



FROM THE FATHERS

“DON’T YOU SEE that this is why we make no progress, why we find we have not been helped towards it? We remain all the time against one another, grinding one another down. Because each considers himself right and excuses himself, as I was saying, all the while keeping none of the commandments yet expecting his neighbour to keep the lot! This is why we do not acquire habits of virtue, because if we light on any little thing we tax our neighbour with it and blame him saying he ought not to do such a thing and why did he do it - whereas ought we not rather to examine ourselves about the commandments and blame ourselves for not keeping them?”

ABBA DOROTHEUS OF GAZA, SIXTH CENTURY

“LISTEN to me, listen, all you malicious reckoners of other men’s accounts! If it is true (as it really is true) that ‘with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged,’ then whatever sins we blame our neighbour for, whether bodily or spiritual, we shall fall into them ourselves. That is certain.”

VEN. JOHN OF THE LADDER, C. 650 A.D.

“DO NOT START examining the deeds of people, do not judge, do not say ‘Why is it this way?’ ‘What is this for?’ It is better to say to yourself, ‘What does their work have to do with me? I will not answer for them at the Dread Judgement of God.’ Divert every thought of yours from judging the deeds of people, and pray fervently to the Lord that He help you in this, because without

the help of God we can do nothing good, as the Lord Himself said, *Without Me ye can do nothing*” (Jn 15:5).

VEN. AMBROSE OF OPTINA, + 1891 A.D.

“EMPTY TALK is the door to criticism and slander, the spreader of false rumours and opinions, the sower of discord and strife. It stifles the taste for mental work and practically always serves as a cover for the absence of sound knowledge.”

SAINT THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE, + 1894 A.D.

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THE ENTRY INTO THE TEMPLE OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY

*A Homily by Saint Philaret of New York,
the New Confessor, + 1985 A.D.*

TODAY the Theotokos, the temple that containeth God, is led into the temple of the Lord, and Zacharias receiveth her. Today the Holy of Holies rejoiceth. You and I have only just heard these words chanted, in which the Church depicts the festive event which we commemorate in today’s Great Feast. Today the Holy or Holies rejoiceth, says the Church. And you and I know that in the Akathist to the Mother of God, in one of the blessings ascribed to her, we also say: Rejoice, Holy one, holier than the [Holy of] Holies, that is: Do thou rejoice, who art greater than the Holy of Holies! The story of the festival tells us how the pious parents, Joachim and Anna, brought the three-year-old child, the little maiden Mary into the Temple of God, as they had promised, according to their vow, that there they might dedicate her to God; how virgins accompanied her with candles, and how when they finally entered the Temple of God, the High Priest Zacharias himself came forth to meet her. And tradition

informs us how she, even so young, only three years old, completely freely ascended the many steps towards him, and he, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, did what had never been done at any other time, and led her into the Holy of Holies, into that very place where in the mystic darkness the Lord Himself dwelt, where formerly the foot of man had never trodden, and where the High Priest alone entered in, when he had the right to do so, with prayer and censing on one day a year. One day a year! And this was not that day. Nonetheless, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the righteous Zacharias led the three-year-old Little One into the Holy of Holies, so that there she might be brought up. In another Church prayer, it says “as one sanctified.” And Church tradition tells us that she was often in the Holy of Holies; that the Angels appeared to her there; that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and brought her nourishment. And so it is that when you and I read of that other solemn occasion which came to pass, the Annunciation to the Mother of God, the Gospel very precisely makes clear that when she saw the Archangel Gabriel the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was not disturbed because she had seen him, but she was disturbed by his message, because by then he was an old acquaintance of hers and had many times appeared to her in the Holy of Holies. But, all the same, when she heard his unaccustomed greeting, *Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women*, it was this unaccustomed greeting which disturbed her, and she considered what such a greeting might mean.

According to Tradition, after the entry into the Temple, she constantly lived in the Temple. There she prayed, there she worked, and there, as has already been said, the Angels brought her nourishment.

But how do we relate to God’s temple? For the Christian the house of God should be just as it was in ancient times for the Psalmist, who wrote, *I was glad because of them that said unto me: Let us go into the house of the Lord!* (Ps. 121:1). That is, I rejoiced hearing that they said unto me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord”! Does this happen with us? Do we value the house of God? Do we love the house of God? Do we strive to be there as often as it is possible for us? Do we, perhaps, overcome any and every obstacle? You yourselves know that

it is a long way, - but a long way isn't always that! In this particular case, they brought in the Most Pure Virgin Mary, they brought the young Maiden into the Temple; the Temple became her own for her. There she abode; she always stayed near it. But unfortunately, it now happens that our children rarely ever see the house of God. Blessed are those children whose pious parents always bring them to church! There is nothing of equal worth to that which a young child receives in church, in the grace-filled, radiant, hallowed and spiritual atmosphere of the church! That which the young soul absorbs in those tender years of infancy will be a treasury for it, its spiritual capital, and the very best antidote to life's banality and filthiness, to which it will very soon be subjected. If only it could actually be that our holy churches were always filled with children! But we continually see that it is not so, even when there are Great Feasts, - for instance, the church might have a sufficiently large number of people, but hardly any children.

This is something which we must all reflect upon, not only parents, but educators, teachers, Christians, everyone, that the young might be given the possibility, however meagrely, to absorb in their developing, blossoming souls that spiritual capital to be found in the house of God. This so that they might utilise it and so that it might be for them spiritual wealth, not only in the course of this life, but also in that to come. Consider this, and strive to bring our children to church more often, so that they will come to love the church and constantly aspire to be therein. There used to be - and indeed there now are some families - where the small children loved the house of God to such an extent, and were not overburdened by the services, that it was not the parents that brought them to church, but they brought the parents! "Quickly, quickly!" Blessed is that family, in which things are like this. Think about this, beloved brethren; take concern that our children are brought up as Christians, as faithful children of the Orthodox Church, and that they love the house of God with its reverent and prayerful atmosphere. Amen.

Compiler's Note: *It is undoubtedly an indication of the spiritual decline that we have witnessed since St Philaret reposed twenty-six years ago, that we need now to add something more to his wise words. He speaks*

of children profited by being “in the grace-filled, radiant, hallowed and spiritual atmosphere of the church.” Of course, they will not benefit in this way if their parents allow them to behave in church as if they were in a kindergarten or playground. They have to be trained to be quiet enough and attentive enough to appreciate that “grace-filled, radiant, hallowed and spiritual atmosphere of the church.” Otherwise for them church will simply be a bore to be endured, and something they will escape from it as soon as they are old enough to be out of what used to be called “parental control.”



*In November we have the **Feast of the Holy Angels**, and this year the **Eighth Sunday of Luke** also falls within the month, and so we are reproducing here the following instructive piece from our Metropolitan.*

Enemies and Allies in Our Spiritual Struggle

His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Fili

“The Lord rebuke thee!”

“An Angel of the Lord was rebuking them.”

IT IS A TRUTH confirmed by experience that the pious Christian who is struggling, with the Grace of God and the help of the Saints, to arrive from a state *contrary to nature* to a state *according to nature*—and then proceeds to be raised to a state *above nature*—is warred upon night and day by the evil spirits—those fallen former luminous angels.

The demons' envy of mankind is indescribable; for these miserable ones see that people who have been sanctified in Christ, though mortal and material, inherit the places of light and glory and blessedness from which the demons themselves fell on account of their arrogance, and who now inherit gloomy Hades and the eternal fire of Hell.

Spiritual inexperience, a want of faith, and the cloud of passions usually do not allow us to understand our *true* enemies, who, night and day and with various wiles, beleaguer our soul, in order to separate it from the Light of Christ and to subjugate it to the dark passions.

“It was said of a certain Elder that he prayed to God to see the demons. And it was revealed to him: ‘You have no need to see them.’ But the Elder supplicated, saying: ‘O Lord, Thou art able to shelter me by Thy Grace.’

“And God uncovered his eyes and he saw [the demons] circling man like bees and gnashing their teeth at him, while an Angel of the Lord was rebuking them.”

* * *

IN THE END, however, when we have overcome the temptation of lack of faith and are convinced that, in essence, our sole enemies are the unclean spirits, we now meet, with even greater intensity, the temptation of anxiety, sorrow, impatience, and indignation; for both the internal and external battle is heavy in the extreme, spontaneous, and unceasing—thoughts, fantasies, and feelings, like a dark cloud, cover our heart and mind. We have the intense feeling that people, nature, and circumstances are all rising up against us!

An immediate danger that beginners in the life in Christ, in particular, pass through is that of cursing Satan!

It would be good, in these critical moments when the intensity of our inner struggle reaches its peak, to remember how the Chief Commander Michael acted:

“Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said: ‘The Lord rebuke thee’” (St. Jude 9).

In other words, when conversing with the Devil—who was disputing with arrogance of mind, desiring to take the dead body of Moses the God-Seer under his dominion—, the Archangel Michael did not presume to condemn him with oaths and curses, but rather said to the Devil: *“May God punish you for that. May the Lord rebuke you. May the Lord do away with you for the wrong you have ventured.”* And thus did the Devil vanish.

“And consider,” the Saints remark, that *“the Archangel Michael indeed banished the Devil, but not through domination or authority, rather by surrendering [in humility] all judgment and the expulsion of the Devil to the God of all.”*

Through his example, then, the Archangel Michael showed us that we must not curse, imprecate, or anathematize even Satan himself—something that the Sacred Texts of our Faith also teach us:

“When the ungodly curseth Satan, he curseth his own soul.” (Ecclesiasticus 21:27)

The Saints interpret this verse as follows:

“For if I anathematize even Satan himself, insofar as I do such a deed, I anathematize my own self.”

* * *

A SECOND risk faced by the fighter of the good fight is that of forgetting his spiritual allies: the luminous Angels of God!

In the revelation to the aforementioned saintly Elder—let us never forget this point!—, it is true that he saw the demons ferociously circling man, but: *“An Angel of the Lord was rebuking them”!*

When, in time, we will be granted spiritual purity by the Lord’s love for mankind, then we will gain intimacy with our Guardian Angel and will noetically hear his holy voice assuring us: *“I am here! Do not lose courage! Just be careful!”*

The Saints teach us—and experience confirms this—that when the soul undergoes afflictions and tribulations, but with patient endurance, humility, and thanksgiving, the All-Good God provides for the soul to be comforted “*by means of the noetic ministers—namely, the Angels— who fortify it by most fervent and sweet tears, refined thoughts, and strength of virtue.*”

We must have unswerving faith that, insofar as we remain firm in the accomplishment of the good commandments of our Lord, we mystically receive the *seal* of a Divine Angel. In this way, the swarm of gnashing demons has no power over us; they will attack us, but they will vanish. They will come and they will pass away, rebuked.

“*As for you,*” the Saints say, “*if you remain in the good, God sends His Angel and seals you, so that the one coming and brandishing a sword will pass you by, through the prayers of the Saints. Amen.*”

* * *

HENCE, take heed! When the burden of the struggle presses heavily upon us, let us not forget who our *enemies* are and who our *allies* are!

The former are dark and malignant, but weak. Our capitulations and compromises are what give them power, and they wound us, either with pardonable or deadly sins.

The latter are bright and good. The purity of our lives and the fragrance of Grace—Which dwells in our *hearts* by means of *noetic prayer*—attract them, and they protect, comfort, and guide us to the heights of deification.

† *Eighth Sunday of St. Luke*
7/20 November 2005

**Taken from the Synod in Resistance website:
< www.synodinresistance.org >**

TEACHING

OF THE VENERABLE SERAPHIM OF SAROV

ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS

The starting point of this third method of attentiveness does not consist in gazing up into heaven and lifting up your hands, and concentrating the mind on heavenly images, and seeking help from that, because these are the characteristics of the first method, a delusion; nor does it consist in keeping watch over one's feelings with the mind and paying all one's attention to this, without keeping watch and paying attention to the inner warfare which comes from the enemies of the soul; because these are the characteristics of the second method, and he who acts in this way is put down by the demons rather than putting down the demons himself; he is defeated and does not even recognize it; he is led into captivity and enslaved and unable to take revenge on his captors; and the enemies both openly and secretly make war upon him and make him vainglorious and conceited.

But you, beloved one, if you desire to be saved, learn this third method as follows. After complete obedience, which, as we said above, you must maintain towards your spiritual father, in all that you do you must maintain a clean conscience as if you were before the face of God; for without obedience the conscience can never be clean. The conscience must be kept clean in three respects: first of all in regard to God; then, in regard to your spiritual father; and thirdly in regard to other people and things.

You are obliged to keep your conscience clean in regard to God, that is you must not do anything at all which, as you understand it, is disagreeable to Him or displeasing to Him. With regard to your spiritual father, you must do all that he enjoins you, neither more nor less, but make your way according to his direction and his will. In regard to other people, you must keep your conscience clean by not doing anything to them which you yourself would be adverse to or not want, if

they were to do this to you. And with regard to things, you are obliged to beware of misusing them; you must use everything in a befitting way, food, drink, and clothing, and in general do everything as if before the very face of God, for, if your conscience convicts you and torments you even about one matter, then you have not done well. In this way travel the true and undeluded way of the third method of attentiveness and prayer, which consists in the mind guarding the heart at the time of prayer and constantly residing within it, and from this, that is from the depths of the heart, it will send up prayers to God; and when within the heart it tastes that *the Lord is good* (Ps. 33:8), and receives delight, then it will not depart from that place in the heart, and then it will say, as the Apostle Peter said: *It is good to be here* (Mt. 17:4). It will ever look there, that is to the interior of the heart, and there it will be occupied, devising means to banish all the thoughts, which are lodged there by the enemy, the devil. Further, for those who do not have any understanding of the work of salvation, he often represents it as being extremely arduous and unattainable. But those who have tasted the sweetness locked therein, and who delight in that sweetness in the depths of their hearts, say with the Divine Paul: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* and what follows (Rom. 8:35).

Hearing the Lord speaking in the sacred Gospel, *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*, and that *these are the things which defile a man* (Matt. 15:19-20); hearing also in another Gospel tract, that He enjoins us to *cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also* (Matt. 23:26), our holy Fathers put aside every other concern, and struggled with all their powers in this one activity, that is the guarding of the heart, knowing for sure that it is easy with this activity to achieve every other virtue, and that without it it is impossible to possess or maintain even one of the virtues. Some of our Fathers have called this work stillness of the heart, others refer to it as attentiveness, others temperance or rebuttal, others searching of the thoughts and the guarding of the mind. But all of them exercised themselves therein and through this were deemed worthy of Divine gifts. Concerning this even Ecclesiastes speaks: *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, ... and walk in the ways of thine heart, chaste and pure, and remove thy heart from*

thoughts (Eccl. 11:9); and in another place: *If the spirit of the ruler* (understand, the devil) *rise up against thee, leave not thy place* (Eccl. 10:4), and by *place* we are to understand the heart. And in the sacred Gospel, our Lord speaks: *Be not lifted up on high* (Luke 12:29), that is, dissipated in your mind, letting it scan hither and yon. And in another place He says again: *Blessed are the poor in spirit* (Matt. 5:3), that is, blessed are those who do not grant entry into their heart to any thought of this world, but are destitute of every worldly thought. All the Divine Fathers wrote about this; and he who wishes to read their writings, let him observe how much Mark the Ascetic wrote, and how much St John of the Ladder, the Venerable Hesychius, Philotheus the Sinaite, Abba Esaias and the great Barsanouphius and many others had to say.

Generally he who does not attend to the guarding of his mind cannot be pure in heart and will not be deemed worthy to see God. He who does not pay attention to himself then cannot be poor in spirit, he cannot weep or lament, or be meek or humble, nor can he hunger and thirst after righteousness, nor can he be merciful or a peacemaker, nor can he be persecuted for righteousness sake; and in short I would say that it is impossible to acquire the other virtues in any other way but through attentiveness. For this reason, above all other things we have to take care that we comprehensively understand this, as I have told you. And if you desire to know the means of doing this, and you listen with attention, I will tell you about it according to my ability.

... to be continued.



"*BEHOLD, I stand at the door and knock* (Rev. 3:20). This means that the Lord continually stands at the doors of our heart, closed or being closed to Him by sins and various passions. *Behold, I stand.* You pray, He stands at your very heart, and is attentive to every movement and feeling of your heart."

ST JOHN OF CRONSTADT, + 1908 A.D.

The Coming Month

IN NOVEMBER, we have two important observances. The first is that in this month, we begin the **forty-day fast** in preparation for the **Nativity of our Saviour, Christmas**. This fast, because it is a fixed length one, always begins on 15th /28th of the month, which this year falls on a Wednesday. The second is the **Great Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple**, which is also in some way a preparation for the Nativity, for it was by her life in the Temple that the All-Holy Virgin began her spiritual ascent to become a fitting instrument of God the Word's incarnation, and this fact is emphasized by the Orthodox practice of chanting the *katavasias* for the Nativity (the hymns at the end of each Ode of the Canon, the first of which begins, *Christ is born, give ye glory*) during Mattins from this day forward. The feast, which falls on 21st November / 4th December, is observed with a one-day fore-feast, and lasts five days, ending on 25th November / 8th December, which is also the day of the commemoration of the **Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria**. Usually on the leave-taking of a Great Feast, the services for the Saints of the day are omitted or transferred to another day and only the service for the feast itself is chanted, but such is the pre-eminence of St Catherine, that her service is chanted along with that of the feast. In this issue we have reproduced a homily by **St Philaret the New Confessor of New York** on the Entry of the Mother of God.

The Nativity Fast, like all the fasts of the Church Year, is a time when we should pay particular heed to our spiritual life. During its forty days, we should prepare and go to confession, we should pay particular attention to deepening our prayer life and to spiritual reading, and should as much as possible refrain from worldly pursuits. Married couples during this period also abstain from marital relations. The refraining from worldly pursuits proves a particular difficulty in this fast, as most people around us will be celebrating their Christmas and the New Year during our fast, but one has to exercise a little discretion in this regard. If join-

ing them to some extent is an act of love, and not simply an excuse for breaking the fast or having a good time, then perhaps it should be done. Then one can be stricter with oneself in other ways. Also one can use this time to help others who will be keeping the new calendar celebrations, by volunteering to do work on their Christmas day to give them a holiday, by doing voluntary work then, by visiting those in hospitals or living alone, who may be left feeling especially lonely on those days. Search out what you can do. Such work will be a greater witness to our Faith and to the love of our Saviour than any preaching ever can be.

A third and very important observance this month is the feast of the **Synaxis of the Bodiless Powers of Heaven**, on 8th /21st. This feast celebrates Angelic orders, and, as each baptized Orthodox Christian has a **Guardian Angel**, it should be a feast that we celebrate with love and devotion, it being the feast day of our heavenly protector and intercessor. A hymn from the Vespers service of this day tells of the Angelic ministry: *Thine Angels, O Christ, who stand in fear before the throne of Thy majesty, who always shine with the effusion of Thy light, who sing hymns to Thee in the highest, and minister to Thy counsel, being sent forth by Thee, abundantly bestow enlightenment on our souls.* This feast, even in parish churches, is usually celebrated with a Vigil. This year, it falls on a fast day, Wednesday, but because of its importance we are permitted fish, wine and oil.

Among the Saints we celebrate in November, we have:-

Saint Paul the Confessor, Archbishop of Constantinople (6th / 19th) was from Thessalonica. He became the secretary of Saint Alexander, Patriarch of Constantinople (feast day: 30th August / 12th September), a deacon, and then the successor of St Alexander in about 337 A.D. Because of his virtue, his eloquence in teaching, and his zeal for Orthodoxy, the Arian heretics hated and feared him. When the Arian Emperor Constantius, who was in Antioch, learned of Paul's election, he exiled Paul and proclaimed the Arian, Eusebius, Patriarch. St Paul went to Rome, where he found St Athanasius the Great also in exile. Provided with letters by Pope Julius, Paul returned to Constantinople, and after the death of Eusebius in 342 A.D., ascended again his rightful throne; the

Arians meanwhile elected Macedonius, because he rejected the Son's consubstantiality with the Father (and the Divinity of the Holy Spirit besides). When Constantius, still at Antioch, learned of Paul's return, he sent troops to Constantinople to expel Saint Paul. The Saint returned to Rome, where St Athanasius also was again in exile. The Orthodox Emperor of the West, Constans, Constantius' brother, wrote to Constantius that if Athanasius and Paul were not allowed to return to their sees, he would come with troops to restore them. So Paul was again returned to his throne. After the death of Constans, however, Constantius again had Paul deposed. Because of the love of the people for St Paul, Philip the Prefect, who was sent to depose him, was compelled to arrest him secretly to avoid a riot. Paul was banished to Cucusus, on the borders of Cilicia and Armenia. In Cucusus, as St Paul was celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the little house where he was a prisoner, the Arians strangled him with his own omophorion, so much did they fear him even in exile. Thus, in the year 350, he received the crown of martyrdom. His holy relics were brought back to Constantinople with honour by the Emperor Theodosius the Great in A.D. 381. However, in A.D. 1236, during the Latin captivity of the Imperial City, his sacred relics were taken to Venice.

Our Venerable Father Barlaam, the Abbot of the Kiev Caves Monastery (19th November / 2nd December) was the son of wealthy and eminent parents. His father, John, was the chief boyar of Prince Iziaslav. Tall, strong, practised from a young age in the martial arts, decisive and bold, he led a pure life. The Gospel made an indelible impression on his heart; everywhere he saw the image of the crucified Christ, Who had suffered for our sakes. Barlaam had no desire to acquire glory on that earth which had brought Christ only thorns. In the example of the Kiev Caves monks, he saw before him the crown of Christian life, and he decided to join them. Coming to Saint Antony of Kiev (feast day 10th / 23rd July), he told him of his intent. The elder spoke at length with the youth, and Barlaam returned home with fixed resolve. The sacrifice he was making was considerable: he had wealth, he had esteem, he had a beautiful fiancée who loved him. And all this he determined to abandon. The next day, donning fine and costly apparel, he mounted his horse

and, accompanied by a score of servants leading other horses laden with expensive goods, he rode up to the monastery gates in great glory. The monks came out to greet him and bowed down to him, but Barlaam dismounted and fell at their feet. He took off his boyar's garments and laid them before Saint Antony. He pointed at the laden horses and said, "All these worldly goods I am giving to you. Do with them what you will. I am giving up all in order to acquire Christ. I want to live with you in these caves." The Saint urged him to think well upon such a serious decision. "Believe me, father, even if my father should decide to beat me, I will in no wise return to the world. Therefore, make haste to tonsure me." Saint Antony had spent enough time with the youth to know his deep faith and his readiness for spiritual struggle. He did not want to be responsible for his soul and push him back into that world which he had left with such firm resolve. And so, that same day Barlaam was granted the monastic tonsure. His father, on learning what had become of his son, was filled with wrath. Summoning a crowd of servants, he arrived at the Caves, dragged out his son, tore from him his monastic attire, and ordered the servants to clothe him in the rich clothes of a boyar. Barlaam threw these on the floor, and he did this not once but several times until his father put them on by force and, tying his son's hands, took him home. There Barlaam was forcibly made to sit at the table. Then his father sent him to his quarters, ordering the servants to keep a sharp eye on him, that he not run away. He sent his fiancée to him, hoping she could persuade him to remain in the world. But after three days of such treatment, Barlaam still had not succumbed to any temptations. To all their threats and cajoling he answered nothing, just as he refused the tasty dishes that were offered. At last his father relented and allowed Barlaam to return to the Caves Monastery. When the number of monks at the Caves began to increase, St Antony made St Barlaam hegoumen (Abbot), while he himself moved to another cave and again began to live in solitude. Thus St Barlaam became the first Abbot of the Kiev Caves Monastery. In the year 1058, after asking St Anthony's blessing, St Barlaam built a wooden church in honour of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos. Afterwards, St Barlaam became Abbot of the newly-formed monastery of the Great Martyr Demetrius. He twice went on pilgrimage to the holy places in Je-

rusalem and Constantinople. After he returned from his second journey, he was physically too frail to reach the Caves Monastery and died in the Holy Mountain Monastery in Volhynia, probably in the year 1073. He was, however, buried, in accordance with his final wishes, at the Kiev Caves Monastery in the Near Caves.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“AS REGARDS faith, we are told “Whatsoever you shall ask, believing,” you shall receive. So when we ask, should we simply believe that we shall receive? What if it’s not good for us? Should we ask, thinking that, if it’s God’s will, we shall receive, and if not, we won’t? What should we do?” - N.L., U.S.A.

REGARDING your question, St Theophylact, in his interpretation of that saying of the Saviour, points out that He speaks of prayer and faith, but he insists that by this we should understand “true faith” and not a “foolish faith” and that the word prayer here applies to prayer for that which is profitable, and so, when we ask in true faith for those things which are profitable for our salvation, then we receive them; when we ask for something that is not to our profit the all-merciful God does not punish us by granting that false prayer. Also, as an old priest I knew, once said in a sermon, when we pray and God seems not to answer: that is our answer. Always He does what is best for us.



“CAN I ASK a question - maybe suitable for someone who has converted from High Anglicanism or Roman Catholicism? Does the Orthodox tradition use mental prayer/meditation as a form of private prayer? In the R.C. tradition there is a history of personal mental

prayer using imagination, memory and will and ending up as a conversation with God. In the Orthodox tradition people seem to be asked to have a personal Prayer Rule, which contains formal and liturgical prayer. Could someone kindly explain the Orthodox view of this meditation/personal prayer? - A. R., Ware, Herts.

AS ONE inexperienced in prayer, I cannot answer your letter as it deserves, but will simply make a few observations.

First of all, the Orthodox approach is very different to the Roman Catholic approach that you describe. The main stumbling block is imagination. Orthodox are advised to avoid this at all costs, because imagination is by its very nature something false: an idol. Memory also can be deceptive. So we have nothing like the rosary, where imagination is encouraged.

For the Orthodox, private prayer usually consists of three things:-

A) Saying set prayers, which are essentially based on our liturgy - this is of fundamental importance because it trains one how to pray;

B) The Jesus Prayer - for this many use a prayer-rope, which in some respects looks like a rosary, but is only used for counting. One is encouraged not to conjure up imaginations, but simply to concentrate on the words of the prayer and to beg the Lord for His mercy.

C) Extempore prayers, which one says for the purposes of the moment. Those who are well grounded in saying their set prayers, will naturally also base these on liturgical prayer, and to that extent will be safeguarded from any spiritual delusion and will be joining the Church in their prayer.

I realize that this answer is very inadequate, but hope it will help you a little.

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“THE SPIRIT OF GOD never enters a house
wherein there are delights and pleasures.”

ABBA POEMEN OF EGYPT

NEWS SECTION

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH JOINS VATICAN II CELEBRATION

HIS ALL-HOLINESS, the **Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomeos I**, delivered an address at the invitation of **Pope Benedict XVI** on the occasion of the celebration in Rome of the 50th anniversary since the opening of **Vatican II**. The address was given in St. Peter's Square in Rome on 11th October. The full text may be found on the website of the Patriarchate, <<http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/vaticancouncil>>. In it, His Holiness begins with the now *de rigueur* misinterpretation of the phrase from our Saviour's High Priestly prayer: John 17:11. It is quite evident from his words that he believes the Roman Catholic confession to be a Sister Church. Quoting *Unitatis Redintegratio* §18, he states: "We join in the . . . hope that the barrier dividing the Eastern Church and the Western Church will be removed, and that – at last – there may be but the one dwelling, firmly established on Christ Jesus, the cornerstone, who will make both one." Such is his enthusiasm for union with the Roman Catholics and his explicit acceptance of their faith as being valid, a "validity – and a reinforced sense of the continuity – of the tradition and faith 'once for all delivered to the saints'", that it is difficult to understand what this barrier might be. If already he declares the Roman Catholic Church a "Sister Church," then surely in his estimation he shares with it one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism. What further need for him of the continued separation? The strange thing about ecumenists is that they appear ever to be working towards unity, but never intending to achieve it.

RUSSIAN CELEBRATION IN LONDON

OVER THE WEEKEND of 20th and 21st October (n.s.) the two Russian churches in London were hosts to a number of their Bishops from Russia's "Far Abroad," and celebrated the fifth anniversary of the union of the greater part of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia with

the Moscow Patriarchate. On arrival in London, on the 19th, the Bishops (fourteen in all, - one by remote feed) and four senior priests held a conference, at which they issued a declaration, which outlined what they had discussed, although refrained from expressing their decisions explicitly. Thus, for instance, the declaration tells us that: “Discussed were prospects for bettering coordination between dioceses of the unified Russian Church on a local level, in particular with regard to opening new parishes and in joint pastoral work, external and internal mission work, practice in divine services, as well as the method of receiving persons wishing to join the Orthodox Church.” It does not tell us whether this means that the doubling up of episcopal titles, for instance, is to be regularised, or whether the “united Church” will now receive converts by Baptism as was the practice in the old ROCOR or by Chrismation as seems more generally the practice in the Patriarchate. So we are little the wiser.

On the Saturday, a Vigil service was held at the **Church of the Dormition on Harvard Road (ROCA-MP)**, led by **Their Eminences Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, President of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York (ROCA-MP)**. The next day, the Hierarchs celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the **Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Ennismore Gardens**, with an assembly of the clergy. Later a reception was held, and in the evening a concert, and various awards were presented.

Rather curiously for a festival celebrating five years of union, the emphasis seemed rather lop-sided. The website of the Harvard Road Church, <<http://www.russianchurchlondon.org/en>>, made no mention at all of the fact that the Russian Hierarchs had gathered in London, not only to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the union, but also to celebrate the **50th anniversary of the foundation of the MP Diocese of Sourozh** and to honour its founder, the late **Metropolitan Antony (Bloom)**, to whom during the celebration a plaque was dedicated and blessed. Even more oddly, although they noted the Vigil in their own church, they did not even mention the Divine Liturgy the next day in the Patriarchal Cathedral, when surely their own Hierarchs and those from the Patriarchal

Church were confessing that they were of one heart and one mind. Even now, fifteen days later, there is no report on this Liturgy, but the next item posted on the website was a piece about a forthcoming Christmas Fair. The Sourozh website, <<http://www.sourozh.org/>>, in marked contrast, quickly posted news items about the whole celebration with pictures of the services in both churches. One thinks of one country occupied by another. In the ensuing celebrations, doubtless the jubilation of the occupiers is more robust and heartfelt than that of the occupied, who probably feel they have to participate but do so with no real enthusiasm. This impression was reinforced for us by the comment of one of those who participated in the Harvard Road church Vigil, who wrote: “We were all under the thumb of Moscow there, I wonder what the outcome of [the] meeting will be? Closer integration?” And of a second member of the ROCA-MP faithful who wryly commented: “It would seem that for now we still have a diocese.” These sentiments hardly reflect a joyous celebration of the “union” that took place five years ago.

The website of the ROCA-MP diocese in the United Kingdom, <<http://www.rocor.org.uk/>>, did announce the Liturgy at Ennismore Gardens, but refrained from mentioning the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Sourozh Diocese, and has so far (5/11/12) posted no report on the whole affair. The official website of the ROCA-MP (worldwide), <<http://www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws/synod/indexeng.htm>>, has published more detailed and balanced reports. Perhaps the oddest thing about their presentation of the event was that it was headed, “The capital of Great Britain hosts 50th anniversary celebrations of Sourozh Diocese,” whereas one suspects that, although Prince Michael of Kent attended the reception, the “capital of Great Britain” was largely unaware of the whole affair! The following week, the two Metropolitans Hilarion met again in New York.

ORTHODOX PRIEST MURDERED IN DAMASCUS

ACCORDING to an internet posting on OCP, on 25th October, the body of the Greek Orthodox priest, **Fr. Fadi Jamil Haddad**, pastor of the church of St. Elias in Qatana, was found in the Jaramana neighbour-

hood (north of Damascus) not far from the place where he was kidnapped on 19th October by an unidentified armed group. This was confirmed by Fr. Haddad's Greek-Orthodox confrere, who asked for anonymity. "His body was horribly tortured and his eyes gouged out," he reported. "It is a purely terrorist act." The kidnappers had asked the priest's family and his church for a ransom of 50 million Syrian pounds (about £450,000). It was, however, impossible to find the money and meet this exorbitant demand. Among the various Christian communities in Syria, the Greek Orthodox is the largest (with about 500,000 faithful) and is concentrated mainly in the western part of the country and in Damascus. Now, there is a debate about who is responsible for this act. Some say that Assad's regime staged the kidnapping and murder in order to later blame it on Islamic Fundamentalists and cause tensions, while others are sure that it could have been any one of the armed groups in the opposition as this is one of their common practices. Only those who committed the act and God can know for sure. May God be with Fr Haddad's family, and may he be granted *Memory Eternal*. Fr Fadi graduated from the University of Balamand in 1994, and had served as the priest in Qatana since 1996.

NEW ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MAGAZINE PUBLISHED

THE CONVENT OF THE HOLY ANGELS, Aphidnai, Attica, Greece, has just published a first issue of an instructive and attractively produced tri-monthly magazine, named "*Edification and Consolation*." The first issue, which we downloaded from the internet, contains articles on the Ecclesiastical Year, the Eucharist, Pious Practices surrounding the Holy Cross, almsgiving and abortion. The mailing address of the Convent is: **Convent of the Holy Angels, 145 65 Hagios Stephanos, P.O. Box 51891, Greece**; their email: **mhangels@otenet.gr**. With the blessing of **His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi**, the Acting President of the Holy Synod in Resistance, the magazine is in fact published in eight languages: Greek, Russian, English, French, Italian, Swedish, Czech and Georgian.

VANDALISM AT GENEVA CATHEDRAL

THE BEAUTIFUL CATHEDRAL of the **Elevation of the Holy Cross in Geneva** (ROCA-MP), built in the 1860's in a traditional Russian style, was the object of an attack by vandals on 15th October. A large area of the external walls were spray-painted in red, as were some of the windows, and political slogans were painted along the walls and adjoining walk-way. **Pierre Maudet**, for the department of security of the *Republique et Canton de Geneve*, addressed a letter of sympathy to **His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of Geneva and Western Europe**, on the same day, but as yet no report on the motivation for the attack or whether the culprits have been apprehended has come to our notice.

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SIR-UK NEWS

BAPTISMS AT BROOKWOOD

HIS GRACE, **Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** arrived at Saint Edward's Church on Saturday, 7th / 20th October, the feast of the Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus, just as we came to the end of the Divine Liturgy. He then celebrated the Mysteries of Holy Baptism and Chrismation for two babies, belonging to the Traditionalist Orthodox Romanian community in this country. **Damian**, the son of **Vadim and Corina Nicarici** of Boreham Wood, Hertfordshire, is named after the Holy Unmercenary Healer Damian of Rome (feast day: 1st / 14th July), and **Rodica Costin** was his sponsor. **Matthew**, named for the Holy Apostle and Evangelist (feast day: 16th / 29th November), the son of **Daniel and Andrea Miertea** of Forest Hill, South London, was sponsored by **Marius Carp**. After the Baptisms, His Grace returned to London to tend to the pastoral needs of the Romanian faithful there, and on the next day he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the **Convent of the Annunciation**. For the divine services the Convent was packed to overflowing and many of the infants were brought to Holy Communion. May our new Brothers in the Faith, Damian and Matthew, grow in piety and in the love of God, and may He in turn grant them **Many Years!**

CHALICE VEILS RESTORED

SASHA WILK of Eastbourne, a long-time friend of our Brotherhood, visited us on Tuesday 9th October, and brought with her an antique set of Russian Chalice veils, which she had restored for us. The veils had been embroidered with metallic threads, but over the course of time these had become badly frayed and had to be re-sewn and the whole set re-backed. Having relatively recently moved from London to the South Coast, Sasha had this intricate work on her hands over the period of the move, and we greatly appreciate her undertaking it at a stressful time.

VISITORS

ON Tuesday, 16th October, two groups of people visited us almost simultaneously: a meditation group from **Wonersh**, and the **University of the Third Age from Guildford**. They stayed about 45 minutes in the church, learning about our community and asking questions.

ON Wednesday 17th, a group of about ten friends paid an impromptu visit to the church.

ON Saturday, 27th October, a dozen ramblers from **St Mary's Church, Park Road, Camberley** visited the church - again their visit had not been expected, but we were able to show them round and answer questions.

FUNERAL OF CLLR IAN FIDLER

ON FRIDAY, 5th October, as a mark of respect and gratitude, Fathers Alexis and Niphon attended the funeral of **Cllr Ian Fidler**, who had helped us during the period when we were trying to obtain planning permission for the new monastic house, and had with his wife, Elizabeth, visited us when he was Mayor of Woking. The funeral was held in the tiny Norman Church of St Nicolas at Pyrford, and the numbers of those able to attend had of necessity to be limited. May Cllr Fidler now find mercy, and may his family and loved ones be granted consolation in their bereavement.

CHICKENS

MELANIE GUNEY, **the wife of Egg**, recently gave us a cockerel and a hen, along with an ark, poultry food and mock eggs. Our own little flock had at that time been reduced through old age to one cockerel and one hen, and was thus doubled. We had also arranged to adopt some more hens from the **British Hen Welfare Trust**, and indeed on 28th October we collected five of these from the distribution point near Cranleigh, and so again our hen population has been restored. Melanie also offered us a goat, but we declined that, thinking that there might be a “jurisdictional conflict” with one of our dogs!



PRACTICAL TIP

AT the beginning of this issue, we included a sermon of **Saint Philaret the New Confessor**, who spoke about children being uplifted by church attendance, but then added our own addendum, pointing out that for this to work children have to be attentive in church. How can this be achieved? Of course, there is no one answer to this, but two things might help. First, in your family prayers at home every day, make sure your children realize that this is a time set apart for God, and that they must behave and pay attention; then in church they will more naturally do the same thing, without the need to continually correct them. Secondly, on the way to church, impress upon them where they are going and why, how they must treat the holy place with reverence, have a regard for the other people in church and not disturb them, how they should attend to the words and rites of the services as far as they are able, and must themselves pray. Parents will naturally know how best to approach this with their own children and how much they can comprehend, but any and every effort in this regard will help. However, if on the other hand, you drive up to church with the car radio blaring, and chattering among yourselves as if you were going on an outing, naturally when the children arrive in church they will not be able suddenly to switch from worldly to reverent, and indeed nor will you, the parents.