreters, those "who labour" meant those people who voluntarily gave reverent burial to the martyrs, to those without relatives or friends, and to the poor.

In form the Litany of Fervent Supplication differs from the Litany of Peace, in that on each of the petitions, as we have said, the response is a threefold, rather than a single, "Lord, have mercy." And the deacon's invitation to the faithful to pray, "let us pray to the Lord," which occurs at the end of every petition on the Litany of Peace, is replaced by the phrase "Again we pray" at the beginning of each petition on the Litany of Fervent Supplication. In lands where the monarch was Orthodox, there was a further distinction, although this is not explained: on the Litany of Peace the petition for the episcopate preceded that for the monarch, whereas in the Litany of Fervent Supplication, the petition for the episcopate followed that for the monarch.

To be continued with "The Supplicatory Litany"....

Translator's Note: In the above section, as in previous and subsequent ones, we have adapted Fr Antonov's work to accord with contemporary practice, sometimes abridging what he says, and sometimes adding to his text for greater clarity.

THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF THE HOLY RESURRECTION, SINGAPORE

FOR MANY YEARS, through the 1990's, through the good offices of Fr Protodeacon Peter (Danilchick), then resident in Singapore, a small group of Orthodox Christians met regularly here, for deacon-led services, and study and discussion. At regular intervals a priest would visit, for Divine Liturgies and for Marriages and Baptisms. During this time three Singaporeans were received into the Church, including Seraphim Lim, currently the President of the Parish Committee. Seraphim was ordained reader by Metropolitan Nikitas in November 1999. At that time the community worshipped in the Armenian Church, the oldest church extant in Singapore (1835).

Holy Resurrection Orthodox Christian Church was legally established as a Society of the Republic of Singapore in October 2000, and following this, in Hong Kong in January 2001, Fr Daniel was ordained to be the first resident Orthodox priest in Singapore. He had previously been ordained deacon in Greece in November 2000. Since then there has been a regular cycle of services and other Parish activities and events.

Quite soon a Parish website was set up - and this has been a major factor in outreach to people interested in Orthodoxy, or Orthodox Christians working in Singapore and not expecting to find a Church here.

From January 2001 until Pentecost 2002, the Parish used a rented room in the centre of town for Sunday Liturgies and for Nativity and Holy Week and Pascha, while weekday services were served in the Chapel of S. Nicolas, in the Parish House. In June 2002, we started having all services in S. Nicolas Chapel while looking for larger premises. From November 10th, we will be using property which gives us a much larger Church space (with, for the first time, an iconostasis) and will also allow us to open a Parish Office. The premises also give us more space for the Sunday School. Future plans are also being discussed regarding a possible 5-mornings a week kindergarten and for a Saturday morning Greek School.

In 2001, two more Chinese Singaporeans were received into the Orthodox Church: Timothy (previously a Methodist) was baptised at Pascha, and Dionysia (a former Roman Catholic) was received in October, prior to her wedding to Thomas (a Greek from Darwin, Australia). There are several other Singaporean Orthodox, mostly married to people from traditional Orthodox countries (Greece, Cyprus, Serbia) and we are discovering more all the time. We currently have a catechumen of ethnic Chinese extraction, born in Burma, and within the last week we have been joined by a new family: Mariella is Romanian, while her Singaporean husband, Gabriel, was baptised in Romania a few years ago. Their daughter, Sofia, is now five. We also know of, and maintain contact with, several other Singaporean Orthodox, now living abroad, and participating in parish life in such places as Australia, Canada and Malaysia.

In addition to those who have already joined the Church, we have several Chinese Singaporeans who attend our services on a regular basis. Even more attend special events such as the Icon Day (in September 2001) and the "teaching" Liturgy in March 2002. Both of these events are due to be repeated. We are in contact, usually by e-mail, with over a dozen Singaporeans, in a continuing dialogue regarding Church and other theological matters. Often Singaporeans, with commitments in other congregations on Sundays, come to midweek Vigils and the popular Wednesday evening Small Compline and Bible Study.

The Parish currently comprises Orthodox Christians from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cyprus, Greece, USA, Australia, Serbia, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Palestine, South Africa, Russia, Azerbaijan and England.

In common with parishes throughout the Metropolitanate, we try and foster a particular devotion to S. Mitrophan and the Beijing Martyrs. They are commemorated at the end of every service; all parishioners have (and all visitors given) a copy of their icon. Their feast in June is kept with services, the recitation of all the names, and a reading of the martyrdom narrative. Also, in common with our sister parishes, while

services are primarily in English, the Lord's Prayer is read in Mandarin and all languages of the people present at Sunday and Feast-day Liturgies. Sometimes we also have the Epistle and the Nicene Creed in Greek and / or Mandarin. Holy Week and Paschal services are served in English, Greek and Slavonic.

We pray for the time when we are able to have an indigenous Singaporean priest to serve the people here.

*Contributed by the Pastor of the Singapore Parish,
Fr Daniel (Toyne). Fr Daniel was until September 1987
a novice at Saint Edward Brotherhood,
and he maintains friendly ties with our community.*

THE COMING MONTH

DECEMBER takes its name from the Latin word, *decern*, ten, because originally it was the tenth month of the year. Now, of course, it is the twelfth and last month of the civil year, and the fourth month of the Church Year. It begins with a series of commemorations of the Old Testament prophets, Sts Naum (Nahum), Abba-cum (Habbakuk) and Sophonias (Zephaniah), as if to bring our attention to the essential core of their lives and teachings, proclaiming the coming of the Messiah, of God become man and thus "with us."

This theme is taken up again later in the month when on the two Sundays immediately preceding the Nativity, we have commemorations of the Old Testament Saints, the second of these being of those Old Testament righteous ones who were ancestors of the Lord. For those of us who were converts to Orthodoxy decades ago, when hardly a service could be heard in English, that last Sunday before Christmas was the one on which we could follow the Gospel most easily, because it largely comprises the genealogy of our Saviour, the list of names of His ancestors, recorded in St Matthew's Gospel, chapter one. Those names are much the same in Greek, Slavonic or English!

After the coming of our Saviour, the Church ceased to be largely confined to people of Jewish blood, and was opened to people of all nations, to all those who become kinsmen of our Saviour not according to blood but through the Faith. Those Old Testament righteous ones welcomed the first peoples of the nations into the Church, when they were grafted into that family tree through the preaching of the Apostles, beginning with the centurion Cornelius and his household. Perhaps the fact that it was on their festival that we could most readily follow the Gospel reading was an indication that even now, near the end of time, they welcome those who come to be grafted into that same family tree.

These commemorations also remind us that the Church embraces both the Old and New Testaments. It has become commonplace to think of the feast of Pentecost as the "birthday of the Church," and such a thought is not altogether mistaken. It was on that feast, fifty days after the Saviour's Resurrection from the dead, that her New Testament ministry and mission were inaugurated. But the Church has existed from the beginning of creation, and she does not exclude from her members those who, as the Apostle says, "having obtained a good report received not the promise," the

coming of Christ. "God having provided some better thing for us" (Heb. 11:39-40), i.e. that we should be granted to receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, "of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied the grace that should come" (1 Peter 1:9-10). Yet the prophets, who thus served as ministers of Christ, were not denied that salvation, they only had to await it, that "they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40). That waiting is another evidence of their love.

All the celebrations and commemorations that we have daily in the Church are first and foremost expressions of God's love towards us, often as manifested in the saints of both Testaments. And our observing those festivals, by coming to church, by reading the lives of the sacred persons remembered, by chanting their hymns, by preparing to receive the Holy Mysteries on their days, by venerating their icons, by calling upon them in prayer - all these things are only our feeble attempts to reciprocate, and thus make effectual in our lives that love.

Our attempts are indeed feeble, but even so they are accepted by the Saviour. The prodigal son could do no more than resolve to repent and trudge back to his Father's house. His effort was feeble. It was the Father Who had him vested again in the best robe, a ring put on his finger and shoes on his feet, who had the fatted calf killed for him to feast upon, and who accepted him again into the festivity of the his heavenly home. Yet even though the prodigal's part, when compared with the Father's, was so feeble, we read that even before he had completed that feeble part, even before he could even repeat the confession that he had prepared, his Father "ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." So it is with our celebration of the church commemorations of the God, Who is wondrous in His saints and in His love towards us.

The Great Feast of the Saviour's Nativity is, of course, one of the greatest expressions of God's love towards. For it, we make "feeble efforts." All of December is taken up with these efforts, our keeping of the fast in preparation for the feast from the beginning of the month until the 20th; our increasing the fast in the five days of the pre-festival period from 20th to the 24th when we also chant the pre-festival hymns; and our keeping of the festival itself which, in the Orthodox practice, lasts for seven days, from 25th till the 31st December, although we leave off fasting until the 4th January, again keeping the eve of the Theophany as a fast day in preparation for that feast.

We have already mentioned the commemorations of the Old Testament saints on the two Sundays before Christmas, most of the days within the feast itself are also kept as commemorations of persons intimately connected with the Nativity story. On the second day we celebrate the Virgin Mother of God; on the third day the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen; on the fourth day the Twenty Thousand Martyrs of Nicomedia who were burned to death while they were celebrating the Lord's Nativity in the year 302 by the persecutor Maximianus. On the fifth day, which this year is also the Saturday after Nativity, for which special readings are appointed at the Liturgy, we celebrate the Holy Innocents, slain by Herod in his attempt to kill the new-born Saviour. The Sunday after Christmas also has special readings appointed and it is kept as a festival of the Kinsmen of our Saviour: St Joseph the Betrothed His ostensible father, the holy Apostle James the Brother of God, and the Prophet, King

and Psalmist David from whom He was descended. On this day we celebrate the ancient Liturgy of St James in place of that of St John Chrysostom. The last day of the feast, the Leavetaking, this year falls on a Monday, and bring the month to an end.

Among other saints in December, we have:-

Our Venerable Father Stephen the New Luminary (9th/22nd) was born in Constantinople during the time of the Patriarch St Methodius. His parents were named Zacharias and Theophano, and his father was a priest at the Great Church (Haghia Sophia). During her pregnancy, his mother kept a strict fast, and when her child was born a cross of light was seen upon his breast from which he received his title, the New Luminary. When he grew up, Stephen took up the ascetic life and lived in the cell attached to the Church of the holy Apostle Peter. Later he moved to one attached to St Antipas' church. In both these places the heavenly patrons of the churches appeared to him, giving him encouragement in his ascetic endeavours, and revealing to us how the saints care for those who pray in their churches here on earth. Saint Stephen lived a life of the greatest austerity, eating only twice a week and then only vegetables. He lived to the age of seventy-three, having spent fifty-five years in the monastic discipline, and he went to his rest in the year 879.

The Righteous Servulus (23rd December/5th January) was known to Saint Gregory the Great, who has recorded his life for us. Servulus was paralysed from infancy and never able to stand, sit or move himself. His mother and his brother, who cared for him, used to lay him down at the door of the church of St Clement in Rome, and passers-by gave him alms. What he received over and above his own meagre needs he re-distributed to other needy people, and he would ask those going to and from the church to read portions of the Scriptures to him, and these he learned by heart. He also learned some of the church hymns, hearing them through the open door of the church. When his end was drawing near, he asked the faithful to stand by his pallet and sing the hymns he had grown to love with him. Suddenly he stopped them, saying that he heard the sweet singing of Paradise, and saying this he gave up his soul.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

To a correspondent in Greece contemplating IVF treatment:-

Thank you for your sad letter and for explaining your difficulties; we shall certainly remember you and K. in our prayers.

It is a matter for you to talk about with your spiritual father there in Greece, but I was rather worried that you are considering IVF treatment. Even on medical grounds there are serious doubts about it, and a recent Sunday paper here in England printed an expose of the carelessness with which the clinics handle things and of the mistakes that occur (I enclose a copy). Without trying to score a point or be funny, I cannot think things would be any better in Greece.

But more seriously than that: is it right? I am not sure of all the details, but it appears that the process necessarily means that some fertilised eggs (that is human beings) are necessarily surplus to requirements and therefore disposed of - this is a form of abortion, which of course our Church completely condemns. Please find out from the doctors about the process and make sure whether it does involve the killing

of young lives. And then discuss the matter with your priest. If you are involved in such a process, it cannot bring a blessing, even if in the short term it seems to by providing you with a child.

Why not pray to St Sabbas the Sanctified of Palestine and the other saints, who help in such cases? There was a woman here on Sunday who used to live in Greece, although she is English she is married to a Greek, and she found help from a clinic in Thessalonica, where they use only natural means to help, and not measures which incur the killing of children. Or if you cannot have a child naturally, or by using such innocent medical aid, there is always the option to adopt, and there are so many thousands of children in the world today who are in desperate need of a family, that this is a very commendable thing to do.

FROM THE SACRED CANONS

"STRANGE clergymen and readers are not to be allowed to conduct services anywhere in a different city without having letters recommendatory from their own Bishop."

Canon 13 of the Holy and Œcumenical Fourth Council

NEWS SECTION

MONASTIC REVIVAL IN THE BALKANS: On 2nd October, the St Petersburg Times (Florida) carried an article by Richard Mertens on the revival of the monastic life in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and parts of Bosnia. Mertens remarks that "even as their society falls increasingly under the spell of Western secular culture," many young people are turning to the monastic life. He particularly cites the case of the renowned Decani monastery. "After NATO forced Serbian authorities out of Kosovo three years ago," he writes, "ordinary Serbs fled the Decani area. The monks are the only Serbs left for miles around. Mortars have been lobbed in their direction. Italian soldiers guard the monastery's approaches, and the monks do not travel without a military escort. But Decani's predicament seems only to heighten its appeal. With 33 monks and novices, it has the largest brotherhood of any monastery in Serbia. The outer situation has not affected the inner, spiritual life at all,' says Father Sava Janjic, 37, the deputy abbot. 'I can say it's even become more intense. In the history of Christianity, spiritual life increases under repression.'"

GEORGIAN PATRIARCH ISSUES STATEMENT ON R.C. PROSELYTISM: His Holiness and Blessedness Catholicos Patriarch Ilia II of All-Georgia addressed Patriarch Aleksii II of Moscow at the beginning of October, sharing the latter's concern about the Vatican's decision to form a province within Russia, according to "Today's News" (3/10/02). He writes: "The vigorous religious activity of the Vatican on the territory of Orthodox Churches evokes our common concern. Unfortunately, the Vatican, on the one hand, has expressed the wish for fraternal and good relations with Orthodox Churches while, on the other hand, it is founding Catholic parishes, churches, educational institutions, and other charitable institutions on the canonical territories of Orthodox Churches, which provokes confrontations among believers, Orthodox and Catholics. I fully agree with you that this contradicts the traditions of the united, undivided Church and

violates the directions of the Apostle Paul: 'I have tried not to preach the gospel in places where the name of Christ already is known so as not to build on another's foundation' (Rom. 15:20)." Orthodox Christians can understand the Catholicos' concern, but his argumentation seems to be faulty. Saint Paul was speaking of different missions within "the united, undivided Church." The Roman Catholics and the Orthodox are not both members of that same Church. Furthermore, if we are to confine ourselves only to territorial claims and not to address the fundamental issue of the Faith, might not the Roman Catholics themselves complain about the setting up of Orthodox "parishes, churches, educational institutions, and other charitable institutions on the canonical territories of" the Roman See, i.e. in Western Europe?

NEW ORTHODOX IN SOUTH AFRICA: In response to a request from a group of people in Soshanguve, Metropolitan Seraphim of Johannesburg and Pretoria, sent a young missionary priest, Fr Athanasius Akunda to instruct them in the Orthodox Faith. Having finished their preparation, a hundred candidates were to be baptised by His Beatitude Petros VII, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria on 4th November. Reporting this, Stephen Methodius Hayes, states that the majority of Orthodox Christians in South Africa are of Greek, Russian or Serbian descent, and that the parish to be formed by these new converts will be the first one in the country in which the majority of the parishioners are South Africans.

TIKHVIN ICON MAY RETURN TO RUSSIA: Father Sergei Garklavs of the Orthodox Church in America, the custodian of the miraculous Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, has published his desire to see the Icon returned to Russia. Fr Sergei's foster father had directed his son that this should be done as soon as was possible. The icon had been brought out of Russia during the Second World War and has since been in the United States. Fr Sergei has contacted authorities in Russia about the possible return of the Icon, but has laid down that, as an essential condition for the Icon's return, the monastery, founded in the time of Ivan the Terrible, should be completely restored.

ANTIOCHIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA ISSUES STATEMENT ON IRAQ: Fearing that the United States was on the brink of war with Iraq, on 9th October Metropolitan Philip Saliba of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, called upon President Bush and governmental leaders to "rethink their position and the logic behind this impending conflict." He states: "We must add that we find it hypocritical that Iraq is threatened with war and destruction for failing to comply with UN resolutions while another state in the same region is in violation of about seventy UN resolutions which have never been implemented. This continues to be a reality even as this state occupies land that does not belong to it, illegally expands and builds settlements on occupied territories and implements collective punishment on masses of innocent people because of the distorted actions of a few." Referring to the Western "promise," to rebuild the country and help its people form a democratic government, the Metropolitan remarks: "History has proven that this rarely comes to fruition. We need only look to the Balkans and Afghanistan as recent examples." He ends by urging the President "to seek the difficult and tiresome road of peace rather than the bloody and dark road of war."

EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT SEES BIGGER ROLE FOR THE ORTHODOX CHURCH: At a meeting in Brussels on 3rd October, His All-Holiness the Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople was told by the President of the European

Commission, Romano Prodi, that as the European Union brings in more countries with an Orthodox majority, the Orthodox Church will play a more important role. What this important role is to be is not disclosed. The Patriarch and Prodi also discussed Turkey's application for EU membership. A spokesman for the Patriarch, Bishop Emmanuel Adamakis, later reported that, while the Patriarchate "fully supports" Turkey's joining the EU, it "also fully agrees that Turkey has to make the necessary move in reforms." Of course, the necessary move in reforms might also ease the Patriarchate's own situation in a largely Islamic country, where the Orthodox Christians are a tiny minority. The EU has already called upon Turkey to allow the reopening of the Halki Greek Orthodox Theological School, which was closed in 1971, when a law which put military and religious education under state control was enforced. Patriarch Bartholomeos is optimistic that the school will be reopened, and is reported as saying: "Turkey's new demeanour in its path toward the European Union gives us courage and hope."

CHURCH FESTIVAL AT IASI IN ROMANIA: On 15th October, about half a million pilgrims gathered at Iasi to venerate the sacred relics of Saint Parascheva. So many were the numbers that the festival was extended for a further day, and the sacred relics were brought out of the Cathedral and placed in the courtyard to help worshippers approach them. The posting from Bucharest also states that: "This year, the bones of Saint Cassian, also revered for protecting the poor, were flown from France to Romania and deposited in Iasi cathedral."

RUSSIA LEARNS WHAT THE WEST IS FORGETTING: Three presidential plenipotentiaries held a meeting on 10th October with the "leaders of traditional Russian confessions." They have concluded that religious education should be introduced into state schools. One of these plenipotentiaries, Georgi Poltavchenko, stated: "It is impossible to construct a law-based society simply by economic and power methods alone ... It is necessary to strengthen the spiritual and moral foundations of society."

ARCHBISHOP MARK'S VISIT: From 23rd to 26th November, Archbishop Mark briefly visited London. On the Sunday, he celebrated the divine services at the Harvard Road church, and later held a clergy meeting to address pastoral questions about the mission in Ireland. On the feast of St John Chrysostom (13th/26th), he celebrated the Divine Liturgy early in the morning at the Convent, before flying on to Germany.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

VISIT FROM AMERICA: The renowned Reader Isaac Lambertsen, who serves at the ROCA Synodal residence in New York City, and who is perhaps best known for his translations of the Menaion services and his composition of services to Western Saints, chose the wettest days of November to come and stay for three weeks at the Brotherhood. During his stay in England, he was taken by members of the Congleton mission to various holy places in Cheshire and North Wales, and made three pilgrimages from the Brotherhood with members of our community: to Northumbria and the Scottish borders, to Dorchester, Binsey and Wantage, and to Dorset. While in Britain he also took, and made, opportunities to sample our traditional cuisine.

NEW BROTHERHOOD HOUSE PLANS: Since being advised to withdraw our earlier application for permission to build a Brotherhood house on the site of the old South Station, we have revised the plans, and had several talks with the planning officers and the councillors. At the time of going to press, we are on the point of re-submitting our application and ask the prayers of the faithful in this regard.

PRACTICAL TIP

WE LIVE in an increasingly rushed world with hardly a moment to spare but, for that very reason, much time wasted: in traffic queues, in living hand to mouth, in being exhausted. A result of this is that our spiritual life seems often to gain the very least of our attention. Everything else takes priority over it, except of course when we want some "magical" solution to our various problems. To live in such a way as a Christian is impossible. Our life as Christians is meant to be therapeutic, to heal our various passions and sicknesses, but even in everyday life no therapy is going to help us if we do not apply ourselves to it. So, we have consciously and conscientiously to put aside time for our spiritual needs, if need be putting other concerns in second place (where they belong). One way in which we can make a start - (it is only a start) - in this regard is to mark in our diaries the various church observances throughout the year. Thus we can make sure from the start that we do not arrange holidays during fasts, or appointments which will mean that we miss major feasts. We can arrange to take time off from work so that we can celebrate the Passiontide and Paschal services, the greatest feasts, and our namedays. Put a block on Saturday nights, so that even if you cannot attend the Vespers or Vigil service, you can at least prepare in quiet at home for the Eucharist on Sundays. You may not in the year ahead be able to keep to all your good intentions, but it is a sure thing that, if you do not make provision for them, there are very few indeed that you will observe.