

# *The Shepherd*

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# From the Fathers

“DEATH trampled our Lord underfoot, but He in His turn treated death as a highroad for his own feet. He submitted to it, enduring it willingly, because by this means he would be able to destroy death in spite of itself. Death had its own way when our Lord went out from Jerusalem carrying his cross; but when, by a loud cry from that cross, he summoned the dead from the underworld, death was powerless to prevent it. Death slew Him by means of the body which He had assumed, but that same body proved to be the weapon with which He conquered death. Concealed beneath the cloak of his manhood, His Godhead engaged death in combat; but in slaying our Lord, death itself was slain. It was able to kill natural life, but was itself killed by the life that is above the nature of man. Death could not devour our Lord unless He possessed a body, neither could hades swallow Him up unless He bore our flesh; and so He came in search of a chariot in which to ride to the underworld. This chariot was the body which he received from the Virgin; in it he invaded death’s fortress, broke open its strong room and scattered all its treasures. At length He came upon Eve, the mother of all the living. She was the vineyard whose enclosure her own hands had enabled death to violate, so that she could taste its fruit; so the mother of all the living became the source of death for every living creature. But in her stead Mary grew up, a new vine in place of the old. Christ, the new life, dwelt within her. When death, with its customary impudence, came foraging for her mortal fruit, it encountered its own destruction in the hidden life which that fruit contained. All unsuspecting, it

swallowed Him up, and in so doing, released life itself and set free a multitude of men. He who was also the carpenter's glorious son set up His Cross above death's all-consuming jaws, and led the human race into the dwelling place of life. Since a tree had brought about the downfall of mankind, it was upon a tree that mankind crossed over to the realm of life. Bitter was the branch that had once been grafted upon that ancient tree, but sweet the young shoot that has now been grafted in, the shoot in which we are meant to recognise the Lord Whom no creature can resist. We give Thee glory, O Lord, Who raised up Thy cross to span the jaws of death like a bridge, by which souls might pass from the region of the dead to the land of the living. We give Thee glory Who put on the body of a single mortal man, and made it the source of immortality for every other mortal man. Thou art incontestably alive. Thy murderers sowed Thy body in the earth as farmers sow grain, but it sprang up and yielded an abundant harvest of men raised from the dead. Come then, my brothers and sisters, let us offer our Lord the great and all-embracing sacrifice of our love, pouring out our treasury of hymns and prayers before Him who offered His cross in sacrifice to God for the enrichment of us all."

**VEN. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN, + 379 A.D.**

"WHEN the divine Israel laid his hands crosswise on the heads of the children, he signified that as the honour due unto the first-born was set aside, so would be the people serving the Law. Wherefore, when suspected of error in so doing, he changed not the life-bearing figure; for cried he, the newly-planted people of Christ God, walled about by the Cross, shall take the higher place."

**SAINT COSMAS OF MAIUMA, + 787 A.D.**

"WHAT does it mean to take up your cross? It means the willing acceptance, at the hand of Providence, of every means of healing, bitter though it may be, that is offered. Do great catastrophes fall on you? Be obedient to God's will, as Noah was. Is

sacrifice demanded of you? Give yourself into God's hands with the same faith as Abram had when he went to sacrifice his son. Is your property ruined? Did your children die suddenly? Suffer it all with patience, cleaving to God in your heart, as Job did. Do your friends forsake you, and you find yourself surrounded by enemies? Bear it all without grumbling, and with faith that God's help is at hand, as the Apostles did."

**SAINT NICOLAS VELIMIROVICH, + 1956 A.D.**

"IT IS OFTEN said that miracles occurred only in ancient times, but here is a miracle which took place just before Russia's bloody devastation, a miracle attested by eyewitnesses, which clearly demonstrates the life-giving and saving power of the Sign of the Cross. A priest stopped at an inn. Other people were there, and they were all invited to dine. When they had gathered at the table, the priest, as a pastor of the Church, said to the company: 'Brethren, before we begin to eat, let us first say a prayer.' Every-one stood up. The priest said the Lord's Prayer, 'Our Father...' and then, turning to the table, he made the sign of the Cross over it, blessing the food. At that very moment, a large pitcher of mead standing on the table, for no visible reason, without anyone's touching it, burst into smithereens. The mead spilled out; everyone gasped. The hostess, clutching her head ran out of the room with a shriek. The next minute she rushed back and threw herself at the feet of the priest. Then and there she confessed that she had placed the pitcher on the table by mistake. The mead it held was poisoned. She had prepared it to poison her husband. She had meant to bring out a pitcher of good mead for the guests, but the two pitchers looked alike and she had inadvertently taken the poisoned one. Had they not said the Lord's Prayer, had the priest not blessed the table with the sign of the Cross, there would have been a fatal catastrophe. Their lives were preserved by the Sign of the Cross."

**SAINT PHILARET OF NEW YORK, + 1985 A.D.**

# *The Universal Exaltation of the Cross*

THE Exaltation of the Cross is one of the Twelve Great Feasts in the yearly church cycle. It commemorates two historical events: first, the finding of the Life-giving Cross in the year 326, and second, its recovery from Persia in 628.

## **History of the Feast**

In the first centuries of Christianity, during the years of persecution, the pagans wished to destroy all evidence of the life of Jesus Christ, and the Cross on which He was crucified disappeared. With the conversion of Emperor Constantine the Great, Christians were at liberty to worship openly and build churches. The emperor's mother, Saint Helen, longed to find the True Cross of Christ. She travelled to Jerusalem and was told by a very old Jew that the Cross was buried beneath the temple of the pagan goddess Venus, built in 119 A.D. by the Roman Emperor Hadrian.

The temple was torn down, and digging in the earth below uncovered three wooden crosses. The small board which had hung over Christ with the inscription "Jesus King of the Jews," had long since fallen off; there was no way of telling which was the True Cross and which were the crosses of the two thieves crucified on either side of Christ. A sick woman was brought and likewise a dead man who was being carried to burial. The three crosses were laid in turn one by one upon the sick woman and upon the dead man. Two of the crosses had no effect, but through contact with the third cross, the sick woman was healed of her infirmity and the dead man came to life. These miracles clearly indicated which of the three was Christ's Cross.

Hearing of this discovery, all the faithful desired to see the Cross of the Lord and to venerate it. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Macarius, took the Cross onto a raised platform and lifted it on

high, exalting it, for all to see. The people fell to their knees, bowing down before the Cross and crying out repeatedly: “Lord, have mercy!”

To house the True Cross, Saint Helen had a church built over the Holy Sepulchre. The church was consecrated on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 335, an event also commemorated in the service hymns of the Feast. The finding and exaltation of the Cross was appointed to be celebrated annually on the following day.

The Life-giving Cross was kept in Jerusalem until the year 614 when the Holy City fell to the Persians who looted the Church of the Resurrection and took the True Cross back with them to Persia. Fourteen years later Emperor Heraclius concluded a peace with the Persians, and the Holy Cross was returned to the Orthodox Christians. Tradition relates that the Emperor was unable to enter the Holy City with the Cross until he took off his shoes and his imperial robes and continued dressed humbly and barefoot; then he was able to carry the Cross into the Church of the Resurrection where it was once again triumphantly exalted. It was then resolved that the Feast be celebrated by the Church in all parts of the world, for which reason it is called the Universal Exaltation.

### **The Service**

The Vigil for the Feast, one of the most moving and impressive services of the year, contains several distinguishing features. At Vespers, the cross, decorated with flowers and sweet-smelling herbs, is placed on the Holy Table. Following the Gospel reading in Matins, the faithful sing “Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ...” usually sung only during Sunday Matins. At the end of the Great Doxology, to the slow singing of the Trisagion, “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us,” the priest, carrying the Cross above his head, brings it out from the altar and places it on a stand in the centre of the church. He censes the cross on all four sides, and everyone prostrates before it to the singing of the hymn: “We worship Thy Cross, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection do we glorify.” Then the faithful, following the celebrants, venerate the cross in turn, making three full prostrations, and receive anointing. The cross remains in the

centre of the church until the Apodosis or leave-taking of the Feast on 21<sup>st</sup> September.

In cathedrals and monasteries, the adoration is preceded by the ceremony of exalting the cross. After the cross is brought out from the altar, the bishop or archimandrite takes it up in his hands and raises it on high. Then, as the people chant “Lord have mercy” a hundred times, he slowly lowers the cross nearly to the ground and just as slowly raises it. This is done five times as the celebrant faces first east, then west, south, north and east again, signifying that “the Cross is the guardian of the whole world” and through it “the world is sanctified.” In some churches the cross has rose water poured over it during these exaltations. The rose water is caught in a basin of flowers held by the acolytes, and the flowers are distributed to the faithful at the end of the service.

Although it is one of the major Church Feasts, the Exaltation is always kept as a fast day, because together with the joy of the finding of the Cross, this great “weapon of peace and sign of victory,” we are also reminded of the sufferings which our Lord endured in being crucified.

### **On the Sign of the Cross**

Every Orthodox Christian daily ends his evening prayers with a prayer to the Venerable Cross: “As wax melteth from the presence of fire, so let the demons perish from the presence of those who love God and who sign themselves with the sign of the Cross...” When properly applied, the sign of the Cross is a most formidable weapon in a Christian’s armour.

The power of the Cross in the unseen warfare with the demons is illustrated in countless lives of saints. One of the most striking examples is found in the life of the holy martyrs, Saints Cyprian and Justina. An expert sorcerer before his conversion, Saint Cyprian was engaged by a pagan youth to use his magic in order to seduce the Christian maid Justina. But even with the help of the prince of demons, the sorcerer was powerless before the maiden who “fled to the defence of the Cross of the Lord and placed its honourable sign on her forehead,”

causing the demons to depart defeated. This brought Cyprian to his senses, and he railed at the evil one whom he had served for so long: “O destroyer and deceiver of all... Now I have discovered your weakness. For if you fear even the shadow of the Cross and tremble at the name of Christ, then what will you do when Christ Himself comes to you?” Furious at Cyprian’s rebuke, the devil began to beat and strangle him. Already scarcely alive, Cyprian “remembered the sign of the Cross, by the power of which Justina had opposed all the demons’ power, and he cried out: “O God of Justina, help me!” Then, raising his hand, he made the sign of the Cross, and the devil immediately leaped away from him like an arrow shot from a bow.

The power of the Cross is given to each and every Christian. But just as a soldier must learn to properly wield his weapons in battle, so a warrior of Christ must learn how correctly to make the sign of the Cross. A shield has no effect if carelessly waved about in the air. Likewise, there are many who receive no benefit from the sign of the Cross because they make it mechanically or haphazardly.

Some time ago we [Orthodox America] were justly taken to task by one of our readers for an all-too-common inaccuracy in describing the making of the sign of the Cross: “We touch the forehead, the breast...” Our reader pointed out that the first edition of the widely used Orthodox catechism, Archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy’s *Law of God*, contained the same error which was corrected in the second edition with the following explanation: in making the sign of the Cross from forehead to breast and then shoulder to shoulder, “the lower end of the cross turns out to be shorter than the upper one; i.e., the cross comes out upside-down.” Man thereby inverts the Cross of Christ “at which only the demons rejoice.” The Holy Fathers taught that the sign of the Cross should be made by touching first the *brow* (the forehead), marking the upper part of the cross, secondly the *navel* (lower abdomen), marking the lower part of the cross, thirdly the *right frame* (shoulder) and fourthly the *left frame*, representing from end to end the horizontal bar of the Cross.



This is not to say that the correct external formation of the sign of the Cross of itself carries the power to wound demons; it must be made with faith. Saint John of Cronstadt cautions: “In order that the unbelieving heart should not think that the sign of the Cross and the name of Christ act miraculously by themselves, apart from, and independently of Christ Himself, this same Cross and name perform no miracles until I see Jesus Christ with the eyes of my heart... and believe with my whole heart all that He has accomplished for our salvation.”

Parents and godparents, from their earliest years make sure your children learn this and how to hold their right hand - with the thumb, index finger and middle finger joined at the tip to touch the four points of the Cross, the three representing the Most Holy Trinity, and the ring finger and little finger folded into the palm to confess the two natures of Christ, Divine and human - as they use it to make the sign of the Cross, and teach then always to say a prayer mentally as they make the sign of the Cross, and not simply flap their hand about.\*\*\* It is not simply a Meghan Markle wave!

The Cross, once a tool of death, has become a means to life, an instrument of our salvation; it gives strength to resist temptation, to refrain from gossip or harsh words; it dispels fear. If we learn to use the Cross effectively, we shall come through experience to understand the Apostle’s words: *But God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Footnote:**

\*\*\* This can be done if parents are careful and caring in bringing up their children. Just recently we had a visit from a family from America with two young children, and the younger one of these, a three-year-old little girl, knew exactly how to ask a priest’s blessing, whereas sadly in our congregation we have parents with children entering their teens who still have no idea even how to make the sign of the Cross.

**This article was a slightly amplified copy of an earlier one from  
“Orthodox America.”**

## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“ABOUT the Panagia of Pantanassa icon in particular. This icon is renowned for miracles against cancer and other illnesses. But, it is of our holy Queen and the Lord of all, so why does this particular icon have such specific ‘powers’ so to speak? Wouldn’t any icon of our Panagia and Lord also do such miracles? How does a particular icon work wonders in a very specific set of afflictions? Please do not get me wrong, I do not wonder in doubt but in awe, so I am just curious. Perhaps it is a mystery because God does what He wills, but if you have a deeper explanation for me I would really love to hear it please, Father.” - K.D., by email.*

THERE are some icons which are manifestly miraculous and others, they do not seem to be. How or why this is, I do not think we, here below, can begin to understand, we can only trust that it is the Mother of God’s own good will towards us. Also when icons work miracles is a mystery. When I was with the Russians they had a 13th century wonder-working icon which I had on occasion to take to the homes of the people. We took it to one old lady whose house was a complete slum inside and so full of clutter we could not get in. Being unable to, we put a cloth over her coal bunker by the back door, and put the icon on it and chanted the service to the icon. The air all around was immediately filled with the sweetest fragrance. It had not happened in other homes. These things, as you say, are a mystery and have to be accepted as such... In the acathist to the Mother of God, we remember the seeming impossibility of her becoming a mother and remaining a virgin. But the things of God are not bound by our poor, weak human conceptions. Our Faith is not a rational construct like that of the R.C.s and Protestants, but is indeed **faith**, trusting in God’s love for us. Admittedly as we grow we learn to understand more and of course the saints came to even greater understanding, but not by argument, rational construction, but by prayer, fasting, living the life of virtue and thus being enlightened (not by their own thoughts and understandings) - but by God’s grace.



“Faith is the beginning of love;  
the end of love is knowledge of God.”

ABBA EVAGRIUS, + 399 A.D.

# On Reading The Gospels

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

WHEN reading the Gospel, do not seek pleasure, do not seek exalted states, and do not seek brilliant thoughts - seek to see the unadulterated, holy truth.

Do not be satisfied with a mere fruitless reading of the Gospel; strive to fulfil its commandments, and read it with your deeds. This is the book of life, and you have to read it with your life.

Do not think that there is no reason why the most sacred of books, the Four Gospels, begins with the Gospel of Saint Matthew and ends with the Gospel of Saint John. Matthew teaches more about how to fulfil God's will, and his instructions are particularly appropriate for beginners on the path to God; John expounds upon the image of the union of God with man renewed by the commandments, which is something accessible only to those who are progressing along the divine path.

When opening the book of the Holy Gospel to read it, remember that it decides your fate. We will be judged according to it, and depending upon how we were here on Earth with regard to it, we will receive our lot either in eternal blessedness, or eternal punishment (cf. Jn. 12:48).

God revealed His will to a paltry speck of dust: man! In your hands is the book in which His great and all-holy will has been set forth. You can accept it, or you can reject the will of your Creator and Saviour - it all depends upon what you yourself want. Your eternal life and eternal death are in your own hands - just think how careful and wise you must be. Do not trifle with your eternal fate!

Pray with a contrite spirit to the Lord, so that He would open your eyes to see the wonders hidden in His Law (cf. Ps. 118:18), which is the Gospel. Your eyes will be opened, and you will behold the wondrous healing of the soul from sin, which is wrought by God's word. The very healing of bodily infirmities was merely

proof of the healing of the soul - proof for fleshly people, for minds palsied by sensuality (cf. Lk. 5:24).

Read the Gospels with extreme reverence and attention. Do not consider anything in them to be of little importance or unworthy of full contemplation. Every iota of it radiates life. And to be negligent about life is death.

Read about the lepers, the paralysed, the blind, the lame, and the demonically possessed whom the Lord healed; contemplate the fact that your soul, which bears many different forms of the wounds of sin and is held captive by the demons, is just like these sick people. Learn from the Gospel to have faith that the Lord Who healed them will also heal you, if you will diligently pray to Him for your healing.

Acquire a disposition of soul that enables you to receive healing. Those who are capable of receiving healing are those who recognise their sinfulness and resolve to abandon it (cf. Jn 9:39-41). For the proud righteous man, that is, the sinner, who does not see his sinfulness, the Saviour is unnecessary and useless (cf. Matt. 9:13).

Vision of our sins, vision of the fallen state that the entire human race is in, is a special gift of God. Pray down this gift for yourself, and the Heavenly Doctor's book, the Gospels, will be more comprehensible to you.

Strive to assimilate the Gospel with your mind and heart, so that your mind would, so to speak, swim in it, live in it. Then your activities will more readily become evangelical. This can be achieved through constant, reverent reading and study of the Bible.

Saint Pachomius the Great, one of the most well-known of the ancient fathers, knew the Holy Gospel by heart and imputed to his disciples, as God revealed to him, the essential need to learn it. In this way the Gospel accompanied them everywhere, and guided them always.

Even now, why should Christian educators not adorn the memories of innocent children with the Gospel, instead of littering them with Aesop's fables and various sorts of rubbish?

What happiness, what riches is the acquisition of the Gospels by memory! We can't foresee the drastic changes and catastrophes that can happen to us throughout our earthly life. When it is possessed by memory the Gospel can be read by the blind; it goes to prison with the prisoner; it speaks to the labourer in the field, bedewing him; it instructs the judge during the trial; it guides the merchant at the market; it gladdens the sick during exhausting sleeplessness and oppressive solitude.

Do not dare to explain the Gospel and other books of Holy Scripture yourself. The Scriptures were pronounced by the holy prophets and apostles, and they were pronounced not at their own will, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Ptr 1:21). How could it be anything but madness to explain them according to our own will?

Having pronounced the word of God through the prophets and apostles, the Holy Spirit expounded upon it through the holy fathers. And both the word of God and its explanation are gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is the only explanation the Holy Orthodox Church accepts! This is the only explanation accepted by her true children!

Whoever explains the Gospels and all the Scriptures according to his own will thus rejects the explanation of them by the holy fathers, the Holy Spirit. Whoever rejects the explanation of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, undoubtedly rejects also the Holy Scriptures themselves.

And it can happen that the word of God, the word of salvation, for its presumptuous exegetists becomes the savour of death, a double-edged sword, with which they pierce themselves unto eternal perdition (cf. 2 Ptr 3:16; 2 Cor. 2:15–16). Arius, Nestorius, Eutychius, and other heretics murdered themselves forever with it, for they wilfully and presumptuously explained the Scriptures unto blasphemy.

But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word (Es. 66:2) says the Lord. Be this way with regard to the Gospels and the Lord, Who is present in them.

Leave your sinful life behind, leave your earthly passions and pleasures, renounce them with your soul, and then the Gospel will become accessible and understandable to you.

The Lord says, He that hateth his life in this world - the soul who has rejected fallenness and love of sin as if by nature, as if by his life - shall keep it [his life] unto life eternal (Jn. 12:25). But the Gospel is closed to him who loves his own life, who does not have the resolve for self-denial; he reads the letters, but the word of life as the Spirit remains hidden from him as if behind an impenetrable veil. When the Lord was on earth in His most pure flesh, many saw Him, while many others did not. What good is it when a person looks with his bodily eyes, which he possesses in common with the animals, but sees nothing with the eyes of his soul, the mind and heart? And these days as well, many read the Gospel and yet have never read it, and do not know it at all.

As one venerable desert dweller said, the Gospel must be read with a pure mind, and is understood according to the measure that the reader fulfils its commandments by his deeds. But it is not possible to acquire a precise and perfect revelation of the Gospel through your own efforts; this is a gift of Christ.

When the Holy Spirit has come to abide in the His true and faithful servant, He makes him also a perfect reader, and a true fulfiller of the Gospel.

The Gospel is a depiction of the qualities of the new Man, Who is The Lord from Heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). This new Man is God by nature. The holy tribe of His people, who believe in Him and are transformed in Him, He makes gods according to grace.

You who are wallowing in the stinking, filthy morass of sins and find pleasure in this! Lift up your heads and look at the pure heavens - that is your place! God gives you the dignity of gods, and you, rejecting that dignity, choose another worth for yourself: the worth of animals - and the most impure ones at that. Come to your senses! Leave that foul-smelling morass, cleanse yourselves with the confession of your sins, wash yourselves with tears of repentance, make yourselves beautiful with tears

of contrition, rise from the earth and ascend to the heavens; the Gospel summons you there. While ye have light, the Gospel, in which Christ is hidden as a treasure, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of Light, which is Christ (Jn 12:36).

Translation by Nun Cornelia



## THE COMING MONTH

SEPTEMBER is the first month in the **Church Year**, and after seven days, reminding us of the seven days of Creation, on the 8<sup>th</sup> (21<sup>st</sup>) we celebrate the **Great Feast of the Nativity of the all-holy Mother of God**, the prelude of a New Creation. As we chant in the Akathist Hymn, *New was the Creation which the Creator showed us His creatures, when He sprang forth from the seedless womb; and He preserved it incorrupt, even as it was, that we, seeing this marvel, may praise her.* On this feast Saint Gregory Palamas writes: “If it were necessary to name the most appropriate season of all, and if, just as there is a time to sow and a time to reap, a time to plant and a time to harvest, and a time for everything else, you are looking for a season especially suited for beginning a good work, then it is Autumn, particularly this month, which is our first month and the start of the year, when our salvation had its origin, as we celebrate today. This sacred feast and holy day that we are keeping is the first to commemorate our recall and re-creation according to Grace, for on it all things began to be made new; enduring precepts began to be brought in instead of temporary ones, the spirit instead of the letter, the truth instead of shadows.”

Two days after the New Year, 3<sup>rd</sup> / 16<sup>th</sup> September, we celebrate the **Enshrinement of the Sacred Relics of Saint Edward the Martyr** here at Brookwood in 1984. Naturally we will observe this feast by serving a Vigil on the eve, and a festal Liturgy on the day of the feast itself.

Shortly thereafter, we have a second Great Feast, that of the **Universal Exaltation of the Holy Cross**, 14<sup>th</sup> / 27<sup>th</sup> Sep-

tember, about which we have included an article and quotations from the Fathers above.

Among the Saints we celebrate this month we have:-

The **Holy New Martyr Lygeri** (6<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup>) was born in the village of Anavatos on the island of Chios in A.D. 1804. Her parents were simple islanders who had great faith in God, and passed this faith on to their daughter, who was loved by all. In 1822 the Turkish pasha of Chios beheld the beauty of the young maiden Lygeri while he was in her village. He immediately desired to have her and ordered that she be brought before him. He promised her wealth, glory, honour and power if she would consent to being his lover. But she, immediately, rejected his offer. Her refusal greatly disappointed the pasha, but he held on to the hope that she would change her mind and fulfil his sinful desire. He would frequently send men to the village, who renewed the offer of the pasha to the young maiden, but each time she firmly rejected the proposal. On the 6<sup>th</sup> September that year, shortly after the Great Massacre of Chios, when the villagers were celebrating the Miracle of the Archangel Michael in Chonae, the Turkish pasha had the eighteen-year-old maiden Lygeri abducted. He had sent his soldiers to abduct her while everyone was distracted by the celebration and dancing. When they saw the soldiers, they ran away and scattered. Lygeri remained unmoved, and when the soldiers approached her and tried to get her to willingly go with her, she refused once more, so she was taken by force to the pasha, who waited for her in a place called Elenta. Throughout this ordeal Lygeri remained firm in her faith in Christ and constantly prayed to the Bridegroom of her soul. On their way to the pasha, when they reached a steep point, she caught hold of a wild plum tree with such strength, that it was impossible for the soldiers to peel her off the tree. They then began to abuse her, curse her and threatened to kill her on the spot if she refused to let go of the tree. She responded: "I was born a Christian and a Christian I will die. I will not change my faith. I refuse to go any further. Do with me as you wish." Then a brutal slave named Lazo took out his yatagan (an Ottoman blade) and decapitated her. He then took her head and ran on to Elenta. Some Christians who witnessed



this began to chase after him, though in vain. Her headless body reddened the earth with her blood. Her mother ran to her, with tears in her eyes, but also pride, because her daughter was made worthy to be a martyr for Christ. She therefore took three handfuls of her blood and made the sign of the cross on nearby rocks with it. One of these can still be seen today. When Lazo arrived in Elenta with the head of Lygeri, he presented it to the pasha. The pasha, who wanted Lygeri alive to be his lover, was enraged at Lazo and beheaded him. He then departed with sadness for the city of Chios and raised a black flag on his ship. The place of her martyrdom became a place of pilgrimage for the people of Chios.

Our **Venerable Mother Wulfhilda, Abbess of Barking** (9<sup>th</sup> / 22<sup>nd</sup>) was the daughter of a wealthy nobleman named Wulfhelm. Wulfhelm had several children by his pious wife, but for eighteen years before the conception of Wulfhilda they had lived together as brother and sister so as to give themselves up more completely to prayer and fasting. One night, however, an angel appeared to each of them separately three times, and told them that they should come together so as to beget a daughter who would become a bride of Christ. The next morning they told each other the vision, and discovered that it had been identical for the two of them. So they accepted it as having come from God. Thus was the saint conceived and born; and shortly after her weaning she was given over to be brought up at the convent in Wilton. One day the adolescent King Edgar came to Wilton on a hunting expedition and was struck by the beauty of the novice Wulfhilda. He made advances to her, but neither by flatteries nor threats could she be persuaded by him, but rather fled from him as a dove from a hawk. Not daring to snatch her from out of a monastery, the king conceived a cunning stratagem. The virgin had a paternal aunt named Wenfleda, who was abbess of a convent at Wherwell. Tempted by the desire to have a relative of hers as queen, she agreed to pretend that she was ill and lure the virgin to her on the pretext of wishing to dispose of her possessions before she died. So when Wulfhilda arrived she found her aunt, not ill as she had supposed, but full of good cheer from a royal banquet, and with the king sitting beside her.

Everyone greeted and congratulated the new arrival, and she was commanded to deck herself royally and come before the king. Thus, shining in the splendour of golden raiment, she was acclaimed by everybody as worthy of being queen. The king sat her beside him, between himself and her aunt, and tempted her with blandishments, riches and the title of Queen. But she was silent, thinking only of flight, and pouring out her heart in prayer to God. She would not eat, feigning illness; and indeed, she was sick with anxiety, which made the feast oppressive for her. At length, pleading tiredness, she was given permission to go out for a short time. The king, knowing her intention, had placed guards at the doors to follow her even into her bedroom. Eventually she escaped through an underground passage, her guide being the same angel who had announced her birth to her parents. Then, wandering through pathless places, she came to the humble hut of a peasant woman in Wherwell, where she stayed the night as a beggar. Meanwhile, there was much coming and going from the king's court, where everyone was worried, not so much because she had escaped, as that she might have perished. But she was not lured out of her hiding-place by the shouts of the men or the sounding of the trumpets, remembering the words of David: "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be shaken... He that dwelleth in the help of the Most High shall abide in the shelter of the God of heaven. He is my God, and I will hope in Him. For He shall deliver thee from every troubling word." In the morning the king went away, and Wulfhilda, having generously rewarded her hostess, found her travelling companions and returned to the safe refuge of Wilton. When the king discovered this, he abandoned all his kingdom's affairs and flew back to Wilton. But she could not be persuaded by any means even to talk to him. However, he caught her in the courtyard outside the church, and, leaping at her as she was fleeing across the threshold, he took hold of her sleeve. But then a miracle took place: the sleeve came away in his hand without the slightest sign of tearing or cutting. She fled into the altar and took hold of the box containing the holy relics. But the king was smitten in his heart as once was David at the words of the Prophet Nathan. Trembling, he realised that the sleeve coming

away in his hand indicated that she had been cut away from his lust by God Himself. Then he said: "Fear not, O virgin acceptable to God. I promise in the sight of God that I shall molest you no longer, but will rather show myself to be your helper and protector with all benevolence. Only pray, I beseech you, that the most kind God will forgive my vanity and rashness. And now farewell, you who are given to a better Spouse. You will be dearer to us now, with regard to your chaste and higher and incorruptible desire." The virgin accepted these words with a humble nod. But she did not leave the place of prayer until the king had departed. True to his promise, the king now extended his help to the saint, making her abbess of Barking in Essex and restoring it to what it had been under Saint Ethelburga in the seventh century. He also greatly endowed the monastery at Horton in Dorset and likewise gave it, together with some other churches in Wessex, to Wulfhilda. And all this before she had even been tonsured! When she did come to be tonsured, the grace of God was seen to descend upon her head in the form of a dove which was whiter than snow. She governed the two convents which had been given to her for many years. Caring for the nuns with maternal love, she was an example to them in all virtue: in prayer and fasting and abstinence and in every kind of lowly work. She was especially given to almsgiving. Early in the morning, she was at the doors of the church distributing alms to the poor and anticipating their petitions. Once a woman brought her blind child to her. The blessed one made the sign of the cross with a gold ring over the eyes of the child, and he immediately opened his eyes and, seeing the light of the ring and his mother's face, laughed joyfully. The saint told the woman not to publicise the miracle, but she was unable to restrain herself. Once she gave hospitality to Saint Aethelwold, bishop of Winchester, and his retinue, who were sailing down the Thames to meet the king and his fleet at Sandwich. Many people came to meet the prelate, and the demands on the supply of alcoholic drinks were great. But the level of wine never fell below its original level throughout the day, much to the astonishment of the bishop's servants who had measured it with a rod beforehand. On another occasion, she and the virgin Lenfleda

were carrying some heavy jugs of water on their shoulders. But, finding them too heavy, they were forced to put them down. Then Wulfhilda said: "It seems to me that we are good for nothing: the beasts of burden are more efficient and deserve their food more than we do." In this way she gave a lesson in humility to Lenfleda, whom she knew, by the gift of prophecy, would be her successor. Lenfleda had been brought up in luxurious surroundings, but had always longed to be a nun. When her parents were about to give her in marriage, she ran away to the saint, who told her to preserve her virginity until the Coming of the Lord. She received the monastic tonsure, and was thereafter inseparable from her mistress. As we have said, Wulfhilda was granted the gift of prophecy by the Lord. Once she rebuked one of the church's gold-workers for profligacy. But he responded with a torrent of furious words. "Before your death," she said, "you will atone for the crime you have committed, as well as for your abuse." A year before his death, the man became mute and was confined to his bed with a chronic illness. Remembering the saint's prophecy, he repented deeply of his sin. After she had ruled the two monasteries in peace for several years, the envy of certain priests in Barking was aroused against the saint, and they prevailed upon Queen Ælfthryth [Saint Edward's step-mother] to cast her out and install them. The sisters escorted their mother out of the monastery with tears and groans, as if they themselves wished to go with her. But she comforted them, saying on the threshold of the church: "Weep not, my dearest daughters, but as I have instructed you, so remain in the Lord." And, touching the threshold with her hand, she said: "I tell you that on this very day twenty years from now, and by this very door by which I am going out, I shall return." Then she retired to her other monastery at Horton, from where she continued to instruct and exhort the sisters of Barking. Once Queen Ælfthryth visited the orphaned monastery. Immediately a variety of disasters overtook her: animals died, then her own men, and finally she herself fell ill. As she was praying fearfully, the first abbess of the convent, Saint Ethelburga, appeared to her, looking ill and miserable, and with her clothing torn and in rags. "Do you see the shame of my

wretchedness,” she said to the astonished queen. “You have taken away the ornament of my glory, the holy Wulfhilda, and in her long exile you have covered me with this squalid attire. And by what right do you occupy this holy place? Therefore I tell you that unless you recall her as soon as possible you will not recover from this illness but will die of it.” Terrified, the queen sent messengers with all speed to Wulfhilda, and received her back with all the honour due to her. This happened on the very day, and by the same door, as had been prophesied by the saint. Then the queen recovered from her illness, by which she knew that the cause of it had been her expulsion of Wulfhilda. For seven more years the saint ruled both monasteries in peace, drawing all hearts by her love and gentleness and angelic life. Then, on the feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple (2<sup>nd</sup> February) in about the year 1000, she fell and hurt herself badly. “We have fallen like a leaning wall,” she said, “and soon the house, too, will fall.” Then she asked when was the feast of the translation of the relics of Saint Aethelwold. The tenth of September, she was told. “Good,” she replied. “I have a little time left with you, until the birth of our supreme mistress, and the feast of our beloved hierarch.” And so, on the vigil of Saint Aethelwold’s translation, 9<sup>th</sup> September, which was during the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, after prayers and fastings and vigils, and having partaken of the Body and Blood of the Lord, she reposed in peace. She died in London, but her body was conveyed immediately to Barking and buried there. Many miracles were wrought in the presence of her holy relics, as well as at her other monastery of Horton. When the sacred relics of Saint Wulfhilda were being conveyed the seven miles from London to Barking, a certain man who had been rebuked for his sins by the saint during her earthly lifetime put his hand to the coffin. Immediately it became very heavy, as if rooted to the spot, so that no-one could move it. Everybody noticed this and blamed the man, whereupon he departed trembling. Immediately the coffin became light again. But the guilty man, overcome with grief, followed the procession with bitter tears and groans. At length the Lord had mercy on him, and his friends called him to help in carrying the body the last two miles

to the monastery. There it was laid to rest. Once a woman who was both blind and lame came to the monastery at Horton. Having prayed, she received the sight of her eyes, which encouraged her to pray more fervently for the use of her legs. Then it was intimated to her that she should go to the saint at Barking. Thither she dragged herself with great difficulty, and kept vigil at the tomb. Suddenly she was able to stand upright, healed in both her feet. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1030, the relics of the Venerable Wulfhilda were placed together with those of Saints Ethelburga and Hildelitha, the first two abbesses of Barking.

Our **Venerable Father Bassian of Tikсна** (12<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup>) was born and given the name Basil. He was a peasant from the village of Strelitsa (by other accounts, from the village of Burtsevo), near the city of Totma. Married with two children, he was by trade a tailor. Leaving his family, he became a monk under Elder Therapon in the Spaso-Sumorinsky Monastery at the River Sukhona, founded by Saint Theodosius of Totma. There he spent several years in asceticism and obedience. At first they were hesitant in accepting him as a monk, since he had abandoned his family, but they eventually admitted him and he was given the name Bassian at tonsure. In A.D. 1594, with the blessing of the abbot, he left the monastery and resettled with an icon of the Holy Trinity not far from Totma, at the River Tikсна, near a church named for Saint Nicolas the Wonderworker. At first he lived in the church portico, but then he made himself a cell near the church. Saint Bassian attended every divine service. For thirty years he wore chains on his body with the blessing of his spiritual father Elder Therapon: on his shoulders a heavy chain, on his loins an iron belt, and on his head beneath his head covering an iron cap. Yearning for solitude, he admitted no one into his cell, except his spiritual father. He lived by the alms which they put by his small window. Saint Bassian reposed on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1624. Only at burial was it discovered how much he had humbled his flesh. At the place of Saint Bassian's ascetic struggles a monastery was established in honour of the Icon of the Saviour Not-Made-by-Hands. Veneration of Saint Bassian began in the year 1647, when during a deadly plague that killed many people and

animals, many received healing at his tomb. The plague especially raged in Tiksna. The entire area being covered with forests, on the orders of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, a guard was put on all the roads to apprehend any passers-by, nor was any sailing allowed along the river. But Moscow merchants who travelled that way to Arkhangelsk suffered heavy losses from this lockdown. Therefore, they asked the Emperor to remove the guards. Then, at the order of the Tsar, John Akingerov, a nobleman, was sent to Tiksna to investigate the case. Arriving in Tiksna and having served a supplicatory service in the Church of the Saviour, Akingerov went into the chapel, built over the grave of Bassian. Seeing the chains of Bassian, he was amazed at the height of his exploits. Immediately he ordered all the people of Tiksna to gather for prayer. They served a moleben and nine people died suddenly. The people were terrified. Akingerov, the priest and all the peasants in trepidation fell before the tomb of Saint Bassian and with tears prayed to him: "Father Bassian, save us from this deadly and pernicious plague!" And after the prayer service the plague stopped immediately.



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

**BURIAL AT SAINT EDWARD CEMETERY**

ON THURSDAY, 4<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> August, **Smaragda Foundethakis** was laid to rest in our cemetery with her late husband, George. The funeral was chanted by **Protopresbyter Christodoulos Christodoulou** of the **Saint Nectarius Greek Orthodox Church in Battersea**. He kindly donated his ministerial fees to our Brotherhood, and Smaragda's family asked that the flowers not be left at the grave but taken into our church, which they served to decorate beautifully for the impending Great Feast of the Transfiguration.

## ***SAINT EDWARD BOOKLET***

THE Brotherhood has just published a ninety-page booklet, **“Saint Edward the Martyr - The Life, Recorded Miracles and Supplicatory Canon.”** In it we have also recorded some of his more recent miracles, and a short summary of the dispute over the guardianship of the sacred relics. It is now on sale here for £7.50 and may be ordered via our website:

[www.saintedwardbrotherhood.org](http://www.saintedwardbrotherhood.org)

Visit the “Shop” page there and click on “Books” and you will see it highlighted in first place on that page.

## ***THE LIGGY CAMP***

THIS YEAR, the **Annual Liggy Camp** was held as usual just before the start of the Dormition Fast. Surprise participants this year were **His Grace Bishop John of Melbourne and Australia** (ROCA) and the **nun Evgenia**. **Archimandrite Daniel** kindly took the holy things necessary from Brookwood, and afterwards returned them to our church. On the Sunday at camp, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and on St Olaf’s day, Bishop John celebrated Matins and Liturgy.

## ***NEW ICON***

AIDED and abetted by his parents, Gregory and Marina, **Laurence Ferguson** has recently donated a hand-painted icon of his name saint, **Saint Laurence of Canterbury** to Saint Edward’s church. It was painted by the sisters of the Holy Angels’ Convent, Afidnai, Greece.

## ***VISITORS***

ON Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> July, **Nickolas Diafos** of the **Saint Nectarius of Pentapolis Church in Seattle, Washington**, paid a brief visit to Saint Edward’s Shrine during his recent stay in England, travelling down from London by train to do so.



ON Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> July, **Burpham Summer Walk Group** visited the church and exhibition room, being offered hospitality in the old mortuary building. Arrangements for this visit had been made **Andrew Plumridge**, and the group was led by **Sue Hackman**.

ON Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> August, **Fr John Somers** from the States arrived during our celebration of Matins, having made his way here directly from the airport. After the Divine Liturgy he joined us at the Parish Breakfast and met and spoke with our parishioners. On the Monday he visited London, and left for Serbia on the Tuesday. He hopes to come to Brookwood again on the weekend after the Dormition before returning to America.



## Practical Tip

IN our first article this month, we have some practical instruction on making the sign of the Cross. This is fundamentally important because it should never be done heedlessly or carelessly. Parents, godparents and other teachers should instruct the young not only how to make the sign, but also what it means, and that they should always accompany the physical action with interior prayer. Sadly in the churches of the Orthodox diaspora, generations of children have grown up being instructed exactly how and when to perform certain ritual observances, but with little instruction on the meaning of what they were doing, why they were doing it, or that it should be a prayerful action. As many of them sadly also had little understanding of the language in which the services were being conducted, as they grew through their teen years and gained some independence this seemed to them meaningless mumbo-jumbo, and so many lapsed from the Faith. Actually, the contrary should be the case - that our various church practices bolster and uphold our Faith, but this cannot be so unless from the earliest years the young are given adequate instruction.