

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

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FROM THE FATHERS

"WE PERCEIVE that only in the Church, where hierarchs have been established by the gospel law and by the ordinance of the Lord (John 20:22-23), is it permitted to baptise and to give remission of sins. But outside, nothing can be bound or be loosed, where there is no one who is able either to bind or to loose anything."

Holy Hieromartyr Cyprian of Carthage, + 258 A.D.

"BECAUSE all that Christ did and suffered was for our teaching, He began after His baptism to dwell in the wilderness and He fought against the devil, that every baptised person might patiently sustain greater temptations after his baptism, and not be troubled as if this which happens to him was contrary to his expectation, but that he might bear up against all things, and come off conqueror."

Saint John Chrysostom, 354 - 407A.D.

"NOW WE ARE BAPTISED by the Lord in the Holy Spirit, not only when, in the day of our Baptism, we are washed in the fount of life unto the remission of our sins, but also daily when by the Grace of the same Spirit we are inflamed to do those things which please God."

Venerable Bede of Jarrow, 672 - 735 A.D.

"IN SPITE of men's fall into sin, in spite of the darkness surrounding our souls, the grace of the Holy Spirit granted at Baptism in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, shines in men's hearts with the Divine light which has been, from time immemorial, the light of the priceless gifts of Christ. If a sinner does not repent, this light of Christ cries to the Father: 'Abba, Father, harden not Thy heart forever against this sinner.' And then, at the sinner's conversion to the way of repentance, it completely erases all traces of the sins that were committed, and clothes the former sinner afresh with a robe of incorruptibility, woven from the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Venerable Seraphim of Sarov the Wonder-worker, 1759 - 1833 A.D.

Epistle to the Flock from the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Held in December 2003 in New York

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS, having gathered at this time, as had preceding Councils, under the auspices of the Holy Miracle-working Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, had as its main task the matter of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church/Moscow Patriarchate.

The session was preceded by an All-Diaspora Expanded Pastoral Conference. The bishops who were present at the Conference were able to hear the entire scope of opinions from practically the entire clergy of the Church Abroad. It can be decisively stated that not one person doubts the necessity of having dialogue with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate towards overcoming existing divisions.

A significant portion of the participants once again raised the matter of condemning Sergianism and ecumenism. Without a doubt, this resounded in the work of the Council and will be taken into account going forward.

Before us stands the question not of merging or uniting churches, but the establishment of normal church relations between two parts of the once-whole Russian Church, parts which found themselves separated for historical reasons.

As is well known, the Russian Church Abroad was established on temporary principles in the 1920-s in accordance with a *ukase* [decree] of Patriarch Tikhon. It was assumed that the communist state would fall in a few years, and that Russian émigrés, headed by their archpastors, could return to their homeland.

Unfortunately, because of our sinfulness, this did not occur! The godless regime enslaved the Russian people for over 70 years and inflicted brutal persecution upon faith in Christ.

Concurrently, over the years of its wanderings, the Church Abroad spread to almost all countries of the world. New dioceses were formed, churches were built with parish schools, monasteries were established, youth and patriotic groups were formed, newspapers were published along with journals and books. The goal for the pastors of the Church Abroad became not only to preserve the Orthodox Faith and Russian culture within its flock, but to attract those of other faiths to Orthodoxy, instilling in them our Church traditions. And so, in many countries, parishes were born consisting almost exclusively of the local population which converted to Orthodoxy. Over the years, even the composition of the parishioners changed. While the older generation passed to another world, their children and grandchildren began to forget the Russian language and lost the cultural legacy of their parents. Mixed marriages became a common occurrence. These factors presented a new challenge for the Church Abroad, which her founders did not foresee, to wit, that the Russian Orthodox Church must proselytise and bring the world the light of Orthodoxy.

We, Russians who find ourselves abroad, must thank God that, being in complete freedom from godless communism, our Church was able to preserve the purity of the Orthodox faith, and not submit to the fatal temptations of ecumenism and modernism.

At the same time, in our much-suffering homeland, the godless state employed brutal terror and every means possible to enslave the Russian Church.

Fortunately, this has come to an end! As our saints foretold, God showed mercy to our Russian people and freed them from the yoke of the godless state. May the earth be glad and the heavens rejoice: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, the great harlot! (Rev. 18:2).

One can argue endlessly on the ambiguity of socio-political shifts in Russia, but the change in the situation of millions of the faithful is apparent to all.

Now we have become witnesses to that relentless spiritual renewal occurring in our homeland: hundreds and thousands of Russian people are being baptised, churches and monasteries are being rebuilt, theological academies, seminaries and parish schools are opening, religious books are being published in enormous numbers!

We, living abroad, must rejoice at the spiritual awakening of the Russian people, and thank God that He heard our prayers and the prayers of the host of New Martyrs of Russia for the salvation of Russia.

Maybe it will not be as rapid as one would like, but the Church in Russia is gradually recognising the need for destroying the wall that has thus far divided the Russian flock in the homeland and that abroad. Indeed, the Church in Russia glorified the host of New Martyrs, as well as the Royal Family, which was unimaginable under the godless regime. It also condemned the principle of the Church serving the interests of the state: in essence, the principle of Sergianism. A great number of clergymen and laypersons in Russia insist upon the withdrawal of the Russian Church from the World Council of Churches. This all gives hope that with time the other wounds inflicted upon the Russian Church by the militantly atheistic regime will be healed.

Now we must agree upon how to overcome the obsolete and possible new misunderstandings between both parts of the Russian Church, and to agree upon how to resolve all future problems of interrelations peacefully and in the spirit of truth.

It is our firm conviction that the Church Abroad, in light of the tasks which stood before her in regard to the nourishment of such a scattered and disparate flock, must preserve her freedom and administrative independence. At the same time, it is desirable, in those places where parishes of the Church Abroad and of the Moscow Patriarchate exist side by side, to work out a plan of friendly coexistence in the fulfilment of the single mission of witnessing Christ. The matter of full eucharistic communion may be only a final result of the conciliar actions of both parts of the Russian Church, to be prepared by the corresponding committees.

For the resolution of problems relating to overcoming confrontations between the two parts of the Russian Church, the Council of Bishops formed a committee which will exhaustively examine questions of relations between the two parts of the Russian Church and will offer measures acceptable to both sides.

Recognising the importance and responsibility of the developing process of negotiations, we find it desirable to convene in the future a Fourth All-Diaspora Council.

We invoke God's blessing upon our entire faithful flock and ask for their holy prayers for us, your archpastors, who wish to preserve our flock in unity and the purity of the Orthodox faith.

Most-Holy Mother of God, our Guide, continue to lead us according to the commandments of thy Son and the Holy Fathers who pleased Him. Amen.

*+Metropolitan Laurus
+Archbishop Alypy
+Archbishop Mark
+Archbishop Hilarion
+Archbishop Kyrill
+Bishop Ambroise
+Bishop Evtikhii
+Bishop Agathangel
+Bishop Daniel
+Bishop Gabriel
+Bishop Alexander
+Bishop Michael
+Bishop Agapit
+Bishop Peter*

FINAL RELEASE THE RUSSIAN CHURCH ABROAD TODAY

A Report to the All-Diaspora Clerical Council

Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov

THE CIRCUMSTANCES of the appearance of the Russian Church Abroad in the '20s of the last century, as a result of the bloody Revolution and the forced evacuation from their homeland of a vast number of Russian people, are well known. Likewise is known the creation of the Church Abroad in accordance with Decree 362 of His Holiness, Patriarch Tikhon, his Synod, and his Council, dated November 7th (20th), 1920.

In discussing the question of relations between the Russian Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate, it is necessary to establish the state of the Russian Church Abroad today, after almost a century of existence in four generations of Orthodox people of Russian origin and those converted to Orthodoxy. We are confident that the Russian Church Abroad is a genuinely free and conciliar Church of the Diaspora, which has never severed its spiritual and juridical oneness with the Mother Church of Russia, as the resolution of the Council of Bishops Abroad, dated August 27th (September 9th), 1927, bears witness. Reading this momentous resolution, we see that the Church Abroad, "not separating Herself from Her Mother Church and not considering Herself autocephalous, was in full spiritual and administrative subordination canonically to the

Moscow Patriarchate during Patriarch Tikhon's time, but ceased all relations with it and its hierarchy following the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, who betrayed the Russian Church into the hands of its most inveterate foe, entering into union with the militantly atheistic regime, but the Church Abroad maintains as before its faithfulness to the Mother Church of Russia and has taken upon herself the lofty mission of preserving all the foundations, traditions, and grandeur of Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian Orthodox Church, and to speak freely and openly throughout the whole world in the name of the enslaved Mother Church."

The Russian Church Abroad has maintained this mission all these years. The liveliness of the Church Abroad has always been manifest in its spiritual liberty, conciliar administration and thinking. The Church Abroad stands firmly on the confession of its three Pan-Diaspora Councils; it is governed by the Council of Bishops, diocesan and parish assemblies, in the spirit of a freely chosen adherence to the unadulterated Truth of Orthodoxy. The Russian Church Abroad possesses genuine freedom, not being subject to the control of secular powers, should the latter challenge the spiritual nature of the Church or attempt to lead it into the stream of apostate global moral order. As a result of her conviction and firm stance, the Church Abroad was able not only to preserve herself spiritually throughout the 20th century, but also to have a positive and restraining influence on the entire Orthodox world. Thus, in 1981, witnessing the signs of apostate trends in the Orthodox world, the Church Abroad glorified the choir of the Russian New Martyrs and Confessors, led by the Royal Martyrs, an act which resonated throughout the Orthodox world. In 1983, the Church Abroad anathematised Ecumenism, in order to protect its flock from the corrupting influence of the ecumenical heresy, which aims, in the spirit of the new world order, to destroy faith in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Being strengthened by this stance within unadulterated Orthodoxy, the flock of the Diaspora has zealously participated all these years in the vivifying building of Church life. These are the fruits of their labours: there are functioning monasteries for both men and women, church schools, a theological seminary, youth organisations, missionary work, and the publishing of church periodicals, as well as liturgical and spiritual literature. Church-building is flourishing, as are iconography and church music. It is a comfort that all these endeavours have been accomplished in a grace-filled manner, under the protection of the Directress of the Russian Diaspora - the miraculous Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God and the now disappeared Montreal Myrrh-streaming Icon of the Sovereign Lady, and through the intercessions of the saints of God canonised in the Diaspora, among whom a special place is held by Saint John, the great hierarch of San Francisco and Shanghai, whose relics lie accessible in his cathedral.

It is not with the intent of idealising or self-praise that we gaze upon the grace-filled path which the Church Abroad has trodden in the course of its almost century-long existence. We recall with profound gratitude the holy labours of a whole assembly of champions and confessors of the Faith: our Spirit-bearing First Hierarchs and archpastors, who uncompromisingly and with a firm hand rightly divided the word of divine Truth according to the testament of His Holiness, Patriarch Tikhon; our humble pastors, who are often forced to combine their pastoral duties with outside employment; our teachers in seminary and schools; our church workers and donors, who have placed the interests of the Church above that of their own well-being. We

are indebted to them for that fact that they, like the Prophet Moses, have led us safely through the troubles, horrors, and temptations of the ill-fated 20th century and have instilled in us the determination to go forward along the correct and salvific path.

At the same time, during these same decades the Church of Russia in the homeland was subject to savage persecution by the militantly atheistic regime, which took the place of the fallen monarchy. Even worse were the temptations of collaboration with the atheists in the liquidation of the True Church. The majority of the clergy and faithful did not succumb to these temptations, preferring martyrdom, confession, and the catacomb existence, rather than going the way of compromise. There arose a parallel structure of the Russian Church which did not share the stance of opposition to atheism, mingling her interests with the demands of the anti-Church powers, initiating the epoch of so-called Sergianism. Thus there appeared the tragic schism within the Church of Russia. A natural continuation of this course of the Church's coexistence with the government was the demand of the latter that the official Patriarchate join the World Council of Churches, actively and prayerfully participating in the community of ecumenists, in this way overstepping the bounds of service and general prayer with heretics - in violation of the dogmas of the Orthodox Church and the Traditions of the holy Fathers.

Since the Russian Church Abroad does not, as a matter of principle, bind itself by the ideology of the "New World Order," which propagates Ecumenism, it cannot be in union with the adherents of this movement. Thus, it is within these two maladies that one can find the key to the ideological differences between the Russian Church Abroad and the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate of today. It is the duty of both parts of the Church of Russia to find a way to overcome these differences on the basis of one, unified Truth.

We cannot close our eyes to the historical advances which have taken place in the life of Russia during the past decade. We must understand that millions of Russian people are nourished by the Church, despite unbelievable difficulties, weaknesses, and irregularities known to all in Russia. Spiritual nourishment is on the rise in the armed forces, in hospitals, and in prisons. We see the zealous strivings of common believers in the restoration of defiled sacred sites, the rebuilding of churches and monasteries from the ruins, the reestablishment of church schools and homes for children, the publishing of a vast number of books of spiritual content. As throughout the world, the youth of Russia are experiencing a moral crisis; nevertheless, young men are filling the clergy and monastic ranks, while young women are summoned to spiritual labours in convents. Many of the youth are involved in the realm of church music. The Russian people very often donate the last remnants of their incomes toward the regeneration of Orthodoxy. The pious efforts of the Russian faithful need to be wholeheartedly supported and applauded.

However, these rank-and-file labourers do not set policy, they do not cause spiritual temptations. It is imperative that salubrious attention be directed at those who wield power over ecclesiastical ideology on all levels, whose hearts are open to receiving the Truth, and who are willing and ready to overcome the impediments toward the union of the two parts of the Church of Russia - those impediments being servile Sergianism and heretical Ecumenism. That time has come. It is perfectly clear that a respectful and honest dialogue is necessary, one that is condescending toward

human weakness, but is without compromise, that is tolerant but firm - firm in the rejection of the sin of heresy, definite in the refusal to subjugate the will of the Church to the will of the world.

This healing process must take place in a peaceful manner, not impelled by the acceleration of events; in this it would do to investigate with prudence and reason all the questions and positions which divide us. We must take into account the individual peculiarities of the past decades of each side, and not lose sight of the expectations and sensibilities of the flock. Let us look at the reality of the spiritual experience of the Diaspora. Is it not a paradox that the Russian Church Abroad has for many years nurtured thousands of immigrants from Russia in all countries of the Diaspora? And these are people either from parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate or those who are coming to church for the first time in their lives. Inasmuch as these believers are consciously being infused into the life of the Church, this elicits from those parishioners born in the Diaspora no objections. Such will it also be with the whole Church, if that oneness of mind will be attained in that which now makes a merger impossible.

All the Church councils of all times have come to a mutual, correct resolution of questions and disagreements through discussion. There is no reason to fear discussion within dialogue. What should be feared is schism. It is not difficult to cause a schism, but to gather the whole flock into one borders on the miraculous. We beg such a miracle from the Lord, yet we must render ourselves worthy of this miracle.

As for the Church Abroad, the attainment of the oneness of mind of the whole Church on such a fundamental question as the determination of the fate of the Church Abroad is possible and judicious only for the conciliar consciousness of our whole Church - the clergy and the laity, i.e., through the convocation of a Pan-Diaspora Council. Concurrently, a conciliar choice on the merging of both parts of the Russian Church must be carried out by a Local Church Council in Russia. Before that time, preparatory work can be carried out for the attainment of oneness of mind by the two parts of the Church of Russia. If both parts of the

Church, separate at the present time, approach true oneness of mind with a conciliar will, the path to mutual eucharistic service will then be opened. But such concelebration must be preceded by the repentance of the whole people, by fasting and prayer in Russia and in the Diaspora. Thus will the Church of Russia arise to a renewed life, cleansed by tears of repentance, standing on the firm rock of the Truth of the Orthodox, Apostolic Faith.

On this fateful day we must have one, and only one, concern - not to sin against the TRUTH, as we priests pray for when clad in our priestly vestments, before the accomplishment of the unbloody sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist: "Thy priests, O Lord, are clothed in RIGHTEOUSNESS, and thy righteous rejoice." Let there be full righteousness, and let there be tranquil joy; for where there is peace, there is God.

*Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov
November 25th (December 8th), 2003 A.D.*

Adapted from
"THE HOUSE OF GOD
AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"
By the Priest N. R. Antonov

Continuation

§ 82. The Symbolical and Moral Significance of the Various Parts of the Liturgy of the Faithful. The shortened Great Litany (i.e. the Little Litany) is intoned as a sign that we are starting a new part of the Liturgy. -In the first part of the Cherubic Hymn worshippers are encouraged to lay aside all earthly care, so that they might worthily encounter the King of all. - The Great Entrance represents the coming of Jesus Christ to His voluntary suffering. - The placing of the sacred vessels on the Holy Table portrays the taking down of the Lord's body from the Cross and His burial. At this point, the Holy Table represents the Garden of Gethsemane [*This is what the original reads, but obviously Fr Antonov means the garden near Golgotha (John 19:41), wherein the Lord's tomb was hewn out of a rock -transl.*], and the antimimension the tomb of the Lord; the veils represent the burial cloths, and the priest and the deacon Joseph and Nicodemus, who buried the all-immaculate body of the Saviour. The censuring and the incense represent the fragrant spices, myron and aloes with which the body of Christ was anointed. The fact that the asterisk is left on the diskos (paten) signifies the seal on the Lord's sepulchre. The closing of the Royal Gates and the drawing of the veil across them, after the transfer of the Holy Gifts, represents the rolling of the stone to the mouth of the sepulchre and the setting of the guard. - The deacon's calling us to "peace and love" with the words, "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess," reminds us that peace and love are indispensable prerequisites for the receptions of the Body and Blood of Christ, just as were the interior peace and a self-effacing love for Christ of the Ointment-bearing Women, who were the first to see Christ face to face after His resurrection. - The exclamation, "The doors! The doors! In wisdom, let us attend," reminds us that the worshippers must close the doors of their souls to every worldly consideration, and concentrate on what is taking place in the sanctuary behind the Royal Gates. Then, before the Creed, follows the opening of the veil and the waving by the priest of the aer over the Gifts; this represents the opening of the tomb and the earthquake at the time of Jesus Christ's resurrection. The chanting or reciting of the Symbol of Faith, the Creed, is a declaration of the faith of the universal Church in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the ringing of the bell (as is done in some churches) is a sign of the triumphant preaching of the Resurrection to all those who at this time are unable to be present as the time of the consecration of the Holy Gifts approaches.-The Mother of God is solemnly glorified immediately after the consecration of the Holy Gifts, because she ministered at the mystery of the Incarnation and she is the first to intercede that we might receive the Eucharist well. - The chanting or recitation of the Lord's Prayer reminds us of the fulfilment of the promise, implied therein, that we be granted the bread daily necessary for our soul and body, which is granted through communion of the Mysteries. The elevation of the Holy Lamb is a visible sign of the actuality of the resurrection of Christ and His appearance to His Apostles. - The pouring into the Chalice of the hot water before the communion of the clergy signifies the life and the reality of resurrected Jesus Christ,

because warmth is an indispensable quality of living and of life-giving flesh and blood. Further to this, the communion of the clergy, especially at a concelebration, may be taken to signify the repeated "communion" (or encounters) of the Apostles with Jesus Christ after His resurrection, and their eating at tables, blessed by the Risen Christ, and it is equally a foretaste of the future eating by the faithful of the fruit of the wine in the New Kingdom of God the Father (Luke 22:30; Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25). - The presentation of the Holy Gifts to the faithful during the chanting of "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," represents the appearance of the Saviour after His resurrection. - The last appearance of the Holy Gifts (at "Always, now and ever") signifies the Ascension of Jesus Christ. The incense then represents the light cloud of the Ascension. The Holy Table represents the Throne of God the Father, and the prothesis the "place" where the Son of God sits at the right hand of God the Father.

Thus the Liturgy of the catechumens represents the years when Jesus Christ was teaching, and the Liturgy of the Faithful the time of His Passion, resurrection, and the events in the earthly life of the Saviour until the day of His Ascension and the Ascension itself.

...to be continued with "The General Content of the Priest's Liturgical Prayers "

THE COMING MONTH

THIS MONTH we have chosen quotes from the Fathers, for the first section of "The Shepherd," which teach us concerning baptism, because within the month, on Monday, 6th/19th, we keep the Great Feast of the Holy Theophany, which celebrates the Baptism of the Lord in Jordan. This event was prefigured by the Flood in the days of Noah, when he and his kind were delivered from a world grown old in sin. Another precursor of Christ's baptism was that baptism, when Moses the Godseer led his people through the Red Sea dryshod, delivering them from bondage to Pharaoh. Then, in the Mosaic law, rites of cleansing were instituted which point to Christian baptism. At the end of the old dispensation came a fuller and deeper, but as yet incomplete, baptism, that of John the Baptist, whereby people were baptised unto repentance.

But it is the Baptism of Christ in Jordan which is both unique and which inaugurates the perfect Christian Baptism of the Church. It is unique in that in all previous and subsequent baptisms the person being baptised is cleansed. When Christ was baptised He was not cleansed, as He had no need of cleansing, and that is why the Evangelist St Mark reports that He came up "straightway" (Mark 1:10) out of the water. By His Baptism Christ was not cleansed by the waters, but rather He cleansed the waters that we might be baptised therein. This is the Baptism which all Orthodox Christians share, and which is of such fundamental importance to our spiritual life that it is the only mysterion of the Church mentioned in the Creed.

The Fathers also speak of other baptisms, which are of course not developments or additions to the one Baptism spoken of in the Creed, but are rather ancillary to it or manifestations of it. They speak of the baptism of tears which is the renewal of our baptism in repentance, and that of blood or of martyrdom. And lastly there is a baptism which we may hope to avoid, but which in God's mercy will put an end to sin, as did the Flood of Noah, and that is the baptism of the fire of hell, for God promised Noah that He would never again destroy through the agency of water.

The services of the Theophany parallel those of Christmas, although this year because the feast falls on a Monday, the Royal Hours are not read on the previous day, but on the Friday. On the eve of the feast we have the Great Blessing of Waters. In the Russian practice, Great Vespers is served immediately after the Sunday Liturgy and the waters are blessed at its completion. The Vigil for the day of the feast then begins, as did that for Christmas, with Great Compline. The Greek custom, which happily we follow at Brookwood, is a little kinder. The waters are blessed at the end of the Sunday Liturgy, but the Vigil for the feast begins with Vespers as it does for most feasts, and Great Compline is omitted. Both practices come together on the day of the festival when the Liturgy of St Basil the Great is appointed, after which the faithful process from the church to a lake, pond, river, stream, or the sea and bless the waters in the open. Because there is no suitable body of water near our Brotherhood church we have taken to going to Chertsey and blessing the waters on the site of the renowned monastery founded there by St Erkenwald in the mid-seventh century -one of the few holy places in Surrey.

As the hymns of the festival make abundantly clear, all creation "shines with light from on high" sharing in the blessing of the festival wherein a path from sinfulness to sinlessness was made for us. This fact is underlined by our going out of the church to bless natural waters, and by the practice of blessing houses at Theophany. In Orthodox societies, after the blessing of the waters on the day of the feast, the priest takes the blessed water and sprinkles the homes of his parishioners, so that each home is again consecrated to become a small family church, so that the ills and woes of the past year might be cleaned and malign powers expelled. Nowadays, in the diaspora, it is usually impossible for a priest to visit the homes of his parishioners on one day, because we no longer live in close knit communities, but instead he usually visits those who request a blessing as and when he can in the succeeding days or weeks. Because this blessing necessarily does not follow immediately after the Divine service in church on the day of the feast, he usually serves a short prayer service in each home when blessing it. If even this cannot be arranged the faithful may take the holy water themselves, and asking God's blessing, sprinkle their homes as they chant the festal troparion (first tone):-

WHEN Thou wast baptised in the Jordan, O Lord,
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest;
for the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee,
calling Thee His beloved Son.
And the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the certainty of the word.
O Christ our God, Who hast appeared
and hast enlightened the world,
glory be to Thee.

A second important event in January, on Sunday 19th January/1st February, is the beginning of the Lenten Triodion period. This always starts twenty two days (four Sundays and the intervening days) before Great Lent itself. These days are a period of preparation for the fast itself, which this year begins on Monday, 10th/23rd February, the day of the holy Hieromartyr Haralampus. The beginning of the Triodion period marks a turning point in the Church Year, and in some monasteries to mark the event

the choir leader is solemnly presented with the Lenten Triodion before the Vespers for the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. Otherwise, the book is placed before the icon of the Saviour on the iconostas and the choir leader takes it from there, receiving the services and hymns of the Triodion period as a blessing from the Saviour Himself. Indeed, whether this custom is observed or not, the services which are contained in the Lenten Triodion are a blessing from the Saviour. They help us to "turn away from evil, and do good," to "seek peace, and pursue it" (Ps. 33:14). They also nourish us spiritually during the period of the fast. Indeed the edifying thoughts and prayers contained in this book can and should enlighten the way before us throughout the whole year, because the lessons of Lent should not be ignored through the rest of the year.

This year only two Sundays of the Triodion period fall within January, that of the Publican and the Pharisee (19th January/1st February) and that of the Prodigal Son (26th January/8th February). The week that falls between these two is kept as a fast-free week, lest through our fasting we should only learn the self-righteousness of the Pharisee. The fast-free week also serves as a pre-festival of the Sunday of the Prodigal. While the Prodigal stayed in his Father's house, he had all that he desired, and it was only after he left that he fell into need and only then that he needed to begin the struggle of repentance. It is in that struggle that we need to take fasting as an aid in our struggle. In that first week of the Triodion period we are, as it were, living in the Father's house, and no fasting is enjoined.

As we have noted in previous years, after His Baptism the Saviour went out into the wilderness and fasted, and as if echoing this, in the church calendar, after the feast of the Theophany we have the feastdays of many of the greatest of the desert and monastic saints, as you can see in the calendar insert. We also have three important synaxes of saints: that of the Seventy Apostles on 4th/17th; that of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia which this year falls on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, and that of the Three Hierarchs (St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian and St John Chrysostom) on the thirtieth of the month.

NEWS SECTION

MP - ROCA DIALOGUE

THE ALL-DIASPORA ROCA PASTORAL CONFERENCE, held at Nyack in early December, has since been the subject of much discussion on interested websites. Nonetheless, perhaps because it appears that the conference was hastily convened with little groundwork preparing the way, it seems well nigh impossible to gain a clear impression of the proceedings. A number of short, rather bland, reports were published with long disclaimers stating that they were not "official reports"! This of course leaves one wondering whether, official or not, they gave a true impression of events. The only other sources of first-hand information are from individual participants in the conference. The indications from these are that their authors had decidedly taken a party-line before the conference opened, and are at pains to demonstrate that the conference endorsed their views. However, although no resolutions were passed, at the end of the proceedings, the participants did issue an

"Appeal," and the "Report" by Father Valery Lukianov, which we have reproduced above.

Immediately following the conference, the full assembly (Sobor) of the hierarchs of ROCA met in New York, and we have also published their Epistle in this issue. Their letter to Patriarch Aleksii II has, we hear, been favourably received in Moscow.

It appears from other sources that the possible rapprochement between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad has upset some ecumenists. In a report on the subject in Ecumenical News International, bulletin number 23, by Andrei Zolotov, the author quotes a newspaper comment published in Pravda on 20th November in which Yelena Shakhova Rian writes: "Regrettably, the hypothetical reunification of the two Orthodox churches could strengthen their isolation from the rest of the Christian world. The conservative Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has denounced ecumenism as a heresy."

QUADRILATERAL PEACE MEETING WITH PUTIN

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN of the Russian Federation received His Holiness Patriarch Aleksii of Moscow and three religious leaders from the Caucasus at his Novo-Ogarevo residence on 26th November. The other participants were His Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya 11 of All Georgia (Orthodox), His Holiness Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II (Monophysite), and Sheikh UI-Islam Allahshukyur Pasha-Zade, head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus. This was not an ecumenical or inter-faith meeting, but simply an attempt by the religious leaders to address the problems of a peaceful settlement of the situations which have arisen in the Caucasus and to promote accord there.

MORE DESTRUCTION AND KILLINGS IN KOSOVO

TWO CHURCHES, in Gornja Brnjica and in Susica, were vandalised in the last week of November. No perpetrators have been identified or charged. Forum 18 News Service reports: "Fr Miroslav Popadic, the only remaining Serbian Orthodox priest in the Kosovan capital Pristina, who is also responsible for the village of Gornja Brnjica 7 kilometres (4 miles) to the north, reported that the little cemetery chapel is a little distance from the village. He told Forum 18 on 29 November that there were no problems with it in the past four and half years since NATO and KFOR have been in Kosovo.' But this time someone entered the belfry via open windows at the top and climbed down the bell rope,' he reported.' Some money was stolen and minor material damage was done. After it, the entry doors were smashed and broken, probably in order to exit the chapel.'" At the St Dimitrije church in Susica, the churchyard fence was broken and graffiti in Albanian were scrawled on the church walls. Father Sava of Dechani monastery also reported that on 14th August Serbian children swimming in the river at the village of Gorazdevac were shot at, and a dozen were injured and several killed. Because of the need of a KFOR military escort, church representatives were unable to reach the distressed and bereaved relatives for ten hours, even though they were only eight miles away.

ORTHODOX IN MUDSLIDE DISASTER

THE WESTERN CHRISTMAS celebration (2003) coincided with a series of the most horrible disasters and horrors around the world: the earthquake at Bam, the continuing guerrilla warfare in Iraq, hundreds of people killed by poison gases in China, further terrorism on both sides in the Holy Land conflict, and murders in this country. Among these, Orthodox Christians were victims of a mudslide in California. Two dozen members of the Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox youth camp were staying at Waterman Canyon. The surrounding area had been scorched by the wildfire earlier in the year, and many trees had been uprooted or burned. Torrential rains caused mudslides, one of which hit the camp and swept away one of the buildings there. Fourteen people were rescued, but a report, issued on Boxing Day, states that ten were lost in a surging stream of mud and water which rushed through the canyon. May the Lord grant consolation to the bereaved, and Eternal Memory to those who lost their lives.

BEIJING'S LAST ORTHODOX PRIEST DIES

FR ALEKSANDR DU LIFU, who died on 16th December at the age of 80, was the last Orthodox priest in Beijing, China. Fr Dionisy Pozdnyayev, who visited to conduct the funeral of Fr Aleksandr said that Orthodox believers in Beijing "have no priest now, no church and nowhere to pray," although he said the authorities were positive about the idea of Chinese Orthodox studying for the priesthood in Russia. Several parishes still survive in Inner Mongolia and in Xinjiang Province in north-west China. The only surviving Chinese local clergy are in the southern city of Shanghai, where St Nicholas' church has been turned into a French restaurant. Elsewhere, Chinese Orthodox churches are also being used for other purposes, in at least one case as a night club. In the wake of the funeral on 18th December 2003, it remains unclear when the Orthodox community in the Chinese capital will once again be able to worship freely in its own church. There are reported to be up to 250 Orthodox believers in Beijing. The city's Orthodox community has been trying since the 1980s to have the opportunity to meet openly for worship again. Residents of the Chinese capital have not had the possibility to pray in an Orthodox church since 1966. The parish of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God in Harbin in China's north-eastern Heilongjiang Province, the home of many Russian exiles until the 1950s, was the last in China to have its own priest, but with the death in September 2000 of Father Gregory Zhu Shipu has had no priest and no regular services. Several parishes still struggle to survive in Labdarin (Inner Mongolia) and in Urumqi, Chuguchakand Kulj (Xinjiang Province of north-west China), but with no priests cannot hold regular services. In Xinjiang the city of Urumqi's Orthodox church was reopened in 1985, and Orthodox in Yining have been trying in vain to rebuild their destroyed church since the mid-1980s. Local Orthodox have told Forum 18 in Yining that they have given up hope of ever being able to rebuild the church after repeated obstruction from the authorities.

MUSLIM ATTACKS ON COPTIC CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT

EGYPTIAN state and central security officers attacked the Coptic church of St George in Assuit during the celebration of their Eucharist. They ordered the priest to evacuate and close down the church. When he refused, they attacked him and threw the communion bread on the floor deliberately trampling it under foot. News of the attack spread throughout the neighbourhood and thousands of Copts rushed to

protect their priest and church. They chanted;" By our spirit, by our blood, we will protect our cross!" Their presence forced the security forces to retreat. The immediate motivation for the demand that the church be closed is unknown, but it is thought by representatives of the Coptic community that the police had plans to convert the church into a mosque. In another incident last month, in Al-Ubor on the outskirts of Cairo, a newly built Coptic church was destroyed by local government officials hours after the first services were held there, even though the parishioners had the proper permission to build from the government. In a less serious incident Christians displaying "fish" stickers on their cars in Cairo are now being stopped and penalised with heavy fines or arrested. Muslims are permitted to display Islamic texts and symbols. Apparently after the Christians began sporting the fish bumper stickers about a year ago, Muslims even started displaying aggressive "shark" stickers in retaliation, but these people are not penalised.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

SERBIAN BISHOPS' VISIT: On Monday, 15th December, we were paid a surprise visit by two hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church: His Grace Dositej of Great Britain and Scandinavia, who has visited us on several previous occasions, and His Grace Joanikije of Budimlje and Niksic.

After visiting the Serbian Cemetery which adjoins our property and offering prayers there, they visited Saint Edward's Church, and then came to the Brotherhood house for coffee. Bishop Joanikije kindly gave us some wooden crosses as blessings from his monastery and some Communion wine from Montenegro.

PILGRIMAGE FROM LONDON: On Saturday, 6th December a minibus full of pilgrims from the Russian Church in Harvard Road, Gunnersbury, visited Saint Edward's, the first group ever to do so from that parish. They were first given a talk about the church by Fr Niphon, and then had a picnic meal, and, not being able to be with us for the any of the daily divine services, before they left attended a moleben chanted for them before the Shrine of St Edward. They kindly left us an abundance of food, and many promises to come again.

ORTHODOX AID FUND: This is the fund from which each year our Brotherhood gives donations to other ecclesiastical, humanitarian and environmental charities. This year, 2003, we have given totals of £3,332.52 and \$435.00 US. In fact this is slightly less than we gave in 2002 (£3,622.74 & \$1,072), so we ask you to remember this charitable endeavour in your almsgiving that we may make up the shortfall next year. We would also like to thank all of our readers who made donations to the Fund in the past year. For your almsgiving, may God richly reward you in this world and in the next.

OUR SPECIAL THANKS are due to Mr Norman Coles of Knaphill, who over the last few months has so beautifully framed so many of the icons in the church for us. Norman was also instrumental in arranging for the wood from the trees felled at the Pirbright Army Camp be donated to our Brotherhood for winter fuel. May God's blessings be his.

PRACTICAL TIP

THERE ARE TIMES when it is spiritually beneficial to relax a little. The Fathers tell us, for instance, that if an archer keeps his bowstring always too taut, he is likely to snap it. Pay heed to this, but always bear in mind that when you unnecessarily cut corners, or cut down on your church commitment in various ways without proper cause, when you are just slacking, you are not only harming yourself, but you are also giving other a bad example and so are harming them as well.