

# *The Shepherd*

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## FROM THE FATHERS

“FOUR PERIODS [of the year] have been set aside as times of abstinence, so that over the course of the year we might recognise that we are constantly in need of purification, and that amid life’s dis-tractions, we should always strive by means of fasting and acts of charity to extirpate sin, sin which is multiplied in our transitory flesh and in our impure desires.”

**Saint Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, + 461 A.D.**

“THE undefiled beauty of fasting is the pure mother of character. It causes philosophy to gush forth, and offers a crown. It negotiates Paradise for us, and grants a paternal family for those who fast. Of this Adam was deprived, and he attracted death, when he dishonoured the worth of fasting. For at the time when it was treated scornfully, the God of all, the Creator and the Master was at once displeased. To those who honour it He grants eternal life.”

**Saint Romanus the Melodist, + 556 A.D.**

“FASTING is the champion of every virtue, the beginning of the struggle, the crown of the abstinent, the beauty of virginity and sanc-tity, the resplendence of chastity, the commencement of the path of Christianity, the mother of prayer, the well-spring of sobriety and prudence, the teacher of stillness, and the precursor of all good works. Just as the enjoyment of light is coupled with healthy eyes, so desire for prayer accompanies

fasting that is practised with discernment.”

**Ven. Isaac the Syrian, + 7<sup>th</sup> century**

“FASTING is acceptable to God when abstention from food is accompanied by refraining from sins, from envy, from hatred, from calumny, from vainglory, from wordiness, from other evils. He who is fasting the true fast that is agreeable to God ought to shun all these things with all his strength and zeal, and remain impregnable and un-shakeable against all the attacks of the Evil one that are planned from that quarter. On the other hand, he who practises abstention from food, but does not keep self-control in the face of the aforesaid passions, is like unto one who lays down splendid foundations for a house, yet takes serpents and scorpions and vipers as fellow-dwellers therein.”

**Saint Photius the Great, + 891 A.D.**

“FASTING is an ordinance of the Church, obliging the Christian to observe it on specific days. Concerning fasting, our Saviour teaches: ‘When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father Who is in secret: and thy Father, Who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.’ From what the Saviour teaches we learn that fasting is pleasing to God, and that he who fasts for the uplifting of his mind and heart towards God shall be rewarded by God, Who is a most liberal bestower of Divine gifts, for his devotion. In the New Testament fasting is recommended as a means of preparing the mind and the heart for divine worship, for long prayer, for rising from the earthly, and for spiritualisation.”

**Saint Nectarius of Pentapolis, + 1920 A.D.**

“FASTING is absolutely indispensable for man. From the external aspect, it is a struggle of filial obedience to God, Who has given us the rules of fasting through His Holy Spirit. From the inner aspect, fasting is a struggle of restraint and self-limitation. In this lies the great value and sense of fasting, since

a strict observance of fasts tempers one's will and perfects the character of one who is firm in his religious convictions and actions. Let us not forget that Christ Himself fasted, and foretold that His apostles would also fast."

SAINT PHILARET THE NEW CONFESSOR, + 1985 A.D.



## ON THE DISCIPLINE AND ADVANTAGE OF CHASTITY

HOLY HIEROMARTYR CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE, + 258 A.D.

I DO NOT conceive that I have exceeded any portions of my duty in always striving as much as possible, by daily discussions of the Gospels, to afford you from time to time the means of growth, by the Lord's help, in faith and knowledge. For what else can be effected in the Lord's Church with greater advantage, what can be found more suitable to the office of a bishop, than that by the teaching of the divine words, recommended and commented upon by him, believers should be enabled to attain to the promised kingdom of heaven? This assuredly, as the desired result day by day of my work as well as my office, I endeavour to accomplish, notwithstanding my absence. By my letters I try to make myself present to you, addressing you in faith, in my usual manner, by the exhortations I send to you.

I call upon you, therefore, to be established in the power of the root of the Gospel, and to stand always armed against all the assaults of the devil. I shall not believe myself to be absent from you, if I shall be sure of you. Nevertheless, everything which is advantageously set forth, and which either defines or promises the condition of eternal life to those who are investigating it, is then only profitable if it be aided in obtaining the reward of the effort by the power of the divine mercy.

We not only set forth words which come from the sacred fountains of the Scriptures, but with these very words we associ-

ate prayers to the Lord, and wishes that, as well to us as to you, He would not only unfold the treasures of His mysteries, but would bestow strength for the carrying into action of what we know. For the danger is all the greater if we know the Lord's will, and yet loiter in the work of the will of the Lord.

Therefore, although I always exhort you, as you are aware, to many things, and to the precepts of the Lord's admonition (for what else can be desirable or more important to me, than that in all things you should stand perfect before the Lord?) - yet I admonish you that you should before all things maintain the barriers of chastity (as also you do), knowing that you are the temple of the Lord, the members of Christ, the habitation of the Holy Spirit, elected to hope, consecrated to faith, destined to salvation. You are sons of God, brethren of Christ, associates of the Holy Spirit, owing nothing any longer to the flesh, as born again of water. Thus the chastity, over and above the will, which we should always desire to be ours, may be afforded to us also, on account of the redemption, that that which has been consecrated by Christ might not be corrupted.

For if the Apostle declares the Church to be the spouse of Christ, I beseech you, consider what chastity is required where the Church is given in marriage as a betrothed virgin. And I indeed, except that I have proposed to admonish you with brevity, think the most diffuse praises due, and could set forth abundant laudations of chastity. But I have thought it superfluous to praise it at greater length among those who practice it. For you adorn it while you exhibit it, and in its exercise you set forth its more abundant praises, being made its ornament, while it also is yours, each lending and borrowing honour from the other.

It adds to you the discipline of good morals. You confer upon it the ministry of saintly works. For how much and what it can effect has, on the one hand, been manifest by your means; and on the other it has shown and taught what you are wishing for. The two advantages of precepts and practice are combined into one, that nothing should appear maimed, as would be the case if either principles were wanting to service, or service to principles.

Chastity is the dignity of the body, the ornament of morality, the sacredness of the sexes, the bond of modesty, the source of purity, the peacefulness of home, the crown of concord. Chastity is not careful whom it pleases but itself. Chastity is always modest, being the mother of innocence. It is ever adorned with modesty alone, then rightly conscious of its own beauty if it is displeasing to the wicked. Chastity seeks nothing in the way of adornments; it is its own glory. It is this which commends us to the Lord, unites us with Christ; it is this which drives out from our members all the illicit conflicts of desire, instils peace into our bodies; blessed itself, and making those blessed, whoever they are, in whom it condescends to dwell. It is that which they, even those who possess it not, can never accuse. It is venerable even to its enemies, since they admire it much more because they are unable to capture it. Moreover, when mature, it is both always excellent in men, and to be earnestly desired by women.

So its enemy, unchastity, is always detestable, making an obscene sport for its servants, sparing neither bodies nor souls. For, their own proper character being overcome, it sets the entire man under its yoke of lust, alluring at first, that it may do the more mischief by its attraction, exhausting both means and modesty. It is the foe of continence. The perilous madness of lust frequently attains to the blood, the destruction of a good conscience, the mother of impenitence, the ruin of a more virtuous age, the disgrace of one's race, driving away all confidence in blood and family, intruding one's own children upon the affections of strangers, interpolating the offspring of an unknown and corrupted stock into the testaments of others. And this also, very frequently burning without reference to sex, and not restraining itself within the permitted limits, thinks it little satisfaction to itself unless even in the bodies of men it seeks, not a new pleasure, but goes in quest of extraordinary and revolting extravagances, contrary to nature itself, of men with men.

But chastity maintains the first rank in virgins, the second in those who are continent, the third in the case of wedlock. Yet in all it is glorious, with all its degrees. For even to maintain the

marriage-faith is a matter for praise in the midst of so many bodily struggles. To have determined on a limit in marriage defined by continence is more virtuous yet, for in this way even lawful things are refused. Certainly, to have guarded one's purity from the womb, and to have kept oneself pure as an infant even to old age, throughout the whole of life, is the part of an admirable virtue. But though never to have known the body's seductive capacities is the greater blessedness, to have overcome them once known is the greater virtue, even though in such a fashion that that virtue comes of God's gift, though it manifests itself to men in their members.

The precepts of chastity, brethren, are ancient. Why do I say ancient? Because they were ordained at the same time as men themselves. For both her own husband belongs to the woman, for the reason that besides him she may know no other; and the woman is given to the man for the purpose that, when that which had been his own had been yielded to him, he might seek nothing belonging to another. And in such wise it is said, "They twain shall be in one flesh" (Matt. 19:5), that what had been made one should return together, that a separation without return should afford no occasion to a stranger. Thus also the Apostle declares that the man is the head of the woman, that he might commend chastity in the conjunction of the two. For as the head cannot be suited to the limbs of another, so also one's limbs cannot be suited to the head of another. For one's head matches one's limbs, and one's limbs one's head. Both of them are associated by a natural link in mutual concord lest, by any discord arising from the separation of the members, the compact of the divine covenant should be broken. Yet further, he says: "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church" (Eph. 5:28-29). From this passage there is great authority for charity with chastity, if wives are to be loved by their husbands even as Christ loved the Church; wives ought so to love their husbands even as the Church loves Christ.

Christ gave this judgment when, being inquired of it, He said that a wife must not be put away, except for the cause of adul-



tery. Such honour did He put upon chastity. Hence arose the decree, “Ye shall not suffer adulteresses to live” (Lev. 20:10). Thus the Apostle says, “This is the will of God, that ye abstain from fornication” (1 Thess. 4:3); and further: “the members of Christ must not be joined with the members of a harlot” (1 Cor. 6:15).

Thus is the man delivered over unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh who, treading underfoot the law of chastity, practices the vices of the flesh. Thus with reason, adulterers do not attain the kingdom of heaven. And so it is that every sin is outside the body, but that the adulterer alone sins against his own body. Wherefore also are there other authoritative utterances of the instructor, all of which it is not necessary to collect at this time, especially among you, who for the most part know and do them. You cannot find cause for complaint concerning these things, even though they are not described. For the adulterer has no excuse, nor could he have, for he might take a wife.

But as laws are prescribed for matrons, who are so bound that they cannot thence be separated, and while virginity and continence are beyond all law, there is nothing in the laws of matrimony which pertains to virginity, for by its loftiness it transcends them all. If any evil undertakings of men endeavour to transcend laws, virginity places itself on an equality with Angels. Moreover, if we investigate it, it even excels them, for, struggling in the flesh, it gains the victory against a nature which Angels do not have.

What else is virginity but the glorious preparation for the future life? Virginity is of neither sex. Virginity is the continuance of infancy. Virginity is the triumph over pleasures. Virginity has not children; but what is more, it has contempt for offspring. It has not fruitfulness, but neither has it bereavement. Blessed that it is free of the pain of bringing forth, it is more blessed still that it is free of the calamity of the death of children. What else is virginity than the freedom of liberty? Virginity is freed from all affections. It is not given up to marriage, nor to the world, nor to children. It cannot dread persecution, since it cannot provoke it from its security.

But since the precepts of chastity have thus been briefly set



forth to us, let us now give an instance of chastity, for it is more profitable when we come in the very presence of the thing. Nor will there be any doubt about the virtue, when that which is prescribed is also revealed by illustrations. The example of chastity begins with Joseph. A Hebrew youth, noble by his parentage, nobler still by his innocence, on account of the envy excited by his revelations exposed for sale by his brethren to the Ishmaelites, had attained to the household of a man of Egypt. By his obedience and innocence, and by the entire faithfulness of his service, he had aroused in his favour the easy and kindly disposition of his master. His appearance had commended itself to all men, alike by his gracious speech as by his youthfulness.

But that same nobility of manner was received by his master's wife in another manner than was becoming. In a secret part of the house, and without witnesses, a place high up and fitted for deeds of wickedness, the unrestrained unchastity of the woman thought that it could overcome the youth's chastity, now by promises, now by threats. And when she restrained him from flight by holding onto his garments, shocked at the utter audacity of such a crime, and able to appeal to the sincerity of his naked body as a witness of his innocence - the rash woman did not shrink from adding calumny to the crime of her unchastity. Dishevelled, and raging that her desire should be despised, she complained both to others and to her husband that the Hebrew youth had attempted to use that force upon her which she herself had striven to exercise. The husband's passion, unconscious of the truth and terribly inflamed by his wife's accusation, is aroused. And the modest youth, because he did not defile his conscience with the crime, is thrust into the lowest dungeon of the prison. But chastity is not alone in the prison, for God is with Joseph, and the guilty are given into his charge, for he had been guiltless. Moreover, he solves the obscurities of dreams, because his spirit was watchful in temptations, and he is freed from chains by the master of the prison. He who had been an inferior in the house with peril was made lord of the palace without risk. Restored to his noble station, he received the reward of chastity and innocence by the judgment of God, from Whom he had

deserved it.

No less from a different direction does there arise for us another similar instance of chastity, from the continence of women. Susanna, as we read, the daughter of Chelcias, the wife of Joachim, was exceedingly beautiful, more beautiful still in character. Her outward appearance added no charm to her, for she was simple. Chastity had cultivated her and, in addition to chastity, nature alone. Two of the elders had begun to be madly in love with her, mindful of nothing, neither of the fear of God, nor even of their age, already withering in years. Thus the flame of resuscitated lust recalled them into the glowing heats of their bygone youth. Robbers of chastity, they profess love, while they really hate. They threaten her with calumnies when she resists. The adulterers by desire declare themselves the accusers of adultery. Between these rocks of lust she sought help from the Lord, for she was not equal to prevailing against them by bodily strength. And the Lord heard from heaven chastity crying to Him. When she, overwhelmed with injustice, was being led to punishment, she was delivered and saw her revenge upon her enemies. Twice victorious, and in her peril so often and so fatally hedged in, she escaped both the lust and death. It will be endless if I continue to produce more examples. I am content with these two, especially as in these cases chastity has been defended with all their might.

The memory of noble descent could not weaken them, even though for some this is a suggestive license for lasciviousness; neither the comeliness of their bodies and beauty of their well-ordered limbs, even though for the most part this offers a hint that being, as it were, the short-lived flower of an age that rapidly passes away, it should be fed with the opportunity of pleasure offered; neither the first years of a green but mature age, even though the blood, still inexperienced, grows hot and stimulates the natural fires and the blind flames that stir in the marrow to seek a remedy, even if they should break forth at the risk of modesty. No more could they be tempted by any opportunity afforded by secrecy or freedom from witnesses, which to some seems to ensure safety, although this is the greatest temp-

tation to the commission of crime, that there is no punishment for contemplating it. Neither was a necessity laid upon them by the authority of those who bade them yield, and in the boldness of association and companionship, by which kind of temptations also righteous determinations are often overcome. Neither did the very rewards nor the kindness, nor the accusations, nor threats, nor punishments, nor death, move them. Nothing was counted so cruel, so hard, so distressing, as to have fallen from the lofty stand of chastity. They were worthy of such a reward from the Divine Judge that one of them should be glorified on a throne almost regal and the other, endowed with her husband's sympathy, should be rescued by the death of her enemies. These, and such as these, are the examples ever to be placed before our eyes, the like of them to be meditated on day and night.

Nothing so delights the faithful soul as the healthy consciousness of an unstained modesty. To have vanquished pleasure is the greatest pleasure, nor is there any greater victory than that which is gained over one's desires. He who has conquered an enemy has been stronger, but it was stronger than another. He who has subdued lust has been stronger than himself. He who has overthrown an enemy has beaten a foreign foe. He who has cast down desire has vanquished a domestic adversary. Every evil is more easily conquered than pleasure because, whatever it is, the former is repulsive, but the latter is attractive. Nothing is crushed with such difficulty as that which is armed by it. He who gets rid of desires has got rid of fears also, for from desires come fears. He who overcomes desires triumphs over sin; he who overcomes desires shows that the mischief of the human family lies prostrate under his feet. He who has overcome desires has given to himself perpetual peace; he who has overcome desires restores to himself liberty, a most difficult matter even for noble natures. Therefore we should always meditate on chastity, brethren, as circumstances teach us, that it may be more easy for us. It depends on no arts; for what is it but perfected will which, if it were not checked, would certainly not fail to arise? And it is our own will, too; therefore it has not to be acquired, but we have to cherish what is already our own.

For what is chastity but a virtuous mind added to watchfulness over the body, so that modesty observed in respect of the sexual relations, attested by strictness of demeanour, should maintain honourable faith by an uncorrupted offspring? Moreover, brethren, to chastity are suited and known first of all divine modesty and the sacred meditation of the divine precepts, and a soul inclined to faith, a mind attuned to the sacredness of religion: then carefulness that nothing in itself should be elaborated beyond measure, or extended beyond propriety; that nothing should be made a show of, nothing artfully coloured; that there should be nothing to pander to the excitement or the renewal of wiles.

She is not a modest woman who strives to stir up the fancy of another, even though her bodily chastity be preserved. Away with such as do not adorn, but rather prostitute their beauty. For anxiety about beauty is not only the wisdom of an evil mind, but belongs to deformity. Let the bodily nature be free, not let any sort of force be intruded upon God's works. She is always wretched who is not satisfied to be such as she is.

Wherefore is the colour of hair changed? Why are the edges of the eyes darkened? Why is the face moulded by art into a different form? Finally, why is the looking-glass consulted, unless from fear lest a woman should be herself? Moreover, the dress of a modest woman should be modest. A believer should not be conscious of adultery even in the mixture of colours. To wear gold in one's garments is as if it were desirable to corrupt one's garments. What do rigid metals do among the delicate threads of woven textures, except to press upon the weakened shoulders and unhappily show the extravagance of a boastful soul? Why are the necks oppressed and hidden by outlandish stones, the prices of which, without workmanship, exceed the entire fortune of many a one? It is not the woman who is adorned, but the woman's vices which are manifested. What, when the fingers are laden with so much gold they can neither close nor open — is there any advantage sought for, or is it merely to show the empty parade of one's estate? It is a marvellous thing that women, tender in all things else, in bearing the burden of their

vices are stronger than men!

But to return to that with which I began: chastity is ever to be cultivated by men and women; it is to be kept with all watchfulness within its bound. The bodily nature is quickly endangered in the body when the flesh, which is always falling, carries it away with itself. Under the pretext of a nature which is always urging men to desires whereby the ruins of a decayed race are restored, deceiving with the enticement of pleasure, it does not lead its offspring to the continence of legitimate intercourse, but rather hurls them into crime.

Therefore, in opposition to these fleshly snares, by which the devil both obtrudes himself as a companion and makes himself a leader, we must struggle with every kind of strength. Let the aid of Christ be appropriated, according to the Apostle, and let the mind be withdrawn as much as possible from the association of the body. Let consent be withheld from the body; let vices always be chastised, that they may be hated. Let that misshapen and degraded shame which belongs to sin be kept before our eyes. Repentance itself, with all its struggles, is a discreditable testimony to sins committed.

Let not curiosity be indulged in scanning other people's countenances. Let one's speech be brief and one's laughter moderate, for laughter is the sign of an easy and negligent disposition. Let all contact, even that which is becoming, be avoided. Let no indulgence be permitted to the body, when bodily vice is to be avoided. Let it be considered how honourable it is to have conquered dishonour, how disgraceful to have been conquered by dishonour.

It must be said, moreover, that adultery is not pleasure, but mutual contempt. Neither can it delight, because it kills both the soul and modesty. Let the soul restrain the provocations of the flesh; let it bridle the impulses of the body. For it has received this power, that the limbs should be subservient to its command.

As a lawful and accomplished charioteer, it should turn about the fleshly impulses when they lift themselves above the allowed

limits of the body, by the reins of the heavenly precepts, lest that chariot of the body, carried away beyond its limits, should hurry into its own peril the charioteer as well as itself. But in the midst of these things, nay, before these things, in opposition to disturbances and all vices, help must be sought from the divine camp. For God alone, who has condescended to create men, is powerful also to afford unto them sufficient help.

I have composed a few words, because I did not propose to write a volume, but to send you an address. Look ye to the Scriptures; seek out for yourselves from those precepts greater illustrations of this matter. Beloved brethren, farewell.



From the Writings of the Reposed  
Athonite Elder, Priestmonk Arsenii

*A Discipline that Saves*

IN THIS WORLD we are all wanderers. With each and every day of our life we are closer and closer to the end of our life of wandering and to crossing over into a boundless eternity, which will open to our awestricken gaze, and then we shall see things we had never heard of; we shall see wondrous places, wondrous people and we shall hear formerly unfathomable expressions. This our present life is nothing more than a preparation, and as such we should regard it and understand it, for by becoming attached to it we hold ourselves back and distract ourselves.

Aren't we constantly concerning ourselves with the tiniest demands of our earthly existence? Should we not rather be concerned about and consider what we should, the eternity that stands before us, which compared to this life is like an ocean compared to a droplet. We are concerned about the droplet, and about the ocean we do not give a care. But not one

of us will be saved there, we shall receive no recompense, if we prove to be irredeemable.

Our unconcernedness about the future derives from the activities of the spirits of evil lurking within us; it darkens our mind, it seduces it, as if it were a little child, with the tittle-tattle of temporary vanities; it alienates us from thoughts of eternity, making that seem hard, unpleasant and uninteresting. Paying little attention to the malice of the enemy, we direct ourselves by our own understanding, and in fact we find ourselves under the control of the enemy, being obedient unto him. To free ourselves from this servitude, although it is not easy and is arduous, is nonetheless possible with the help of God and it is certainly essential while there is yet time.

The God-enlightened Fathers said that discretion is higher than all the virtues. Let us begin with it; let us delve more deeply into our state of being, reflect upon it, scrutinise it: where are we heading and what are we preparing for ourselves? Yet nonetheless we remain powerless, failing. Help in this one thing is necessary, discipline that entails a firm resolution regarding the significance of the time that has been allotted to us. From this thought there ensues action, and from that day, with the help of God, we should devote ourselves to an unchanging prayer rule after daily morning prayers, although it be for only a quarter of an hour, to get in touch with our soul.

At first this will be difficult, but in time the difficulty will be pleasantly relieved, and we shall see great value in it. Then the saving fear of God will settle in us, then as if a blindfold had fallen from our spiritual eyes, we shall see that which we had previously never seen, - we shall see our sins, which will waken us unto repentance and the correction of our life. And our enemy, the devil, whom nothing can crush but our true repentance, will then find all his efforts destroyed, and a person will be freed from the webs of this cunning arachnid.





“NO CHRISTIAN ought to think of himself as his own master, but each should rather so think and act as though given by God to be slave to his like-minded brethren.”

“THE CHRISTIAN ought to be so minded as becomes his heavenly calling, and his life and conversation ought to be worthy of the Gospel of Christ.”

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT, + 379 A.D.

## THE COMING MONTH

THE TWO most notable events during November are the beginning of the **Nativity Fast**, which starts on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> / 28<sup>th</sup> November, forty days before Christmas, and the **Great Feast of the Entry of the All-holy Theotokos into the Temple**, on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> November / 4<sup>th</sup> December. This, of course, was in some ways the beginning of her preparation for the birth of our Saviour, and we doubtless have her help and protection in trying to keep the fast.

Of this Great Feast, our holy Father Gregory Palamas (+1360) says: “We who understand the salvation begun for our sake through the Most Holy Virgin, give her thanks and praise according to our ability. And truly, if the grateful woman (of whom the Gospel tells us), after hearing the saving words of the Lord, blessed and thanked His Mother, raising her voice above the din of the crowd and saying to Christ, ‘Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps Thou hast sucked’ (Lk. 11:27), then we who have the words of eternal life written out for us, and not only the words, but also the miracles and the Passion, and the raising of our nature from death, and its ascent from earth to Heaven, and the promise of immortal life and unfailing salvation, then how shall we not unceasingly hymn and bless the Mother of the Author of our Salvation and the Giver of Life, celebrating her conception and birth, and now her Entry into the Holy of Holies?” Sadly, many contemporary Orthodox will not, but make sure you are not one of them.

On 8<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> November, we celebrate the **Synaxis of the holy Archangels Michael, Gabriel and all the Bodiless Powers of Heaven**. Ending his praise of the Heavenly Hosts, our Venerable Father Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (+ 1809) writes: “With what I have told you, I have shown that Michael and Gabriel were the two important servants of the great energies and works of God. As long as we live, most merciful Chief Captains of God, keep us safe from the stumbling-blocks, the wickednesses and temptations of all our visible and invisible enemies. At the hour of our death, one on the right, the other on the left, help us sinners, covering us with your wings of gold, so that our souls may not see the ominous sight of the evil demons. And when you have taken us, bring us to the eternal and lambent tabernacles of the Kingdom of Heaven, that, with you, we may glorify the one Triune Godhead, to Whom belongs glory, honour and worship, unto the ages of ages, Amen.” And of course this is a festival special for each and every Orthodox Christian, because it is the festival of his or her own Guardian Angel, given them at Holy Baptism.

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

Our **holy Father Martin of Tours the Merciful** is celebrated on 12<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup> November, the same day as another great saint renowned for his mercifulness, **Saint John the Almsgiver, the Patriarch of Alexandria**. Saint Martin was born of pagan parents in the Pannonian town of Sabaria in the year 316. His father was a Roman officer, and the young Martin was given over to military service against his will, for by then he was already a catechumen in the Church. From early childhood he had loved the Church with all his heart. One winter, while travelling with his companions to the town of Amiens, he saw a beggar before the town gates, almost naked and shivering from the cold. Martin felt sorry for him, and fell behind his companions. He then removed his military cloak and cut it in two with his sword. He gave one half to the beggar and wrapped the other around himself, and left. That night, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream, wrapped in the other half of his cloak, and said to His angels: “Martin is only a catechumen,

yet behold: he has clothed Me with his garment!" On leaving the army, Martin was baptised, and then his mother was baptised. He was then tonsured a monk in the diocese of Saint Hilary of Poitiers and led a life of true asceticism. Martin was exceptionally humble, for which God endowed him with an abundant gift of working miracles, such that he raised the dead and drove out evil spirits. Even before his baptism, while he was still an officer, Saint Martin had a servant whom he considered more a brother than a servant. Reversing their rôles he often served this servant, and even rejoiced in doing so. When Saint Hilary wanted to ordain him a priest, he refused this calling with tears, and begged the bishop to let him simply be a monk in some remote place. Once, he was travelling from France to Pannonia to visit his parents. While he was crossing over the Alps, murderous robbers captured him. When one of the robbers raised his sword to behead him, Martin showed no fear, and remained motionless; he did not beg for mercy but was completely at peace, as if nothing were happening. The robber, amazed at such behaviour, laid aside his sword and asked Martin who he was. Martin replied that he was a Christian, and hence, he was not afraid, for he knew that God, according to His great mercy, is always close to men, especially in times of danger. The thieves were astonished at the rare virtue of this man of God, and he who had drawn his sword against Martin believed in Christ, was baptised, and later became a monk. When the episcopal throne in Tours became vacant, the people wanted Martin to be bishop, but Martin did not even want to hear of it. However, certain citizens of Tours lured him from the monastery and carried him off. They had come to the gate of Martin's monastery and told Martin that a sick man was out there with them, and they begged him for a blessing. When Martin came out they seized him, took him to Tours, and had him consecrated bishop. In old age, he foresaw his approaching death. He told his brethren and they began to weep copiously, begging him not to leave them. The saint, seeking to comfort them, prayed to God in their presence and said: "Lord, if I am still needed by Thy people, I do not reject the labour. Let it be according to Thy holy will." After abundant labour in the vineyard of the Lord, and after a difficult struggle with pagans

and Arian heretics, a life of devoted service to Christ and His Church, the saint fell ill at Candés, a village in his diocese, where he died on 8<sup>th</sup> November, A.D. 397. He was buried three days later (his present feast) at Tours. In A.D. 1008, a cathedral was built at Tours over the relics of St Martin. This cathedral was destroyed in 1793 during the French Revolution, together with the relics of St Martin and St Gregory of Tours. Sadly only some fragments of the relics of St Martin were recovered.

The **Holy Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria** (24<sup>th</sup> November / 7<sup>th</sup> December), was a highly educated man and head of the famed School of Alexandria. In A.D. 300, he was elected Archbishop of the city, of which he was a native, succeeding his teacher and spiritual guide, Saint Theonas. Forced into exile from Alexandria during the persecutions against Christians under the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, the holy hierarch travelled through many lands, encouraging his flock by letter. Later he returned to his city, in order to guide the Alexandrian Church personally during this dangerous period. The Saint secretly visited Christians detained in prison, encouraging them to be steadfast in faith, assisting the widows and orphans, preaching the word of God, and constantly praying and officiating at the divine services. And the Lord kept him safe from the hands of the persecutors. During this time of unrest the iniquitous heretic Arius, who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, sowed the tares of his impious teaching. When Arius refused to be corrected and submit to the truth, Peter anathematised the heretic and excommunicated him from the Church. Under the wise nurturing of Archbishop Peter the Church of Alexandria strengthened and grew in spite of the persecutions. During his incumbency, six hundred and seventy Christians suffered in Alexandria; often, whole families were led to the scaffold and perished. Finally, by order of the Emperor Maximian, the Saint was arrested and sentenced to death. A multitude of people gathered at the entrance of the prison, expressing their outrage. Wanting to avoid bloodshed and a riot by the people, the Saint sent a message to the authorities, in which he suggested that they make an opening in the back wall of the prison, so that he might be taken away secretly to

execution. Thus in the dark of the night Peter went with the executioners, who took him beyond the city walls and beheaded him at the same spot where formerly the Holy Apostle Mark had been martyred. That night a certain pious virgin heard a voice from heaven saying, "Peter was first among the Apostles; Peter is the last of the Alexandrian Martyrs." This took place in the year 311. In the morning, when people learned of the death of their Archbishop, a crowd gathered at the place of martyrdom. They took up the body and head of the Martyr and went to the church, and dressing him in his hierarchical vestments, they sat him on his throne at the high place in the altar. It is said of Saint Peter that he had never climbed the steps and sat on the patriarchal throne in church but rather stood or sat before the steps of the throne. When the faithful began to complain why their hierarch did not sit in his place, he replied: "Whenever I approach the throne, I see a heavenly light and power upon it, that is why I do not dare climb and sit on it." There is a yet more glorious vision in his life. While Peter lay in prison, the ungodly heretic Arius hypocritically pretended that he was repenting of his heresy and sent word through two priests to the captive hierarch that he was renouncing his heresy, and he appealed to Peter to receive him into the Church again. Arius did this because he thought that Peter would be slain and that he could seize the patriarchal throne, from which he could, afterward, spread and strengthen his heresy. Before he gave him any kind of reply, Peter prayed to God in the prison. During prayer, an unusual light illumined the prison and the Lord Jesus appeared to him as a twelve-year-old boy, shining more brightly than the sun so that it was not possible to gaze upon Him. The Lord was clothed in a white tunic, which was rent down the front, from top to bottom. The Lord was clutching the garment around Himself, with His hands as though to hide His nakedness. Seeing this, Peter was in great fear and horror and cried out: "Who, O Saviour, has torn Thy garment?" The Lord replied: "The madman Arius. He tore it, for he alienated My people from Me whom I acquired by My blood, but be careful not to receive him in communion with the Church for he has cunning and diabolical thoughts against Me and My people." Hearing this,

Saint Peter told his priests, Achilles and Alexander, that he could not receive Arius's petition because it was false and cunning. And the Saint pronounced a commination on Arius in both this life and the next. He also prophesied that first Achilles and then Alexander would follow him as patriarch and so it was. Saint Peter, a great champion of Orthodoxy, is known also as a profound theologian. Passages from his book, "On the Divinity," were consulted at the Synods of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Of all his works, the most widely known and highly esteemed by the Church are his "Penitential Canons."

The **Venerable Martyr Stephen the New** (28<sup>th</sup> November / 11<sup>th</sup> December) lived during the reign of Emperor Anastasius II and when Germanus I was Patriarch. He was born and raised in the Queen of Cities (Constantinople), and was the son of Christian parents John and Anna. At a young age he occupied himself with sacred letters, and every day abided in the Church of God with his mother, occupying himself with fasting and hard work. For this reason he was garbed in the monastic schema when he was around sixteen years of age. After this he gave himself over to even more spiritual struggles, fighting off all the wicked desires of the body. Not much time passed when the divinely ineffable John, the holy abbot, reposed in peace. The blessed Stephen was entrusted with the care of the monastery on the renowned mountain of Saint Auxentius. There he struggled in the arena of asceticism. The devil wanted to raise up a great war and heresy against the Church, so that the holy and revered icons would not be venerated; the first to conduct this war and heresy was Leo the Isaurion. He departed this life, having been turned away and sufficiently rebuked by the Holy Patriarch Germanus. His inhumane and mischievous child Constantine Copronymus became emperor, and he did greater evils than his father, waging war against and trampling on the Church of Christ, burning the holy icons, exiling the monastics, and punishing them with various torments. Thus the sinful one, when he learned about Saint Stephen, that he venerated the holy icons, and called the emperor a heretic for not venerating the revered

icons and was not persuaded by him, nor had signed on to his heresy, he sent his soldiers to have him brought before him. After disciplining him with various torments, he was imprisoned in the Praetorium, in which other monastics were imprisoned. There forty-two of the chosen and elect had been gathered together from various places for their defence of the holy icons. As well as these there were the most-venerable Peter and Andrew and three hundred with them. For the holy icons, some of these had their noses cut off, others their ears, others their hands and beards, and some had their eyes plucked out. The blessed Stephen found all of these in prison, he kissed them all, and encouraged them in their struggles, and undertook every monastic service and appointment while in prison, just as it is done in a monastery. When the emperor learned that the prison of the Praetorium had become a monastery because of Stephen, he ordered that the Saint be removed from prison after being there for eleven months. When he stood before him, it was ordered that he be thrown to the ground, where he was struck with stones and beaten with clubs. One murderous and wild-minded man, taking a club, struck him in the head, which split his holy head in two, and in this way he was slain, and he delivered his holy soul into the hands of God, and received the crown of his confession. The other executioners dragged his honourable relic dead and naked to the market-place. There his honourable hands and legs were crushed after being struck here and there with stones, and his nails fell out of his fingers. One inhuman man, wanting to further please the emperor, took a large rock and threw it at the holy relic, ripping open the stomach, so that the bowels spilled out onto the ground. And a peddler took a piece of wood from the fire, and struck at the head of the holy relic, completely separating it into two pieces, causing his brain to spill on the ground. Then the relic of the Saint was cast into the sea, but was later recovered and buried by certain reverent Christians, in the place where he is still today. On this day we also commemorate Saints Andrew, Peter, the Venerable Anna, Basil, and another called Stephen, two Gregorys and John, who all contested for the holy icons.



“THE GENTLE and gracious man is he who treads pride under foot, but he who is set upon what is to the contrary is one governed by arrogance.”

FROM THE PARADISE OF THE FATHERS  
POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*“AT Sunday School, years ago now, we were told that when the priest blesses, with the fingers of his right hand he forms the letters ICXC - the first and last letters of Jesus Christ in Greek. Nowadays I notice than many just bless with their hand slightly curved or even straight, like the Pope’s! Do you know why this change? - A.T., Wraysbury.*

I SUSPECT that there are as many reasons for this apparent change as there are priests who bless in those innovative ways. Of course, as you say, the priest should always bless the flock, individuals, actions or objects with his fingers arranged to spell out ICXC, and thus denote that the blessing is not from him personally but from the Lord. The only exception to this is when he crosses himself, which he does as do all Orthodox Christians. Depending on the man himself, the reasons for not doing so might be: not having been properly trained, being sloppy and careless, not understanding the significance of his liturgical actions, not being concerned about it, having a disability, and the list could go on. Some are probably culpable and others not. Best to ask the priest who worries you because he does this.

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

**REPOSE OF MOTHER GERMANA**

On 5<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> October, the feast day of Saint Charitina, in deep old age, **Mother Germana** of the **Convent of the Annunciation in Willesden** reposed in the Lord. She had struggled in the monastic discipline from her early youth, initially in her native Palestine. Her

funeral was chanted on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> / 24<sup>th</sup> October after the Divine Liturgy. **His Grace Bishop Sofronie of Suceava** was present at the Liturgy which was concelebrated by **Fathers Nicolae Capitanu, Borislav Popov and Priestmonk Sabbas**. Bishop Sofronie served the funeral service with the three priests, and at the end Fr Nicolae read a message from **His Grace Metropolitan Ambrose of Methoni**, who had been unable to attend as he was preparing to fly to Australia. Mother Germana was laid to rest with her spiritual mother, **Abbess Elisabeth**, and the other departed sisters of the Convent in Gunnersbury Cemetery, and afterwards a mercy meal was held at the Convent. May Mother Germana be granted rest with the Saints and **Memory Eternal**. Please remember her in your prayers.

## ***TWO BURIALS AT SAINT EDWARD'S***

ON Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September / 6<sup>th</sup> October, the feast of the Conception of Saint John the Baptist, the funeral of **Dimitar Petkov** was chanted in Saint Edward's Church. Dimitar is the father of our **Presbytera Marina Popova**, and the funeral was served by his son-in-law, **Fr Borislav Popov**. At the end of the service Dimitar was laid to rest in our cemetery. The family then provided a generous mercy meal in his memory in the old Mortuary hall.

ON Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October, **Emily Zantias**, who had been baptised shortly after her birth and then died, was laid to rest here. The graveside funeral service was chanted by **Protopresbyter Stavros Solomou** of **Saint Nicolas Church, Shepherd's Bush**. Our condolences to Emily's parents, **Vasileios and Christina-Ioulia**. May our Saviour grant rest with the saints to His departed servants, Dimitar and Emily, and may their Memory be Eternal.

## ***GIFTS TO SAINT EDWARD'S***

ALEXANDRA GALBEAZA has kindly donated a hand-painted icon of the **Venerable John the Romanian of Hozeva** (+1960 A.D.) to our church. It has now been framed and blessed and placed in the church.

On the feast day of Saints Cyprian and Justina (2<sup>nd</sup> / 15<sup>th</sup> October), her name day, **Justina Trollope**, gave us a beautiful piano stool, one on which **Saint Philaret the New Confessor** (+ 8<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1985) had sat when he visited her home in Brookwood in the late seventies or early eighties and played her piano. We shall use

it as the stool needed in hierarchal Liturgies for the presiding Bishop.

## ***VISITORS***

Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> September: A group from the **London Transport Museum** visited Brookwood Cemetery and asked to view the old railway platform and exhibition room. **John Clarke**, the historian of the cemetery, led the group, and members of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** were in attendance.

Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> September: Members of the **Family History Group** of the **Overton U3A**, visiting the cemetery, also requested to see Saint Edward's Church.

Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> October: The **Rev. Cally Burch** from **Fleet Parish** visited the church, accompanied by about eighteen visitors.

Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October: **Archimandrite Eughenie** from our sister Church in Romania visited unexpectedly with five of the faithful from Leeds and Bristol. They stayed almost an hour before leaving to drive to Bristol and then Leeds.

Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> October: **Laura Kulisic** from the Guildford **Halow Project**, which nurtures young people with learning disabilities, brought a number of her students to visit the church.

Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> October: The **U3A History Group** from Fleet visited, and spent about half-an-hour with us before continuing to visit the rest of the cemetery. The two groups from Fleet were led by **Kim Lowe** and **Malcolm Hitchcock**.

## ***Practical Tip***

WHEN travelling abroad, be careful when buying icons. For many years now sellers have been offering "antiqued" ones. This often means that the surface is marked with apparent scratches and marks, that the border is irregular, and parts are made duller or seemingly stained. Recently, we have noticed that the process of antiquing has become even more slipshod - great loops are taken out of the border, blotches added, etc. Avoid such icons at all costs. Remember in times past people would rather die as martyrs than deliberately scratch or deface an icon - see the life of Saint Stephen the New above. An icon should be clean and clear; looking at it should instil stillness in the beholder, not a fascination with its imperfections. Buy instead icons that are either true reproductions of ancient ones, or ones in Byzantine style that look as if they have been freshly painted last week.