

# ***The Shepherd***

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

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### FROM THE FATHERS

"TO THE SINNER, everything is a difficulty."

*Saint Hilary of Poitiers, + 368 A.D.*

"WHERE GOD HAS PLACED YOU, there remain. It is not by change of place that you will impose quietness on your heart, but by watching incessantly over its movements."

*Venerable Ephraim the Syrian, + 379 A.D.*

"HE WHO REJOICES in another's fall, rejoices in the devil's victory. Let us rather grieve, when we hear that a man perishes, for whom Christ died. Let us repent, and hope for pardon by faith, not as an act of justice."

*Saint Ambrose of Milan, + 397 A.D.*

"GOD NEVER DESERTS a man, unless first He is deserted by that man."

*Saint Cæsarius of Arles, + 542 A.D.*

"YOU MUST KNOW that sin can be committed in three ways. It is done either in ignorance, in weakness, or of set purpose. And certainly the sin committed in weakness is more grave than that done in ignorance; but that done of set purpose is much more grave than that done in weakness."

*Saint Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, + 604 A.D.*

*FEBRUARY this year, with take us up to and into Great Lent, a time when we are each particularly exhorted to "take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:16). The first Sunday of the fast is celebrated as the Triumph of Orthodoxy and the second is consecrated to Saint Gregory Palamas, the great thirteenth century (1296 - 1359 A.D.) Champion of Orthodoxy. It seems appropriate therefore in the present issue to prepare for these commemorations by presenting that great Father's exposition of our Faith.*

### CONFESSION OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH SET FORTH BY HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN GREGORY (PALAMAS) OF THESSALONIKI

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ONE GOD before all, over all, in all, and above everything, do we worship and believe in, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, unconfusedly united and indivisibly divided, the same Unity and Trinity being all-powerful.

The Father is without beginning, not only as being outside time, but also as being in every way without cause. He alone is the cause, root and source of the

Godhead beheld in the Son and the Holy Spirit; He alone is the primary cause of what has come into being; He is not the Creator alone, but the sole Father of the one Son and the sole Originator of the one Holy Spirit. He always is, and is always the Father, and always the sole Father and Originator, greater than the Son and the Spirit, but only as cause; in all other respects He is the same as Them and equal in honour.

Of Him there is one Son, without beginning, as being outside time, but not without beginning, as having the Father for origin, root and source, from Whom also He came forth before all ages incorporeally, immutably, impassibly, and by generation, but He was not divided from the Father, being God from God; not one thing insofar as He is God, but another insofar as He is the Son, He always is, and is always the Son, and always the sole Son. Always being unconfusedly with God (Jn 1:1), He is not the cause and origin of the Godhead apprehended in the Trinity, since He exists from the cause and origin of the Father, but He is the cause and origin of all that came into being, since all things came into being through Him (Jn 1:3), Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6), but at the end of the ages emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant for our sakes (Phil. 2:7), and was by the law of nature both conceived and born of the Ever-Virgin Mary by the goodwill of the Father and the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, God and Man at the same time; having become truly incarnate, He was made like us in all things except sin (Heb. 4:15), remaining what He was, true God, uniting without confusion or change the two natures, wills and energies, and remaining one Son in a single hypostasis even after the Incarnation, performing all the divine actions as God and all the human actions as Man, being subject to the blameless human passions. Being and remaining impassible and immortal as God, but voluntarily suffering in the flesh as Man, He was crucified, died, and was buried, and rose again on the third day; He appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, and when He had promised them the power from on high and exhorted them to make disciples of all nations, to baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded (Matt.28:20), He was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19), making our mixture equal in honour, enthronement and divinity, the mixture with which He is going to come in glory to judge the living and the dead, and to reward each man according to his deeds (Matt. 16:27).

It was then that after ascending to the Father He sent upon His holy disciples and Apostles the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father. He is co-beginningless with the Father and the Son as being outside time, but not without beginning, as Himself also having the Father as root, source and cause, not as generated, but as proceeding; for He also came forth from the Father before all ages immutably and impassibly, not by generation, but by procession, being indivisible from the Father and the Son, as proceeding from the Father and resting in the Son, having union without confusion and division without division. He is God and is Himself from God, not one thing insofar as He is God, but another insofar as He is the Paraclete; He is the self-subsistent Spirit, proceeding from the Father and sent, that is manifested, through the Son, the cause of all that came into being, since They were perfected in Him; the same equal in honour with both the Father and the Son, without ingenerateness and generation. He was sent from the Son to His own disciples, that is, He was manifested. For how otherwise would He Who is not separated from Him be sent by Him? How otherwise, pray tell, would He come Who is everywhere? Wherefore, He is sent not

only from the Son, but also from the Father and through the Son; and He comes from Himself when He is being manifested. For the sending, that is the manifestation, of the Spirit is a common work. He is manifested, not according to essence, *for no one has ever either seen or declared the nature of God*, but according to the grace, power and energy which is common to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. For the hypostasis of each, and whatever belongs to it, is peculiar to each of these. Not only is the superessential Essence, which is entirely nameless, inexpressible and incapable of participation, since it is above every name, expression and participation, common to Them all, but also the grace, the power, the energy, the radiance, the kingdom and the incorruption, and in general everything according to which God communicates and is united by grace with both holy angels and holy men. Departing from His simplicity neither on account of the divisibility and difference of the hypostases, nor on account of the divisibility and variety of powers and energies, we thus have one all-powerful God in one Godhead. For neither from perfect hypostases, could there ever come about any composition, nor could what is potential, because it has power or powers, ever truly be called composite by reason of potentiality itself.

In addition, we accord relative veneration to the holy icon of the Son of God, who is circumscribed as having become incarnate for us, ascribing veneration in relative manner to the Prototype. We venerate the precious wood of the Cross, and all the symbols of His sufferings, as being true divine trophies over the common enemy of our race. In addition to the saving image of the precious Cross, we venerate the divine churches and places, as well as the sacred vessels and the divinely transmitted Scriptures, because of the God Who dwells in them. Likewise, we venerate the icons of all the saints, because of our love for them and for God, whom they truly loved and served, in our veneration ascribing the meaning to the figures depicted in the icons. We also venerate the relics of the Saints, since the sanctifying grace of the same has not departed from their most sacred bones, just as the Godhead was not separated from the Master's body in His three-day death.

We know of nothing that is essentially evil; nor is there any other origin of evil than the perversion of rational men, who abuse the freewill given them by God. We cherish all the ecclesiastical traditions, both written and unwritten, and above all the most mystical and all-sacred Rite, Communion and Assembly, the source of perfection for all the other rites, at which, in recollection of Him Who emptied Himself without emptying and took flesh and suffered on our behalf, according to the divine command which He Himself fulfils, the most divine consecration of the bread and the cup is celebrated, in which the life-giving Body and Blood is accomplished. He bestows the ineffable communion and participation on those who approach in purity. We cast aside and subject to anathema all those who do not confess and believe as the Holy Spirit foretold through the prophets, as the Lord decreed when He appeared to us through the flesh, as the Apostles preached after being sent by Him, as our Fathers and their successors taught us, but who have started their own heresy or followed to the end those who have made an evil start.

We accept and salute the Holy Œcumenical Synods: the one in Nicaea, of the 318 God-bearing Fathers, against the God-fighting Arius, who impiously degraded the Son of God down to the level of a creature and sundered the Godhead that is worshiped in Father, Son and Holy Spirit into created and uncreated; the one after it in Constantinople of the 150 holy Fathers, against Macedonius of Constantinople, who

impiously degraded the Holy Spirit down to the level of a creature and no less than the latter sundered the one Godhead into created and uncreated; the one after it in Ephesus of the 200 Fathers, against Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople, who rejected the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Christ, and completely refused to call Theotokos the Virgin who truly gave birth to God; and the fourth in Chalcedon of the 630 Fathers, against Eutyches and Dioscorus, who propounded the evil doctrine of one nature in Christ; and the one after it in Constantinople of the 165 Fathers, against Theodore [of Mopsuestia] and Diodorus, who entertained the same ideas as Nestorius and commended his ideas in their writings, and against Origen, Didymus and Evagrius, who were from an older period, but had attempted to infiltrate the Church of God with certain fables; and the one after it in the same city of the 170 Fathers, against Sergius, Pyrrhus and Paul of Constantinople, who rejected the two energies and two wills appropriate to the two natures of Christ; and the one in Nicaea of the 367 Fathers against the Iconoclasts.

We salute also the Holy Synods that were assembled at particular times and in particular places by the grace of God for the confirmation of true religion and the evangelical way of life. Among these are the Synods that have been convened in this great city at the renowned Church of the Holy Wisdom of God, against Barlaam the Calabrian and Akindynus, who holds the same ideas as him and hastens to avenge him by treachery. They propound the doctrine that the common grace of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the light of the age to come, in which the righteous will shine like the sun, as Christ revealed in advance when He shone on Mount Tabor, and in general every power and energy of the tri-hypostatic Godhead and everything that in any way differs from the divine nature, is created, and they too impiously sunder the one Godhead into created and uncreated, calling ditheists and polytheists - as the Jews, the Sabellians and the Arians call us - those who piously honour the most divine light, and every divine power and energy, as uncreated, since none of those properties that belong naturally to God is recent. But we reject both the latter and the former as truly atheists and polytheists, and we completely cut them off from the *pleroma* of the pious, as the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ has done through the synodical *Hagiorite Tome*, believing in one tri-hypostatic and all-powerful Godhead, which in no way departs from unity and simplicity on account of the powers and the hypostases. In addition to all these affirmations, we await the resurrection of the dead and the unending life of the age to come. Amen.

*Translated in 1993 by Reader Patrick Barker,  
now the Reverend Priestmonk Patapios*

Adapted from

## "THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N. R. Antonov  
*Continuation*

§ 61. The Exclamations. Usually while the deacon is intoning the litanies from the soleas (the area before the Royal Gates), within the sanctuary the priest offers a secret prayer, one that is read only to himself, the end of which he pronounces out loud, and this end part is called the exclamation. In them, he more often than not expresses the

foundation, upon which, when praying to the Lord, we base our hope that our prayer will be fulfilled, or why we have the boldness to turn to the Lord with our petitions and with our thanksgivings. The most commonly used exclamations are the following:-

1) *After the Great Litany:* For (i.e. because) unto Thee is due all glory, honour and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

2) *After the Litany of Fervent Supplication:* For (i.e. because) a merciful and man-befriending God art Thou, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

3) *After the Supplicatory Litany in Vespers and the Second Little Litany:* For (i.e. because) a good and man-befriending God art Thou, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

4) *After the first Little Litany:* For Thine is the dominion, and Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

5) For a God of mercies and compassions and love for man art Thou, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

6) For blessed is Thy name, and most glorified Thy kingdom, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

7) For Thou art 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, and unto the ages of ages.

8) For Thou art the King of peace and the Saviour of our souls, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

In addition to these eight basic exclamations, there are others in which the fundamental thought is somewhat developed. For instance at the Vigil Service or during Services of Supplication (molebens), we will hear the following:-

1) Hear us, O God our Saviour, Thou hope of all the ends of the earth and of those who are far off at sea, and be gracious, be gracious, O Master, even unto our sins, and have mercy upon us. For a merciful and man-befriending God art Thou, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

2) By the mercies, and compassions, and love for man of Thine Only-Begotten Son, with Whom Thou [God the Father] art blessed, together with Thine all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

3) For holy art Thou, O our God, Who abidest in the saints, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

The exclamation for the Litany for the Departed is:

For Thou art the Resurrection, the Life and the Repose of Thy servants / handmaidens ... (*names*) who have fallen asleep, O Christ our God, and unto Thee do

we send up glory, together with Thine unoriginate Father, and Thine All-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

§ 62. Dismissals. Every service in church ends with a dismissal sequence of prayers and hymns, which together may be thought of as the dismissal, although this term is more particularly applied to the very last prayer, pronounced by the priest. The sequence is thus:- The priest or deacon exclaims, "Wisdom!" which calls us to attention. Then turning to the the Mother of God, the priest prays: "All-holy Theotokos, save us." The chanters respond with the words, "More honourable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, thee who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, do we magnify." Then rendering thanks to the Lord Himself for the completion of the service, the priest exclaims, "Glory to Thee, O Christ God our Hope, glory to Thee!" After which the chanters or reader add: "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy" (*three times*) and the request, "Bless!" or "Holy father, bless!" The priest then turns towards the congregation and, in his dismissal, he commemorates all the saints, through whose prayers, we have placed our hope in God: first, the Mother of God, then the Saint(s) of the day of the week (e.g. the honourable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John on Tuesdays, or the holy, glorious and all-famed Apostles and our holy father Nicolas of Myra in Lycia, the Wonderworker, on Thursdays), any specially locally venerated saints(s) (*in our case: Sts Gregory the Great, from whose parish our present community was founded in 1982 and who is the Apostle of the English, and John of Shanghai, whose vestments we have*), the Saint(s) of the church (*in our case: the holy, right-believing King of England and Passion-bearer Edward the Martyr*), the Saint(s) of the day, and finally the "the holy and just ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, and all the Saints." The priest ends this prayer with the petition that through their prayers, the Lord will have mercy and save us. It is only after this dismissal that the people may properly leave the church.

*To be continued with "The Changeable parts of the Services"....*

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.

## POCHAEV TODAY

DURING A STAY in Kiev, in August last year, I had the great happiness of making a pilgrimage to the Pochaev Lavra during the days of the monastery's main feast.

Why this monastery is so important for Orthodox Christians requires a little history to explain. Its beginnings can be traced back to the thirteenth century, when monks from the Kiev Caves Lavra settled on the slopes of Pochaev hill. Soon afterwards, the Mother of God appeared to one of these monks and a local shepherd, at the top of the hill in a pillar of fire. When she departed, she left behind the footprint of her right foot burnt into the rock, which then produced a spring of healing water. This has continued to flow to this day.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, a Greek metropolitan, on his way to Moscow, was given hospitality by the local landowner, Anna Goiskaya. In thanks he

gave his hostess an icon of the Mother of God, which began almost immediately to work miracles. In 1597 she brought it to Pochaev, where she built two churches, the Dormition and the Holy Trinity churches, and established for the first time a proper cœnobitic monastery. Despite later Uniat claims, her will clearly states that the monastery was to be for "kind and pious monks of the Greek (i.e. Orthodox) confession only - submitting to the Eastern Church.... let anyone perish who would break my will and therefore bring misfortune to the monastery."

A few years later, in 1604 A.D., the renowned Abbot Job of Pochaev took charge of the monastery and led it through its famous period of struggles against the Uniats, Protestant landowners and raiding Tartars. Somehow the monastery survived and became almost the only centre for publishing Orthodox literature in Poland in this terrible period.<sup>1</sup>

After Saint Job's death in A. D. 1651, his relics began to be venerated immediately, though a time of near-extinction was to follow in the next century. In 1720, the monastery was taken over by the Uniats, in the shape of their "religious order," the Basilians, whose lifestyle was modelled on that of the Jesuits. They demolished both the churches and replaced them with the huge Dormition cathedral in the 1770's. It was a typical creation of Austrian baroque of the time and does not even face eastwards, though it is undeniably magnificent. In the new church was incorporated the shrine of the footprint (near the "west" door), the Pochaev icon (over the iconostas) and the cave of Saint Job of Pochaev (below the church). The Uniats walled off the relics of Saint Job, but did not otherwise harm them and, in fact, miracles continued at his intercession.

After the partitions of Poland, Pochaev came under Russian rule, and in 1831 the monastery was returned to the ownership of Orthodox monks. About this time it was declared to be a "Lavra" - one of only four monasteries in the Russian Empire to hold this rank.

In 1910, when Archbishop (later Metropolitan) Antony (Khrapovitsky) resided at Pochaev, the Holy Trinity Church was refounded, and built and decorated in ancient Russian style, with many gifts, including a huge hanging corona from the Tsar-martyr Nicolas II.

After the First World War, Pochaev found itself once again in Poland and endured several unsuccessful attempts by the Roman Catholic hierarchy to take possession of the monastery. Interestingly, these attempts were rejected by the Polish civil courts themselves.

The territory around Pochaev (Volhynia) was incorporated into the Soviet Union after the Second World War. So far, the monastery had escaped Communist and Roman Catholic destruction, and it was left to a large extent in peace until the mass closure of churches, which took place in the Khrushchev period (1958-64). During this persecution Pochaev suffered terribly, and its sufferings were made known in the West in a remarkable series of letters and appeals including one poignant one from local laity to the "Holy Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem" in 1964.<sup>2</sup> These appeals document the beatings, threats, raping of female pilgrims, deportations to mental asylums, expulsions of monks and other outrages which the local Communist militia perpetrated with a savagery which was said to have displeased

even their Moscow superiors. Needless to say, important foreign visitors to the Russian Orthodox Church were never taken to Pochaev.<sup>3</sup>

The persecution of the monastery continued after Khrushchev's fall and even into the early 1980's - a time when attacks on Orthodox institutions had ceased elsewhere. An astonishing indication of the extent to which the demons and their human instruments detested this sacred place.

And through all this, the Mother of God and Saint Job preserved their monastery. At one point the number of monks is said to have been reduced to six - there were about 140 in the 1950's - and nearly all its buildings were confiscated, yet still Pochaev did not close. The miraculous nature of its survival is now obvious to all.

At present the Lavra houses about 160 monks and numbers are growing continually. Let me describe what a pilgrim sees there today.

Approaching by road (there is no railway station nearby), one can see the monastery bell-tower and other buildings on the hill from a great distance, as the surrounding countryside is open and quite flat. Once inside the monastery walls, one is immediately involved in a continuous round of services. These commence at 5 a.m. with an Akathist before the miraculous icon (which is solemnly lowered on silk ribbons) and the early Liturgy. Molebens and panikhidas follow, and queues begin to form for the veneration of the "Three Holy Things" (the icon, the footprint and the relics of Saint Job). A late Liturgy is served in the second cathedral, and, on most days, exorcism services are conducted for the possessed and spiritually disturbed. Twice a week the anointing of the sick takes place. Every day ends with an evening vigil lasting between 4 and 4½ hours. The services are beautifully and prayerfully sung, with the choir of monks alternating with a local men's choir of the "Brotherhood for the Defence of Orthodoxy."

After venerating his relics, it is possible for the pilgrim to enter the inner cave of Saint Job through a very small hole in the wall near his shrine. This is achieved only with difficulty. Once inside, one can see the tiny area in which he prayed and slept. There is no flat surface there at all.

Close to Saint Job's relics have now been laid those of the Venerable Elder Amphilochy, who died in 1970 and who was glorified at Pochaev early this year. He was a man with little education but enormous spiritual wisdom, who began Pochaev's ministry to the possessed and mentally disturbed. I was shown a video of his glorification in which the demonic screams, which impotently greeted the opening of his relics, were simply blood-curdling. Blessed Amphilochy suffered a near martyrdom during the persecution in the early sixties, in which he was taken (he was 70 at the time) to a mental institution, shaved, kept naked in a cell and injected with drugs which made his body swell terribly. After his death, miracles immediately began at his grave. His extraordinary life and miracles badly need translating into English.

Pochaev Lavra is in a part of western Ukraine which is strongly nationalistic, and several nearby villages belong to the so-called "Autocephalous Ukrainian Church" (now under a Ukrainian Metropolitan in America). Further south is an area where most villages are once again Uniat. Both these groups are openly hostile to the Pochaev monks, though they come to venerate the icon and the footprint on the great days of pilgrimage. Their behaviour in church singles them out clearly.

Despite all this, the monks, local Orthodox people and visiting pilgrims (who come from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and even Romania) are united in their conviction that Pochaev will be preserved as an Orthodox monastery, as Anna Goiskaya wished and willed, until the end of the world.

*John Harwood September 2002*

Footnotes:

<sup>1)</sup> There is a very full life of Saint Job in *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. 14, nos 4 + 5 (1992).

<sup>2)</sup> *Orthodox Word*, vol. 1 no 3 (1965), pp 105-114.

<sup>3)</sup> See the excellent collection of documents in M. Bourdeaux *Patriarch and Prophets*, pp 74-84 & 97-116.

## THE COMING MONTH

THE MEETING OF THE LORD in the Temple with the Righteous Simeon and the Prophetess Anna is celebrated as one of the Twelve Great Feasts in the Orthodox Church, and it falls at the very beginning of February on 2nd/15th. It is celebrated on this day because it falls forty days after Christmas, as did the original event, when as a forty-day-old Infant, the Saviour was presented in the Temple according to the Law. The festival is thus part of the sequence of celebrations intimately connected with the Nativity, but in prophesying the sorrows that the Mother of God would experience at the Passion ("yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also"), Simeon the God-Receiver anticipates the coming Passion. And so the feast itself links the Nativity with the Passion and Resurrection, and actually falls about midway between these two feasts. The Righteous one also indicated two spiritual mysteries which we see being worked out even to this day. He spoke of the Christ-Child, saying "This Child is set for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel." That fall and resurrection were both first achieved in the people of the Old Israel, the Chosen People of the Old Testament, for many fell when they did not believe on Him, while others, believing, found resurrection. So in the New Israel, the Church, through the generations we see the same thing happening, many falling away through unbelief, and others being raised up through faith. Interiorly, too, a similar conflict takes place, because within each one of us there is a conflict between good and evil. Christ in our lives brings about the fall of the evil, and the raising up of the good. Our own efforts, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, church attendance, participation in the Mysteries, spiritual reading, practicing the virtues are our efforts to set Christ there, in our hearts, for this fall and rising.

The feast has a one-day forefestival (1st/14th) and itself runs for eight days. This year it falls on a Saturday, and on the very next day we enter the period of the Lenten Triodion, with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Because of this, the week, 3rd/16th - 9th/22nd is kept as a fastfree week. This is to instruct us not to rely on our own righteousness or ascetic excellence (as if we had any) as did the Pharisee, who boasted of his fasting, but this year coinciding with the Meeting it means we also keep that feast fastfree.

As our readers will probably know, there are four Sundays which precede Great Lent itself, which each have special Gospel commemorations, to prepare us for the fast and to instruct us, both on how to keep the fast and what its purpose is. This year, all four, the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, that of the Prodigal Son, of the Dread

Judgment and of Forgiveness, all fall within February. And Great Lent itself begins on Monday 25th February/10th March.

The last two of these preparatory Sundays are often referred to as Meatfare and Cheesefare Sundays. The suffix "-fare" here does not refer to the type of food we eat, but to the fact that from these days we take leave of eating these things, so the "-fare" is akin to that in the word "farewell." Meatfare Sunday (17th February/2nd March) is the last day on which the Orthodox faithful eat meat products until Pascha, and Cheesefare Sunday (24th February/9th March) is the last day on which any dairy products are eaten.

The first four days of Lent fall within February this year and these four days are distinguished not only because they (and the Friday) are kept with particular strictness, but also because on each of these four evenings, during Great Compline the Great Penitential Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete is read. This beautiful composition sets forth examples from the Old and New Testament Scriptures to invoke in our hearts contrition and a feeling of compunction, so that our repentance will not be arid and dry. There seems to be a common misconception among some Orthodox that the fast should be arid, harsh and unpleasant, and yet the Saviour does not require of us a heart that has been made hard through grim self-imposed "sacrifice" (Ps.50:16), but one that is "broken" by contrition and "humbled" by the understanding of its unworthiness (Ps. 50:17). The lenten disciplines are intended to lead us to such contrition and understanding. They are to soften rather than harden our hearts. This is made clear throughout the fast, because the austerity is continually pierced by celebrations of joy and triumph, even the sombre lenten vestments of the clergy are trimmed with silver braiding.

Among the saints we honour in February, we have:-

St Vedast, Bishop of Arras (6th / 19th) first comes to our notice in the year 496 when he was already a priest in Toul. Clovis, King of the Franks, had consolidated his realm, and four years earlier had married a Christian, St Clothilde. Under her influence, he was persuaded to become a Christian, but some doubts about the "new faith" lingered in his heart. However, in the year 496, he won a signal victory over the Alemanni, which he attributed to the grace of the Christian God, and thereafter passing through Toul, he sought out the priest, St Vedast, under whose direction he was catechised. One day when the two were talking as they walked near the river, a blind beggar approached the saint, begging that his sight be restored. St Vedast, moved to pity, prayed and blessed him with the sign of the Cross, and the Lord restored his sight. Seeing this miracle, the King was confirmed in his new Faith, and several of his entourage were also converted. Clovis was baptised at Reims by the Bishop St Remigius, and in A.D. 500 this hierarch also consecrated St Vedast as Bishop of Arras. The town had earlier been a great Christian centre, but had been overrun by barbarians and St Vedast found his cathedral church in ruins. He wept when he saw the devastation, and as he prayed he was approached by a huge bear that had made its den in the abandoned church. He drove the beast out and forbade it to return, and then set about driving the spiritual beast of unbelief out of his diocese. He was pastor of that church for forty years, until his repose in A.D.540, and through his struggles he restored the people of the region to the Faith. Although a French saint, St Vedast was venerated in this country even before the Norman Conquest. His name has been

corrupted into various forms in various countries and surprisingly became Foster in English.

Our Venerable Father Isaicius the Recluse of Kiev (14th / 27th) was the son of a rich merchant from the town of Toropits, but he distributed his wealth to the poor and took up the monastic life, joining the brotherhood of the Kiev Caves Monastery when Sts Antony and Theodosius were still alive. Having been tested he received the monastic tonsure from St Antony, and having made some progress in the ascetical life, he adopted a life of complete reclusion. In his cell, he lived the most austere life, keeping the strictest of fasts, eating only a small prosphora every other day, and he was subjected to various demonic temptations. Some element of pride must have crept in, for he was deluded and when the evil one appeared to him in the form of Christ, surrounded by "angels of light," he fell down and worshipped him. As a result of this fall, he became completely paralysed. He was nursed back to physical and spiritual health only over a period of two years, and Saint Theodosius himself would feed him during this period. Having recovered he did not return to his seclusion, but now took up the struggle of being a Fool-for-Christ, and being now more wise concerning the wiles of the evil one, by his foolishness he mocked him who had earlier mocked him. At the end of his life, he retired to live as a recluse again, but although he was again beset by demonic temptations, he was now more experienced and always guarded himself with the Cross and with prayer. Before his death in 1090 A.D. he was granted the gift of working miracles. His sacred relics are in the Caves of St Antony at Kiev.

## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*"It has been suggested to me that I should not attend several churches in my area (North London) but stick to one and always go there. Is this right, and if so, what is the reason for it?" - A.K., London, N.W.2*

I would say that this is fundamentally sound advice, although it probably needs qualifying a little. It is fundamentally sound, because one needs a parish, a spiritual home, to which one belongs. You see, one does not simply "attend" services. As an Orthodox Christian, you should belong to a parish family. You should not simply attend, but participate. You should be helping to support a church community, offering your talents (singing, reading, baking prosphoras, cleaning, helping with office work, lighting lamps, etc), and you should be helping to support the other worshippers there, adopting them as your brothers and sisters (visiting the sick and lonely, giving lifts to those in need, even doing chores for those in various needs), as well as praying for them, comforting them in their sorrows and encouraging them when they are downcast. Otherwise we end up with audiences at a performance, rather than congregations -people who come together. You cannot begin to do any of these things, if at every church you attend, you are always an outsider, a spectator. Nor can you if no one there can rely on your doing anything because in any given week you might be absent. For these reasons, it is important that one has one's own church, and that one works with the clergy and the other people there to build it up.

The "ruling" needs some qualification, however, in that it is quite admissible to visit other churches on occasion, and even beneficial to do so. Traditionally, Orthodox people often took time off from their own parishes to visit monasteries and convents and join in the worship there. It is also a good custom to visit churches on their

feastdays to show the mutual love that exists between the separate churches (parishes or monasteries). There will also be personal reasons, particularly for those like yourself who come from an Orthodox family, for visiting other churches: weddings, funerals and family occasions of various kinds, when you might quite reasonably go not only to the particular service but also to the Divine Liturgy. So, the ruling you were given was fundamentally right, but one must bear in mind that there are occasions when you make exceptions for special occasions.

I have also often advised those who are in a position to do so, who come making initial inquiries about Orthodoxy, to go to several churches at the beginning, because by not observing that each has, as it were, its own flavour, one can grow into a ghetto mentality, thinking that one's own church is somehow the norm, or even, God forbid, the best.

## NEWS SECTION

### ROME AND THE NON-CHALCEDONIANS

THE VATICAN has relaunched its dialogue with the Non-Chalcedonian (Monophysite) Churches, according to a report issued from Vatican City on 27th January. The Armenian Apostolic Church, the Coptic Patriarchate of Egypt, the Syro-Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, the Orthodox Churches of Ethiopia and of Eritrea, and the Syro-Orthodox Church of Malankar comprise a family of churches, which differ in doctrine from the Orthodox Churches and from the Roman Catholic Church in their Christology. Traditionally they have refused to accept the Orthodox teaching on the two natures of Christ, although the present report tells us that in 1996 the Pope and the Armenian Catholicos Karekin I signed a joint declaration that "Christ is the Word of God made flesh, perfect God in His divinity, perfect man in his humanity." Quite what the import of this declaration was is far from clear, as the Vatican Press Office says that the meetings of the re-launched initiative are "preparatory in character," and that they hope "to establish the topics and methods of future dialogue." One might have thought, that, taken at face value, the Catholicos' statement would have removed all need for dialogue, except perhaps about some peripheral matters, but it seems that the discussions start at square one again.

### E.U. RESOLUTION ON MOUNT ATHOS

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT approved a 135-article resolution, submitted by the Dutch MEP Joke Swiebel on 15th January. Among other things, this resolution, which was passed by 277 votes to 255, proposes the lifting of the ban on women entering Mount Athos, which it sees as a violation of sexual equality. Whether the resolution will eventually be implemented is not clear (here, in Britain we still seem to be free enough to have curved bananas!), however it signals troubles ahead. The ban of women entering the Holy Mountain is, of course, not an expression of any sexual inequality, but simply a way of honouring one woman in particular, the All-holy Theotokos, and an ascetical discipline. Many women's monasteries, especially in the East, ban men from entering. However, communities on the Holy Mountain have recently been receiving funding from the European Union for various conservation projects, and one cannot help having thoughts on the lines of a proverb about supping with a certain individual and using long spoons.

## TURKEY AND THE CHRISTIANS

PERHAPS as part of the build-up towards Turkish entry into European Union, several reports have been publicised about the plight of the Christian minorities in Turkey. Thomas Oden reports on a website posting dated 10th January, that in Eastern Turkey the Christians "languish between the secularising government of the Republic of Turkey and an Islamic culture that views them as heathen outsiders." Modern hydroelectric and irrigation schemes, and the building of dams, threaten to submerge lands on which Christians have lived for more than a millennium, and thus to destroy their churches, monasteries, and monuments. He ends by saying: "The Turkish government has grossly neglected these ancient Christian sites. The tourist literature nowhere mentions them. Instead the government has supervised the demise of numerous Christian villages or passively watched them deteriorate." The Christians suffering there are for the most part members of the "Syrian Orthodox Church" with separate patriarchates in Damascus, one Jacobite, and the other Antiochene."

Another article, culled from the "Moscow Times," reports that a renowned Armenian church on Akdamar Island in Lake Van, one of the holiest sites in the Armenian Church, is facing ruin, because of neglect. A government official was questioned as to why restoration work of this important historical monument had not been undertaken, and said that he was not permitted to reply. Turkey's Minister of Culture, Huseyin Celik, was, however, outspoken, saying, "What we are up against is an undeclared policy by certain narrow-minded individuals within the state of discrimination against Armenian monuments in Turkey" Local authorities have even rejected funding from Western governments to restore an Armenian cathedral in Ani. Celik, who seems to deplore the short-sightedness of his fellow-countrymen, said "If we Turks expect tolerance in the West, then we should extend the same tolerance at home." Let us hope his views prevail.

On a more light-hearted note: Muammer Karabulat, chairman of a Turkish-based "Santa Claus Foundation" has requested that the sacred relics of St Nicolas the Wonderworker be returned to Turkey from Italy, where they now repose at Bari. St Nicolas was a fourth century bishop in the town of Myra in Lycia, a town which is now called Demre and is situated within modern Turkey. A church exists at Demre dedicated to his memory and pilgrims gather there on his feastday. The Saint's exemplary philanthropy and kindness, gave rise, through various cultural transformations, to the Americanised Disneyland character, Santa Claus, and it is because of the latter's pulling power that this Turkish organisation not demands the return of the bones of the Saint. The Italians have sensibly grasped that the Turks have no desire to venerate the relics and require them only to boost their tourist industry, and they are refusing to return the relics which were brought to Italy in the eleventh century.

## BROOKWOOD NEWS

PLANNING APPLICATION: Our application to build a new monastic house on the site of the old South Station, alongside the present "mortuary" building, went to the committee on Tuesday, 14th January. Because the site is within the Green Belt, the Brookwood Cemetery Conservation Area, a site of Nature Conservation Importance and within other conservation areas, the Woking Borough Council planning officers

recommended that the application be refused. In the event, the majority of the councillors on the committee spoke very sympathetically for us, and proposed instead that the application be deferred, so that it might be modified and presented in a form which would convince the First Secretary of State that there were special considerations to be taken into account. We are now pursuing this course, and so ask continued prayers.

**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS:** We would like to thank all those who contributed in so many ways to our Christmas celebration, especially to those who help decorate the church, brought foods, and perhaps more especially to those who helped clear up - something which is often forgotten. Special thanks to Robert and Hazel Eades for bringing their organ and leading the carol singing at the buffet breakfast. This year, too, we were pleased to be joined for the celebration by the owner of Brookwood Cemetery, Mr Ramadan Guney.

**CHERTSEY BLESSING OF THE WATERS:** On the festival of the Theophany, after the Divine Liturgy of St Basil, we journey to Chertsey to bless the waters at the site of the seventh century monastery, founded there by St Erkenwald. This year, because the earlier floods had weakened the river banks, Robin and Mary Haigh, of Abbey Bridge Farmhouse, kindly allowed us to use the steps which lead down from their patio to the riverside. They also took a splendid photograph of the event, which they printed out and gave us. The Reverend Timothy Hillier, the incumbent of St Peter's Shared Church (Anglican/Methodist/URC) in the town, was unable to join us this year, but with his encouragement numbers of his parishioners did, and afterwards they surprised us by laying on hot soup, cheese, rolls, fruit and hot drinks in their church hall, where in the absence of the vicar, we were greeted on behalf of the parishioners by Reverend Sue Loveday, who resides in the town. We are extremely grateful to the Haighs and the people of St Peter's for their kind hospitality.

**HENRY KOBUS:** One of the earliest benefactors of our Brotherhood at Brookwood, Henry Kobus, of Harrow, Middlesex, died suddenly on Wednesday 22nd January after a stroke. Mr Kobus was a perfumer and spent a great deal of time advising us and helping us to set up our incense making project. He helped to formulate most of the oldest fragrances that we use. His funeral was held at Our Lady and St Thomas R.C. church in Harrow on Friday 31st January. Our sympathies go to his widow, Christiane, and his children, and we ask prayers that his kindness towards us will now receive a rich recompense.

**FREEWILL OFFERINGS:** Readers will probably know that we do not have collections at Saint Edward's Church, but simply an alms-box at the entrance of the church. The average weekly receipts from this for each of the last six months of 2002 were as follows:- July £250.16; August £284.91; September £279.41; October £275.07; November £269.88; and December £309.04. We sincerely thank all of you who have contributed to the support of our mission in this way. May the Lord grant you His blessings in the year ahead.

## **PRACTICAL TIP**

**THE FATHERS** always advise us that there is safety in asking much counsel or advice. But this does not mean that we should ask advise about one matter from many

people! It means that we should often ask advice of one trusted counsellor. Here, at the Brotherhood, we often receive letters or calls from people who want advice about some matter, and it turns out that they have already asked someone else and simply want a re-take on the advice already given. This is not very profitable for the person asking advice. If you collect advice from various people, you will inevitably find that you receive different advice from each, and in the end you will find that you are in the same position as someone who does not ask advice at all: namely, you have to make your own decision. This negates the primary benefit of asking advice: that by doing so you set aside your own will and show humility by following another's. It is that humility which obtains for us the blessing of God for whatever we are contemplating.