

The Shepherd

An Orthodox Christian Pastoral Magazine

VOLUME XXIV NUMBER 9 MAY 2004

FROM THE FATHERS

"BUT WHAT does the Lord Himself mean when He exclaims, *That which is exalted in the sight of men is an abomination before God* (Lk.16:15)? And: *Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted* (Lk. 14:11)? And Wisdom says: *Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. 16:5)? And one could find many passages in other books condemning those things which are hidden in our souls. So wicked and hard to cure and strong are those things possessed in the depths of our souls that it is not possible to erase them and to remove them through human efforts and virtue alone unless, through prayer, we take the power of the Spirit as an ally, and, in this way, conquer the evil which is playing the tyrant within us, as the Spirit teaches us through the voice of David: *From my secret sins cleanse me, and from wanton sin spare Thy servant*" (Ps. 18:12 -the translation differs somewhat from the Boston one - ed.).

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, +c. 395 A.D.

"HE WHOSE WILL and desire in conversation is to establish his own opinion, even though what he says is true, should recognise that he is sick with the devil's disease. And if he behaves like this only in conversation with his equals, then perhaps the rebuke of his superiors may heal him. But if he acts in this way even with those who are greater and wiser than he, then his malady is humanly incurable."

Venerable John of the Ladder, Abbot of Sinai, + 603 A.D.

SELF-ESTEEM is the replacing of a purpose which accords with God with another which is contrary to the Divine. For a man full of self-esteem pursues virtue not for God's glory but for his own, and so purchases with his labours the worthless praise of men."

Venerable Maximus the Confessor, 580 - 662 A.D.

"SHOULD THOUGHTS of self-praise, of self-satisfaction, occur to you, remind yourself that you are nothing, and that all that is good in you is accomplished by the grace of God. *What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Without Me ye can do nothing.* Should the thought of despising any of your neighbours, or of your family, come to you, remind yourself that man is the work of God's hand, and that *it was very good.*"

Righteous John of Cronstadt, the Wonderworker, + 1908 A.D.

"THE HELPING of others, the giving of alms, and all external good works don't calm the arrogance of the heart. Humility of the mind, the pain of repentance and the breaking of the will, however, humble, the proud spirit."

Blessed Elder Joseph the Cave-dweller of Athos, 1898 - 1959 A.D.

Extract from
ON THE HOLY SPIRIT
by Saint Basil the Great,
Archbishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia

The Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the Father and the Son in any way, whether it be in the creation of perceptible objects, the ordering of human affairs, or the coming judgment.

LET US RETURN to the point we first raised: that in everything the Holy Spirit is indivisibly and inseparably joined to the Father and the Son. St. Paul writes as follows to the Corinthians concerning the gift of tongues: "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you"¹

If God is recognised to be present among prophets because their prophesying is a gift of the Spirit, let our opponents determine what place they will give to the Holy Spirit. Will they rank Him with God, or will they push Him down to a creature's place? Peter said to Sapphira, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? You have not lied to men but to God"² and this shows that to sin against the Holy Spirit is to sin against God. Understand from this that in every operation, the Holy Spirit is indivisibly united with the Father and the Son. God works in various ways, and the Lord serves in various capacities, but the Holy Spirit is also present of His own will, dispensing gifts to everyone according to each man's worth. Scripture says, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one."³ It also says, "All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, Who apportions to each one individually as He wills."¹ Just because the Apostle in the above passage mentions the Spirit first, and the Son second, and God the Father third, do not assume that he has reversed their rank. Notice that he is speaking the same way we do when we receive gifts: first we thank the messenger who brought the gift; next we remember him who sent it, and finally we raise our thoughts to the fountain and source of all gifts.

The communion of the Spirit with the Father and the Son may be understood by considering the creation of the angels. The pure, spiritual, and transcendent powers are called holy, because they have received holiness from the grace of the Holy Spirit. The historian has described for us only the creation of visible things and passes over the creation of the bodiless hosts in silence. But from visible things we are able to construct analogies of invisible things, and so we glorify the Maker in Whom all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities,⁵ or any other reason-endowed nature whose name we do not know. When you consider creation I advise you to first think of Him Who is the First Cause of everything that exists: namely, the Father, and then of the Son, Who is the Creator, and then the Holy Spirit, the Perfecter. So the ministering spirits exist by the will of the Father, are brought into being by the work of the Son, and are perfected by the presence of the Spirit, since angels are perfected by

perseverance in holiness. And let no one accuse me of saying that there are three unoriginate Persons, or that the work of the Son is imperfect. The Originator of all things is One: He creates through the Son and perfects through the Spirit. The Father's work is in no way imperfect, since He accomplishes all in all, nor is the Son's work deficient if it is not completed by the Spirit. The Father creates through His will alone and does not need the Son, yet chooses to work through the Son. Likewise the Son works as the Father's likeness, and needs no other cooperation, but He chooses to have His work completed through the Spirit. "By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the Spirit of His mouth."⁶ The Word is not merely air set in motion by the organs of speech, nor is the Spirit of His mouth an exhalation of the lungs, but the Word is He who was with God in the beginning, and was God⁷ and the Spirit of God's mouth is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father.⁸ Perceive these Three: the Lord who commands, the Word who creates, and the Spirit who strengthens. What kind of strengthening is it? Perfection in holiness, which expresses itself in an unyielding, unchangeable commitment to goodness. Such holiness is impossible without the Spirit. The angelic powers are not by their own nature holy; otherwise there would be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit. Rather, they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit in proportion to their excellence. When we consider a branding-iron we also immediately remember that fire is required to heat it, yet we would not claim that the iron and the fire are the same substance. The angels are a similar case; they are essentially aerial spirits, composed of immaterial fire, as it is written, "He makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire."⁹ They exist in space, and when they are seen by those who are worthy, they assume an appropriate physical form. Holiness is not part of their essence; it is accomplished in them through communion with the Spirit. They keep their rank by persevering in goodness, by freely choosing to never abandon serving Him, who is good by nature. If we agree that the Spirit is subordinate, then the choirs of angels are destroyed, the ranks of archangels are abolished, and everything is thrown into confusion, since their life loses all law, order, or boundary. How can the angels cry "Glory to God in the highest,"¹⁰ unless the Spirit enables them to do so? "No one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, 'Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."¹¹ Evil and hostile spirits might say such a thing as 'Jesus be cursed,' and the existence of fallen spirits proves our statement that the angels have free will. They are free to choose either good or evil, and for this reason they need the Spirit's help. Not even Gabriel could have announced events to come,¹² unless the Spirit gave him foreknowledge - since one of the gifts distributed by the Spirit is prophecy. Where did the angel who interpreted the mysterious vision of Daniel, the man of desires,¹³ obtain the wisdom enabling him to teach hidden things if not from the Holy Spirit? It is the unique function of the Spirit to reveal mysteries, as it is written, "God has revealed (them) to us through the Spirit."¹⁴ How can one explain the blessed life of thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers,¹⁵ if these spirits do not behold the face of the Father who is in heaven?¹⁶ One cannot see the Father without the Spirit! It would be like living in a house at night when the lamps are extinguished; one's eyes would be darkened and could not exercise their function. Unable to distinguish the value of objects, one might very well treat gold as if it were iron. It is the same in the spiritual world; it is impossible to maintain a life of holiness without the Spirit. It would be easier for an army to continue its manoeuvres without a general, or for a choir to sing on key

without its director. How can the Seraphim sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy,"¹⁷ without the Spirit teaching them to constantly raise their voices in praise? If all God's angels praise Him, and all His host, they do so by cooperating with the Spirit. Do a thousand thousands of angels serve Him? Do ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him? They accomplish their proper work by the Spirit's power. All the indescribable harmony of the heavenly realm, whether it be the praise of God or the mutual concord of the bodiless powers, would be impossible without the authority of the Spirit. Therefore the Holy Spirit is present among those created beings which are not gradually perfected, but are immediately perfect from the moment of their creation. He gives them His own grace, that their nature might be maintained in perfection.

But when we speak of the plan of salvation for men, accomplished in God's goodness by our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who would deny that it was all made possible through the grace of the Spirit? Whether you wish to examine the Old Testament - the blessings of the patriarchs, the help given through the Law, the types, the prophecies, the victories in battle, the miracles performed through righteous men - or everything that happened since the Lord's coming in the flesh, it all comes to pass through the Spirit. In the first place, the Lord was anointed with the Holy Spirit, Who would henceforth be inseparably united to His very flesh, as it is written, "He on Whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who... is my beloved Son"¹⁸ and "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit."¹⁹ After His baptism, the Holy Spirit was present in every action He performed. He was there when the Lord was tempted by the devil: "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted."²⁰ The Spirit was united with Jesus when He performed miracles: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons . . ."²¹ Nor did the Spirit leave Him after His resurrection from the dead. When the Lord renewed mankind by breathing into His Apostles' faces, (thus restoring the grace which Adam had lost, which God breathed into him in the beginning) what did He say? "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."²² Is it not indisputably clear that the Church is set in order by the Holy Spirit? "God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues."²³ This order is established according to the different gifts distributed by the Spirit.

Any intelligent man realises that the work of the Holy Spirit will not cease, as some imagine, when the Lord makes His long-awaited return from heaven. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit will be present with Him on the day of His revelation, when He will judge the universe in righteousness as its only Ruler. Who is so ignorant of the good things which God has prepared for those who are worthy that he does not understand the crown of the righteous man is precisely the grace of the Spirit? On that Day spiritual glory shall be distributed in perfect abundance, as each receives a share proportionate to his uprightness. In the Father's house are many mansions,²⁴ meaning that some saints are of greater radiance and dignity than others: ". . . star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead."²⁵ Those who were sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption, and have preserved pure and undiminished the fruits of the Spirit which they received, will hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much."²⁶ Likewise, those who have grieved the Holy Spirit by their evil ways, or have

not increased the talents they were given, will be deprived of what they received, and their share of grace will be given to others, or as one of the Gospels says, they will be completely cut to pieces,²⁷ meaning that they will be separated from the Spirit forever. It does not mean that the body is divided: one part handed over to punishment, and another part forgiven. The entire body has sinned, and God's righteous judgment is not like the old myths, where only part of the body is punished. Nor can the soul be cut in two, because sinful resolutions possess the soul completely, and accomplish evil with the body's cooperation. It is as I have said: the cutting to pieces is eternal separation of the soul from the Spirit. At present, before the day of judgment comes, even though the Spirit cannot dwell within those who are unworthy, He nevertheless is present in a limited way with those who have been baptised, hoping that their conversion will result in salvation. On the day of judgment, however, He will be completely cut off from the soul that has defiled His grace. That is why Scripture says that in hell no one confesses God and in death none can remember Him,²⁸ since the Spirit's help is no longer present. How can anyone imagine that the judgment will be accomplished without the Holy Spirit? Scripture says that He Himself is the reward of the righteous, on that day when the fulfilment is given instead of the promise, and sinners are deprived of what they once appeared to have. But the greatest proof that the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son is that He is said to have the same relationship to God as the spirit within us has to us: "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."²⁹ Concerning this I have said enough.

¹ 1 Cor. 14:24-25; ² Acts 5:9,4; ³ 1 Cor. 12:4-6; ⁴ 1 Cor. 12:11; ⁵ Col. 1:16; ⁶ Ps. 32:6; ⁷ Jn. 1:21; ⁸ Jn. 15:26; ⁹ Ps. 103:4; ¹⁰ Lk. 2:14; ¹¹ 1 Cor. 12:3; ¹² Lk. 1:11, 26ff; ¹³ Dan. 9:22ff, 10:10ff; ¹⁴ 1 Cor. 2:10; ¹⁵ Col. 1:16; ¹⁶ Cf. Mt. 18:10; ¹⁷ Es. 6:3; ¹⁸ Jn. 1:33, Mt. 3:17; ¹⁹ Acts 10:30; ²⁰ Mt.4:1; ²¹ Mt. 12:28; ²² Jn. 20:22-23; ²³ 1 Cor. 12:28; ²⁴ Jn. 14:2; ²⁵ 1 Cor. 15:41-42; ²⁶ Mt. 25:21; ²⁷ Mt. 25:51; ²⁸ Ps. 6:6; ²⁹ 1 Cor. 2: 11.

*From "On the Holy Spirit," by St Basil the Great,
translation published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press,
Crestwood, New York, 1980*

Adapted from

"THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CHURCH SERVICES"

By the Priest N. R. Antonov

Continuation

AS THEY PREACHED everywhere concerning Jesus Christ and the Christian Faith, the Apostles also instructed the new Christians about the celebration of the Liturgy. From the most important cities, where the Apostles preached, the order, content and rites of the celebration of the Liturgy were passed on to the lesser towns in the neighbourhood and to the villages and hamlets.

What did the first Liturgy from Apostolic times consist of? On the basis of several references in Sacred Scripture (1 Cor. 11:18-34; Jude 12; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Acts 11:42), scholars are of the opinion that during the lifetime of the

Holy Apostles, the Eucharistic service was repetition of the Mystical Supper of Jesus Christ, indicating that the Liturgy was an evening meal in its concept. It was celebrated in the evening on Sundays and began with a brotherly gathering and the partaking together by the Christians of their usual food. After these "brotherly-love meals," called in Greek agapes, they went on to make prayer and supplication and to the consecration of the special bread and wine, which served as the species for the Holy Communion offered in remembrance of Jesus Christ. Moreover, in addition to the psalms and prayers of thanksgiving to God and the prayers of blessing over the bread and the cup - things which had their origins in Jewish festival suppers which indeed the Mystical Supper of Christ was itself, - in the ancient Christian agape services and in the composition of the Eucharistic divine service itself there were already readings from the Scriptures in Apostolic times, as well as Old Testament hymns, and teaching and prayers offered by the celebrant of the service or the president. The president pronounced the prayers as he was guided by the inspiration and feeling of his own heart. The choosing of the readings and hymns and the way they were arranged depended on the decision of those presiding or of the Apostles themselves, or of the clergymen they had ordained. The Liturgy was handed down by the Apostles not in a written form but orally, and in this way people became acquainted with it. The immediate successors of the Apostles enjoyed a like liberty in the ordering of the prayers. Over time in various regions, and even in various cities, there developed various local variants in the celebration of the Liturgy, each stemming from some capital city from whose Apostle they would claim the origin of their Liturgy. In view of the disparities which we have mentioned in the celebration of the Liturgy, there were attempts even in the Apostolic age to establish one single form for the Liturgy.

By tradition, of all the Apostles those who were most concerned to establish a single order and even to have a written one were the Holy Apostles James, Mark, Jude (or Thaddæus), and perhaps the Apostle Peter as well. From them, there came down, according to tradition, those Liturgies which were served from the first until the third century and on until St Basil the Great, in the most important administrative districts and regions and among the various tribes. Thus in Palestine, the Liturgy of St James was established, who had himself preached in Palestine. In the Egyptian region around Alexandria, they had the Liturgy of St Mark, who had preached in Alexandria. In Syro-Persia and Mesopotamia, that of St Jude or Thaddæus, who had preached there. In the region around Antioch, that of St Peter which had been transcribed and handed down by one of his disciples, maybe the bishops Evodius or Clement. The indices that have come down to our time, containing records of the Liturgies which, according to tradition, were composed by these Apostles, are historical and literary evidences of the liturgical work of the Apostles. However these records and the prayers contained in them do not, in the opinion of scholars, give a complete view of the Apostolic rites but only indications of their thought, notably with regard to the Eucharistic prayer which may be accepted, as tradition tells us, to have come down from the Apostles. From the original regions, step by step, the Liturgy spread to neighbouring lands, into which the Christian Faith had been introduced. Thus from the Antiochian-Mesopotamia sphere, the Christian Faith and Church practice spread to the region around what was to become Constantinople, and there the Antiochian liturgical practice was prevalent. From Rome, the Faith and Liturgy spread into Gaul, into Spain and the cities of North Africa as well as those in other parts of Italy, such as Milan; and

in these areas the Roman form of the Liturgy was established. Abyssinia received the Christian Faith via Alexandria, and the Liturgy attributed to St Mark was used there. In this way the various Liturgies took root: the Palestinian, the Antiochian, the Syro-Persian, the Roman and the Alexandrian usages. The absence of a common liturgical form throughout the whole Christian world and the spread of localised rites may be explained by the fact that, until the fourth century, it was impossible for the Christian Church to establish any kind of uniformity or common church order and custom. In the fourth century, with the ending of the period of repeated persecutions against the Christians, uniformity of practice, including that of liturgical practice, became feasible.

After the Apostolic period, the development of liturgical practice experienced a number of changes, some parts of the early Liturgy fell into disuse, and others appeared. Thus the agape, or meal of brotherly love, disappeared.

At first the agape had immediately preceded the mysterion of Communion itself. However, this practice gave rise to certain disorders, as a consequence of which more and more the Christians were inspired by the pious desire not to eat any food at all before receiving Holy Communion - a practice we strictly adhere to in the Orthodox Church to this day. For in the course of time, according to the scholarly opinion of some already about the year 65, but in any case before the end of the first century A.D., the agape had fallen out of use, or if it was used at all it followed rather than preceded Communion. Now, in our present practice, we have only several "reminiscences" of it: a) the custom of distributing antidoron, blessed bread, at the Liturgy; b) the blessing of the loaves at the Vigil Service; c) the refectory meal in monasteries; d) the blessing of fruits on 6th August. Another group of scholars has recently [*i.e. beginning of C20th*] suggested that the agape did persist in various regions well into the fourth century, notably in some of the African churches, in Abyssinia and in Carthage, but that it gradually lost its connection with Holy Communion and its significance as a Eucharistic Supper, and became attached to other services - in some places to Mattins, and in others to Vespers, and thus took on a new aspect as a kind of mercy meal or communal meal offered at the end of the divine services, and provided by the richer members of the congregation for the benefit of the poorer ones, or that it survived as the offering of the firstfruits of cereals, fruits and vegetables, which were given first to support the clergy and then distributed to sustain the poor either by the clergy themselves or by respected laymen. But whenever we may consider that the agape fell into disuse, it was at about the beginning of the second century that the reading of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament in the service began. The Old Testament ones had been read there earlier. Then too, the prayers for the "newly-illuminated" appeared as did others, from which scholars tell us, our present petitions derived. Besides this, in a description of the Liturgy of the second century (from the works of the holy Martyr Justin the Philosopher), we have an account of the offering to the president of bread and the cup with wine and water, this scholars regard as the beginning of the proskomidi. In the third and fourth centuries, new prayers appeared for the various sorts of people in the Church of that time, for instance "for the catechumens," "for the demon-possessed," "for the penitents." In consequence we can argue that the present Liturgy of the Catechumens has its roots in the second century. We should make a special note that in the first age of Christianity there existed special services for the catechumens, which

differed substantially from our Liturgy of the Catechumens, and which comprised readings from the Holy Scriptures, psalms and prayers, which were specifically appointed for the catechumens. The prayers for the catechumens and for the penitents were long and were read aloud, and this contributed to the length of the Liturgy. Responding to this, in the fourth century church leaders, condescending to human frailty and desiring to maintain the closest unity in the celebration of the Liturgy, applied themselves to shortening the Liturgy and committing it to a written form. Among these churchmen, we can number St Basil the Great and St John Chrysostom in the East; St Ambrose of Milan, St Pope Leo the Great, Pope Gelasius, St Gregory the Great in the West; and in Syria and Armenia, St Gregory the Illuminator. These holy Fathers composed the Liturgies in written form which bear their names and which were used in their ecclesiastical regions.

The work of St Basil the Great and St John Chrysostom largely consisted in curtailing the liturgical prayers, which had been hitherto used, and in giving the Liturgy a written form.

For instance, we have now established that St John Chrysostom curtailed or shortened the following prayers which are read by the priest secretly: the prayer for the catechumens, the two prayers for the faithful before the Great Entrance, the prayer of Oblation when the Gifts have been taken from the proskomidi to the Holy Table, the Eucharistic prayer for the living and the dead, the prayer for the preparation of the faithful to commune (read while the second "Grant this" litany is being recited), the one after Our Father, the one before the Elevation, and the one after Communion.

As regards the form of the Liturgy which St Basil shortened, it used to be thought that this was the Palestinian Liturgy, which is called that of St James. Now it is surmised that it was in fact the Antiochian Liturgy, which is known as the Clementine Liturgy, and can be found in an ancient Christian work, *Anthology of the Apostolic Constitutions.* *[in a footnote here, Fr Antonov, runs through the twenty-four parts of this Liturgy.]*

Likewise, there are differing opinions about the work of St John Chrysostom in this regard. According to one view, an older one, he shortened the Liturgy of St Basil the Great. But another opinion, a more recent one, is that, without reference to St Basil, he may have independently shortened the prayers of some Antiochian Liturgy from Asia Minor, and maybe that of Clement. This seems particularly to be the case with regard to the Eucharistic Prayer itself. At the same time as mentioning the shortening of the liturgical prayers by Saints Basil and John Chrysostom, we should note that at that time it was appointed that the prayers were to be read aloud, and only later did they begin to be read silently by the celebrant.

Over the course of time, scholars have worked to investigate and compare the various written documents, which demonstrate the composition of the Liturgy at various times and in various places, and to ascertain its essential original core, as laid down by those we may call the first liturgical composers, the Apostles James, Mark, Thaddæus, Peter and the rest. Such studies can establish which prayers and which moments in the Liturgy have remained unchanged and constant throughout all the generations in which the Divine Liturgy has been celebrated. The Eucharistic Prayer contains such a moment, for in it there is praise rendered to God and therein are

contained the Divine words, which were first pronounced by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself at the Mystical Supper: "Take, eat, this is My Body." The essential meaning and words of the Eucharistic Prayer are of the heart, and it, around them, as it were in layers, that the other prayers and hymns of the Liturgy are laid. One of the most ancient records regarding the Eucharistic Prayer and testifying that it is at the root and heart of the Christian Divine services appears in the book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), and particularly chapters 8 to 11, in which we have an image of an hierarchal Liturgy with priests and the words of the prayerful exclamations.

...to be continued with "The Days, on which the Liturgy is Not Celebrated"

THE COMING MONTH

THIS YEAR, May is graced with two of the greatest and most important festivals in the Church Calendar: the Lord's Ascension on Thursday, 7th/20th, and Pentecost - Trinity Sunday on 17th/30th. The latter is followed by the Day of the Holy Spirit, and it is for that reason that we have included an extract from St Basil the Great's "On the Holy Spirit," in this particular issue.

The present writer remembers, back in the sixties, asking a little boy in one of the Russian parishes in the Midlands about the Ascension, and being told that Jesus had to ascend into heaven, because, having risen from the dead, He would have been left for ever wandering on earth if that had not occurred. Certainly the lad was not altogether wrong, but the Church sees a much more beautiful and significant message in this feast. The Lord ascends into the highest heavens and, as the Creed tells us, "sitteth at the right hand of the Father" - the Lord Who is clothed in our humanity and bears our flesh. Thus, one of our kind is seated on the Throne of the Most High. He is seated there because He was never separated from the glory which was His, as God, before the world began. But His being there inspires our hope that, through grace, we might share a like honour and glory.

This truth is the very hope of our Christian life, and St John Chrysostom, in his homily on the festival, exults in it: "He therefore offered to the Father the first-fruits of our nature, and because of the dignity of the Offerer, and the perfection of What was offered, the Father found the Gift so acceptable that He received it with His own hands, and placed it close to Himself, saying, *Sit Thou at My right hand* (Ps 110:1). But to what nature did He say, *Sit Thou at My right hand*? It was to that which had heard the words, *Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return* (Gen. 3:19). But did He not so raise it above the heavens? Did He not upraise it to stand amid the Angels? Was not this honour without measure? It ascended above the heavens, it ascended above the Angels, it passed upwards beyond the Archangels, above the Cherubim, it soared above the Seraphim, higher than all the Powers of Heaven, and came to rest only before the Throne of the Lord." This then is one of the most joyous feasts in the whole year. It is the one on which, in all our trials and struggles, we should fix our hope and aspiration.

The Day of Pentecost-Trinity celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and first disciples, as is recorded in the Book of Acts, chapter two. It is sometimes popularly thought of as the Birthday of the Church, but this is not strictly

right. The Church also embraces the Old Testament righteous, and its birthday might more wisely be considered to be the beginning of creation. The day of Pentecost is though the inauguration of the Church's New Testament ministry. At the very beginning of creation, with the creation of the Angelic hosts, as we saw in St Basil's work above, the Holy Spirit was present, as He was at the beginning of the creation of the physical world, moving upon the waters as a foretelling of our Baptism (Gen. 1:2), and on the Day of Pentecost, increasing His Gifts, He filled the Apostles, and since that time has been present in the life and ministrations of the one True Church. Again we can quote St John Chrysostom: "For of all the gifts which contain within them our soul's salvation, which of them has not be given us by the ministry of the Spirit? Through Him we are freed from slavery, called to freedom, made children of God through His adoption, and above all we have been, if I may say so, remade, putting off the heavy and foetid burden of our sins. Through Him we see before us the choirs of priests, through Him we have the help of our schools of instructors. From this Source come gifts of revelations, the graces of healing, and all the other gifts with which the Spirit adorns the Church of God."

It is at Pentecost that for the first time in our prayers since Pascha, we hear again that most beautiful prayer which begins so many of our services, *Heavenly King, Comforter*, - said at the beginning of every rule of prayer because we know that without the Holy Spirit's aid we cannot even begin to pray. And it is at Vespers on the feast, that for the first time since Pascha that we kneel in church, when the three prayers are read which beseech the blessing of God upon the whole Church and upon our lives within it.

Such is the importance of the feast of Pentecost that for the seven days that it is kept, we do not fast at all. The eighth day, the Sunday is celebrated as a feast of All the Saints, and on the day following that we begin a fast in preparation for the feast of the Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul. This fast, called the Apostles' Fast, reminds us of our ministry in the Church and the need to prepare for it. The Apostles themselves have set us an example of preparing for their ministry by prayer and fasting (Acts 13:2,14:23). As their followers, we also hold to their example.

The Apostles Fast varies in length depending on the date of Easter. The fast begins on the eighth day after the Day of Pentecost, always a Monday (25th May/7th June this year), a day calculated by the paschal cycle, and it ends after we have received the Holy Mysteries or antidoron on the feast of Sts Peter And Paul (29th June), a date on the immovable calendar. Thus if Easter is early the fast will be longer, and if it is late the fast will be shorter. This year, Easter was quite early (29th March - it can never fall earlier than 22nd March and never later than 25th April), and so the Apostles fast will be observed by the Orthodox for thirty-five days, ending on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost, which happens to be the eve of the Apostles' martyrdom.

Although long this year, the fasting prescriptions for the faithful during this fast are not so strict as in the Great Lent. On every Saturday and Sunday, we are permitted fish, wine (alcohol) and oil; and on Tuesdays and Thursday we are permitted wine and oil. If a celebration with a Great Doxology should fall on a Tuesday or Thursday we are also permitted fish then. If a Great Doxology is appointed for a Monday, Wednesday or Friday, we have wine and oil on those days. Only should a Vigil be appointed on a

Monday, Wednesday or Friday, or if one is celebrating the dedication festival of the church, is fish allowed on these days.

Perhaps here we should scotch one quite widely held misconception about the Church fasts. In our times, it is quite often said that they are appointed to be kept only by the clergy or the monastics. This is absolutely incorrect. All Orthodox Christians are enjoined to keep the fasts. Of course, if one is sick, elderly, infirm, pregnant, breast-feeding, or an infant, it might not be possible or advisable for one to keep the fast strictly, but the rest of us, if we are serious about struggling for salvation at all, should try and keep the fast.

NEWS SECTION

PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE CHURCHES OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND GREECE

THE RIFT between the Œcumenical Patriarchate and the autocephalous Church of Greece has, according to a release from the Athens News Agency, widened. As we noted in an earlier issue, a dispute had arisen because the Patriarchate maintains certain rights and privileges over the so-called "New Lands," - parts of northern Greece, which were not part of that country when the Church of Greece attained her autocephaly. A meeting of the Greek hierarchs, under the presidency of Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens, on 26th April first voted in favour of an agreement with the Patriarchate and expressed the Greek Church's respect for and acceptance of an earlier agreement made between the two Churches in 1928. However, immediately they proceeded to elect hierarchs for three sees in the New Lands, in a way which the Patriarchate does not approve and believes to be in contravention of the 1928 accord. His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople, has stated that the Phanar will not recognise the elections of the hierarchs, and he has threatened to break communion with the Church of Greece over the matter.

METROPOLITAN LAVR TO VISIT MOSCOW

METROPOLITAN LAVR, the present First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, is due to visit Russia with a delegation from the Church Abroad, which will meet His Holiness Patriarch Aleksii of Moscow and members of his Synod. The visit is scheduled to coincide with the feast of the Ascension, and while in Russia the Metropolitan hopes to make a pilgrimage to Sarov and to the site of the martyrdom of the Russian Imperial Martyrs at Ekaterinburg. In a short talk given after his celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Convent of the Annunciation on the Sisters' dedication festival, Archbishop Mark informed us that, after the delegation returns from Russia, it will make its impressions known to all the faithful, and that they will be consulted with regard to the progress or otherwise of any rapprochement between the Church Abroad and the Patriarchate.

ANOTHER FIRE ON ATHOS

THE BELL-TOWER of the central church on the Holy Mountain Athos, the Protaton, was damaged by a blaze at the end of March. The cause of the fire is not known, but fire-fighters managed to contain the blaze before it could spread. The Protaton is a church which dates back to the fifteenth century, and is the central church for the twenty ruling monasteries, the sketes and cells on the Holy Mountain.

RECEPTION OF CONVERTS

IN AN ARTICLE, published in the December 1997 issue of the "Diocesan News" of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Denver (CEP), it is stated that: "For the record, the Eparchial Synod of Bishops of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, with the concurrence of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, has determined to recognise by extreme Oikonomia the heterodox Baptism normatively performed according to the prescribed form in the following denominations and churches: a) Anglican Catholic, b) Anglican Communion (Church of England, Episcopal, etc), c) Assembly of God, d) Baptist, e) Church of the Brethren, f) Lutheran, g) Methodist, h) Moravians, i) Non-Chalcedonian and Monophysite Churches, j) Old Catholic (Polish National Catholic Church, Church of Utrecht, Liberal Catholic Church, etc.), k) Presbyterian, l) Roman Catholic, m) United Church of Christ." No explanation is given for the particular ordering of these various denominations, nor why these were included and others were not, although it is stated that "this decision is respected by all hierarchs and all synods of the Orthodox Church in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate." This last statement does at least undermine a common fallacy promoted by some within the Church of Constantinople: that to be Orthodox one has to be in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. What is rather astounding is that the statement regarding the acceptance of the "extreme oikonomia" with regard to heterodox baptisms, which, to say the least, implies a failure to distinguish between the baptism of the Orthodox and that of those outside the Church contrary to the rulings of the Apostolic Canons, follows a piece in which the article's author first cites Blessed Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky)'s "The Basis on Which Oikonomia May Be Used in the Reception of Converts," and goes on to proclaim that Metropolitan Antony (the first First Hierarch of the ROCA) "provides an excellent overview of the canonical and historical factors dealing with this issue." Is this spin?

SERBIAN PRIEST WOUNDED BY NATO FORCES

NATO "peacekeepers" hunting the Bosnian Serb alleged war crimes fugitive Radovan Karadzic raided the small town of Pale on Thursday 1st April. Approximately 40 American, British and German troops aboard helicopters and road vehicles failed to apprehend Karadzic. They had centred their raid on the town's church and the priest's home. Father Jeremija Starovlah and his son, Aleksandar, a catechist in the church, were seriously injured in the raid. Fr Jeremija's wife reported: "We were awoken by shooting. Soldiers burst into the house and immediately took them [*her husband and son*] to another room.... a soldier put a gun to my head. I heard my husband cry for help, but I could do nothing." The two were later flown by helicopter to a US base near

Tuzla and taken to the city hospital for treatment. In a letter of protest to the U.S Major General Virgil L. Pickett, the SFOR commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, His Holiness Patriarch Pavle stated: "... as our letter failed to convince you that our priests and the members of their families take no part in the activities of which you obviously suspect them, you, Sir, ordered that nothing short of a military campaign be launched against their homes on 1st April, 2004, on the very eve of the Easter holidays. In the dead of night, your soldiers, using the most lethal explosive devices, broke in through the roof, the door and the windows of their home, completely destroying it in the process. The strong explosions wounded Archpriest Stavrophor Jeremija Starovlah and his son, Catechist Aleksandar. But this was not enough for your soldiers, called "peacemakers" by our people. They proceeded to tie up Father Jeremija and his son and, while thus tied, they savagely beat them using rifle butts, boots and whatever else they had to hand. In short they beat them to death. The entire time this was occurring, the presbytera had a gun pointed at her, with a finger on the trigger, so she could not help her son or her husband. These facts, Sir, are well known to you. At the time of the writing of this letter (6th April?), physicians are still fighting for the lives of these two Christians." As we prepare to go to press, we hear of outrages committed by coalition forces in Iraq, and must wonder whether the forces that are purportedly fighting a war on terrorism are not themselves agents of terror, whether the peacemaking forces which are defending civilisation are not rather furtherers of brutality.

OBJECTIONS TO KRISHNA TEMPLE IN MOSCOW

ALFRED FORD, the great-grandson of Henry Ford, and a convert to the Krishna Consciousness movement, is funding the building of a Krishna temple in Moscow, and has been offered a site for the £6million structure on Leningradsky Prospekt. These plans have led to vociferous protests from Orthodox Christians and the leaders of other tradition religions in Russia. On Sunday 21st March, about 1,500 Orthodox gathered to protest against the building of the temple. The Krishna movement in Russia claims about 100,000 members of whom 10,000 are said to live in Moscow.

BROOKWOOD NEWS

BUILDING FUND FUNDRAISING EFFORTS:

At the time of going to press, we are discussing our fundraising prospects with a number of professional consultants, hoping shortly to be in a position to engage one to help us.

With the blessing of the Dean of the New York and Eastern American Diocese's Southern Deanery, Archpriest Victor Potapov, a parishioner of the St John the Baptist Cathedral in Washington, D.C, Mary O'Brien, held a luncheon at the church in aid of the Saint Edward Brotherhood Building Fund during Great Lent. The collections held on 27th and 28th March in connection with this raised a total of US \$4,248.00. The amount will be held in our Brotherhood dollars account, until the exchange rate is more favourable! Our warmest thanks to Fr Victor, Mary and all the parishioners at St John's who have shown such Christian love in contributing so generously to our building fund.

Although we have not yet "officially" begun our fundraising campaign, contributions are steadily growing, and we thank all those who have contributed. Also if any readers have any ideas to promote the fund or can offer any help, advice or contacts, it would be very greatly appreciated if you got in touch with us.

At the end of February, we had £58,000 in hand and about £40,000 pledged to the appeal. Despite having to make some necessary payments from the fund (quantity surveyor fees, &c), our total at present is just under £65,500 in hand with the £40,000 pledged.

Readers may be interested to know that they can now donate to King Edward Orthodox Trust Company Ltd online by visiting the following internet address <www.AllAboutGiving.org>. Although for many readers and parishioners cash or cheque donations will remain a convenient means to support the charity, it is hoped that the online service will encourage donations from other charities or individuals who are, at the moment, without information about our charity's aims and details.

NEW VESTMENTS

For Pascha this year, we had a complete new set of priestly, diaconal and servers vestments in an ivory brocade with gold crosses. These were the gift of our parishioners, James and Valentina Merritt, and were made for the church by Mrs Elizabeth Palmos of South Africa, who offered her labour gratis and who brought them to England while visiting her daughter here and was with us over the feast.

Also, parishioner Elena Holden made us a burgundy set of priest's vestments, which were blessed and worn for the first time on Holy and Great Thursday. Our thanks to Elizabeth, Elena, James and Valentina for loving the beauty of God's house. May they all receive the blessing invoked at the end of every Liturgy in the Prayer behind the Ambo.

NEW ICONS

TWO NEW HAND-PAINTED ICONS have arrived from the Convent of Saint Elizabeth, Etna, California. The one is of St Moses of Optina and was ordered because he was such a great monastic builder, asking his intercessions for our own small building endeavours with regard to the new monastic house, and the other is of the Venerable Abraamius of Smolensk.

ORTHODOX AID FUND

With the "Shepherd" returns last year, readers contributed a total of £750 to our Orthodox Aid Fund, the fund through which we attempt to distribute alms to other charities, ecclesiastical, humanitarian and environmental. At the moment we have £1,060 in hand to distribute, and in 2004 so far (i.e. from the New Year until Pascha) we have given away a total of £1,050. Our thanks to all those of you who have made this almsgiving possible through your donations to the fund. N.B. No monies from this fund are allotted to the Brotherhood or KEOTCoLtd - they are all given to other charitable causes.

SPECIAL THANKS

Throughout the year, as we try to acknowledge in the "Our Thanks" section in the insert, we are grateful to people, especially the Greek and Cypriot "Myrrhbearing Women" who attend the Convent services, for providing us with ready-made meals. But we are especially grateful to Vasili and Evphi Calcanteras and to Elena Holden for the number of meals that they provided during the Great Lent and Holy Week, when our services are longer and we have correspondingly less time for our work schedule. Their thoughtfulness, help and generosity in this regard were very much appreciated.

PRACTICAL TIP

IF YOUR CHURCH COMMITMENT is confined to attending the Sunday Liturgy and putting something in the collection, the likelihood is that you seriously need to reassess it. For Orthodox Christians church attendance has never been confined to a Sunday affair - (this is not even good Protestantism). Much less are we simply "Mass Christians." The whole range of the church services is for the whole congregation to participate in, and, more to the point, to benefit from. (Sometimes people apologise to the priest for not attending the service, and this is nice and polite, but somehow they are apologising to the wrong person, because one apologises to the injured party, and that, if they miss church, is: themselves). Furthermore, supporting the church should not be simply be a matter of making monetary contributions, important as this undoubtedly is. One should be contributing and participating in the work of the church, by helping, in the ways that one's abilities allow, in all those things that keep the church going. And in this way too, one is also benefiting oneself.