

# ***The Shepherd***

## ***An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine***

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### FROM THE FATHERS

"IF IT WERE NOT FOR SUFFERINGS, the Providence of God would not be seen to be as operative in mankind. It would be impossible to approach God with boldness; impossible to learn the wisdom of the Spirit and to be assured of the divine love in the soul. Before sufferings come to a person, he prays to God as if he himself were a stranger to Him. But if he constantly struggles out of his love, soon he undergoes a change. Before, he held God as a taskmaster, but now he becomes a sincere friend of God."

*Venerable Neil Sorsky, + 1508 A.D.*

"THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN on earth is a chain of suffering. It is necessary to fight against our own body, against passions and evil spirits. Our hope lies in this fight. Our salvation is from God. Having put our reliance on Him, we must bear with patience the time of struggle. We are ground between the millstones of temptation as grain that is ground into flour. Divine Providence permits these trials to assail us for the great benefit of our soul; from them we acquire a contrite and humble heart which God will not despise."

*St Ignatius (Brianchaninov) of the Caucasus, 1807-1867 A.D.*

"IT IS OBVIOUS that bodily hardship in general constitutes pressure upon the soul. For when one suffers, the endurance of the soul is put to a test. And the ascetic struggle aims at rendering the soul passionless with respect to every kind and intensity of pressure, ill-treatment, or humiliation. That is, it is necessary that by stages there be developed patience in the soul to every kind of disagreeable thing or event. The highest level of patience is when one experiences joy and gratitude and doxology to God when under such pressures."

*Blessed Elder Gabriel Dionysiatis (1886-1983 A.D.)*

## A DISCOURSE ON THE DORMITION OF OUR LADY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

By the Venerable John of Damascus, Monk & Presbyter

*(feastday: 4th/17th December; + c. 750A.D)*

### THIRD HOMILY

IT IS THE WAY of those who are consumed with love for something to have it always on their tongue, to have an image of it in their mind night and day. Let no one pass judgment on me, then, if I have composed this third eulogy in honour of the Mother of my God, a kind of funeral gift, in addition to the two that have gone before. It is no great favour to her, but for myself and for you who are gathered here before

me, O holy and sacred assembly, I mean to serve a nourishing meal for the soul's health, appropriate for this holy night, and to provide spiritual joy for your hearts. We are usually faced with a lack of nourishment, as you realise; so I am providing a full-course banquet, and even if it is not very rich, or worthy of the invited company, at least it will be enough to satisfy our hunger. She, after all, stands in no need of our speeches of praise, but we do stand in need of the glory that comes from her. How shall what is already glorious be glorified further? How shall the source of light be illumined? By what we do here, we weave a crown rather for ourselves. "For I live," says the Lord," and I shall glorify those who glorify Me."

Wine is truly sweet to drink, and bread is a nourishing food. The one gladdens, the other strengthens man's heart (Ps 103:16-17). But what is sweeter than the Mother of my God? She has captivated my mind; she has taken my tongue captive! I gaze on her in my thoughts, waking or sleeping. She, who is the mother of the Word, has become the patroness also of my words. The offspring of a barren woman is the one who makes barren souls fruitful. Today we celebrate the sacred event of this woman's holy departure for heaven.

Come, then, let us approach the mystical mountain. Passing beyond the images of living, material things and into the holy darkness of incomprehensible realities, let us enter the divine light and sing the praise of the Power beyond all power. How has He, who came down from His immaterial height, above all being, beyond all things, into a virgin's womb, without ever leaving the Father's heart, - how has He Who was conceived and made flesh and Who willingly walked the way of suffering to death, Who has returned again to the Father with a body whose origin is from this earth, winning imperishability by Himself perishing, - how has He drawn His mother according to the flesh up to His own Father, and raised to the land of heaven the one who is called 'heaven on earth'?

Today the spiritual, living ladder, by which the Most High has appeared on earth to "walk among men"(Bar3.37),has herself climbed the ladder of death, and gone up from earth to heaven.

Today the earthly table, which without marital experience bore the heavenly Bread of life, the coal of Divinity, was lifted up from earth to heaven. For her, God's "gate facing towards the East"(Ezek 44:1;cf. Ps 23:7, 9), the gates of heaven are opened.

Today the living city of God is transported from the earthly Jerusalem to "the Jerusalem which is on high" (Heb 12:22); she who has brought forth, as her own first-born, "the Firstborn of all creation" (Col 1: 15), the Only-begotten of the Father (Jn 1:14), now dwells in the "assembly of the firstborn" (Heb 12:23). The living, spiritual ark of the Lord has gone up to "the rest" of her Son (Ps 131:8).

The gates of Paradise are opened, and welcome the field that bore God, where the Tree of eternal life has grown, to put an end to the disobedience of Eve and the death imposed on Adam. This Christ, the Cause of life for all people, welcomes the cave that has been hollowed out - the unquarried mountain, from whom, without help of human hands, that Stone has been cut, which fills the universe (Dan 2:35,45).

The bridal chamber of the Word's holy Incarnation has come to rest in her glorious tomb as in her mansion. When she ascended to the shrine of her heavenly nuptials, to reign in public splendour with her Son and her God, she left her tomb as a bridal chamber for those who live on earth. A tomb as a bridal chamber? Yes, and one much more splendid than every other bridal chamber, for it is radiant not with flickering gold or shining silver or brilliant gems, not with silken threads or cloth of gold and spun purple, but with the Divine glory of the Holy Spirit. It offers not bodily contact for earthly lovers, but to those linked by bonds of the Spirit it offers the life of holy souls - a state better and sweeter in God's sight than any other.

This tomb is more lovely than Eden. I need not tell again what happened there: the "kindness" of our worst enemy, his "friendly advice" (if I may call it so!), his envy, his deceit, Eve's weakness, his persuasiveness, the sweet but bitter bait by which her mind was captivated and she captivated her husband's, their disobedience, their banishment, their death: - if I tell the whole story, I shall turn our festival into a depressing occasion! But this tomb sent a mortal body from earth to heaven, while Eden brought the mother of our race down to the earth from on high. For was it not there that the one who had been made in God's image heard the sentence, "Thou art earth, and to earth thou shalt return" (Gen 3:19)?

This tomb is more precious than the tabernacle of old, for it contained the radiant, living lampstand, the table spread with life, holding not the showbread but the Bread of heaven, not earthly fire but the immaterial fire of the Godhead.

This tomb is more richly endowed than the ark of Moses, for its treasure was not shadows and types, but Truth itself. For it has displayed to us the vessel of purest gold, which bore the heavenly Manna (Ex 16:33; Heb 9:4); the living tablet of stone, written on by the all-powerful finger of the Spirit, which received God's Word made flesh, the Word in His own substance; and the golden censer, which gave birth to the divine Coal, spreading His fragrance through all creation.

Let the demons flee; let the thrice-wretched Nestorians cry out in pain as the Egyptians did of old, and with them their leader, the new Pharaoh, the cruel scourge, the tyrant! For they are buried in the depths of blasphemy. But we, who have been saved with our feet dryshod, who have walked across the salty sea of impiety, - let us sing our song of Exodus to the Mother of God! Let the Church, as Miriam, raise the tambourine in her hands and begin the festal hymn! And let the young maidens of the spiritual Israel cry out loudly "with tambourines and choral songs" (Ex 15:20)!

Let the "kings of the earth, the princes and judges, the young men and virgins, elders with the younger" (Ps 148:11-12), all sing in praise of the Mother of God! Let there be gatherings and speeches of all kinds, let the diverse tongues of the nations and peoples strike up "new song" (Ps 39:4; 149:1). Let the air resound with the reeds and trumpets of the Spirit, and inaugurate the day of salvation with flashes of fire! Let the heavens be glad (Ps 95:11); "let the heavens rain down rejoicing" (Es. 45:8)!

Leap up, O rams of God's chosen flock, ye holy Apostles, lifted like lofty mountain-tops by your sublime vision; and leap ye also, lambs of God, His holy people nourished by the Church and reaching up, in your desire, like foothills towards the mountains (cf. Ps 113:4,6)!

What a remarkable story! The source of Life is dead, the mother of my Lord; for it was right that she who was formed of earth should go home to the earth again, and so rise from there to heaven, taking from the earth the pure life entrusted to it when her body was laid there to rest. It was fitting that her flesh should rise from the tomb, pure and incorruptible, having cast off the earthy, lustreless mass of mortality like gold in the crucible of death, and that she should shine with the brilliance of incorruption.

Today she receives the beginning of a new existence from the One Who gave her the beginning of her former existence - she who gave the beginning of a second existence, in a body, to Him who had no temporal beginning to His previous, eternal existence, even though He has the Father as the Origin and Cause of His own divine Being.

Rejoice, O Sion, holy mountain of God, where the living mountain of God dwelt: the new Bethel, where the stone of human nature was anointed by the oil of the Divinity (cf. Gen 28:18). From you, she has been taken to the heights, as her Son went up from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12). Let a cloud be made ready, to cover and embrace the whole world, and let the wings of the winds bring the Apostles from the ends of the earth to Sion. "Who are these, who fly like clouds" (Es. 60:8) and like eagles towards that corpse (cf. Mt 24:28) which, above all others, deserves to rise again? Who are these who come to venerate the Mother of God? "Who is this who goes up, as white as a flower," "all beautiful," resplendent "as the sun"? (Cant. 8:5; 4:7; 6:10) Let the lyres of the Spirit sing - the tongues of the Apostles! Let the cymbals shout - the resounding bearers of God's word! Let the chosen vessel Hierotheus, made holy by the Holy Spirit, who experienced and learned holy things by being united with the Holy One Himself, be totally withdrawn from his own body in ecstasy; let him be wholly transported in his devotion, and strike up the festal hymns! "Let all the nations clap their hands" (Ps 46:1). Let all sing the praise of the Mother of God! Let the angels bow in veneration before this mortal body! Daughters of Jerusalem, walk in procession behind the queen; virgins, young in the Spirit, approach her and be drawn with her towards the bridal chamber (cf. Ps 44), to place her "at the right hand of her Lord."

Come down, come down, O Lord, and pay Thy mother the debt Thou owest her, the return she deserveth for having nourished Thee. Open Thy divine arms; receive Thy mother's soul, Thou Who on the cross entrusted Thine own spirit into Thy Father's hands. Call to her in a gentle whisper, "Come, My fair one, My dear one (Cant 2:10; 4:7), thou who in thy virginity art more radiant than the sun. Thou didst give Me a share in what was thine; come, enjoy what is Mine! Mother, come to thy Son! Come, reign with Him Who became poor with thee by being born from thee!" (2 Cor 8:9). Go, mistress, go! Do not first ascend, as Moses did, and then die (Deut 32:49 f.), but rather die, and then ascend! Place your soul in the hands of your own Son! Give what is made of earth to the earth, since that, too, will be raised up with you.

Lift up your eyes, O people of God! Lift them up! Behold! The ark of the Lord God of hosts is in Sion, and the Apostles stand bodily around her, paying final respects to the body that is our source of Life, the vessel of God. Angels watch round her, too, in reverent fear, incorporeal, invisible, as servants assisting the Mother of their Lord. The Lord Himself is there: He is present everywhere, He fills all things and watches over the universe, although no place is simply His, for all things are in Him, as the Cause who made and sustains them all. Behold the virgin, the daughter of Adam and

Mother of God! Because of Adam she commits her body to the earth, but because of her Son she gives her body to the heavenly tabernacle above. Let the holy city be blessed! Let it enjoy blessing upon blessing forever! Let the angels go before the holy tabernacle as it passes on; let them prepare her tomb carefully! Let the radiance of the Spirit adorn it! Let perfumes be made ready, to anoint that wholly spotless, wholly fragrant body. Let a pure wave come and bathe it in blessings from the pure spring of blessing. "Let the earth rejoice" (Ps 95:11), as her body is laid to rest; let the air leap as her spirit ascends! Let the breezes blow, filled with grace as soft as dew! Let all creation celebrate the ascent of the Mother of God! Let choirs of youths cry out, let the tongues of orators flow with lyric praises, let the hearts of the wise reflect on the meaning of this wonder, let the elders, revered for age's white hair, peacefully profit from what they have seen! Let every creature make its contribution to this festival, for even all of them together will not achieve a tiny fraction of the praise that is her due.

Come, let us all go forth from the world with her in spirit as she departs! Come, let us go down into the tomb with her, in the love of our hearts! Let us also surround that holy bier! Let us raise holy songs, in words such as these: "Rejoice, full of grace! The Lord is with thee!" (Lk 1:28). Rejoice, thou who wast fore-ordained to be Mother of God! Rejoice, thou who wast chosen before all ages by God's will, most holy shoot of the earth, vessel of the Divine fire, sacred image of the Holy Spirit, spring of the Water of life, paradise for the Tree of life, living branch of the holy Vine that flows with nectar and ambrosia, river filled with the perfumes of the Spirit, field of Divine wheat, rose glowing with virginity and breathing the fragrance of grace, lily robed like a queen, ewe-lamb who gave birth to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, workshop of our salvation, higher than the angelic powers, handmaid and mother!

Come, let us surround that spotless tomb, and let us drink of God's grace. Come, let us carry her ever-virgin body in the arms of our spirit, and let us, too, go within the sepulchre; let us die with her, leaving behind the weaknesses of our bodies and living a pure and passionless life with her. Let us listen to those divine hymns, coming forth from the immaterial lips of angels. Let us bow low and enter that tomb, and let us recognise the wonder of this mystery: she has been raised, she has been lifted up, she has been taken to heaven, she stands by her Son, above all the ranks of angels. For there is nothing between mother and Son!

I have now finished a third funeral oration for you, as well as the first two, O Mother of God, in reverence and love of the Trinity which you served, when through the Father's pleasure and the Spirit's power you received the Word without beginning, the Wisdom and Power of God Which can do all things. Receive my good will, then, which far surpasses my powers, and grant me salvation, freedom from my soul's weaknesses and relief from my body's ills, a solution to my crises, a peaceful state of life, and the enlightenment of the Spirit. Enkindle our love for your Son, make our lives pleasing to Him, so that we may come to share in that blessedness on high, and may see you, radiant in the glory of your Son, and raise our holy songs in eternal rejoicing, in the assembly of those who keep festival worthy of the Spirit for Him Who wrought our salvation through you: Christ, the Son of God and our God, to Whom be glory and power, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages! Amen.

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

By the Priest N. R. Antonov  
*Continuation*

9) The Little Entrance. When the Beatitudes are being intoned or chanted, the Royal Gates are opened, the priest takes the Gospel Book from the Holy Table and hands it to the deacon, and together they leave the sanctuary, processing behind the Table and out through the north door. This is called the Little Entrance, and represents the Saviour's coming to begin His preaching ministry. The ceremony now only has a symbolical significance, but in the first centuries of Christianity it also had a practical purpose. In those early days of the Church, the Gospel book was not kept in the sanctuary on the Holy Table as it is now. It was kept in a secure place, called the diaconicon, or the place where the sacred vessels were kept. Then when the time drew near for the reading of the Gospel, the clergy brought it solemnly into the sanctuary.

As they approach the north door, the deacon says quietly to the priest; "Let us pray to the Lord." Although this is said quietly, he is also calling everyone to pray to the Lord Who is coming to us. Before the Royal Gates, the priest reads the secret prayer, asking that the Lord will bless this entry into the Holy Place with the accompaniment of the ministry of the Angels, like that of the Heavenly Liturgy. Then immediately blessing the entrance, he says: "Blessed be the entrance of Thy holies," and the deacon raising the Gospel Book up and making the sign of the Cross with it over the doorway, exclaims: "Wisdom! Upright!" (see § 9).

10) The Chanting of "O come let us worship." The faithful now looking upon the Gospel Book as if upon Jesus Christ Himself, setting out upon His preaching ministry cry out: "O come let us worship and fall down before Christ. Save us, O Son of God, risen from the dead" (on Sundays), or "through the prayers of the Theotokos" (on her feasts), or "Who art wondrous in the saints." "Save us, who sing unto Thee, Alleluia."

11) The Chanting of the Troparions and Contakions. To the "O come let us worship," we add the chanting of the troparions and contakions appointed for the day or for the Saints celebrated, who, through the fulfilling of the commandments of Christ, have themselves received blessedness in the heavens and act as an example to others.

When he has entered the sanctuary again, the priest prays to the Heavenly Father, "Who is hymned by the Cherubim and Seraphim," to accept from us, who are lowly and unworthy, the chanting of the Thrice-holy Hymn. He asks that we might be forgiven our sins voluntary and involuntary, that we might be sanctified and given the strength to serve God without reproach and righteously to the very end of our life. The end of this prayer is the exclamation, which follows the troparions and contakions: "For holy art Thou, O our God, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever." This the priest says loudly, although the rest of the prayer he has said quietly, heard only by the clergy in the altar.

12) The Deacon's Exclamation, "O Lord, save the pious." Then the deacon breaks in: "O Lord, save the pious and hearken unto us. "Then standing before the Royal Gates, facing the people, he ends the priest's exclamation with the words "and unto the ages of ages." As he does so, he motions his stole in an arc over the people.

13) The Trisagion or Thrice-holy Hymn. Immediately after this, the faithful chant the Thrice-holy Hymn or Trisagion: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us." On some feasts, the Trisagion is replaced by other verses. Thus, for example on Pascha, Trinity Day, the Nativity of Christ, the Theophany, and Lazarus Saturday, we sing instead, "All ye that in Christ have been baptised, Christ have ye put on. Alleluia." This chant reminds us that in ancient times it was particularly on these feasts that the catechumens were baptised. And on the feast of the Exaltation of the Lord's Cross and on the Sunday of the Worship of the Cross, we chant, "Thy Cross do we worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection do we glorify."

The hymn, Holy God, should inspire in us a feeling of repentance concerning our sins, and a turning to God for mercy. At this time we should involuntarily recall the words of the Prophet Esaias, who saw the Throne of God surrounded by the angels, who were continuously chanting "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth," and who, impressed by this vision, cried out, "Woe is me! ... I am a man of unclean lips... and I live among a people of unclean lips" (Es. 6:3-5). After the Trisagion, the reading of the Apostle follows.

14) The Prokeimenon. This reading of the Apostle (from the Epistles or from Acts) is preceded by the exclamations; "Let us attend! Peace be unto all. Wisdom!" and by the prokeimenon, which usually comprises two verses intoned by the reader, after each of which the choir repeats the first one. Then the reader intones half of the first one again, and it is completed by the choir.

There are many prokeimena. They are divided into those used at the Liturgy and those used at Vespers or Mattins. The Liturgy ones are further divided into daily ones, Sunday ones, and festal ones. There are also special prokeimena used during Great Lent and the period of Pentecost, and there are prokeimena for various "types" of saints. All these are found in the priest's Service Book. For Sundays, there are eight prokeimena used in the Liturgy, according to the eight tones:

First tone: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee.

Second tone: The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation.

Third tone: O chant unto our God, chant ye; chant unto our King, chant ye.

Fourth tone: How magnified are Thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast Thou made them all.

Plagal first tone: Thou, O Lord, shalt keep us and shalt preserve us from this generation and forever more.

Plagal second tone: Save, O Lord, thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

Grave tone: The Lord shall give strength unto His people, the Lord shall bless His people with peace.

Plagal fourth tone: Make your vows and pay them to the Lord our God.

15 & 16) The Reading of the Apostle and the Gospel. During the reading of the Apostle, the deacon censes, representing the grace of the Holy Spirit, in Whom the Apostles preached, and in Whom all those who heard their teachings did hear. The priest sits on the seat in the High Place during this reading to signify that he is equal to the Apostles with regard to his teaching ministry. For this reason, unless they are particularly infirm, others in church do not sit at this time.

When the Apostle reading is finished, the reader intones other short verses, which are called the Alleluiarion, because they are responded to by the choir with a threefold Alleluia. Then the Gospel reading follows. This is prefaced and followed by the chant, "Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee," a token of our gratitude to the Lord, for granting us the evangelical teachings. Both the Apostle and the Gospel are read, that Christian teaching regarding the Faith and morals might be disseminated.

17 & 18) The Threefold Litany and the Special Prayer. After the Gospel and perhaps a homily by the priest, there follows the Threefold Litany (see § 57 above) and sometimes a special prayer. At the time when Fr Antonov was writing, in Russia this special prayer was one for the Tsar, composed after the assassination in 1881 of the Emperor Alexander II, the Tsar-Liberator. After the Revolution, the Synod appointed a very beautiful Prayer for the Salvation of Russia, which in fact could be said for almost any country in the world today and its people.

19 & 20) The Litanies for the Faithful Departed and for the Catechumens. After the Threefold Litany (and the Prayer), there follows a threefold litany for the faithful departed (never used on Sundays and within Pentecost) and the Litany for the Catechumens, and then the dismissal of the catechumens. In the Litany for the Catechumens, the deacon prays on behalf of all the people, that the Lord will enlighten the catechumens with the word of Gospel truth, that he will deem them worthy of Holy Baptism and thus unite them to His holy Church. At the same time, the priest quietly reads a prayer in which he beseeches the Lord "who liveth in the heights" to regard the humble, and to look upon His servants the catechumens, and deem them worthy of the laver of regeneration (Holy Baptism), the robe of incorruptibility and unite them to the Holy Church. Then bringing the petitions in this prayer to a conclusion, he makes the exclamation, "That they also with us may glorify Thine all-honourable and majestic name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages."

There is no doubt, that the petitions for the catechumens also touch those who are already baptised, because we who are baptised very often sin without repenting, often we do not comprehend our Orthodox Faith clearly enough, and we enter the church without the reverence that we should have. Fr Antonov then writes: "At the present time we should also pay especial attention to peoples of other races (nationalities), Muslims and Jews, within the borders of Russia, and also those in Japan and China and in other countries, who through God's help, are being evangelised with some success by Orthodox missionaries. We should assuredly pray for them as they especially need God's kindness of heart." Of course, he was writing of the situation at the beginning of the last century (c. 1912), but in our own times the mission field



opened to the Orthodox has increased immeasurably, and we should in like measure increase of prayers for the conversion of the erring everywhere.

21) The Dismissal of the Catechumens. At the end of the Litany for the Catechumens, the deacon four times requires them to leave the church: "As many as are catechumens, depart! Catechumens, depart. As many as are catechumens, depart! Let none of the catechumens remain!" And then calls upon the faithful who remain and are preparing to receive the Holy Mysteries to pray: "As many as are of the faithful, again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord." And thus ends the Liturgy of the Catechumens. The catechumens, as being not yet made worthy to participate in the highest Mystery, leave the church.

§78. The Schema or Order of the Liturgy of the Catechumens. In this paragraph, Fr Antonov, simply lists the various parts of the Liturgy of the Catechumens, which we have enumerated in the twenty-one paragraphs above.

*...to be continued with "The Symbolic and Morally Instructive Significance of the Parts of the Liturgy of the Catechumens "*

## THE COMING MONTH

AUGUST is a very special month in the Church's year, being also the last month in that cycle. Two Great Feasts and one which ranks nearly as importantly fall within the month: The Lord's Transfiguration (6th/19th), the Dormition of the Mother of God (15th/28th) and the Beheading of St John the Baptist (29th August/11th September). As is fitting at the end of the year, all these three celebrations tell us of glory.

In the first, we see the glory of the Lord's Divinity shining forth from His human body, and in the other two festivals we see that we can become participants in that glory, as did His all-holy Mother and the Forerunner and Baptist John. In this issue, our principal article is a homily by Saint John of Damascus on the Dormition, but it may be harder for us to appreciate how the Beheading of St John can be considered a festival of glory. The Gospel narrative, and much of the service based on it, tell us of Herod's drunkenness and licentiousness, of his stupidity in making a vow and then his sin in honouring that oath. They tell us of the vicious hatred of Herodias, and her abuse of her daughter in using her for her own vile schemes. Surely none of these things tell us much about glory, and yet we are granted two lessons which lead us to glory. We see that it was the Baptist, although a captive and denied freedom, and a victim of the malice of others, who won the moral victory. He it is, and not the earthly king and his sad consort, who now stands by the Throne of the Most High in the Heavens. He is taken from the confines of a dungeon and now enjoys the spaciousness of the heavenly mansions, whereas Herod and Herodias, who lived in a palace, are now confined to the tomb and moulder there. We learn also that not only must we contest for that which is true, but that that contest will involve us in suffering, perhaps as St John and so many other Christians in all ages past have found, in suffering unto blood - a message which is clean contrary to today's "gospels" of self-fulfilment and self-gratification.

The three feasts thus tell us of the Lord's glory, that that glory might be shared in by us, and how we might achieve participation in glory. Then with fresh resolve we can turn to the New Year, which begins on 1st/14th September, and start afresh our struggle for glory, - a struggle for glory which is the essence of the Christian life.

In the first two weeks of the month, we keep a strict fast in preparation for the Dormition, and this year, as regular readers will know, our fast will be blessed by our having the Wonderworking Kursk Root Icon in our midst. Every weekday in this fast, at Brookwood we follow a Greek custom of chanting the Supplicatory Canon (Paraklesis) to the Theotokos, which we do after daily Vespers. On the days, when the Icon is with us we shall do so before it. During these canons, which we also have on nearly every Tuesday evening of the year, we always commemorate those for whom prayers have been asked, both the Orthodox and the non Orthodox. During these days, when the Icon is in our midst, all may approach the Holy Virgin in a very special way and offer their intercessions for their loved ones and for their own particular needs and anxieties.

Among the saint in August, we have:-

The Venerable Pimen the Much-Ailing of Kiev (7th/20th): This righteous one was born sick and remained sickly throughout the greater part of his life. Because of the severity of his ailments he was eventually brought to the Monastery of the Kievan Caves by his parents, who asked the fathers to pray for his recovery. But, desiring to become a monk, Pimen secretly prayed that he would not be cured, and so stayed in the monastery infirmary. One night as he prayed, it appeared to him as if the Abbot and the brethren gathered around his sickbed and tonsured him into the monastic schema. In truth, he had been tonsured by the Angels. The fathers, however, heard the angelic chanting and hurried to his cell; there they found the newly tonsured monk, and the hair that had been shorn from his head, which they reverently placed on the tomb of Saint Theodosius, their founder. St Pimen himself lived another twenty years and until the very end never recovered from his illnesses. Nonetheless he was always cheerful and, although sick himself, healed others through his prayers. Then his death approached. As he had been foretold by the Angels who tonsured him, a short while before his death, he was granted full health. He visited, and worshipped at, the holy places in the monastery, and thanked the fathers for bearing with his infirmities for so long. He prepared for himself a grave in the Caves of St Antony, and then, having partaken of the Holy Mysteries, he gave up his soul in the year 1110.

The Holy Hieromartyrs Pothinus and Irenaeus of Lyons (23rd August/5th September): Both of these holy hierarchs were disciples of St Polycarp of Smyrna (fd: 23rd February/8th March), who was himself a disciple of the Apostles. Under obedience to St Polycarp, St Pothinus was sent to preach the Gospel in Gaul, and established his mission centre in Lyons, becoming the first Bishop of that place. During the persecution, already a man of ninety, he was arrested and taken before the proconsul, who asked him Who the Christian God was. Knowing that he did not ask to learn, St Pothinus only told him that if he were worthy he would find out. The pagans then set upon the Bishop and beat him with sticks and stones, and so viciously that he died of his injuries. Thus in the year 177, he was crowned as a martyr. He was succeeded as Bishop of Lyons, by the much more famous Saint Irenaeus. He is known for his numerous writings, especially those written to protect the flock entrusted to his

care against the errors of the Gnostic heretics. He had been a disciple of St Polycarp in his earliest childhood and recorded that he treasured Polycarp's teaching "not on paper but in the heart, for the things learnt in childhood are part of our soul." He died in A.D. 202, during the persecution raised by the Emperor Severus, in which some nineteen thousand Christians suffered for their Faith.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Beneath the Altar

By Jan Rutter

Published by the Author,

Thomas's House, Stower Row, Shaftesbury, SP7 0QW

This 32 page booklet investigates the case for the presence of a crypt within King Alfred's Monastery at Shaftesbury in Dorset. It was of course within that monastery that the sacred relics of St Edward were later enshrined, although the greater part of Jan Rutter's work concentrates on a period prior to St Edward.

The investigation itself might seem to readers to be rather a curious one, especially as next to nothing of the original convent survives. However, this fact should not deter potential readers. In her short study Ms Rutter has garnered an impressive amount of information about crypts, their purpose and their formation, and the exposition of sacred relics within them.

She has traced the development of the crypt in Western church architecture from the time of Constantine the Great through to the time of King Alfred, and she cites examples, not only from Saxon England, but also from France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland, some of which were known to Alfred.

Her investigation, at first sight so seemingly narrow, thus opens out to touch upon a variety of other subjects which, although she does not approach her subject as an Orthodox Christian, will doubtless be of great interest to many Orthodox interested in the earlier Orthodox Christian heritage of our country.

In the hope that you will obtain and read the booklet, we will not reveal her conclusions regarding Shaftesbury, but will leave you to find out for yourselves.

## NEWS SECTION

### BISHOP HILARION PINPOINTS ECUMENICAL DIFFICULTIES

EUROPAICA, the Bulletin of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church [MP] to the European Institutions, quotes Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Vienna and Austria, from his paper delivered at the International Symposium on "Orthodox Theology and Ecumenical Dialogue." He writes: "The main problem, as I see it, lies in a deep-seated discrepancy between those Christian communities that try to preserve the Holy Tradition deriving from the Ancient Undivided Church and those that have revised and continue to revise Tradition in conformity with secular standards. There is always a certain danger in such generalizations, but I do not think it would be totally mistaken to say that the borderline lies at present not so much between Orthodox and

Protestants as between 'traditionalists' and 'liberals.' This divergence is as evident at the level of church teaching, including doctrine and ecclesiology, as at the level of church practice, including worship and morality. The 'dividing' issues which are constantly mentioned in connection with the present Orthodox-Protestant dispute are, as noted above, the use of inclusive language with reference to God, the ordination of women and the acceptance of homosexuality. The first has to do with Christian doctrine, the second with ecclesiology, and the third with morality. In my opinion, it is not by mere chance that in some Protestant communities all three were introduced almost at the same time: doctrinal liberalism almost inevitably leads to revisionism of ecclesiological teaching and of moral standards, while laissez-faire lifestyles almost inevitably demand changes in theology and liturgy... In my opinion, recent liberalization of teaching and practice in many Protestant churches has alienated them from the Orthodox much more than all prior Protestant history." His comments are insightful and deserve close study.

### KOSOVO: ATTACKS ON CHURCHES CONTINUE

UNDERSTANDABLY, with the iniquitous war upon Iraq and its aftermath, the attention of the world has turned away from Kosovo, but while no one is looking attacks by Albanian extremists against Orthodox Christian sites continue, and Milosevic's injustices have been replaced by new ones which no one seems to care to rectify. On 28th May, Spanish KFOR sentries guarding the Orthodox Convent of Gorioc were fired upon, and three days later a hand grenade was thrown at the Greek KFOR guards protecting the St Czar Uros Church in Urosevic, and five people were injured. On 26th June, St Nicolas Church in Pristina was stoned and damaged, and the home of the priest, Father Miroslav Popadic, was also attacked and several windows broken. Fr Kojic in Kosovska Vitina reported that Orthodox monuments in the cemetery were found to have been desecrated on 27th June, and that several Serbian families in his small settlement of 150 families have already announced that they are moving out because of constant threats and intimidations.

### YEKATERINBURG CHURCH CONSECRATED

THE CHURCH ON THE BLOOD, recently erected on the spot where the Ipatiev House stood, in which the New Imperial Martyrs were slain in 1918, was consecrated on 16th July n.s. His Holiness Patriarch Aleksii II of Moscow was unable to attend the ceremonies, due to his ill health, but he sent a message expressing the hope that the church's consecration might signal a revival in Russia, and an attempt to "build the kind of Fatherland that would correspond to the ideal of Holy Russia." In the Patriarch's absence, the ceremonies were headed by Metropolitan Yuvenaly, and among the dignitaries and celebrities present in the congregation was Mstislav Rostopovich, the world-renowned musician.

### SERBIAN MEMORIAL IN NORWAY

HIS GRACE, Bishop Dositej served a Parastas at the site of one the largest wartime German prison camps in Norway, Falstad. During the war, about 5,000 people were held there, many of them Serbian slave labourers. A monument has been erected at the place where many of them were executed and on 29th June Bishop Dositej

served a memorial service there. Church leaders from other denominations, attending the 12th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches in nearby Trondheim, attended the Orthodox memorial service.

## EXTRAORDINARY MONASTIC CONVENTION IN A LONDON HOSPITAL

SISTER ANNA, an English convert to Holy Orthodoxy, has for several years been a member of the Sisterhood of the Lesna Icon Convent of the Mother of God In Normandy, France. Having come to London for a medical check-up, she fell seriously ill and was admitted to hospital. Learning the seriousness of her condition, Abbess Macrina of the Lesna Convent asked Fr Alexis to tonsure Sr Anna, a rasophore nun, to the Little Schema, and Archbishop Mark gave his blessing for this. After serving the Divine Liturgy at the Convent in Willesden on the anniversary of the repose in 1966 of St John of Shanghai (19th June/2nd July), the mysterion of the tonsure was celebrated in the chapel of the Royal Marsden Hospital in Fulham Road, through the kindness of the chaplain and the pastoral ministers there. Three sisters from the Lesna Convent, Mother Evphrosynia, Mother Pelagia and Sister Natalia were with Sr Anna and attended her during the ceremony. Father John Lee of the Patriarchal Cathedral at Ennismore Gardens, who was her spiritual father, attended, as did Mother Serafima formerly from the community at Little Walsingham. Mother Taisia of the Monastery of St Silouan (MP) in France also attended with another sister. And Abbess Maria from the Monastery of the Nativity of the Mother of God (GEcP) in the Netherlands and one of her sisters attended, because Sr Anna had earlier tried her vocation in their convent. They, along with Sister Anastasia of the Monastery of St John the Baptist in Tolleshunt Knights, provided us with a choir. Thus, suddenly, we had nuns from five religious houses, from three countries and from three jurisdictions participating. On Mother Macrina's instructions, at her tonsure, Sr Anna was named Elizabeth nun after the holy New Venerable Martyr the Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia. May the Lord God grant that the newly-tonsured Mother Elizabeth, whose profession thus evoked such an effusion of goodwill and love from her monastic sisters, may be supported by their prayers in the struggles ahead, and through the prayers of St Elizabeth complete her course so as to win the prize of her high calling.

## BROOKWOOD NEWS

### PLANNING PERMISSION

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL planning committee considered our revised plans for the erection of a monastery house on the site of the Old South Station within the Brotherhood property on 29th July, and, at the recommendation of the planning officers, the application was passed subject to a number of conditions. Because of the various restrictions on development on a site such as this, the application will now be referred to the Secretary of State for the Environment. On the Sunday before this session of the committee, 14th/27th July, we chanted a moleben after the Divine Liturgy to St Edward, St Xenia the Blessed and St Moses of Optina, and these prayers have been favourably answered. We ask our readers to continue their prayers for the project, that the Secretary of State may also accept the proposals. We would also like to express our thanks to Cllr Philip Goldenberg, who again spoke so convincingly in

favour of the proposal and praised the design which our architect, Irina Aldersley of Hoble Design Ltd, had drawn up to meet the committee's earlier objections. Thanks are, of course, due to Irina, who over the past months has put so much work into the design and in dealing with the various officers and agencies involved in the application. Thanks too to those who supported us, both parishioners and neighbours, by turning up for the committee meeting and by sending letters and e-mails supporting our application. May God's blessings be yours for helping us to reach this stage.

### "IN A FLOOD OF MANY WATERS"

CATECHUMENS BENJAMIN & ELAINE WATERHOUSE of Newport, Isle of Wight, were baptised at Saint Edward's Church on Saturday 13th/26th July, the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel. Vasileos Calcanteras and Barbara Woodford stood as their sponsors. Benjamin, a former Anglican, was named for the New Hieromartyr Benjamin of Petrograd, and Elaine, a former Roman Catholic, was named for one of the New Martyrs of China. For eight days we had daily Liturgies, so that everyday, travelling up from the island, the newly illumined could receive the Holy Mysteries on the days when they were still wearing their chism robes. May the Lord, Who has received them into His holy Church, grant them the patience, strength and wisdom to remain steadfast in the Faith until the end.

### VISITS FROM MOUNT SINAI

HIERODEACON NILUS of the ancient Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, an English convert to Holy Orthodoxy, briefly visited Brookwood on Tuesday 8th July. Between 23rd and 25th July, Hieromonk Justin of the same monastery stayed with us. Fr Justin, an American Orthodox, was tonsured in 1977 in the same monastery as Fr Alexis. On leaving he presented us with a priest's pectoral cross which is so elaborately bejewelled that we are sure it must be miraculous!

### GIFT OF A CROSS

THE BROTHERHOOD was recently given an antique priest's cross from Russia by Mrs Dorothy Lazenby of Haywards Heath. The cross was given Mrs Lazenby years ago by her godfather, and is said to have belonged to a priest who gave his life for his Faith, although she knows no more than this. We are particularly grateful to Father Deacon Meliton Oakes of Thyateira House for putting Mrs Lazenby in touch with us and making this gift possible.

### PRAYERS ANSWERED

ONE OF OUR FORMER PARISHIONERS, an Australian, had asked us to pray for some of the asylum seekers in detention outside her home town. One, a Muslim, converted to Christianity & had to flee his homeland when his conversion became public as it carries the death penalty for apostasy. In one letter she sent him an icon of Sts. Onouphrius the Great & Peter of Athos, explaining their assistance to those captured & in trouble with the courts. And through her we have received this note of thanks: "Please thank everyone for their prayers. I saw many things in my home country, war, revolution, despotism and now detention [in Australia] but in all this bad situation I feel God and I felt God was very close with me in all that problems. Please pray for me. I need your prayers. Also pass on my regards to all your friends. I wish

God luck to you, but please don't pray that my beard to be like St. Peter's as that's how I will look by the time I will get my High Court date!" We have been requested to withhold the names of those involved because of possible repercussions.

## PRACTICAL TIP

MANY SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS advise that in church one does not use a Prayer Book. They do so in the belief that reading a book cuts one off from fully participating in the liturgy. One is, they argue, then simply alone with one's book and not watching the sacred rites, listening to the chants, participating as fully as one might with the rest of the congregation, in what is after all communal worship. There is a measure of truth in this, but there are also circumstances when a book might be a help, perhaps, for instance, when the service is being conducted in a language one does not readily understand. However, when one does choose to follow with a Prayer Book, make sure that you are only doing that. Do not have the Prayer Book so that you can read your private devotions or "catch up" on unsaid prayers (which should have been read at home), during the time of the Divine services, otherwise you will indeed be cutting yourself off from the rest of the congregation. And if you use service time to catch up on your private prayers, when are you going to catch up on your church-communal prayers? If you choose to use a Prayer Book when in church, use it only to help you follow the service which is being chanted.