

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 7 APRIL 2003

Christ is Risen ! Truly, He is Risen!

FROM THE FATHERS

"HAVE YOU NOT SEEN LAZARUS a little while ago throw off death as though it were sleep? Have you not seen him come forth, clothed in his cerements, at the words: *Come forth?* Have you not seen the dead obedient to His voice, when He bade him come? And the winding sheet did not hinder him. Have you not seen how His voice restored a man dissolving in death? He Who did that can also do this. He Who raised His own servant, much more shall He himself be raised up. He Who gave life again to a body already corrupting shall not leave Himself in death."

Saint Amphilochius of Iconium, 339 - 400 A.D.

"SOTHAT prolonged sadness might not afflict the troubled minds of His disciples, with a wondrous promptness He cut short the promised time of three days [i.e. in the Tomb]; so that though the number of days remained, the time was shortened, by joining the last part of the first day and the first part of the third day to the entire second day. And so the Resurrection of our Saviour brought it about that Christ's soul should not be long detained in Hades, nor His body in the sepulchre. And so swift was the revivifying of His uncorrupted body, that we have here the appearance of sleep rather than of death; for the Divinity, which departed not from either substance of His assumed humanity, joined together by Its power what by Its power it had sundered.

Saint Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, +461 A.D.

THE TEMPLE of my body has been destroyed [*N.B. this is an extract from the Saint's will, and so to be read after his death - ed.*], and the earth returns to earth, according to the word of God: 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' But with the Holy Church, I expect resurrection from the dead and the life of the age to come. My Hope is sitting at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ, my Lord and God. He is my life and resurrection. He says to me: 'I am the resurrection and the life, he who believeth in Me shall not die but live.' With His voice He will awaken me from my sleep. I have gone away from you according to the way of earthly things. I have departed, and we no longer see each other as we did before. But we shall see each other in that place where shall be gathered all the nations that have lived from the beginning of the world and to its very end. O God, grant that we may see each other there, where God is seen face to face, and gives new life to those who behold Him, and comforts and gladdens them, and gives ineffable joy for all eternity. There men shine like the sun; there is true life; there is true honour and glory; there is true joy and

gladness; these is true ecstasy, and all that is eternal and endless. 'Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, even as we have hoped in Thee.'"

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, 1724- 1783 A.D

PASCHA AND THE SCRIPTURES

By the Ever-Memorable
Metropolitan Antony

*"Come, on this auspicious day of the Resurrection,
let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness
and of the kingdom of Christ,
praising Him as God unto the ages"
(Ode 8 of the Paschal Canon)*

CHRIST IS RISEN!

YES, great is the spiritual joy of today's feast. We rejoice because Christ our Saviour, Who was reviled and killed by the impious, has risen from the dead. We rejoice because His resurrection has granted us eternal life. And, finally, we rejoice because this triumphant and great day has awakened our souls, even if not for long, from the sleep of sin, and enabled them to partake of Christ's kingdom. Look at people today, not all, but the majority: it is as if they have been regenerated. Where, today, is their usual unfriendliness, their striving to annoy one another, to laugh at each other? Where is the conceit and pride which superiors show their inferiors? Where are the gloom and reticence, so characteristic of sinners? Where are all these instruments of our spiritual death? "O death, where is thy sting? O hades, where thy victory?" (Os. 13:14). Instead of malice, today we encounter kindness between people. Instead of envy, mutual forgiveness; instead of pride, we see the great ones of this world exchanging a brotherly kiss with common folk. Instead of spiritual death, we see "resurrection and life," instead of the hell that we have built on earth in our sinful life, today we have a foretaste of the Paradise, of the heavenly Kingdom, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. "We celebrate the death of death, the destruction of Hades, the beginning of an everlasting life" (*Ode 7 of the Paschal Canon*).

Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has led us up from death to life, delivered us from darkness to light. May He also be blessed for having established this festival in His Church, this feast when we can be lifted up, albeit not for long and only "in part, "to the summit of the Christian spiritual disposition, when we "enter into the joy of our Lord," and draw near, even if only a little, to the life lived by the early Christians, who were more worthy of that name than we are. Oh, if only we always lived with that joyful feeling of forgiveness and love in our souls which we now experience! How radiant and pleasing to God our lives would be! How we ourselves, it would seem, should desire this!

If some good person came for a minute to visit some hungry and neglected criminals neglected in a gloomy gaol, and brought them light and nourishing food, and talked to them kindly - how impatiently they would wait for him to come a second time, how they would yearn for him, and think of him day and night, how they would beg the guards to persuade the dear guest to come and visit them again and again!

So now also Christ, risen from the dead, has come to the gloomy prison of our earthly life, has given us a taste of the "new drink" of His love, has enlightened us with the radiance of His joy. How can we now not value this joy, not preserve it carefully all our lives, like the pearl for which the wise merchant shed all his possessions? When we have once tasted Christ, experienced in our hearts, even if only for a minute, all the truth of His promises, all the sweetness of His law, is it possible for us to lose it again? Surely we will not remain Christians only for today? Indeed, it is not only on one day that Christ is risen. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more," wrote the Apostle. "Death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:9-11).

And so if, even for today, we were really "alive unto God," and "dead unto sin," then of course we could not revive to sin and die unto God again so easily and so quickly. But if, however, this does happen, if we only live unto Christ for a few hours, then it means we are not really living, that we meet His resurrection with insufficiently clear faith, with inadequately firm hope, with love that is too weak. How can we be filled with joy that is real and not just apparent? With what should we fill our souls in order to meet the Risen One "worthily," so that our "partaking of Christ's Kingdom" today is not just an ecstasy lasting one day and then easily disappearing, but a constantly growing penetration by God's commandments, "that our joy may be full"? (Jn 16:24).

Let us recall the sacred accounts of the appearances of the Risen Saviour to His Apostles and the Ointment-Bearing Women. Let us penetrate into the disposition of soul with which they were deemed worthy once again clearly to behold their Teacher, about Whom they had hoped that He was "he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). Let us penetrate into this disposition and try and make it our own, so that we may "behold Christ" not just with a vague feeling, but with full clarity, "radiant with the unapproachable light of the resurrection," and "clearly hear Him say: Rejoice!" (*Ode 1 of the Paschal Canon*).

"When it was yet dark, Christ's faithful women disciples went to His tomb to honour their Teacher, Who had been reviled and bestially executed, with the last earthly honours and with love, "bringing the spices which they had prepared" (Luke 24:1) and with what is more than spices: bitter tears of love and reverence. They did not despise Christ when He was insulted. They were not afraid of the mockery and hatred of His enemies; they remembered only His love and sanctity, and they hastened to His tomb with broken hearts. But what met them at the tomb? Instead of coarse soldiers, heavenly angels. Instead of the darkness of the cave, an immaterial light. Instead of funeral laments, the Resurrected One Himself with the greeting, "Rejoice!" (Matt. 28:9). "Why seek ye the Living among the dead? Why mourn ye the incorruptible One amid corruption? Go and tell His disciples." After setting out for grief, ignominy and insults, they returned as preachers of the good tidings, and they taught the great truth of the resurrection to those whose duty it would be to "teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

Brethren! When we have seen Christ being insulted in life, when we have seen His law being forgotten, whether in the corruption of children, or the defilement of

holy places, or the exultation of vice, -have we wept like the Ointment-Bearers, have we remained firm in our love for Him? Have we washed His body with the spices of our good deeds, accusing the revilers, bringing those who have been led astray to their senses, consoling the distressed? If we have not acted thus, then let us do so now, and then our joy in the Resurrection will be made full; and let us do so always, so that, like the holy women, we may be deemed worthy to behold the life of Christ even in circumstances in which it seems to the world that His law is completely dead and is being trampled on in life. Let us imitate the holy women in their fearless faithfulness to Christ, taking no account of how much He is appreciated in the life which surrounds us.

Then, like all people who are truly pious, truly devoted to Him, we will always see His resurrection with our spiritual eyes, like the Ointment-Bearers, to whom He revealed Himself in His glorified flesh for the first time.

And again, an unknown third person comes up to the two travellers, Luke and Cleopas, asks them about the reason for their grief, reproaches them for not understanding the prophets and begins to explain "beginning at Moses, how Christ had to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory" (Luke 24:27, 26). The divinely inspired prophecies of the righteous ones of old kindled the spirit of the grieving disciples; the spiritual image of their beloved Teacher was reflected in their souls with new strength - and then what happened? The Traveller came to share their meal with them, broke the bread and suddenly opened their eyes, and they saw that the risen Christ Himself had been with them, that it was He Who had opened their hearts as He explained the Scriptures.

Brethren! Do our hearts burn when we hear the Word of God in church? And do we hasten to read for ourselves the revelation of God's will which is given to us in the Holy Bible? Then, in the future, let us act differently, and let us set aside at least fifteen minutes each day which we give up our to our worldly interests; let us set aside at least a few minutes for studying the divine law and making it our own and, when we read it, our hearts will burn, i.e., let us try mentally to taste every word in the Bible with our hearts, to experience in ourselves all that the Lord is teaching us. Then we will always live with Him; then the joy of His resurrection, which we are now celebrating, will remain with us henceforth and we will always bear it in our burning hearts, "celebrating the eternal Pascha."

Moreover, you see that neither the Ointment-Bearers nor Christ's disciples were deemed worthy to meet Him without trials and woes. Indeed, it would appear that she to whom He "appeared first" (Mark 16:9) Mary Magdalene, experienced the longest trial of all. Not finding the Lord in the tomb, she did not understand that the day and hour of His glorification had come. Instead, in the simplicity of her soul, she presumed that His enemies had permitted yet another new mockery of His body and had thrown it out into the street somewhere. She weeps bitterly, so that from the abundance of her tears she does not recognise the angel who speaks to her, and then thinks that it is the gardener who converses with her, and she addresses Him with her last hope, "If thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away" (Jn 20:15). But suddenly she recognises the voice, not of a hostile gardener, but of the sweetest Lord Jesus: "Mary," and she worships the God-man risen in the flesh.

Brethren! How many times in life we have lost Christ, not from a burial cave, but from our most sinful hearts! Do we seek Him again? Do we weep over the loss with warm tears of contrition? Do we ask everyone once again to show us the path to Christ? And if not, then in this let us imitate this woman, the peer of the

Apostles, who in her time was perhaps more sinful than we, but nevertheless twice found Christ and His salvation. The first time He drove seven demons out of her, and the other time He sent her to preach the "glad tidings of joy."

So also with us; if we seek Him, if we weep when we temporarily lose love and firm faith towards Him, if we repent and pray and seek instruction from the vine-dressers of the Church, then the Lord will reveal Himself to us also, and will fill us with the joy of His appearance, so that we too may "tell forth His joy in the morning and His truth every night." Every day, at every step we take, let us remember His resurrection from the dead, so as to overcome the temptations of life with it, and thus be Christians not only today, but all our lives, to preserve that love, that forgiveness, that humility before all, which make the feast of the Resurrection, the cause of these feelings, so sweet to us.

And so, with what disposition of soul can one be deemed worthy to behold the Resurrected One face to face? With the faithfulness and love of the Ointment-Bearers, by listening to the Scriptures with flaming hearts like the two Apostles, and by ceaselessly seeking for Christ like Mary Magdalene. If we encourage such dispositions in ourselves and cultivate them in our souls, then not only will we always have the joy of Christ's resurrection in our hearts here on earth, but we will also more fully "partake of" Him "in the unwaning day of" His "kingdom." (*See Ode 9 of the Paschal Canon*).

And when the gloomy life of the earth arms itself against our spirit, and temptations of the flesh and of the world start swaying our hearts - like the Christ-hating Scribes who taught the soldiers to disparage the miracle of the Resurrection - when, that is, malice or envy, or self-interest, or vainglory, or the passion of lust rise up against us, then let us remember today's paschal joy. Let us replicate in our souls the heavenly joy we are now experiencing, and we will observe how insignificant in comparison with it are the momentary "joys" of sin, "which shows us sweet things, but ever makes us taste and swallow bitter things."

Let us flee far from this bitter taste of sin and bind the sweetness of Christ's resurrection more firmly to our hearts. Let us unite it with faithfulness, with love, with reading Holy Scripture, and then Christ's words will be fulfilled in us: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (Jn 16:22). Amen.

*A sermon delivered at the Agape Vespers, 1889,
in the main church of the St Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St Petersburg.
The above is a slightly modified version of a translation published
in the March-April 1975 issue of "Orthodox Life."*

THE COAT OF CHRIST

SAINT ANDREW THE FIRST-CALLED is the founder of the Apostolic Church of Georgia, who, blessed by the Virgin Mary, preached the Gospel in Georgia, namely in Achora, Osetia and Aphasis. Along with St Andrew, the Georgian people were evangelised by the Apostles Simon the Canaanite, Matthias and Bartholomew. Simon suffered crucifixion in the town of Nicopsia in Aphasis and is buried on the spot. In Achara's Castle of Gonio is the grave of St Matthias, who converted the Aphas and Svan peoples to Christianity. As for St Bartholomew, he preached in South-East Georgia.

However, before the Apostles, a divine treasure had entered Georgia, the Coat [*the Seamless Robe - John 19:23*] of Christ. It is believed to have been woven by the hands of the All-holy Theotokos. She foresaw her Son's sufferings to come, often weeping over and dampening the red tissue of the Coat. Jesus had worn it since he was a child, and miraculously it grew with Him.

During the Transfiguration on Thabor, the Coat shone like flames of fire "exceeding white as snow." On the way from Gethsemane to Golgotha, it was permeated with the blood seeping from the Lord's wounds.

The story of the Coat of Christ is related in the name of the Blessed Sidonia, the sister of a Jew living in Mtskheta, the then capital of Georgia. She is known as the first martyr of the Iberian (Georgian) Church. The story runs as follows:-

Sidonia had never seen Christ, but loved Him, the Saviour of the world and Messiah, with all her heart. When her brother, Eliaz, went to Jerusalem in what was to be the year of the Crucifixion, the God-fearing virgin pleaded with him: "You are going to be worthy enough to see the true man called Jesus. Bring me something that has been touched by His holy hand and clothes, and we shall be blessed." At Christ's crucifixion, Eliaz was standing on Golgotha. When it came to casting lots for his raiment, the Coat was bought by Eliaz from the Roman soldiers, and he took it to Mtskheta as a priceless relic. Sidonia met him at the town gate. "Have this Coat that He wore, as you wished," he said. Sidonia embraced the Coat, gave a groan, and died.

People gathered to witness the miracle. King Aderk, having heard of it, yearned to be clad in that garment, but no one was able to loose the virgin's tight grasp in order to remove it. Eliaz secretly buried his beloved sister together with the Coat in the middle of the royal garden, where there afterwards grew a shady cedar, which attracted believers from various places to come and venerate it.

Having heard of this story when on her mission to Georgia, St Nino (fourth century) started coming to the tree at night, to pray under it, not altogether sure whether or not the Lord's Coat lay underneath. Certain visions, however, convinced her of the sanctity and future glory of that place.

King Mirian of Georgia, after being converted into a Christian with the help of St Nino, and after declaring Christianity the official faith of Georgia, decided to build a church on a site chosen by St Nino, around the great cedar. They felled the tree and out of its six branches squared out six pillars. When the carpenters went to lift a seventh pillar, hewn out of the trunk, which was to stand in the foundation of the church, much to everyone's amazement, no amount of force could budge it from its place. In the

evening the saddened king went home, reflecting on the significance of all that had happened. The people broke up. Only St Nino stayed on the spot overnight with her disciples, praying, and pouring out her tears over the stump.

Early in the morning, a marvellous young man, engirdled with a belt of fire, appeared to St Nino and whispered three mysterious words in her ear, after hearing which she fell to the ground and worshipped him. Then the young man grasped the pillar lifting it high in the air. The pillar shone like lightning, so as to illuminate the whole town.

The king and the people gathered around the site, with fear and joy watching this uncanny sight, marvelling at how the heavy trunk, that could not be moved, either went up or came down touching the stump it had grown from. At last it stopped and stayed fixed in its own place. From the base of the pillar oozed fragrant myron, and anyone with an ailment or wound who anointed themselves with this sacred myron would be healed.

With more and more people gathering around the living pillar, King Mirian was prompted to give orders for it to be fenced in. Since then, the place has been venerated by both Christians and pagans. When the wooden church had been completed, the Georgian king dispatched messengers to the Emperor Constantine, who was only too pleased to send him the Archbishop of Antioch, two priests, three deacons and all that is essential for the Divine Liturgy.

Eventually the wooden church was replaced by a large cathedral, erected in the 11th century, retaining the name of Svetitskhoveli (Living Pillar).

Thus King Mirian, Queen Nana and their children were baptised in the River Mtkvani, along with other nobles and ordinary Georgians, and Christianity was proclaimed the state religion of Georgia.

Later, Constantine the Great sent King Mirian an abundance of gifts, including a portion of the Holy Cross, found by his mother, Saint Helena, as well as a nail with which Christ's hands had been pierced, and relics of the saints.

Priests went to towns and villages baptising people, and soon the whole of Kartli was baptised, except those living in the mountains and most of the Jews.

St Nino lived in the village of Bodbe for the rest of her life, where also, according to her will, she was buried. When the king and bishop thought of moving her sacred remains to the Cathedral in Mtskheta, to rest near the Living Pillar, no one could move her coffin from the place chosen by the saint herself.

Soon after this, King Mirian started building a church over her tomb, and it was completed by his son, King Bakur, who was named after St Nino's kinsman, St George. It has been restored a few times but never destroyed.

There are two feast days for the Coat of Christ and the Living Pillar: 1st/14th October and 30th June/13th July. They are celebrated all over Georgia, especially so in the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta, where the Patriarch conducts the main service.

Translated from the original Georgian by our parishioner, Natela Mariam Bruce. As we are celebrating the Passion of our Saviour it seemed appropriate to include this account of one of the sacred relics so closely associated with the Crucifixion in this issue.

Adapted from
**"THE HOUSE OF GOD
AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"**

By the Priest N. R. Antonov

Continuation

§ 64. Understanding the Service Books. One must distinguish the books of Sacred Scripture used in the services, and the other church service books. In the first category, we include those books which contain the various lections from the Bible: the Gospel Book, the Apostle Book, the Prophetic Books and the Psalter. In the second category we include the prayers and hymns which change according to the daily, weekly and annual cycles.

The prayer book for the daily cycle of services is called the Book of Hours, and contains the daily church services: Vespers, Compline, Nocturns, Mattins and the Hours.

The book for the weekly cycle is called the Octoechos, or Book of Eight Tones, and it is divided into eight sections corresponding to the eight tones of the church chant. It is used throughout the year except during the period of the Great Fast and the paschal period, ending with the festival of the Holy Trinity.

The Lenten Triodion contains the services for the preparatory weeks before Great Lent, the fast itself, and the fast of Holy or Passion Week.

The Pentecostarion (which is called, among the Russians, the Floral Triodion) contains the services for Pentecost, that is, the fifty day period, beginning with Pascha (Easter) and ending with Trinity Sunday.

The prayer book for the annual cycle is in fact a twelve volume set called the Menaion - this word derives from the Greek word for "month," and the twelve volumes correspond to the twelve months of the year from September to August. The prayers and hymns found in the Menaion are interspersed, according to certain rules, with those in the Octoechos, and these combinations are then inserted into the various services: Vespers, Mattins or the Liturgy. The prayers and hymns for the greatest feasts of the year are published for convenience sake in a book called the Festal Menaion. There is also a book called the General Menaion, which contains services for different types of saints (martyrs, hieromartyrs, hierarchs, monastics, etc) which can be used when one wishes to honour a particular saint or group of saints, for whom no service has yet been composed.

[There is also a book used by the clergy, the priests and deacons, which is simply called the Service Book (Sluzhebnik) or in the Greek practice, the Hieraticon. This contains the prayers and the litanies which the clergy need in conducting the services.]

All the books listed above would, however, be insufficient, without the addition of one other book. This is called the Typicon or Rule, and it contains the regulations for combining the various cycles of services. It also gives guidance on the conduct of those praying in church, both during the divine services and for when they are in the church precincts at other times of the day.

§ 65. How to Use the Books in Conducting the Services. For any service one needs the following books: the Book of Hours, the Octoechos, Triodion or Pentecostarion, the Menaion, and the Psalter for the readers and chanters, and the Service Book for the clergy. The most important book for the reader is the Book of Hours, which gives the basic form of each of the services. From the other books we take the changeable parts of the services; the troparions, kontakions, verses and canons.

All this may sound extremely complicated, but the ordering of the services using the books we have outlined does not present great difficulties if one bears in mind three fundamental rules:-

1) Before the start of every service, one should attentively read through the directions in the Menaion, and the Octoechos or Triodion, and determine what "rank" the service of the day has - this is indicated by the number of verses that are read on the canon, and will tell one how the whole order of the services throughout the day should be conducted. Particular care is needed for feasts which might or do fall in the Lenten period, such as the Meeting of the Lord, or Annunciation, or when the dedication festival of one's church falls in Lent. Some feasts, such as the Universal Exaltation of the Cross, have special ceremonies attached to them and these need special attention.

2) During the service, one must keep one's attention on the rubrics, and in particular when it is necessary to change from one book to another.

3) In the Book of Hours, there are directions such as, "When God is the Lord is chanted," "When Alleluia is chanted," "If it falls within the Forty Days." These phrases indicate various periods in the church year, (the last two mentioned refer the Great Lenten weekdays) and they give one directions on how to continue.

To be continued with "The Order and Explanation of the Divine Liturgy"

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. To help readers, in this particular section, we have been more liberal than usual in adapting the original. His next three sections contain very technical information about Greek Chant, Russian Chant and the translation of the services from Greek into the Church Slavonic language used by the Russian Church - these we have omitted, so that we might continue with subjects which are more immediately useful for Orthodox Christians who wish to understand the services of their Church.

THE COMING MONTH

ACCORDING to the Orthodox reckoning, the greatest feast of the Church Year, Pascha, falls on the fourteenth of the month this year, and so, within April this year, we have the last week of the Great Fast, Passion Week, Bright Week and the first days of the paschal period: the most significant days of the whole year.

The last week of Great Lent is a short period of quiet, following the special services which fall in the fifth week, and which this year are augmented by the Great Feast of the Annunciation also falling within the fifth week. Nearly everyone with more than a passing interest in Orthodoxy, knows that the sixth week ends with Lazarus

Saturday. This is the festival of the Saviour's resurrection of Lazarus, placed there as a precursor of His own resurrection eight days later. What is less widely appreciated is that throughout the week, we trace the story of Lazarus: his falling ill, his dying, the Saviour's journeying to Bethany, culminating on the Saturday in the miracle of Lazarus' being called forth from the tomb. Thus we follow a course of events which one day, each one of us will start out upon: sickness, death, burial, the coming of the Saviour and resurrection.

Our resurrection will, of course, be followed by judgment, and Lazarus Saturday is followed immediately by the Great Feast of the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday. This is one of the most beautiful festivals in the Church Year. It is a festival of joy, and it is one in which, as the Fathers interpret it, the Saviour foretold the calling of the nations, of us who are converts to Holy Orthodoxy too, by His riding not upon the ass but upon its foal. But it is also a feast of the Judgment, in which we see that chasm open up which will separate the saved from those who have chosen perdition. In this feast we see the "children" greet our Saviour with love and devotion, and the Pharisees complain and the chief priests and the scribes begin to consider how they might rid themselves of Him. That same division continues to this day, and on the last day we shall find ourselves either among those who are ready to greet the Saviour with love and devotion, or among those who wish to rid themselves of Him.

In the first three days of Holy Week, we have some of the longest services of the year. Each day the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served, and it is preceded with Lenten Hours, in which there are extended readings from the Gospels. (Properly, although this is not always done, in the Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours, read each day for the three days we read the Gospels from Matthew 1:1 through to John 13:32.) In the early days of the original Holy Week, our Saviour spent His time instructing His disciples, and so through these readings He does today, to those who gather round Him in church.

In the last three days of Holy Week, it is as if the normal liturgical forms are shattered. The readings of the psalms are severely curtailed; often the order of the services as usually done is altered, so that prayers and hymns appointed specifically for the sacred events that we are following on each day take over the greater part of the services in a way which they do not do at other times of the year. This, of course, is not without purpose. The Cross, in these days, is planted on Golgotha, and history itself is changed.

In brief we celebrate Mystical Supper and the institution of the Eucharist on the Thursday, and then too, as a dreadful warning, we recall the betrayal of Judas. On the Friday, beginning with the service of the Twelve Gospels which is chanted on Thursday evening, we have the Crucifixion. Late on the Friday afternoon, we have Vespers in which we depict the entombment of the Saviour, and then in the evening the Service of Lamentations during which in the procession at the end, we commemorate His descent into, and harrowing of, hades.

That harrowing of hades is the beginning of our Saviour's victory over death and the powers of darkness, and the Saturday Liturgy, which is served in the afternoon and which is appended to Vespers, already gives us a foretaste of the joy to come. During the service, the dark Lenten vestments are changed for the paschal ones, and

the church is sprinkled with scented pot-pourri, so that the whole church is filled with fragrance. The Midnight Paschal Mattins and Liturgy is, of course, the crown of the week, indeed of the whole liturgical year. It is the one that everybody attends, but the quieter sweetness of that earlier rejoicing, with the fewer faithful, has a special beauty.

For seven days, throughout Bright Week, we celebrate the Holy Mysteries daily, and proclaim again and again the good news that Christ is risen from the dead, that the power of death and hades has been crushed, that we have been granted access in to a new and more radiant life.

The two Sundays following Easter Day are dedicated to events through which the news of the Resurrection has been made known to us: the meeting of our Risen Saviour with the holy Apostle Thomas on the eighth day, and Ointment-Bearing Women at the Tomb. Between these two Sundays, in the Russian practice, the Tuesday is kept as Radonitsa, a day on which, after the services in church, we go to the cemeteries and chant short memorial litanies at the graves of the faithful departed, that they might share the joy of the Saviour's triumph. This year Radonitsa falls on the festival of the holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer, and so will be kept with a Vigil.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

"I have been told that we should not call the feast of the Resurrection of Christ Easter but Pascha, because Easter is a pagan word. Is this so, and is it that important?" - G. L, Newark-on-Trent.

This seems to be one of those minor issues, about which certain people love embracing extremist views if only to demonstrate the "purity" of their Orthodoxy!

The argument is that the English word "Easter" derives from the name of a pagan goddess, Eostre, and for this reason should not be used. It is true that no less a scholar than the Venerable Bede endorses this derivation. However, the argument itself seems rather a silly one. Many words derive from others which have meanings far removed from their present connotation. In modern English, the word Easter means the Christian festival of the Resurrection of Christ, and simply that. In contemporary society, of course, many have little idea of the feast's Christian significance, and Easter is just a Spring festival, but it is equally true that far, far fewer have ever heard of the derivation from the miserable Eostre, or have any idea who she is.

If one is going to monitor all the words we use to see that they have no unchristian connotations or derivations, we are going to be hard pressed to use any words at all in confession of our Faith. The word "mysteries" certainly has some very suspect pagan connotations; and the word "god" would seem to be particularly dangerous! Even in common usage today, - and not just in some distant derivation known only to academics, - it is variously used, usually with the initial letter capitalised, to mean the Most Holy Trinity, and, with lower case letters, to mean a host of unsavoury characters: Jove, Odin, Bacchus, Baal, Shiva, Ganesha, Ishtar, etc. I think we have to be a little more mature than the extremists would have us be.

Having said that, it is also important to bear in mind, that the word Pascha should perhaps be our term of first choice. It derives from the Jewish Pesach or Passover, and so it reminds us immediately that the Saviour is our Passover, our Deliverer from bondage to sin,

the One Who, through the waters of Baptism, rather than those of the Red Sea, leads us out of captivity. Furthermore, it is a word used in various forms in a host of European languages, and so reminds us of the Christian heritage of all those nations.

In formal references, therefore, we should perhaps always use the word Pascha, but this does not preclude us from using Easter in everyday speech. We certainly do not want to descend to the priggish silliness of those who would expect us to send "paschal cards," or even eat "paschal eggs"! There is always something very disturbing about those who believe our Faith can be expressed only by the imposition of a heap of pettifogging irrelevancies or a superabundance of foreign words.

NEWS SECTION

BLOCKADE ON ATHONITE MONKS LIFTED: Greece's highest administrative court is said to have issued a "sharp rebuke" to His All-Holiness, the Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I by lifting the blockade on the Sacred Monastery of Esphigmenou on the Holy Mountain Athos. The monastery had been cut off by a police cordon and there had been an embargo on the delivery of food, medicines and fuel since 28th January. The Patriarchate had declared the monastery schismatic because the fathers there are non-commemorators, and had issued an eviction order on the monks on that date. When they did not leave they arranged the embargo in an ostensible attempt to starve them out. The Greek Court is to try the legality of the eviction order in a mid-October session, and has ordered that, until then, the fathers are to be allowed free access. During the period when the monastery was blockaded (28/1/03 - 13/3/03), a 25-year-old monk, Father Tryfonas, was killed when in attempting to avoid the police blockade, he drove a tractor off the road and into a ravine. Despite the fact of the embargo, the tragic accidental death of a young monk, and the fact that the highest Court in Greece ordered the ban to be lifted, the newspaper Ekathimerini, carried the following denial from the Holy Community of Mount Athos: "Nobody is being persecuted, nobody's belief is being punished; nobody's religious freedom or human rights are being encroached on. No violence is being employed; nobody is being endangered, or deprived of food, medicine or medical care." But, according to the "Church Times," the statement added that "the Esphigmenou monks had no place on the Athos peninsula." Have they learned "spin" from the "freedom-loving" West?

GREEK ARCHBISHOP PARTICIPATES IN ENTHRONEMENT SERVICE OF ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY: It has become customary, as a courtesy, for Orthodox delegates to attend such ceremonies as the Enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, at the recent enthronement of Dr Rowan Williams, His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain took a further step and not only attended but also offered a prayer, which rather paradoxically ended: "In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will, with joy we offer ourselves anew to you."

ORTHODOX CHURCH LEADERS SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE IRAQI WAR: From around the world Orthodox Church leaders have made statements deploring the horrifying war upon Iraq. His Holiness Patriarch Alexei II of Moscow has been particularly vocal in this respect, and has issued a series of statements. In one dated 26/3/03, he writes: "The military operations of the coalition led by the USA and Great Britain against Iraq have lasted a week now. Cities and towns are burning, civilians are dying, and innocent

children, women and old people are suffering. Millions of people have been left without a roof over their heads and deprived of proper conditions of life. Flows of refugees are amounting to thousands of people. Missile and bombing strikes have also caused damage to countries neighbouring Iraq. Historical monuments are running the danger of destruction. The whole world has become aware of the fact that there is a growing humanitarian catastrophe in the country and its bounds are expanding. However not one of the accusations that provoked the war has proved true to date." Addressing the UN Secretary General, he ends: "The Russian Orthodox Church calls upon all UN member states to do their best to stop bloodshed, further victims, especially among women and children, and to re-establish the violated world order." Sadly, of course, his voice will go unheeded. Looking back to the sufferings in his own country, Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro-Primorska, pleaded even before the blitzing began: "We ask the powerful of this world, above all the United States and its allies, not to begin a new war, this time with Iraq. It would mean disaster for everyone, a new disgrace for all humanity - not just humiliation and destruction for the honest Iraqi nation." He added: "Our own Church and nation had to endure seven wars in the twentieth century, whose traces are still suffered today, especially in Kosovo." We now know his words also were not heeded; - Kosovo, in fact, was only a training ground for what has now happened and for what, alas, is to come.

ALASKAN ORTHODOX CLERGY TO BE ALCOHOL-ABUSE COUNSELLORS: Ecumenical News International bulletin 03-0081 tells us that the Orthodox Church (OCA) is the biggest church in Alaska with 20,000 members and about ninety parishes and chapels. Because of the prevalence of the problem in the state, their ruling hierarch Bishop Nikolai has initiated a new programme for training seminarians in counselling for alcohol and substance abuse. The programme will include training at a health care facility. By mid-year the first four counsellors will be certified and two will work in Anchorage, Alaska's biggest city, and two in rural areas.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

PLANNING APPLICATION: Our architect, Irina Hoble-Aldersley, has revised the plans for the new Brotherhood building in accordance with guidelines from the planning committee. We have also had a report drawn up by planning consultant, Andy Ryley of PRC Fewster, and an ecological survey of the site made by Giles Groome. On 25th March this whole package was deposited with the planning department in the Woking Borough Council offices, and we are given to understand that the matter will come before the planning committee again on Tuesday 22nd April -Holy and Great Tuesday, although, in the way of things, this may yet be rescheduled. We ask the prayers and support of our readers. When earlier the planning committee considered our application, several parishioners and friends attended in person, and not only did we very much appreciate that support, but apparently it makes something of an impression on committee members. We ask as many of you as can to do the same again (check date and time with us first though) or to write letters of support to: Woking Borough Council, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, Surrey GU21 6YL

LOCAL SUPPORT: Usually people only write letters supporting, rather than opposing, planning applications if they have an interest in the matter themselves, but we have been encouraged that the Brookwood Cemetery Society has written in support of our

application, as have villagers in Brookwood whom formerly we only knew as passing acquaintances.

GIFTS TO THE CHURCH: Recently Miss Lydia Roskill donated an antique silver vase, which had been one of her mother's wedding presents, to the Shrine of St Edward. And Laurence Bloom-Davis gave a sculpted panel by artist Keith Newstead of Monkton Farleigh, Wiltshire, which we hope to have as a feature in the new house. Laurence also gave us a fine copy of the "Saxon Chronicle" in English and Anglo-Saxon parallel texts.

GRANT TO THE LIBRARY; We hope, with the building of the new house, to divide the library, so that we have a private section and one from which people can borrow. Recently we received a generous grant from the Urosevic Foundation to acquire books on the late Imperial period in Russia. We are particularly thankful to the secretary of the Foundation, Miss Margaret Davis, for making this possible.

GABRIEL AND HELENA LAWANI, who for so many years have printed "The Shepherd "for us, are, for family reasons, leaving the South and going to live in the North, close to the Congleton Mission. They are among the few people who have been with us from the very beginning of the Brotherhood's existence in 1982 and we shall, of course, miss them, but they hope to continue their work for us and we are very grateful for that. There may be some hitches as they relocate, and we ask readers to bear with these, and to pray for the Lawani family as they go into a "far country."

PRACTICAL TIP

OUR RECENT CORRESPONDENT, the wife of an Anglican vicar, bemoaned the fact that in their usage the second Sunday of Easter is rather depressingly called Low Sunday. When an Anglican, I was told this was because after the huge congregations on Easter Day, the next Sunday hardly anyone would come. I am not sure this is the correct derivation of the term, but we may sadly reflect that in Orthodoxy we seem rather than have one Low Sunday to have a whole series of them! A custom is prevalent, where people do make some more effort in Lent, but having arrived at Pascha, they simply slack off. A similar thing can be observed at Christmas. That we make more effort during the fasts is a good thing, thereafter to slack off does not benefit us much. We should try then to sustain that effort. If you are trying to climb a ladder, there is little point in mounting a few steps and then jumping off, and having to start again.