

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

“IF YOU KEEP your inner man full of wicked thoughts, even if you were on Golgotha, even if you were on the Mount of Olives, even if you stood on the memorial rock of the Resurrection, you will be as far away from receiving Christ into yourself as one who has not even begun to confess Him.”

SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, + C. 395 A.D.

“THERE CAME to me two brothers who were always fighting. The older one was saying about the younger one, ‘I arrange for him to do something and he gets distressed, and so I get distressed, thinking that if he had faith and love towards me he would accept what I tell him with complete confidence.’ And the younger was saying, ‘Forgive me, reverend father, but he does not speak to me with the fear of God, but rather as someone who wants to give orders. I guess this is why my heart does not have full confidence in him, as the Holy Fathers say.’ Notice that each blames the other and neither blames himself. Both of them are getting upset with one another, and although they are begging each other’s pardon, they both remain unconvinced ‘because he does not from his heart show me deference and, therefore, I am not convinced, for the Fathers say that he should.’ And the other says, ‘Since he will not have complete confidence in my love until I show him deference, I, for my part, do not have complete confidence in him.’ My God, do you see how ridiculous this is? Do you see their perverse way of thinking? God knows how this grieves me: that we take the sayings of the Holy Fathers to excuse our own will and the destruction of our souls. Each of these brothers had to throw the blame on the

other. What they really ought to do is just the opposite. The first ought to say: 'I speak with presumption and therefore God does not give my brother confidence in me.' And the other ought to be thinking: 'My brother gives me commands with humility and love, but I am unruly and have not the fear of God.' Neither of them found that way and blamed himself, but each of them vexed the other. 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, 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 we ought rather to examine ourselves about the commandments and blame ourselves for not keeping them."

ABBA DOROTHEUS OF GAZA, + 620 A.D.

"IN TIMES of peaceful relationships do not recall what was said by a brother when there was bad feeling between you, even if offensive things were said to your face, or to another person about you and you subsequently heard of them. Otherwise you will harbour thoughts of rancour and revert to your destructive hatred of your brother."

VEN. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, + 662 A.D.

ALL THE SORROWS and sufferings caused us by other people never come to us except with God's permission for our essential good. If these sorrows and troubles were not absolutely necessary for us, God would never allow them. They are indispensable, in order that we may have occasion to forgive our neighbours and so receive forgiveness for our own sins.... Let us force our heart to accept from our neighbour all kinds of offences and injuries that they may inflict upon us, so as to receive forgiveness for our countless sins."

SAINT IGNATIUS OF THE CAUCASUS, + 1867 A.D.

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

A Homily on the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT

TODAY we read the Gospel about Jesus Christ healing the lunatic. At the very end of the reading, the Lord foretold His sufferings and death in Jerusalem (Mt. 17:14-23). The Gospel shows how strong a man can be by faith in the Lord - so strong that he can move mountains; and how ineffectual, powerless, and pitiful an unbeliever can be - for he's but a plaything of the demons and of his own passions and those of others. It also shows the great power of prayer and fasting, when they go hand-in-hand, strengthening one another.

You see in this Gospel an unfortunate father and an unfortunate demoniac son tormented by sufferings, whom a frightful evil spirit has tormented at every new moon since birth and has often thrown into fire or into water. The father entreats mercy from the Lord, that He might heal his son, adding that the disciples of the Lord, whom he first entreated, were unable to heal him. Having rebuked and reproached them with His righteous word on unbelief and perversion, the Lord orders that the demoniac be brought to Him, and He then instantly heals him with but a rebuke.

What is a demoniac lunatic? It's a man who is subject to the action of an evil spirit, which torments him at the new moon with insidious intent, so that people might not ascribe this evil to him, to the evil spirit, but to the wholly innocent creation of God, the moon, and thereby utter blasphemy against the Creator of the moon. This is how Saint John Chrysostom interprets it.

Wicked spirits, which cause all kinds of evil for people, want to conceal their pernicious actions from people, so that they

might not hate them and turn away from them and their pernicious works completely, but instead direct their slander at the wonderful and useful creation of God, the moon, the nighttime luminary. But the evil spirit cannot hide with his pernicious machinations! A man enlightened by God will recognise his wicked tricks and destroy them by the grace of God.

Unbelievers, however, are careless. They have been ensnared in his net and suffer at his hands, like the aforementioned lunatic. And how many in our age, an age of unbelief and perversion, are subject to the guile, ridicule, and malice of evil spirits! I mean all those who are subject to drunkenness, wretched and insane carnal love, or, rather, carnal passion; all so-called nihilists, who, having lost man's most precious treasure, faith, do not believe in the future life and in the immortality of our souls, do not look for the resurrection of the dead and Last Judgment, do not believe in the existence of God Himself and His eternal truth, and His formidable, incorruptible justice, and, to their bitter misfortune, do not believe in evil spirits either. These unfortunate, deluded people, entangled in the enemies' nets, like the demoniac in the Gospel often run to fire or water; that is, to firearms, in order to shoot themselves, or to drown or hang themselves.

And take note of what an evil craze such violent, terrible deaths are now! Every day, people either shoot themselves, drown themselves, or hang themselves, or they kill others. For many, human life is not worth even a penny.

What is the terrible cause of this? What terrible lever moves these pitiful people to a violent death? It is, firstly, unbelief and a depraved or perverse life; secondly, the evil demons, those killers of mankind of old. I myself have heard from many unfortunate people, prone to alcohol abuse or despondency due to some grave circumstances, that an evil demon intrusively whispers to them: "Hang yourself, hang yourself!" or "Drown yourself, drown yourself!" or "Shoot yourself, shoot yourself!" or "Kill someone!" Oh, accursed foe! How many human, Christian souls have you destroyed in the ill-fated nineteenth century by violent death through your all-devouring charm! They are to blame for

being seduced by your deceit, but you are a thousand times guiltier, and you will receive retribution from the righteous Judge on the day of recompense for all your destruction.

What is the remedy against the wicked seducers, tormentors, and destroyers? Faith in Christ, Who has trampled down the power of the devil by His Cross, fasting, and prayer. Prayer and fasting purify, enlighten, and strengthen the soul; conversely, without prayer and fasting, our soul is easy prey for the devil, because it is not shielded and protected from him. Fasting and prayer are spiritual weapons against the devil, which is why the Lord says in today's Gospel that the demonic race comes out only by prayer and fasting. The holy Church, knowing the power of this spiritual weapon, calls us to fast twice a week, on Wednesday and Friday - by the way, this is in remembrance of the suffering and death of our Saviour; and many times during all the extended fasts. And Great Lent adds special, touching penitential prayers. Fasting and prayer have this spiritual benefit that, by strengthening our souls, they strengthen faith, hope, and love in us and unite us with God.

The Lord's reproof of His disciple's unbelief in today's Gospel is remarkable. Did the Apostles also hesitate in faith at first? Yes, they were weak sometimes before the Holy Spirit descended upon them. Sometimes they believed, and sometimes they fell into unbelief and lack of faith. This should be said at least about the nine, excluding the three called pillars of faith: Saints Peter, James, and John. By faith they healed all kinds of illnesses, they raised the dead, they cleansed lepers, they cast out demons; and when grace left any of them for lack of faith or unbelief, then they could not cast out demons, as is mentioned in today's Gospel. Thus, through them, the Lord also teaches all of us to have undoubting faith, and says: If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Mt. 17:20).

Indeed, all those who truly believed, all the saints worked many miracles by faith; by faith the impossible became possible. Read the descriptions of their lives and you will see for yourself

how powerful faith is! And yet the people of our age flaunt and boast of their unbelief! Is this an enlightened age? How? We owe all the successes of enlightenment in all fields to our faith, which has shed abundant light into the minds of men and into all the sciences, and yet we reject faith? Do children reject their mother, who bore them and raised them up? It's insanity and ingratitude!

Brothers and sisters, cherish your faith! Preserve your faith. Without faith, there is no salvation. Without faith, man will perish forever. Amen.

Slightly amended for British usage and to conform to Miss Dobbs's sound counsels from a translation sent us by Daniel Olson. Obviously the sermon was given by Saint John at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century, and yet how accurately he describes the world without faith in which we live today.



From the Life of Saint Nicolas Planas

FROM THE LETTERS OF MOTHER MARTHA

I WANT to write yet another incident which a pious Christian woman told me, so that you may see that, however much he [St Nicolas] was lacking in formal education, so much the more was he enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit and he penetrated into the depths of the souls of those confessing to him, and brought out into the open the sin that was nesting within, which not even the one who was confessing could perceive.

I quote with her very own words these things which the pious woman mentioned above told me.

“Once, some forty years ago, I had a misunderstanding with, or rather, had been slandered by, some of my relatives. I did not retaliate even with one word, or insult - nothing of the kind. When both of our families moved to Athens, we would exchange only formalities. When I confessed, I told Father about the situation and, at the same time, said that I did not want an exchange

of visits with my relative. ‘Things are well enough at this point,’ I told him, ‘since we exchange greetings when we see each other.’ She was married, involved in the world; I was near Father, living another life. This is how I said it, and I believed that I had nothing against her.

“If it had been another confessor, he might have told me, ‘Well, my child, let things stand as they are; it is not necessary to have more contacts.’ This is what I thought Father would tell me also.

“But suddenly I heard him saying to me, ‘No, my child, they are not “well enough at this point” ... It is necessary for you to go to her house, to eat at her table, and sleep for one day in her house, because this passion is thriving within you!’ If a lightning bolt had hit me, it would have been less of a shock. I would have been able to drink the most bitter, most foul-smelling medicine rather than do what he told me. Then I saw with consternation how much passion was nesting within me, hidden, which even I myself had not perceived. ... But I had to follow with *obedience!* With trembling knees, I went to her house. Fortunately the Father’s prayer enlightened them and they welcomed me nicely - not only she, but even her husband and her mother. We sat down to eat at noontime, and at the table I was saying within myself, ‘Diabolic trinity.’ I meant, naturally, the couple and her mother. One could never imagine my agony of soul that day. At noontime I slept in the same room with my relative [the siesta]. As soon as I fell asleep, I saw Satan big as life standing next to me, saying, ‘You fool, you came here to sleep? Bah, to hell with you!’ I awoke, contrite, and said to her, ‘I saw a bad dream.’ And at the same time she said to me, ‘And I also saw a very bad dream.’ I neither told her what I saw, nor did I ask what she saw. Intimacy was lacking. After that, we returned to our first state of sisterly affection, and we have, by the grace of God, much love.”

From “Papa-Nicolas Planas, The Simple Shepherd of the Simple Sheep,
published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, 2001.



THE COMING MONTH

AUGUST is the last month of the Church Year and is adorned with two Great Feasts. The first, the **Transfiguration of our Saviour** (6th/19th) shows the Divine Glory of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And the second shows one born as we were, the All-holy Mother of God, granted fully to participate in that Divine Glory. It is the feast of her **Dormition** (15th/28th). So at the end of the year we are persuaded to look up with hope, rather than occupying ourselves with looking down to earthly concerns and feelings as we now do most of the time. Though at the very end of the month, let us not become careless we are given a third and very important feast, that of the **Beheading of Saint John the Baptist** (29th August / 11th September). We are reminded that in reaching towards that glory we will have to endure suffering and maybe even persecution.

Among the Saints we celebrate this month we have:-

The **Seven Holy Youths of Ephesus, Maximilian, Exacustodianus, Iamblicus, Martinian, Dionysius, John* and Constantine** (4th/17th). These Saints, more commonly known in the West as the Seven Sleepers, flourished during the reign of Emperor Decius, who was persecuting the Christians. So in the year 252 they distributed all their belongings to the poor, and entered a cave to hide. After supplicating God to be released from the bond of the body, so as not to be handed over to Emperor Decius, they delivered their souls to God. When the Emperor Decius returned to Ephesus, he required them to come and sacrifice to the idols, but he learned that they died in the cave, so he ordered that the door of the cave be blocked. From that time generations passed, until the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Theodosius the Younger, 446. At that time there began to spread a heresy, which said there was no resurrection of the dead. When Emperor Theodosius saw the Church of God troubled, and many Bishops had fallen into error due to this heresy, he was perplexed. Then he put on a garment of goat's hair,

Footnote: In many versions John is called Antoninus.

spread himself on the ground and mourned, supplicating God to reveal to him the solution to this heresy. The Lord did not overlook his tears, but hearkened to him. The landholder of that mountain, where the cave of the Seven Holy Youths was located, wanted to build a shelter for his sheep. As he was rolling stones from the cave in order to do so, the door of the cave opened, and by God's command the Seven Youths who had died in the cave were resurrected, and they conversed between each other, as if they had reposed the previous day, without changing at all, so that not even their clothing was ruined at all from the natural moisture and humidity of the cave. Having therefore risen, they remembered that Emperor Decius sought for them in order to torture them, about which they spoke among themselves. Maximilian said to the rest: "If perhaps, brethren, we are captured by Decius, let us stand with courage, and not betray our noble faith. You brother Iamblicus, go to purchase some bread, and purchase even more, since last night you purchased little bread, which is why we went to sleep hungry. Learn also what Decius is deliberating about us." Iamblicus therefore went to the city of Ephesus, where he saw the sign of the honourable Cross on the gate and he was amazed. Seeing the same in other places, and observing the buildings and houses to have been changed, and that the people were different, he thought he was having a vision, or had come into a state of ecstasy. However, as he went to the bread-sellers, he purchased breads, and having given the coins, he set out to return back to the cave. Yet he saw how the bread-sellers were showing the coins to each other, so they turned towards him and said that he had found a treasure, for the money he gave clearly testified that he had found a treasure, for it had engraved on it the image of the Emperor Decius from long ago. When Iamblicus heard this, he became terrified, and because of his fear was unable to speak, thinking that he had been recognised by them, and would in turn be handed over to Decius. He therefore begged them, saying: "I beg you, my lords, you have my coins, take also your breads, and allow me to leave." The bread-sellers said to him: "Show us the treasure you found, and make us also partners of the find, otherwise we will hand you over to be killed." They put a chain

around his neck, and dragged him to the open market. Taking him to the proconsul of Ephesus, they presented him for examination. When the proconsul saw this, he said: "Tell us, young man, how you found this treasure, and how much is there, and where." Iamblicus responded that he never found a treasure, but the money he had he received from his parents. "What then has come about," he said, "I do not know." The proconsul again asked him: "From what city are you from?" The Saint responded: "I am from this one, if this is Ephesus." "And who are your parents?" asked the proconsul, "let them come to us, and when they reveal the truth, then we will believe you." Iamblicus replied: "So and so is my father, so and so is my grandfather, and so and so are my relatives." The proconsul responded: "The names you said are strange and unsubstantial, and not contemporary. So we cannot believe you." Iamblicus said: "If you do not believe me who speaks the truth, then I do not know what else to say." The proconsul replied: "Irreverent one, your money testifies by its inscription that it was produced more than three hundred years ago, during the reign of Decius the emperor, and you as a young man are attempting to deceive us?" Then Iamblicus fell at the feet of those who were there, and begged them, saying: "I beg you my lords, tell me, where is the emperor Decius, who was in this city?" They told him that currently it was not Decius, for he died many years ago. And Iamblicus said: "This is why my lords you are in astonishment; but do now follow me to a cave, and from these signs you will come to believe my words. For I am sure, that we fled because of Decius, and yesterday when I came to buy breads, I saw that Decius had entered the city." The Bishop of Ephesus, whose name was Marinus, heard these things, so he said to the proconsul: "I think a wonderful thing will follow from this proposal, therefore let us follow him." The Bishop and the proconsul and many people followed him, and when they arrived at the cave, Iamblicus first entered it, followed by the Bishop, who when he turned to the right side of the door of the cave, saw a chest sealed with two seals, which was put there by the [secret] Christians Rufinus and Theodore, who were sent there with others by Decius, in order to block the door of the

cave. It was they who wrote their names on plaques of lead. Reading these words, all were astonished. Entering the deeper part of the cave, they found the Saints, and fell at their feet. Sitting down, they questioned them. The Saints narrated, first, their own purpose, then their brave deeds before the Emperor Decius. Wherefore all were astonished and glorified the God of wonders. Then the proconsul with the Bishop wrote a report to the Emperor Theodosius, and told him all of the above. The Emperor received the letter, and was filled with joy over the news, and with much speed went to Ephesus. Entering the cave, he fell to the ground and washed the feet of the Saints with his tears. And he rejoiced and was glad in his soul, for the Lord did not overlook his request, but showed him with his own eyes the resurrection of the dead. While the Emperor was conversing with the Saints, together with Bishops and other authorities, the Saints began to get a little tired, and before everyone, they delivered their souls into the hands of God. Then Theodosius gave precious garments of gold and silver, and ordered that seven chests be made of the same, to have the relics of the Saints placed in. But that night, the Saints appeared to the emperor and said: "Leave us, O Emperor, in this cave, in which we arose." After many Bishops and authorities gathered, the emperor had the relics of the Saints placed in the ground of the cave, as they revealed to him in the vision. And making a joyful feast, he gave hospitality to the poor of Ephesus, and brought joy to all the people, lovingly honouring them royally. He redeemed also from the prisons the imprisoned Bishops, for they proclaimed the resurrection of the dead. This was followed by a common feast, glorifying and blessing our Lord Jesus Christ. The Seven Youths of Ephesus are also commemorated on 22nd October, though 4th August is their primary feast day. It is believed by some that the commemoration in August celebrates the day of their resurrection, while that in October commemorates the day of their second death.

Our holy **Father Tikhon of Zadonsk, Bishop of Voronezh** (13th/ 26th), who was born in the year 1724 in the village of Korotsko in the Novgorod diocese, into the family of the chanter

Sabellius Kirillov. A new surname, Sokolov, was later given him at the Novgorod seminary, as was the custom then in Russia. He was baptised with the name Timothy. His father died when Timothy was a young child, leaving the family in such poverty that his mother was barely able to make ends meet. She wanted to give him over to be raised by a neighbour, since there was nothing with which to feed the family, but his brother Peter would not permit this. Timothy often worked a whole day with the peasants for a single piece of black bread. As a thirteen-year-old boy, he was sent to a clergy school near the Novgorod archbishop's home, and earned his keep by working with the vegetable gardeners. In A.D. 1740, he was accepted under a state grant set up for the Novgorod seminary. The youth excelled at his studies. Upon finishing seminary in 1754, he became a teacher there, first in Greek, and later in Rhetoric and Philosophy. In 1758, he was tonsured with the name Tikhon. In that same year they appointed him to be prefect of the seminary. In 1759, they transferred him to Tver, appointing him archimandrite of the Zheltikov Monastery. Later, he was made rector of the Tver seminary and, at the same time, head of the Otroch Monastery. His election as bishop was providential. Metropolitan Demetrius, the presiding member of the Holy Synod, had intended to transfer the young archimandrite to the Trinity-Sergiev Lavra. On the day of Pascha, at Petersburg, Father Tikhon was one of eight candidates being considered for selection as vicar-bishop for Novgorod. The lot fell on him three times. On the same day, during the Cherubic Hymn, Bishop Athanasius of Tver, without realising it, commemorated him as a bishop while cutting out particles from the prosphora at the Table of Oblation. On 13th May, 1761 he was consecrated Bishop of Keksgolma and Ladoga, a vicar bishop of the Novgorod diocese. Two years later, Bishop Tikhon was transferred to the See of Voronezh. During the four and a half years that he administered the Voronezh diocese, Saint Tikhon provided constant edification, both by his life and by his numerous pastoral guidances and soul-saving books. He wrote a series of works for pastors: Concerning the Seven Holy Mysteries, A Supplement to the Priestly Office, Concerning the Mystery of

Repentance, An Instruction Concerning Marriage. He considered it essential that each priest, deacon and monk have a New Testament, and that he should read it daily. In an Encyclical, he called on pastors to perform the Holy Mysteries with reverence, with the fear of God, and love for one's neighbour. At Voronezh he eradicated an ancient pagan custom, the celebration in honour of Yarila (a pagan god associated with the fertility of grain and cattle). In the outlying districts where military units of the Don Cossacks were dispersed, he formed a missionary commission to restore sectarians to the Orthodox Church. In 1765, Saint Tikhon transformed the Voronezh Slavic-Latin school into a seminary. He invited experienced instructors from Kiev and Kharkhov, and planned the courses for it. He exerted much attention and effort to build up both the churches and the school, and to guide pastors to understand the need for education. The Saint was unflagging in his efforts to administer the vast diocese, and he often spent nights without sleep. In 1767, poor health compelled him to give up running the diocese and withdraw for rest to the Tolshevsk Monastery, at a distance of about twenty-five miles from Voronezh. In 1769, the Saint moved to the Monastery of the Theotokos in the city of Zadonsk. Having settled into this monastery, Saint Tikhon became a great teacher of the Christian life. With deep wisdom he set forth the ideal of true monasticism in his Rule of Monastic Living and his Guidances to Turn from the Vanity of the World, and in his own life he fulfilled this ideal. He kept strictly to the precepts of the Church. Zealously (almost daily) he visited the church of God, and he often sang and read in the choir. In time, out of humility, he altogether ceased participating and serving, but merely stood in the altar, reverently making the sign of the Cross over himself. He loved to read the Lives of the Saints and the works of the holy Fathers. He knew The Psalter by heart, and he usually read or sang the Psalms on his journeys. The Saint underwent much tribulation because he had to leave his flock. When he recovered his health, he thought about returning to the Novgorod diocese, where Metropolitan Gabriel had invited him to head the Iveron Vallaisk Monastery. But when his cell-attendant mentioned this to the Elder Aaron, he declared: "Are

you mad? The Mother of God does not direct him to move away from here.” The cell-attendant conveyed this to His Grace. “If that is so,” said the Saint “I shall not move away from here,” and he tore up the invitation. The Saint used to go to the Tolshev Monastery, which he loved for its solitude. The fruition of all his spiritual life were the books that the Saint wrote while in retirement: *A Spiritual Treasury, Gathered from the World* (1770) and *On True Christianity* (1776). He lived in very simple circumstances: he slept on straw, covered by a sheepskin coat. His humility was so great that he paid no attention to the workers who laughed at him as he walked about the monastery, pretending that he did not hear it. He used to say, “It is pleasing to God that even the monastery workers mock me, and I deserve it because of my sins.” He often said, “Forgiveness is better than revenge.” Once, a fool named Kamenev struck the Saint on the cheek, saying, “Don’t be so haughty.” The Saint, accepting this with gratitude, gave the fool three kopeks every day for the rest of his life. All his life the Saint “in troubles, and sorrows, and insults... joyfully endured, mindful that there can be no crown without the victory, nor victory without effort, nor effort without struggle, nor struggle without enemies” (Ode 6 of the Canon). Strict towards himself, the Saint was indulgent towards others. On the Friday before Palm Sunday, he entered the cell of his friend, the schema-monk Metrophanes, and he saw him at table together with Cosmas Ignatievich, of whom he was also fond. There was fish on the table, and his friends became upset. The Saint said, “Sit down, for I know you. Love is higher than fasting.” To further calm them, he ate some of their fish soup. He especially loved the common folk, and comforted them in their grievous lot, interceding with the landowners, and moving them to compassion. He gave away his pension, and gifts from admirers, to the poor. By his deeds of self-denial and love, the Saint advanced and foresaw the future. In 1778, he had a vision in his sleep: the Mother of God stood in the clouds, and near her were the Apostles Peter and Paul. On bended knees, the Saint prayed to the All-Pure Virgin for the peace of the whole world. The Apostle Paul loudly exclaimed: “When they shall say, ‘peace and safety;’ then sudden destruction will come upon them” (1

Thess. 5:3). The Saint fell asleep in trembling and in tears. The following year, he again saw the Mother of God in the air and several people near her. The Saint knelt down, and near him four others in white garments also fell to their knees. The Saint entreated the All-Pure Virgin for someone, that she would not leave him (Tikhon did not tell his cell-attendant who the four people were, nor for whom the request was made). She replied, "Let it be as you ask." Saint Tikhon prophesied much about the future, particularly the victory of Russia over the French in 1812. More than once they saw the Saint in spiritual rapture, with a transformed and luminous face, but he forbade them to speak about this. For three years before his repose he prayed each day, "Tell me, O Lord, of my end." And a quiet voice in the morning dawn said, "It will be on a Sunday." In that same year, he saw in a dream a beautiful meadow with wondrous palaces upon it. He wanted to go inside, but they said to him: "In three years, you may enter. For now, continue your labours." After this the Saint secluded himself in his cell and admitted only a few friends. Both clothing and a grave were prepared for the time of his death. He often came to weep over his coffin, while standing hidden from people. A year and three months before his death, in a vivid dream, it seemed to the Saint that he was standing in the monastery church. A priest of his acquaintance was carrying the Divine Infant, covered with a veil, out of the altar through the Royal Doors. The Saint approached and kissed the Infant on the right cheek, and he felt himself stricken on the left. Awakening, the Saint sensed a numbness in his left cheek, his left leg, and a trembling in his left hand. He accepted this illness with joy. Shortly before his death, the Saint saw in a dream a high and twisting ladder and he heard a command to climb it. "At first, I was afraid because of weakness," he told his friend Cosmas. "But when I started to climb, the people standing around the ladder lifted me higher and higher, up to the very clouds." "The ladder," said Cosmas, "is the way to the Heavenly Kingdom. Those who helped were those you have helped by your advice, and they remember you." The Saint said with tears, "I thought so, too. I feel that my end is near." He frequently received the Holy Mysteries during his illness. Saint Tikhon

reposed, as was revealed to him, on Sunday 13th August 1783, at the age of fifty-nine. On 14th May, 1846, during the construction of the new cathedral at Zadonsk, Saint Tikhon's relics were uncovered and reported to be incorrupt. His relics were kept in Zadonsk. It was reported that many miracles occurred near his relics, and he was glorified as a saint on Sunday, 13th August, 1861. The Uncovering of the Relics of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk was instituted to be celebrated annually on 14th May.

Our **Holy Father Eogan, Bishop of Ardstraw** (23rd August / 5th September) was born in Leinster, the son of Cainneach and Muindeacha. The name Eogan means 'born under the yew tree.' His name is often Latinised as Eugenius, or Eugene, but the Irish form is Eoghan (pronounced Owen), hence Tir Eoghain, which means "land of Eogan", or Tyrone. His mother is said to have been the *Mugdorna* [ruler] of south-east Ulster. Her people seem to have had some contact with the Laighin (who gave their name to Leinster), to whom his father Cainneach belonged. Since this is the area where Christianity first reached Ireland it may well be that Eoghan's father's family had been Christian for some time. As a boy he studied at Clones, and it was from there that he was carried off to Britain by pirates, and subsequently he was taken captive to Brittany with Cairbre of Coleraine and Saint Tigernach, who is best known as the founder of the abbey of Clones. On obtaining his freedom, he went to study at Saint Ninian's Candida Casa. Others said to have studied with Ninian include Finnian of Moville. He may also have spent some time in Brittany. Returning to Ireland, he made a foundation at Kilnamanagh, in the Wicklow hills. After guiding the monastery of Kilnamanagh for fifteen years, he settled in the valley of Mourne, his mother's country, about the year 576. It is reasonable to assume that Eoghan came north not just as a missionary to pagans, but also 'as a pilgrim for the sake of Christ' in exile. It was not necessary to go abroad to do this. Due to the division of Ireland into a grid of independent states or *tuatha*, exile meant leaving one's own and taking one's chances in another tuath. Without personal resources one had no honour or personal standing outside one's own tuath. He

was followed by many disciples including his kinsman, Saint Kevin of Glendalough, who completed his studies under this Saint. So great was the fame of the sanctity and learning of Saint Eoghan at Mourne, that he was consecrated first Bishop of Ardstraw (Ardfrath) about the year 581. His Life contains records of a number of miracles. Once while going through the forest Craoibheach (modern day Cruagh, a townland near Wicklow) he sang fifty psalms and when his attendant answered "Amen" at the end of the Lord's Prayer the trees all around also answered "Amen." It also mentions his close relations with Tigernach of Clones and Cairbre of Coleraine, which might indicate an alliance of monasteries threatened by the dominance of Armagh. He reposed on 23rd August, A.D. 618, and was laid to rest in his own churchyard; over his sepulchre a chapel was built later.

The holy **Martyrs Adrian and Natalia of Nicomedia and the Twenty-three with them** (26th August / 8th September). Saints Adrian and his wife Natalia hailed from Nicomedia. During the second reign of Maximian (306-308), there were twenty-three Christians that he found in a cave and inflicted upon them diverse tortures. Adrian, who was twenty-eight years old and head of the praetorium, learned of this and inquired of them why they endured such torments. They answered him, saying, "We endure them so that we might gain those good things prepared by God in the heavens for those who suffer for His love; indeed, such things which no ear can possibly hear nor word can set before the mind." This response moved blessed Adrian to compunction, and he was filled with divine grace, igniting a flame within him to also undergo torment for the love of Christ. Adrian turned to the recorders who were preparing the lists of those Christians to be slain, and said, "Write my name together with the names of the others, for I too count it pleasure to die with them for the love of Christ." Whereupon, they entered his name in the lists, and had him bound with chains and locked in prison. Now his wife, Natalia, who was raised a Christian by her parents yet kept her faith to herself to avoid being violated by the pagans, was informed of her husband's imprisonment, yet she thought it was for some other

reason, causing her to weep and lament. After she learned that Adrian was imprisoned for the sake of Christ, she arrayed herself in splendid clothes and went to visit him in prison. When she entered the prison, she kissed the bonds and chains which bound her husband, and praised him for his eagerness to demonstrate his witness for Christ. She also counselled him to remain firm and unshaken in the tortures. After her husband exhorted her to return home lest she also be imprisoned, Natalia left beseeching the other twenty-three Christians imprisoned with Adrian to pray for her husband. Having left the prison, Natalia returned home. Adrian, however, bribed the guards to release him for an appointed time to notify his wife that he would soon be martyred. When Adrian arrived at his home, Natalia assumed Adrian feared the torments and had denied Christ, and reproved him for being a coward and lamented for the missed opportunity of being the wife of a martyr. But when she was told of the true reason for Adrian's return, she was exceedingly glad and embraced him. They therefore returned to the prison together, where Natalia tended to the wounds of the Christians prisoners. When the Emperor learned this, he forbade Natalia and the other women from coming to the prison to attend to the Christians. Undaunted, Natalia cropped her hair and, donning male clothes, she bribed her way into the gaol. When Adrian stood before the Emperor, he boldly confessed Christ, for which he was thrashed with staves, then thrown on the ground and beaten upon his chest and abdomen till his entrails were exposed. Then, they cut off his hands and feet together with those of the other Christians. Indeed, Natalia was not only present at the severing, but assisted in the dismemberment by placing each member upon the anvil for cutting. She would even beseech the executioner to bring down the cleaver and hammer with a mightier blow, to render greater and harsher pain for the Saint; for she believed his reward would be greater. At the same time she emboldened Adrian and endowed him with strength to endure the pains courageously, so as not to betray Christ during his martyrdom. During the course of these torments, Adrian and Christ's twenty-three other athletes finished the course of martyrdom.

The idolaters were about to cast their sacred bodies into the fire, when the blessed Natalia retrieved one of Adrian's hands. She hid it under her shirt, and waited to see what would happen to the sacred relics. And when she noticed the blood dripping from them, she anointed herself with it as if it was myrrh and spices. As the holy relics were cast into the flames, a sudden storm of rain fell and quenched the fire. Whereupon, a certain Christian named Eusebius gathered up the sacred relics and took them on board a boat. He brought them to Argyropolis, near Constantinople, where he interred them, and later on a church was built there in their honour. The names of the twenty-three athletes of Christ are as follows: Anatolius, Anthimus, Antiochus, Gentelius, Eleutherius, Hermogenes, Evethius, Euretus, Eutyichius, Theagones, Theodore, Thyrsus, John, Karteras, Claudius, Cyriacus, Marinus, Mardonius, Menodius, Platon, Synetus, Troadius and Pharetrius. Shortly thereafter, Natalia was pursued by a certain imperial officer at Nicomedia who desired to take this young and wealthy widow as his wife. This caused Natalia to flee by ship to the location of her husband's sacred relics. Soon after she surrendered her soul into the hands of God, and was buried with the Holy Martyrs. Although Natalia did not shed her blood and suffer physical martyrdom, she is still numbered with the Martyrs for having co-suffered with them by ministering to them and encouraging them. As our Saviour promised: "He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matt.10:42). "Adam's spouse exiled him from Paradise, by the counsel of the serpent; but Natalia, the all-wise, led Adrian to Paradise with sacred talks, exhorting and teaching him to patiently toil, being a mediatrix of heavenly rewards and eternal glory" (Vespers Stichera, tone four). "O the ways of a God-loving woman! For she did not bring her husband corruption as Eve did Adam, but ushered in unbroken life for her spouse. Praising her with her husband, we cry out to Christ, Grant us help, by the intercessions of Thy Saints" (Vespers Doxasticon after the Aposticha, tone one).



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

Reply to an Enquirer about converting:-

It seems that your news is basically good. You are still hoping to become Orthodox and you are experiencing spiritual warfare. The second one is good because our life as Christians is one of combat. That you are being fought against by the demons is evidence that you are fighting. Nowadays many expect Christian confession to be a bed of roses - Jesus will make it all right and comfortable - but this is clean contrary to the teaching of the Church and the experience of her Saints. And take becoming Orthodox slowly, otherwise there may be temptations ahead after your Baptism. Keep studying, keep praying (do you have a Prayer Book?), keep asking questions, and as much as you possibly can living so far away keep attending the church services - both so that you learn and so that you become a part of the community of believers. One thing your letter indicated that you should beware of regarding church attendance, is not to become a special events attender. People naturally come for the Great Feasts etc., but come on some of the quieter days too. We have people who have never been to a lenten service! You need both, otherwise it is as if you are living by always eating the cherries and the icing off the cake, but never tasting the cake itself. Cherry picking from the cake leads to sickness, and doing the like with the church celebrations also leads to a spiritual sickness. Not knowing you, I am not sure whether this will help you in any way, but I hope the Saviour will use it to do so, and please do keep writing if you have any questions, worries, etc.



“SOMETIMES parents close the gates of heaven against their own children by not giving them a proper upbringing.”

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, POPE OF ROME, +604 A.D.

NEWS from the Richmond Diocese of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece

ADULT BAPTISM

ON THE FEAST of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Wednesday, 29th June / 12th July, **Alla McDowell** of Aldershot was baptised at Saint Edward's Church. Alla had been through a form of baptism in her native Ukraine, but it was not by full immersion and this troubled her. With a blessing we celebrated the full mysterion. She also asked that to make her new start she might change her name, and so when the catechumenate prayers were being read, **Priestmonk Sabbas**, the celebrant, renamed her **Solomone** after the mother of the Maccabee Martyrs (feast day 1st / 14th August). The name had been drawn by lot from a list of eight. After the mysteria Solomone received the Holy Mysteries during the feast day Liturgy, along with her sponsor, **Procla Bell**, and she attended the Divine Liturgy on every day it was celebrated here for her eight days in her baptismal robe. Please keep her and her sponsor in your holy prayers, praying the newly-illuminated Solomone remain faithful unto the end of her days, and that Procla ever guide her aright to the end of her course.

FUNERAL IN SAINT EDWARD'S CEMETERY

ON Thursday, 20th July, **Constantin-Nicolae Enache** was laid to rest in our cemetery after his funeral service, which was led by **Protopresbyter Christodoulos Christodoulou** of **Saint Nectarios's Church, Battersea**. After the service, Constantin's widow and other mourners had a mercy meal in our Old Mortuary hall, and afterwards they very kindly left us a generous amount of provisions and flowers for the church. May Constantin be granted rest with the Saints, and may his loved ones be comforted in their berevment.

MOTHER AGAPIA VISITS

ON the Sunday of the Holy New Martyrs slain under the Turkish Yoke, 12th / 25th June, **Mother Agapia** of the **Saint Nicolas Convent, Cleveland, New York**, attended the Divine Services at Saint Edward's Church. In the afternoon, after Vespers, she gave an hour-long presentation and answered questions about the **Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary in Etna, California**. Mother Agapia is on their Board of Directors. She spent the night with our parishioner **Alla Sion of Aldershot**, and the next day visited London, returning to Brookwood for Vespers. On the Tuesday she left for Lyons to speak to parishioners there about SPOTS, and was accompanied by parishioner **Larisa Bouaka**, who volunteered to be her translator in France. Then she made her way to the Holy Land to lead a pilgrimage there.

THREE NEW ICONS GIVEN ON ONE DAY

ON Sunday, 10th / 23rd July, three new icons for Saint Edward's Church were given us. **Christina Giannopoulos** gave us a large and beautiful icon of the **Baptism of our Saviour**, which she had painted herself and which we will eventually place where the Baptisms of parishioners are celebrated. And **Alexandra Galbeza** gave us two hand-painted icons of the holy **Martyr Christopher** and the **Great Martyr Anastasia**, both painted in Romania. We thank the kind donors for their love of the beauty of God's house.

WOKING HISTORY SOCIETY

ON Monday, 3rd July, about thirty members of **Woking History Society** were given a talk about the **sacred relics of Saint Edward the Martyr**, how we came to be their guardians, why we settled at Brookwood, and how the Brotherhood grew up here. The visitors were led by **Nick Carpenter**. The talk and the questions-&-answers afterwards ran over the scheduled

hour to about ninety minutes. Nonetheless many of the participants then visited the exhibition room and many stayed to look around the church and ask more questions.

KEOTCo AGM

THE AGM of the **King Edward Orthodox Trust Co Ltd** (registered charity no: 284929) was held in the exhibition room immediately after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 10th / 23rd July. All the company directors and members, our trustees, attended, and as all the reports and accounts had been distributed earlier to them, we were able to complete the necessary work of the meeting quite briefly - a bonus after the long Sunday morning services.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY AGM

THE **Brookwood Cemetery Society** held their Annual General Meeting in the main hall of our Old Mortuary building on Saturday 8th July. After the official business and a break for refreshments, **Robert Stephenson** of the **Friends of Brompton Cemetery** gave a fascinating illustrated talk on the “Post-humous Indignities of the Famous.”

VISITORS

ON Friday, 23rd June, an extended family group of ten members visited the church. The **Lawson family from Pirbright** were led by **Kim Lowe** of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** and visited us while making a tour of the whole cemetery.

ON Monday, 26th June, “**Our Walking Group**” from Wood Street and villages visited us; they too were led by Kim.

ON Tuesday, 11th July, the **Berkshire Environmental Association** visited the church, during a more extended visit to the cemetery. Their group leader was **Patrick Crowley** and they were brought by **Margaret Hobbs** of the BCS.

STOP PRESS!

WE have just heard from our Bishop, **Metropolitan Ambrose of Methoni**, who has recently returned from a pastoral visitation to our churches in Congo, that he hopes to be in England in mid-September and will lead the Divine Services at the **Brookwood Brotherhood** for the festival of **Saint Edward the Martyr**, Friday, 2nd / 15th and Saturday 3rd / 16th September.



Practical Tip

THROUGHOUT life we have to make decisions every day, but we should strive to the utmost of our ability, and aided by prayer, to make sure that we do so based on the precepts of our Faith and not on what we would like things to be. Recently we were reminded of this imperative by a short piece on the Oropos & Fili website entitled, “Do We Have the Mind of Christ?” It was from the works of Saint Theophan the Recluse and he points out how easily we are rather led by deceit. We choose to deceive ourselves, just so that things should be easy or comfortable. Self-love rather than faith in Christ motivates us. The Saint tells us: “The mind without faith is a fabricator; it constantly hammers out its evil suspicions and weaves blasphemy against the whole realm of faith... In the same way does it confront irrefutable evidence of the truth of God. It is sufficiently and cogently presented with both experiential and intellectual proof, yet it covers even this with doubt. Sort out all that it produces and you will see that in this there is only deceit, although its own language calls it cleverness, and you are involuntarily led to the conclusion that cleverness and deceit are one and the same.” The deceit of cleverness obviously stems from pride, but we should all strive to follow the way of humility and become disciples of our Saviour, which means to follow Him and His teaching. We shall doubtless often fail, but let us never forget the need to try. As an old proverb had it: “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, and try again.” That should be the mark of our Christian life, not always seeking after what suits us.