

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

"A CERTAIN BROTHER from the Great Monastery was accused of fornication, and he rose up and came to Abba Antony, and there came brethren after him from that monastery to inform him about the matter and to take him away, and they began to accuse him, saying, 'Thus and thus hast thou done,' and the brother made reply and said, 'I never acted in this way.' Now Abba Paphnutius happened to be there, and he spake a word unto them, saying, 'I saw a man in the river with mud up to his knees, and some men came to give him help and drag him out, and they made him sink up to his neck.' And when Abba Antony heard him say this, he spake concerning Abba Paphnutius, saying, 'Behold, indeed, a man who is able to make quiet and redeem souls!' And the eyes of those brethren were opened by the word of the elders, and they took that brother and he departed with them to their monastery."

From the Paradise of the Fathers

"LET US CARRY OUT everything together peacefully, without any grumbling, without any disobedience, without any shouting, without any contradiction, without holding any grudges, without rendering evil for evil or insult for insult; on the contrary, we should bless them that curse us, love our enemies, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that do us wrong; for such are the commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to these things we have been called that we may obtain a blessing.

Saint John Chrysostom, + 407 A.D.

"LET THE UNYIELDING then wrangle and quarrel about earthly and temporal things. The meek are blessed for they shall inherit the earth (Matt 5:5) and not be rooted out of it; that earth of which it is said in the Psalms, *My portion art Thou in the land of the living* (Ps. 141:6), meaning the fixedness of a perpetual inheritance, in which the soul that has good dispositions rests as in its own place, as the body does in an earthly possession; it is fed by its own food, as the body is by the earth. Such is the rest and the life of the Saints."

Blessed Augustine of Hippo, + 430 A.D.

"WHEN A MAN walks in the ways of peace, he picks up the gifts of the Spirit as it were with a spoon.... When a man attains a state of peace, he can shed on others the light of an enlightened understanding. But first he must repeat to himself the prophetic words: Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5)."

Venerable Seraphim of Sarov the Wonderworker, + 1833 A.D.

THE MEANING OF HIS SUFFERING WHAT MEL MISSED

*From a Beliefnet posting
by Presbytera Frederica Mathewes-Green:
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THERE IS A REASON why the Gospels don't dwell on the blood and gore of the crucifixion.

Most of us have yet to see Mel Gibson's "The Passion," but we've gained one sure impression: it's bloody. "I wanted to bring you there," Gibson told Peter J. Boyer in September 15's *New Yorker* magazine. "I wanted to be true to the Gospels. That has never been done before."

This goal means showing us what real scourging and crucifixion would look like. "I didn't want to see Jesus looking really pretty," Gibson goes on. "I wanted to mess up one of his eyes, destroy it."

It's a mark of our age that we don't believe something is realistic unless it is brutal. But there's another factor to consider. When the four Evangelists were writing their own accounts of the Passion, they didn't take Gibson's approach. None of them depict Jesus with a destroyed eye. In fact, the descriptions of Jesus' beating and crucifixion are as minimal as the writers can make them.

"Having scourged Jesus, Pilate delivered him to be crucified," the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) agree. "When they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him."

Little more than a dozen verses later He is dead. The Evangelists did not linger over His suffering in order to stir our empathy. The account of physical action is so brisk that, back-when I was in seminary, I asked one of my professors why we presume Jesus was nailed to the Cross, rather than bound with ropes. He supposed it was because Paul later refers to redemption through Christ's blood.

If Mel Gibson had allotted his time the way the evangelists do, the majority of his film would have been about the swirl of people around Jesus in his last days, how they interact with Him and what they do because of Him. The scourging and crucifixion would have passed in a flash.

Why would the earliest Christians have handled these events so discreetly? Not because the events were thought unimportant; the whole Gospel story builds toward them. Not because the writers were squeamish, or because they were ashamed. St Paul speaks boldly about Jesus' saving blood and proclaims that he will boast in the Cross.

But in the earliest Christian writings we see a different understanding of the meaning of the Cross, one which, shockingly, didn't think it was important for us to identify with Jesus' suffering. For contemporary Christians it's hard to imagine such a thing. The extremity of Jesus' sacrifice has been the wellspring of Christian art and devotion for centuries. It has produced great treasures, from late Renaissance paintings of the Crucifixion, to the meditations of Dame Julian

of Norwich, to Bach's glorious setting of "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded." Mel Gibson's "Passion" arrives as the newest entrant in a very old tradition.

A funny thing happens, however, if we press further back in time. Before the Middle Ages, depictions of the Crucifixion show very little blood. Though the event itself was no doubt horrific, artists preferred to render it with restraint (like the Gospels, but unlike Gibson). The visual elements in an ancient icon of the Crucifixion are arranged symmetrically, harmoniously, and the viewer is placed at a respectful distance. The depiction is not without drama: Mary and the disciple John, at the foot of the Cross, reel in grief. But Jesus does not reveal any sense of torment. He is serene, almost regal.

What changed? In the 11th century, a theory emerged that shifted the common understanding of the Cross. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, proposed that our sins constituted a debt to God that could not be simply erased without unbalancing justice. The debt was too immense for any human to pay, and only Jesus' death could be an adequate sacrifice. Protestant Reformers retained the same theory substantially intact, but during the Enlightenment some theologian proposed instead that Jesus' suffering is meant to unite us in grateful love toward the Father, rather than pay a debt.

In both cases, Jesus as the God-Man takes on the sin of the world, bears its crushing weight, and accomplishes divine reconciliation. The movement in this drama is from earth to heaven, and the Cross means "suffering."

Yet for the first millennium, and continuing in Eastern Christianity today, the Cross means "victory."* In this idea of the atonement, God in Christ effects a rescue mission. Humans are being held captive by Death, due to their voluntary involvement in sin, and are helpless to free themselves. In a majestic sweep of events Jesus takes on human life in order to die, invade hell, and set the captives free. The focus is much broader than the Crucifixion alone. The movement is from heaven to earth, the reverse of the later pattern. Paul, writing about 60 AD, describes this divine descent in the words of the earliest existing Christian hymn:

"Who, though he was in the form of God,
Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.
And being found in human form, he humbled himself to death,
Even death on a Cross." (Phil 2:6-8)

Early Christians understood the Cross to be the way that Jesus broke into the realm of Death. Suffering itself is not the point.

How then could Jesus be a ransom, sacrifice, or offering? Early Christians understood such terms to mean that it cost Jesus His life to rescue us. It was a sacrifice to the Father, as a soldier might offer a superlative act of courage to his beloved general. It was the price of entry into the realm of Death. It cost Jesus His life's blood to enter Hades and save us, but it wasn't a payment to anybody.

This helps us see why they did not linger over the details of His suffering. It would be as odd as welcoming home a wounded soldier, and instead of focusing on the victory he won, dwelling on the exact moment the bayonet

pierced his stomach, how it felt and what it looked like. A human soldier might well feel annoyed with such attention to his weakness rather than his strength. He would feel that it better preserved his dignity for visitors to avert their eyes from such details, and recount that part of the story as scantily as possible to focus instead on the final achievement.

This is the sense we pick up in the Gospels. Jesus' suffering is rendered in the briefest terms, as if drawing about it a veil of modesty. What's important is not how Jesus suffered for us, but that Jesus suffered for us. It is the contrast with his eternal glory that awed the earliest Christians.

Eastern Orthodox hymns for Good Friday convey fearful wonder:

"Today He is suspended on a Tree
Who suspended the earth over the waters.
A crown of thorns is placed on the head of the King of angels.
He who covered the heavens with clouds
is clothed in a false purple robe."

At such sights,

"The heavenly powers trembled with fear.
The whole creation, O Christ, trembled;
the foundations of the earth were shaken for dread of Thy might...
The sun hides its rays at seeing the Master crucified...
The armies of the angels were amazed."

Mel Gibson's "The Passion" promises to be a landmark expression of the strand of devotion that emphasises identification with Jesus' sufferings. It is a strand that has produced powerfully affecting works of art, and moved and inspired Christians for centuries. The Crucifixion was, in fact, bloody and brutal - Gibson is on solid historical ground in wishing to depict them this way - and when he prayerfully reads the Gospels, no doubt these are the pictures that appear in his mind.

But these pictures are not, actually, there in the Gospels. The writers of the Gospels chose to describe Jesus' Passion a different way. Instead of appealing to our empathy, they invite us to awesome wonder, because they had a different understanding of the meaning of His suffering.

BELIEFNET runs a message board next to their articles, so I can see what readers are thinking. Some want to tell me that Mel is an artist and has a right to interpret the material anyway he wants, which I don't dispute. Some very moving art has come from this desire to explore the Passion empathetically. It wasn't the Gospel-writers' choice, which we tend not to recognise. I was curious about that, the split between "I want to be true to the Gospels" and "I want it to be bloody," and how most of us assume that's the same thing, when a moment's reflection shows its not true.

Second, readers want to protest that the Crucifixion really was that bloody, and so it's historically accurate. - Again, I don't dispute this, but it's not the way the Gospels tell it. He's free to tell it a different way, of course.

I was curious about where and why this changed, and as best I can tell, it was about the 14th century. That's when devotion to the Passion, as we know it in Western Christianity, really began to bloom, and the earlier "Christus Victor" theory began to fade. It was just interesting to me. We take things for granted because they're the way we are used to looking at them, and don't stop to realise that our ideas come from somewhere, and viewpoints have a history. But it was a very subtle point I was trying to make in this column, and I can see lots of readers just flying past without catching it. To distinguish between viewing the Passion with awe, and viewing it with empathy - that's subtle. But for the Eastern Christian present at a Western Good Friday service there's a feeling of being somehow in unfamiliar territory, and vice versa.

I was embarrassed that one reader pointed out the obvious - we know Jesus was nailed to the Cross, not bound with ropes, because of the Resurrection appearance to Thomas in the Gospel of John. D'oh! My professor, the estimable Reginald Fuller, and I were looking so intently at the Gospel descriptions of the Crucifixion, which only say "they crucified him" and don't specify how, that we forgot this evidence from elsewhere in the story.

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** EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE: Presbyteria points out that for the Orthodox the Cross means Victory, and this fact is amply backed up by the symbol of the Cross so often used by Orthodox Christians: a Greek Cross with the initials IC XC NI KA in the four quadrants between the arms. Those initials read "Jesus Christ Conquers!"*

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

By the Priest N. R. Antonov

Continuation

The Symbol of Faith. Immediately before the confession of the Symbol of Faith (the Creed), the deacon exclaims, "The doors! The doors! In wisdom let us attend." The reference to the doors relates to the practice in the ancient Christian Church of alerting the door-keepers to guard the doors with every care, lest any of the catechumens or of the penitents, or indeed anyone else with no right to participate in the celebration of the Mysterion of Communion, should attempt to enter at this time. And the words, "In wisdom let us attend," were addressed to those standing in church, so that they might guard the doors of their souls from the entry of worldly and sinful thoughts. The Symbol of Faith is recited or chanted to witness before God and the Church to the fact that all those standing in church are numbered among the Faithful, and have the right to attend the Liturgy and partake of the communion of the Holy Gifts. During the Creed, the veil across the Royal Gates is withdrawn, signifying that it is only through the precepts of this Faith that the Throne of Grace, from which we

receive the Holy Mysteries, might be revealed unto us. Also during the Creed the priest takes the largest veil, the Aer, and waves it over the Holy Gifts. This signifies the over-shadowing of the Holy Gifts by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Then immediately the Church calls the worshippers to attend well to the Mystery itself. Now the most important part of the Liturgy begins, the sanctifying of the Holy Gifts. Encouraging the faithful who are standing in church to pay the fullest attention with all reverence, the deacon says: "Let us stand well. Let us stand with fear. Let us attend that we may offer the holy oblation in peace." This means that we must stand well in an orderly fashion, with reverence and with attention, so that with a peaceful disposition of soul we may make the holy offering. The faithful respond: "A mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise," which means: we will offer this holy oblation, this bloodless sacrifice, which for the Lord's part is a mercy, a gift of His kindheartedness, granted to us people as a sign of the Lord's reconciliation with us, and from our point of view is a sacrifice of praise to the Lord God for all His benefactions. The words, "a mercy of peace," can also be understood to mean that we will offer the Gifts in that spiritual peace which is mutual love, and is itself a sacrifice of praise.

Through this response, the priest hears of the readiness of the faithful to turn to the Lord and so he blesses them in the name of the Most Holy Trinity: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. The chanters reciprocate, wishing the priest a like blessing, saying: "And with thy spirit." The priest continues: "Let us lift up our hearts." That is, let us raise our hearts on high, to heaven, to the Lord. On behalf of the worshippers, the chanters respond, "We lift them to the Lord," - we really will raise up our hearts to the Lord and prepare ourselves for the Great Mystery.

Having in this manner prepared himself and the worshippers that they might participate in the celebration of the Holy Mystery, the priest then starts upon that celebration itself. Following the example of Jesus Christ, Who offered up thanks to God the Father before the breaking of the bread at the Mystical Supper, the priests call upon all the worshippers to give thanks unto God, making the exclamation, "Let us give thanks unto the Lord."

The Eucharistic Prayer. The chanters begin to sing "Meet and right it is to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity one in essence and undivided." In some places when the choir begin to sing this hymn, a bell is sounded, so that those who are unable to be in church might be informed that the most important moment of the Liturgy is approaching. In church, as the hymn is being chanted, the priest begins to read the Eucharistic Prayer, which actually continues uninterruptedly until the end of the hymn of praise which is later chanted in honour of the Mother of God, "It is truly meet." The Prayer itself falls into three parts. In the first part, we commemorate all God's benefactions, which have been manifest to man from the creation, for example: a) the creation of the world and of people; b) their restoration through Jesus Christ, and the other acts of goodness, both those which are known and the unknown, those seen and those unseen. The service of the Liturgy itself is clearly a special benefit, as is the particular celebration being offered, which the Lord is pleased to accept, even

though at this very minute in the Heavens the Archangels and Angels stand before Him, "singing the triumphal hymn, shouting, crying and saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory." It is with the words, "singing the triumphal hymn, shouting, crying and saying," which the priest uses as an exclamation, that he introduces the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth," and brings to an end the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer. The last words of this part of the Prayer thus run through the exclamation into the next hymn in this manner:-

"We give thanks unto Thee also for this Liturgy which Thou hast deigned to accept at our hands, although there attend Thee thousands of archangels and ten thousands of angels, the cherubim, and the seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, soaring aloft, borne on wings, singing the triumphal hymn, shouting, crying and saying: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest: Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

The words of the Eucharistic Prayer which the priest here proclaims in the hearing of all the people as an exclamation are taken from the visions of the Prophets Ezekiel (1:4-24), and Esaias (6:3) and the Apostle John the Theologian (Rev. 4:6-8). The holy Prophet Ezekiel and John the Theologian in Revelation saw the Throne of God, surrounded by angels, with the faces of an eagle (singing), an ox (shouting), a lion (crying) and a man (saying), which continuously cried out. The Prophet Esaias heard what they cried out, namely the hymn of praise "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth." Both angels and men are united spiritually in offering glorification to God in this triumphant hymn, because, appended to this angelic hymn of triumph, and bringing us right up to the time of the offering at the Mystical Supper, we also add the song of the little Jewish children who greeted the Saviour on His triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday): "Hosanna in the highest: Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

Just as the choir starts to chant the "Holy. Holy. Holy," the priest begins to read the second part of the Eucharistic Prayer, in which after offering praise to all the Persons of the Holy Trinity, he specially refers to the Son of God, the Redeemer, recalling how the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Mystery of Communion. The institution of the Mystery of Communion is related in the Eucharistic Prayer with the following words: "Who (i.e. Jesus Christ) having come, and having fulfilled all the dispensation for us, the night He was delivered up, or rather He delivered Himself up, for the life of the world, He took Bread in His holy and immaculate and blameless hands, and when He had given thanks, and blessed, and hallowed, and broken it, He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles, saying: Take, eat: This is My Body, which is broken for you, for the remission of sins. In like manner also, He took the cup when He had supped, saying: Drink ye all from it: This is My Blood of the new testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins. Being mindful, therefore, of this saving commandment and of all that hath come to pass for us: of the Cross, of the grave, of the Resurrection the third day, of the Ascension into the heavens,

of the session at the right hand, of the second and glorious Coming again, Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, because of all and for all."

In Greek, these last words are, "Ta sa ekton son soi proseromen kata panta kai dia panta, "and they mean: We offer Thee, O Lord, Thy gifts, bread and wine, because of all the benefits mentioned in the prayer, in accordance with all that was ordained by Jesus Christ (Luke 22:19), and in thanksgiving for all the benefactions we receive. In the Liturgy of St Basil the Great, in the prayer read secretly during the first supplicatory litany, this thought is expressed even more emphatically. There we read, that the Lord might accept the bloodless sacrifice of the Eucharist, as He accepted "the gifts of Abel, the sacrifice of Noah, the offerings of Abraham, the priesthood of Moses and Aaron, and the peace offerings of Samuel." While this offering is being made, the priest or deacon (if there is one) raises the paten and chalice, holding the Gifts aloft.

Consecration of the Holy Gifts. Then we sing "We hymn Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, and we entreat Thee, O our God," and the priest begins the third part of the Eucharistic Prayer: "Again, we offer unto thee this reasonable and unbloody service, and we beseech, and we entreat, and we supplicate: Send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these Gifts set forth." This is called a "reasonable service" to distinguish it from those things such as prayer and good works which are "active service "for the Christian, because the changing of the Holy Gifts is something which is far above the powers of man, and it is only perfected by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The priest only prays, offering up the words of the consecration.

Next, in the Russian usage, the priest breaking off from this prayer, thrice inserts the prayer to the All Holy Spirit taken from the Third Hour, "O Lord, Who at the third hour...." Otherwise he continues, "And make this Bread the precious Body of Thy Christ. Amen. And that which is in this Cup the precious Blood of Thy Christ. Amen. Changing them by Thy Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen."

This is the most important and most sacred moment in the Liturgy. Now the bread and wine are changed into the true Body and the true Blood of the Saviour. The clergy and all those in the church make a deep bow (on Sundays and feast days) or a prostration to the ground, reverently honouring the Holy Gifts.

The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving offered to God for the living and for the dead, and after the consecration of the Holy Gifts the priest commemorates those, for whom the sacrifice was particularly offered, first among them the Saints, because in the person of the saints and through the saints, the Holy Church has achieved her most cherished desire, the Kingdom of Heaven. But from the whole company and assembly of the Saints, one is singled out, the Mother of

God, and it is for this reason that we next hear the exclamation, "Especially our all-holy, immaculate, exceedingly blessed, glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary." The faithful respond by chanting the hymn of praise in honour of the Mother of God, "It is truly meet to call thee blest..." On the Twelve Great Feasts in place of this hymn, the irmos for the ninth ode of the canon is chanted. This irmos always speaks of the role of the Mother of God. In

the Russian the hymn to the Mother of God is called the *Dostoinik*, from the first word of the hymn in Slavonic, *dostoino*, and the hymn used instead of it on a Great Feasts are known as the *Zadostoinik* (in place of the *Dostoinik*).

Meanwhile, the priest continues his prayer, secretly praying for all those who have fallen asleep in the Faith, and for the members of the Church still struggling in this life; the Bishops, presbyters, deacons, and all Orthodox Christians living in purity and sobriety of life. Then aloud he commemorates the episcopate and particularly the local Bishop. Confirming this, the faithful respond, "And each and every pious and Orthodox Christian." Then again the priest prays silently for the particular city, monastery or island in which the Liturgy is being celebrated and for those living therein. Having thus remembered the Church in heaven, which with one soul glorifies God, he invokes such oneness of soul and peace on the Church on earth as well, exclaiming: "And grant that with one mouth and one heart we may glorify and hymn 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. Amen." Thus, with an invocation of the Trinity the Eucharistic Prayer ends. It has consisted of three parts: thanksgiving, a representation of the historical events at the Mystical Supper, and supplication. The priest then blesses the people with the words: "And the mercies of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ shall be with you all."

...to be continued with "The Second Supplicatory Litany"

THE COMING MONTH

IT IS IN NOVEMBER that the Holy Church begins to direct our minds and hearts to the Holy Days at the end of December and the beginning of January, when we celebrate the Nativity of the Saviour in Bethlehem and His later Baptism in the River Jordan. The Church does this first by the institution of the Nativity Fast which lasts for forty days, beginning on 15th/28th November and ending after the Liturgy on Christmas Day; and secondly by the celebration on 21st November (4th December) of the third Great Feast in the Church Year: the Entry of the All-holy Theotokos into the Temple. It is on this feast that we first hear the Christmas hymns chanted in Church, with the inclusion into the services of St Cosmas of Mamma's Christmas *katabasia*. The first of these proclaims very emphatically, "Christ is born, give ye glory." Thus, not only are we urged to look forward to the coming feast and prepare for it, but an important truth is revealed to us: that, no matter what season of the year it may be, Christ is born, and that those who would tempt us into looking for some other "Christ" are leading us astray. Throughout the ages, there have been many false Christs and pretend Messiahs, many of them victims of their own or their contemporaries' delusions, but of course, before the end, there will come a more serious impostor, Antichrist himself. Our hymn warns us of his imposture, and confirms us in the saving belief that it is the One born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the King that is the only true Christ.

The festival of the Mother of God's Entry into the Temple as it were completes the Old Testament dispensation and looks forward to the

inauguration of the New with the Incarnation of the Word of God. There were two Old Testament temples, one built by Solomon, which was later destroyed, and one built after the Babylonian exile. The second one, which was greatly embellished by Herod (leading some to speak of three temples), was in some sense incomplete. The first had contained the Ark, which itself contained the tablets of the Mosaic Law, - this was lost at the time of the destruction of the first Temple, and so could not be placed within its replacement. The entry into the Temple, into the very Holy of Holies, of the Mother of God, who is the Ark which was to contain not the Law but the Giver of the Law and of Grace, is a completion of that Temple, its consecration for its role in our Saviour's earthly ministry. The Mother of God herself also undergoes a consecration, preparing herself by her life in the Temple to become the Bearer of God.

Reminding us that we also have to prepare ourselves, we also have the Nativity Fast beginning in November. Like the fast before the Dormition, this is a fixed length fast, and it is always kept for forty days. On account of the winter months and its length (40 days), with regard to the dietary regulations it is not so strict as the Dormition Fast. Fish, wine and oil are allowed on Saturdays and Sundays until, on 20th December, we enter the pre-festival period. Until this same point, oil and wine are permitted on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sometimes on account of a particularly important feast, these regulations are somewhat relaxed as you will see in the calendar insert for the next two months. Many of the Greek Orthodox faithful increase the strictness of the fast not at the fore-festival period, as outlined here, but immediately after the feast of St Spiridon on 12th/25th December.

As in all the fasts of the Church Year, the Fathers urge us not only to fast from foods, but also to fast from the passions. To help in this second and harder struggle, they urge us to cut travelling to a minimum, to avoid entertainments, and married couples refrain from marital intercourse. However, one cannot simply create a vacuum and not fill it, and so we are also encouraged to try and increase our prayer-life, both with regard to our private prayers at home and our church attendance, to give ourselves more time for spiritual reading so that our minds are nourished, and to try and practice the virtues, primarily almsgiving. Even in those mini-cultures within Orthodoxy wherein frequent confession and Communion are not encouraged, it is customary in this, one of the four fasting periods in the Church Year, for the faithful to prepare themselves for confession and to receive the Holy Mysteries.

In addition to the festival of St Michael and All Angels on 8th/21st November, among the November Saints, we have:-

Saint Paul the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople (6th/19th) was born at the beginning of the fourth century in Constantinople. Even as a youth he was renowned for his purity of life and his meekness. He was ordained deacon and priest by Saint Alexander of Constantinople, who, knowing his virtue, suggested Paul as his successor. At that time, there was an Emperor in the East and one in the West, and the Emperor of the East, Constans, favoured the Arian heresy, while Constantius the Emperor of the West was Orthodox. Hearing of Paul's election, Constans, who was then at Antioch returned to his capital and

summoned a council of Arian bishops who deposed St Paul and put one Eusebius in his place. However, within a year the usurper Patriarch died, and Paul, who had taken refuge in Rome, was recalled. Meanwhile the Arian heretics selected Macedonius to be their Patriarch, - he compounded the blasphemies of Arius by denigrating the Holy Spirit as well as the Word of God. The City was in uproar with proponents of the two factions fighting each other. Constans, again in the East, sent a military division to quell the troubles, but this seemed only to aggravate the situation. St Paul was restored to his cathedra for a short period, but was removed when the Emperor himself returned with a greater military force. Again he sought refuge in Orthodox Rome. With the support of the Western Emperor and the Pope, St Paul was able to regain his see for a third time to the great rejoicing of the Orthodox, but Constans did not give up his fight against the godly hierarch for he could not bear his teaching. To avoid disturbances, St Paul was tricked into attending a reception, arrested and carried off to Thessalonica. From there he fled again to Rome. In 347 A.D., after the Council of Sardica, St Paul and the renowned St Athanasius the Great, who was also living in exile in the West, were once more returned to their flocks. However, after a short three year spell of peace, the political situation changed radically. After an uprising in 350 A.D. Constans managed to seize power also in the West. The political balance was altered, and the persecuted Orthodox in the East were not longer able to appeal to the West for succour. Saint Paul was arrested and sent into exile, to Cucusus in Lesser Armenia. There, one day as the exiled hierarch celebrated the Divine Liturgy, the Arians stormed the church, broke in, and strangled the holy one with his omophorion. Thus a life of struggles for Orthodoxy against heresy was crowned with martyrdom.

The Holy Martyr Bieuzy (24th November/7th December) was a native of the British Isles who lived in the seventh century. Wishing to take up the monastic life at a time when, with the Anglo-Saxons gaining more and more of the country, life was troubled here, he departed for Brittany and placed himself in obedience to his fellow-countryman, Saint Gildas. Because of his virtue he was ordained to the sacred priesthood, and it is said that he was granted the gift of wonder-working. However, in the exercise of his pastoral ministry he came into conflict with a violent and wicked man, who, when he could not force the godly priest to be unfaithful to his pastoral conscience, murdered him. Thus the Saint died as a Christian martyr.

Saint James, Bishop of Rostov (27th November/10th December) was consecrated to that see in the year 1386. During his short episcopate there, a certain teacher named Marcian encouraged the people to reject the veneration of the holy icons. St James countered this false teaching with Orthodox doctrine, and eventually had the deceiver expelled from his city. A little later a poor woman was sentenced to death in Rostov, but the Saint had her sentence commuted to a period of penance. For some reason, this kindly decision incurred the wrath of the citizens, and they rose up against the Bishop and cast him out of their city. He made his way to Lake Neri and, having traced the sign of the Cross over its waters, he threw his episcopal mantia upon them. Then sitting himself upon the vestment as upon a raft, he floated across the lake to the furthest

shore. The people were moved to repentance seeing this miracle, and went to recall their Archpastor. Saint James pardoned them and blessed them, but would not return. Instead he settled in a confined cell and lived the remainder of his days in the strictest asceticism. Because of his evident virtue, disciples gathered and built cells around his, seeking his spiritual direction and counsel, and thus a monastery was founded, which was dedicated to the Conception of the Theotokos. Saint James ended his earthly course in 1392 A.D., and his sacred relics were preserved in his monastery.

On the same day, we have Saint Maximus the Bishop of Riez. He was born in Provence to Christian parents and as a young man entered the renowned monastery of Lerins, while the great St Honoratus was still abbot there. In 426 A.D., St Honoratus was consecrated as Bishop of Aries and Maximus succeeded him as the abbot of Lerins. When the see of Frejus was widowed, Maximus was fearful that he would be made Bishop, and so he fled and lived in solitude in the forest until he was assured that a new bishop had been consecrated. However, in 433 A.D., he was elected to be Bishop of Riez, and as such he attended the Church Council there in the year 439, and subsequent ones in Orange (441 A.D.) and Aries (454 A.D.) In his cathedral city he erected a church to Saint Albinus, and he was one of the Bishops of Gaul who joyfully received the letters of the Pope St Leo the Great to St Flavian the Patriarch of Constantinople, in which the errors of Eutyches were condemned. He confirmed the condemnation of that heresy (Monophysitism). He died in the year 460, and his body was enshrined in the cathedral at Riez.

NEWS SECTION

INTERVIEWS WITH TWO ROCA HIERARCHS

SINCE THE MEETING of four ROCA with President V. Putin of Russia in New York City on 24th September (see last month's issue), two of the Bishops have given interviews which have been circulated on the internet. His Grace Bishop Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America described how the meeting with Putin came about and the matters touched upon in the two and a half hours they were with him. He also spoke of his own change of heart, having at first been very fearful of such meetings, saying: "There are times when we should avoid meetings, and there are times when we are obliged to meet face to face. In the past I have feared such meetings, I even preferred being isolated, but there have been too many changes in Russia. As a pastor, I have a great responsibility for the salvation of souls, and I also feel that someone has been praying hard for me. All this has caused me to have a change of heart. If we have a great conviction in our position, if God is with us, we should not be afraid. According to the Apostle Peter, we must always be ready to give an answer of our hope (1 Ptr 3:15)." In an interview given by His Grace Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan, much the same ground was covered, but His Grace did specifically touch upon the two primary issues which now separate the two communions. When asked what prevents reunion, he replied: "Before everything else - it is the 1927 Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius and the cooperation of the church hierarchs with the

atheists. We believe that there must be a recognition that the path chosen was wrong. None of the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate has repented this historical sin. The second problem is the Ecumenism to which the Moscow Patriarchate remains loyal to this day."

DISPUTE BETWEEN CONSTANTINOPLE & THE GREEK CHURCH

A CRISIS has arisen in relations between the Œcumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (Istanbul) and the autocephalous Church of Greece, headed by Archbishop Christodoulos. Greece grew territorially as the Ottoman Empire and its successor shrank, but as new territories were added to Greece an ecclesiastical problem arose because these "new territories" (which comprise about a third of the total area of modern Greece) fell within the jurisdiction, not of the autocephalous Church of Greece, but of the Œcumenical Patriarchate. In 1928, an agreement was drawn up between the two Churches, but over the decades since then the rights of the Patriarchate have atrophied. Recently the Metropolitan of Thessalonica died, and Patriarch Bartholomaios suddenly elected to reclaim his prerogatives, asking that Archbishop Christodoulos submit a list of the eligible candidates for the see for his approval. The Church of Greece at first refused this request, but then submitted a list, but pointed out that it was not for the Patriarch's approval but only for his information. This moved Patriarch Bartholomaios to return the list asking that it be submitted again for his approval. The two primates have now agreed to meet to try and resolve the issue.

ANTIOCHIAN AUTONOMY

THE HOLY SYNOD of the Patriarchate of Antioch, at a session on 9th October this year, unanimously resolved to grant self-rule to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, covering the territory of Canada and the United States. The resolution consisted of eight principle parts defining the jurisdiction of the new autonomous Archdiocese. The Patriarch retains the right to appoint two or three Metropolitans to participate with the Local Synod in the election of Diocesan Bishops. Three nominees for the office of Metropolitan, who will be a member of the Antiochian Holy Synod, will be submitted to the Synod for them to elect one of them. The decisions of the Holy Synod of Antioch will be binding on the Archdiocese on matters of doctrine, liturgy sacraments, relations with autocephalous Orthodox Churches and "ecumenical policy with regard to other Christian and non-Christian bodies" (*sic*).

"GREATEST CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND IN 50 YEARS" CLAIMED

AFTER THE CASE of the ossuary attributed to the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of God, one is a little wary of Holy Land archaeological finds! Now a scholar at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Joe Zias, claims to have found an inscription dating from the mid-fourth century which indicates that the Tomb of Absalom, a notable landmark in the Kedron Valley, also marks the burial place of the father of the Forerunner, St Zacharias. The inscription apparently is only visible when the sun strikes the monument in a certain way, and it has been

defaced because of old people had the custom of stoning the tomb, because of Absalom's betrayal of his father, King David. Zias also claims that the name Simeon is seen in the rather lengthy inscription, and this has led him to believe that the find confirms a reference in the writings of the Blessed Jerome, who states that St Zacharias, the Righteous Simeon the God-bearer and St James were laid to rest in one place. Zias has enlisted the help of Professor Emile Puech of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem who has dated the inscription, and he (Zias) plans to disclose more of his findings at a conference in Atlanta on 19th November.

PRINCE CHARLES HONOURS HIS SAINTED FOREBEAR

EARLIER THIS YEAR, H.R.H. Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales hosted a Concert at Windsor Castle to raise funds for the Convent of Sts Mary and Martha in Moscow, the monastic house originally founded by his great-great-aunt, Saint Elizabeth of Russia, the Grand Duchess Serge. The concert comprised Russian Orthodox sacred music and a piece specially commissioned by the Prince in memory of his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, which was dedicated to Saint Elizabeth. The piece, called *Elizabeth: Full of Grace*, was composed by Sir John Tavener, and was performed by the Mariinsky Orchestra from St Petersburg and choristers from St George's Chapel, Windsor, and from Westminster Cathedral.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

GIFT OF AN ICON OF ST ELIZABETH OF RUSSIA: Sometime ago we reported the gift to the Brotherhood of a large icon of the Russian Royal Martyrs which now hangs near the shrine of St Edward in our church. The donor of this icon, the artist Sigrid Spencer of Whitstable, Kent, who had painted it simply because she liked the subject and because of her love of the Martyrs, had then tried to find a home for it and was directed to us by Andrew Bond of the Saint George Orthodox Information Service. When we collected the icon, she generously asked if she could now paint an icon of our choice, and we asked her to paint one of Saint Elizabeth of Russia. Although in the interim Mrs Spencer moved house, the icon was finished in September this year and has been brought back to the church. We are thankful to Mrs Spencer for her kindness and generosity in painting the icon of such a beloved Saint for our church, and we hope that the Saint's prayer will always sustain her and that one day she will find an opportunity to come and see it in situ.

PRACTICAL TIP

WHEN THE PRESENT WRITER was young, Christmas in the West was celebrated largely as a family affair. Decorations were put up on the eve and taken down for Twelfth Night. Advent was still remembered, if not observed, as a fasting period as it is in the Orthodox Church, and except perhaps for end-of-term school parties and carol services, the celebratory aspect of the festival was kept till 25th December. Now, with the decline in any belief in the significance of the festival, all that has changed. On Christmas Day the feast is now over. We

have hardly got past Guy Fawkes Night, before we are in a whirl of parties and "Christmas dinners and breaks." Added to this, in the same period we have seen a huge increase in self-indulgence and drunkenness. Hedonism rather than Christian Faith now distinguishes this feast. All this poses problems for the conscientious Orthodox Christian. Few of us either can or should cut ourselves off completely from society around us. We have non-Orthodox friends and relatives and we must show some condescension for the sake of showing them love. However, this is a time to be especially careful. Here are some ideas:-

A) Remembering that, for our spiritual well-being, we keep a fasting regime to prepare for the Orthodox celebration of our Saviour's Nativity, try to keep any social commitments to a minimum. When you cannot altogether avoid taking some part, choose a family dinner together rather than a party.

B) Always bear in mind, that although our Church is not puritanical and does not forbid her adherents from enjoying themselves, drunkenness, gluttony, licentiousness have no place at all in a Christian life.

C) When for the sake of loved ones, you join in various celebrations, try to make sure that they do not conflict with church commitments, Saturday evenings, feastdays, etc.

D) Don't ruin others' enjoyment and bring the Orthodox Faith to their attention simply by being bigoted about your religious practices.

On this last point I remember a story told of the late Abbess Elisabeth. A recent convert to Orthodoxy, who was receiving instruction from her, once explained to Mother that she would go home for the "Western Christmas" with her parents, but would nonetheless keep the fast while there. Mother Elisabeth told her to go home and join the family celebration but to eat whatever they were eating without mentioning the fast. Then, she said, when you return you can keep the rest of the fast with renewed zeal.

Remember also that none of the lamentable things that now distinguish the "Western Christmas" in any way prevent us from keeping one aspect of the Nativity Fast in all strictness: nothing hinders us from giving alms.