

# *The* *Shepherd*

*An Orthodox Christian  
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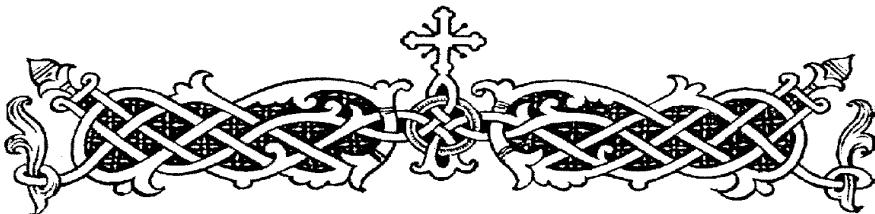
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## FROM THE FATHERS

‘TO THE SINNER, everything is a difficulty.’

SAINT HILARY OF POITIERS, + 368 A.D.

‘WHERE GOD HAS PLACED YOU, there remain. It is not by change of place that you will impose quietness on your heart, but by watching incessantly over its movements.’

VENERABLE EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN, + 379 A.D.

‘HE WHO REJOICES in another's fall, rejoices in the devil's victory. Let us rather grieve, when we hear that a man perishes, for whom Christ died. Let us repent, and hope for pardon by faith, not as an act of justice.’

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN, + 397 A.D.

‘GOD NEVER DESERTS a man, unless first He is deserted by that man.’

SAINT CÆSARIUS OF ARLES, + 542 A.D.

‘YOU MUST KNOW that sin can be committed in three ways. It is done either in ignorance, in weakness, or of set purpose. And certainly the sin committed in weakness is more grave than that done in ignorance; but that done of set purpose is much more grave than that done in weakness.’

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

# THE LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS

## Introduction

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is only served on weekdays of Great Lent. The term ‘Presanctified’ refers to the fact that bread and wine are not consecrated in this Liturgy; Holy Communion is distributed from a Lamb consecrated at the Liturgy on the preceding Sunday. Thus, on a typical Sunday in Great Lent, three Lambs are consecrated in the Sunday Liturgy: one for the Sunday, and one for each of the Presanctified Liturgies on Wednesday and Friday.

The Lamb that is to be consecrated for the Presanctified Liturgy is cut out during the Service of Preparation on the preceding Sunday, and placed on the diskos in the normal manner. After the clergy have taken Holy Communion, the Lamb is prepared for the Presanctified Liturgy by either dipping the underside of the consecrated Lamb into the chalice or by carefully spooning the Blood of Christ onto the Lamb; the Lamb is then placed upside down in the artophorion so that the Blood of Christ does not come into contact with it.

The Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil are not used on weekdays during Great Lent because the Church regards these as too festive for this fasting period. Unlike these two Liturgies, which as we have seen, are almost indistinguishable to a casual observer, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is very different in structure.

The Presanctified Liturgy is commonly attributed to St. Gregory the Great, the Pope of Rome, but this attribution is probably honorific due to St. Gregory’s support for the principle of a special lenten weekday Liturgy in Rome during his tenure.

The Presanctified Liturgy is served on Wednesdays and Fridays, and on other weekdays of Great Lent when there is a

special commemorated saint; in larger monasteries, the Liturgy is served on every weekday of Great Lent and on the first three days of Great Week.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY**

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is integrated into Vespers, so ideally it should be held in the afternoon and not in the morning. Regardless of the timing of the Liturgy, those wishing to take Holy Communion should have fasted from midnight and read the prayers of preparation.

### **Ninth Hour, Typica, Psalm 103**

The service begins with the Ninth Hour and Typica read according to the Lenten order. During the Typica, at the beginning of the Beatitudes, the curtain is opened; at this point, the clergy leave the altar through the north door and begin the prayers said by the clergy before the Liturgy.

In the Presanctified Liturgy, the normal prayers for vesting are not read, but the priest simply makes the sign of the Cross over each vestment and says 'Let us pray to the Lord' as he puts it on.

The priest, now fully vested in sticharion and phelonion, ends the Typica with the usual dismissal. He then re-enters the altar to begin the Presanctified Liturgy with the blessing: 'Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.' As he says this, the priest make the sign of the Cross with the Gospel Book.

The choir answers 'Amen' and then begins Vespers with 'O Come let us worship....' and Psalm 103.

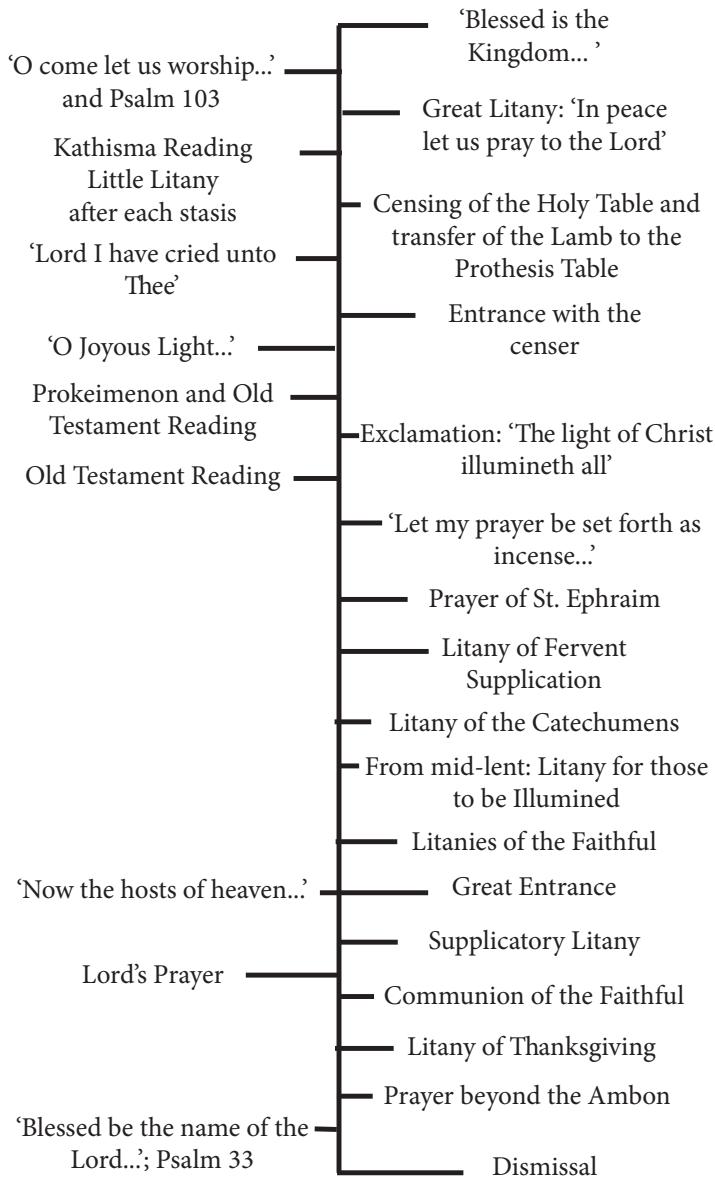
### **Kathisma Reading**

After the Psalm, the deacon intones the Litany of Peace and then the appointed kathisma is read with a Little Litany between each stasis. During Great Lent, with the exception of the fifth week, the eighteenth kathisma is read on every weekday Vespers.

## The Structure of the Presanctified Liturgy

### Choir

### Clergy



During the kathisma reading the consecrated Lamb is moved from the *artophorion* on the Holy Table, to the Prothesis Table, ready for the Great Entrance. The transfer occurs in three stages carried out during the three sections of the kathisma:

**First Stasis:** The Gospel is moved off the antimension and the latter is unfolded and opened out. The diskos is placed on it, and the Lamb is removed from the artophorion and placed on the diskos.

**Second Stasis:** The priest prostrates before the Holy Table, and then censes it from all four sides preceded by the deacon holding his candle.

**Third Stasis:** The curtain is closed, and all the people in the Church prostrate themselves to the ground. The priest, raising the diskos level with his forehead processes, with the deacon censing, to the Prothesis Table. He pours wine and water into the chalice, and covers the diskos with the asterisk; both are then covered with chalice veils and then the aer. After these actions are completed, the curtain is opened and the people arise from their prostration.

### **‘Lord I have Cried...’**

The reading of the kathisma is followed by a Little Litany and then the choir begins to sing the Lord I have Cried with ten stichera: seven from the Triodion and three from the Menaion. As we have explained earlier, the new Church day begins at Vespers, so on Wednesday evening, for example, the hymns chanted at Vespers are for the saint commemorated on Thursday.

During the ‘both now...’ there is an entrance with the censer, but on days when a Gospel is to be read during the Liturgy, the entrance is made with the Gospel and not the censer.

After the entrance, the prokeimenon is read by the reader and the choir, followed by a reading from the Book of Genesis. Unusually, after the reading, another prokeimenon is read. After this, the priest, holding a candle in both hands, faces the people through the Royal Doors and exclaims: ‘Wisdom, Upright! The Light of Christ illumines all!’ as all the faithful

prostrate. The Royal Doors are then closed and the reader begins the second reading from the Old Testament.

### **‘Let my Prayer be set forth as incense...’**

After this reading is completed, the choir and the priest begin the ‘Let my Prayer be Set Forth’ sequence which is similar in structure to a prokeimenon, in that the deacon intones a verse to which the choir sings a response. When the choir sings, the faithful prostrate themselves to the ground and the priest censes the Holy Table.

### **The Prayer of St. Ephraim**

The priest, from within the altar, now reads the Prayer of St. Ephraim with everyone in Church making a full prostration after each petition. At this point, on particularly celebrated feasts, such as the patronal feast of a church, the appointed prokeimenon, Epistle and Gospel for the saint are read – the Gospel sequence is identical to that normally used in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

### **Augmented Litany of Fervent Supplication; Litany for the Catechumens; Litany for those Preparing for Illumination**

The Augmented Litany of Fervent Supplication and the Litany of the Catechumens are intoned according the normal order, but from the Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent they are followed by the ‘Litany for those Preparing for Illumination’. In this litany, the Church prays for those that are going to be baptised at Pascha. Two little litanies are then intoned by the deacon according to the normal order of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

### **The Great Entrance**

The hymn of the Great Entrance is unique to the Presanctified Liturgy:

*Now the hosts of the Heavens invisibly do worship with us; for behold, the King of Glory entereth.*

The priest and deacon recite this hymn quietly three times and make three prostrations in front of the Prothesis Table. The priest, his head completely covered by the aer, holding the diskos in his right hand, and the chalice in his left, exits the altar through the north door preceded by the deacon, who censes the Holy Gifts. At this point, all the faithful in the Church prostrate themselves to the ground. The Entrance is made in silence, and the clergy re-enter through the Royal Doors; the people stand up as the choir sings the second half of the entrance hymn:

*Behold the accomplished mystical sacrifice is being escorted. In faith and love let us draw nigh that we may become partakers of eternal life. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.*

The priest places the diskos and the chalice on the Holy Table and removes the chalice veils, placing the aer over the diskos and chalice. In the Greek usage, the diskos is placed on the right of the chalice as it already holds the Body and Blood of Christ. When the choir is finished, in the Russian usage, the priest reads the Prayer of St. Ephraim once and then everyone makes three prostrations according to the normal order. In some churches, the Prayer is not read, but the three prostrations are made in silence. The Royal Doors are then closed, and the curtain is drawn half across signifying that the mystery has previously been completed.

### **The Litany of Supplication; Our Father; Communion hymn**

The deacon then begins the Litany of Supplication which is identical to that used in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom except that it begins, 'Let us complete our evening prayer,' and the second petition refers to the 'precious gifts set forth and presanctified'.

The Liturgy now proceeds according to the normal order of St. John Chrysostom until the priest exclaims: 'The Presanctified Holies are for the Holy.' As he says this he merely holds the Lamb and does not elevate it. The Presanctified Liturgy has a special communion hymn: 'O taste and see that the Lord is good. Alleluia.'

## **Communion of the clergy and the faithful; Litany of Thanksgiving; Prayer beyond the Ambo**

The priest breaks the Lamb on the diskos and places a portion in the chalice, saying nothing. Hot water is poured into the chalice from the zeon in the normal manner and Holy Communion is distributed in the usual manner to both clergy and people. The Presanctified Liturgy concludes according to the normal order of that of St. John Chrysostom, until the Prayer beyond the Ambo, which is different:

*O Almighty Master, Who hast made all creation and by Thine inexpressible providence and great goodness hast brought us to these all-revered days, for the purification of soul and body, for the restraint of the passions and for hope of resurrection; O Thou who during the forty days didst give into the hands of Thy servant Moses the tablets of the law divinely inscribed: Enable us also, O Good One, to fight the good fight, to complete the course of the fast, to preserve inviolate the faith, to crush under our feet the heads of invisible serpents, to be accounted victors over sin and to worship the holy resurrection without condemnation. For blessed and glorified is Thine all-honourable and majestic name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.*

## **The Dismissal**

After singing ‘Blessed be the Name of the Lord’ the choir reads Psalm 33 (the same psalm that is read at the end of the Typica). The Presanctified Liturgy starts with Vespers and finishes with the ending normally used in the Lenten Typica, a further indication of the special character of the Liturgy which does not stand on its own, but only in the context of the services of Great Lent.

*This article was first published in ‘The Grace of the Spirit’ written by the Fathers of Saint Edward Brotherhood.*

# The Autumn of Life

By Archpriest George Cheremetieff

OLD AGE need cause no fear. At first, of course, it seems irksome that one can no longer do what before seemed quite easy, physically and mentally.

But if one find in oneself the strength to be humble and to bow before God's Will, which imposes an ineluctable physical law, this leads to a certain tranquility.

One is no more in a hurry to finish this or anything else, for the wisdom of old age has already taught one that one can no longer do all that one would like. Rather, one withdraws into oneself, into inner communion with one's Creator. And at such moments one begins to be aware of the souls of people, of animals, of plants and even seemingly of inanimate objects.

And thus the soul is established in peacefulness. It is already, as it were, detached from worldly cares, it already sees the Evening Light, and praises God with thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup>

Such moments of peace have more value than the luminous, joyous and exuberant impetuosity of youth, which also were so good in their own time. Spring flowers are wonderful and beautiful. But there is, too, the blessed quietness and soundless melancholy melody of falling leaves. They lie down humbly on the ground, become one with it, giving the sap of life to flowers of the Spring. And their quite meditation rises to God like a silent prayer, making holy the pensive beauty of autumn woodlands. For not a single blade of grass is forgotten by God. This quiet prayer resounds to spiritual hearing, like the delicate harmony of nature, giving praise to its Creator.

*Fr. George reposed in the Lord on Mid-Pentecost, 1971 having served as the chaplain of the Convent of the Annunciation, London. This translation was made by the Ever-memorable Abbess Elisabeth.*

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. George is referring to this Vespers hymn: 'O Joyous Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father, O Jesus Christ: We that come to the setting of the sun, when we behold the evening light, praise Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God. Meet it is for Thee at all times to be praised with gladsome voices, O Son of God, Giver of life. Wherefore the world doth glorify Thee'

# THE VENERATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

BY PROTOPRESBYTER MICHAEL POLSKY

*Continuation from the previous issue.*

## IV. THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE ALL-HOLY VIRGIN MARY FROM THE LORD'S ASCENSION UNTIL HER DEATH

### 1. The Accord of All with the Lord's Mother

*Then returned they (from the mount of the Ascension)... and they went up into an upper room, where abode (all the Apostles)... These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with certain of the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren (Acts 1: 14).*

After the Lord's Ascension there came about a fundamental change in the mutual relations of all the first believers. The Holy Apostles had been inseparably close to the Lord, and after them there often followed many women (Luke 8:1-3; Matt. 27:55). Now the orphaned community is all gathered together, not travelling, and they are to be found in one place. And the Mother of Jesus and His brothers are with them.

The unbelief (John 7:5), doubts and uneasiness of His brothers are at an end, as is their closeness according to the flesh with the Great Man. There comes instead a general concord, which is now expressed in prayer and supplication. There were many women among them, for the company numbered about 'an hundred and twenty' (Acts 1:15), but only one of them is mentioned by name, the Mother of the Lord, and this even though formerly several of them were accounted for by name.

It is fitting that now she alone has a mention, just as it is that earlier in His lifetime she was not mentioned in the number of the female companions of the Lord. That was not her time; she observed her Son from afar; she saw Him at home every time He was in His hometown; then she came to His Cross. Now she, as

an active member of the Christian community, is together with the Apostles and all the community. This is why she alone is mentioned here. This fact was therefore worthy of note.

The Lord is not with them in the flesh; the Mother of the Lord is. There came about an exceptional solidarity within the whole community and the Lord's Mother took her own appropriate place therein, putting her prayers and supplications behind the general cause. The concord of all was now a concord with the Mother of the Lord in the strength of her participation in the common assembly.

## **2. The Glorious Dormition of the All-holy Virgin Mary**

Several years after the Ascension of the Lord into heaven, at a time when the All-holy Virgin was fervently praying to the Lord that she might 'be absent from the body and be present with the Lord', she sighed 'desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven' (2 Cor. 5:1-8).

To whom would it be more onerous than to her to be separated from the beloved Son? Then the Archangel Gabriel, her heavenly minister, appeared to her with the good tidings that in three days she would indeed be reunited with her Divine Son. The Mother of the Lord, God's dwelling place on earth, would now herself be translated to God's heavenly dwelling place.

The holy Apostles, the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, of God in the flesh, would behold the demise of her, whose flesh God Himself had born. And in the same way as the holy Apostle Philip, through the prompting of an Angel, went down on the way to Gaza, and was subsequently 'caught away' by the Angel and 'found at Azotus' (Acts 8:26, 39, 40), so also all the holy Apostles, who were dispersed throughout the world, were, by the Divine omnipotence, caught up from their various places and were gathered together at the death-bed of the All-holy Theotokos.

But the death of the All-holy Virgin was exactly a falling asleep [dormition]: it was without the slightest heaviness or conflict at the separation of her soul from the body that she, as it were, fell asleep.

The Lord Himself, appearing with a company of the holy Angels and of the spirits of the righteous, received her immaculate soul. The Son repaid His debt to the mother and received her unto Himself in Heaven, as she had received Him unto herself on earth. The One Who was Himself mortal in the flesh which He had received from her, being a man, willed that she should die and surrender her soul into His hands.

However, the physical nature of mankind, which in Christ had resurrected, could not be wholly given over to death and corruption in the one from whom the Lord had received that nature.

Like her Son, she was subject to the natural law in her death, and she dies with her Son, so that she might with Him rise again unto all eternity. Being a heaven herself, she is taken up to heaven; as the throne of God, she goes to God's throne. Her resurrection and ascension into heaven were assured, for she was not lesser than the Prophets Enoch and Elias, who also have not seen corruption and the dissolution of their bodies.

It was not possible that the Lord would permit the dissolution of the most pure and most sanctified divine temple of His Mother, when He Himself had in three days raised up in Himself that temple which was destroyed in Him (John 2:19). Thus the Lord, Who rose on the third day, raised the All-holy Virgin on the third day.

On this day, at the request of the Apostle Thomas, who had arrived late for the repose and burial of the Mother of God, her tomb was opened, but within the body of the Virgin was not to be found. The evening of the very same day, the holy Apostles rose from table and, according to the sacred custom, took a portion which was set aside in the Lord's honour, and they began to glorify the All-holy Trinity and desired to intone 'All-holy Trinity' or 'Lord Jesus Christ, help us,' when they saw the All-holy Virgin in the air with a multitude of Angels, and she spoke to them: 'Rejoice! I am ever with you!' The Apostles exclaimed 'All-holy Theotokos, help us.'

Thus the life of the All-holy Virgin Mary from her birth until the Annunciation is known to Christ's Holy Church from two very important facts: the circumstances of her birth itself

and her entry into the Temple and her upbringing therein. And, after the Ascension of the Lord, we know of her repose.

This pure, sacred Church Tradition has been kept as being in complete accord with the spirit and the letter of Sacred Scripture, and has been immovably established in the Church of Christ by the annual festal commemorations on the 8<sup>th</sup> September (Birth of the All-holy Virgin), 21<sup>st</sup> November (her Entry into the Temple), and 15<sup>th</sup> August (Dormition).

## **V. THE VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE VENERATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY**

The veneration of the Virgin Mary has a common foundation with the veneration of all the saints, and only occupies first place in this veneration.

### **1. The Heavenly Life of the Saints**

This common foundation consists first of all in the fact that, as the Word of God bears testimony, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him' (Luke 20:38), that is that there are no dead at all with God. Death is only the separation of the soul from the body, and the soul's life, which enlivened and has left the body, is maintained in God. And holy souls (which immediately after death have reached 'the first resurrection' (Rev. 20:5), which is the blessedness of life eternal, even before the second resurrection, that is the resurrection of the body) 'are, as the angels of God in the heavens' (Matt. 22:30).

The holy souls and the angels in the heavens, being genuinely alive, hear all and see all that comes to pass on earth; they rejoice with and suffer with, they pray for and beseech on behalf of, the world; they intercede.

'Abraham', our father, says the Saviour, 'rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad' (John 8:56). He saw our salvation.

But holy souls in the heavens, and particularly 'souls slain for the Word of God' grieve over the triumph of unrighteousness on earth and they thirst for the victory of truth and for God's

judgment, praying: ‘How long, O Master, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell I on the earth?’ (Rev. 6:9-10).

The angels deeply suffer alongside people in their sufferings and they pray for the destiny of whole peoples. ‘The angel of the Lord...said: O Lord Pantocrator, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah’ (Zach. 1:12). Himself full of kindheartedness towards men, the angel prays to the kindhearted God.

Just how precious each human soul is to the angels, who are so sensitively loving, is apparent from the fact that in the heavens ‘there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth’ (Luke 15:10).

‘Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,’ said the Saviour of the children, ‘for I say unto you, That in the heavens their angels do always behold the face of My heavenly Father’ (Matt. 18:10), that is, children have in their angels their own protectors and intercessors before God. How is it then possible to ‘despise’ children, when even the angels have such concern for them?

The Angels, being ‘ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation’ (Heb. 1:14) actually and palpably appear to people when their ‘prayers are heard’ and their ‘alms had in remembrance before God’ (Acts 10:31). They bear testimony to the prayers and almsgiving of people and to the fact that these are acceptable to God. They are mediators between God and man and ministers of God and of the salvation of people.

In the heavens there are representatives of all the saints of the Old and of the New Testaments (the twelve sons of Jacob or tribes of Israel, and the Twelve Apostles), that is, ‘four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of perfumes, which are the prayers of the saints’ (Rev. 5:8). And ‘another angel’ in the heavens was given ‘much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand’ (Rev. 8:3-4).

Are the prayers of these saints, both those in heaven and those on earth, offered up by angels and the elders in heaven to the throne of God? One must realize that the saints that are not yet in heaven, as well as those that are in heaven, also themselves pray before the throne of God. And they [the ones in heaven] not only pray themselves, but they also present to God the prayers of the other saints, which is those that are still on earth. For all Christians are referred as saints, because they are called to holiness (1 Thess. 4:7).

When saints on earth pray, angels and holy people in the heavens offer their prayers to God. And the prayers of those on earth are not carried up to God without the intermediacy of the heavenly saints.

The participation of the saints in the care of people on earth and in their salvation, their living love, the complete compassion are yet only a temporary, median, and incomplete beatitude which exists until the general resurrection and the judgment, only after which they will enjoy the fullness of blessedness and the joy of salvation for themselves and for all those that have been saved.

## **2. The Earthly Gifts of the Saints in the Heavens**

The fact is that the holy inhabitants of Heaven are actually alive; they see, hear, know, feel and respond to all that happens on earth, and this truth contains within another very important fact: that the holy people leave the earth with those very same qualities, skills, and gifts of grace, which they acquired while on earth, and they have lost nothing but their bodies, and the limitations associated therewith. The heavenly gifts of the saints are but a continuation, strengthening and broadening of their earthly gifts.

Thus, to holy people on earth there belongs the gift of the knowledge of that which is hidden and mystical. The holy Prophet Achias [Ahijah], though he was blind, yet knew Jeroboam when he came to him.

The Prophet Eliseus [Elisha] knew what Giezi [Gehazi] and the Syrians did, though they were far from him. The holy Apostle Peter discovered what Ananias and Sapphira had concealed (3 [2 Kings 14:4-6; 4 [2 Kings 5:25; 6:8; Acts 5:1-11].

Thus it is wholly comprehensible that for the saints in the Heavens this ability is immeasurably extended, and is made theirs from the moment that their souls are separated from their bodies.

The prayer of the righteous for others has a particular significance. 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much'; 'Elias was a man ... as we are,' and his prayer both stopped the rains and besought rain.

The Lord said of Job the Righteous: 'My servant Job shall pray for you, for only his face will I accept' (James 5:16-18; Job 42:8). This is because 'if our heart condemn us not,' says the holy Apostle, 'then we have confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight' (2 John 3:21-22).

Such are the prayers of the holy Apostles for people: 'We also pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling; 'we do not cease to pray for you and to ask that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will'; 'this also we pray for, even your perfection' (2 Thess. 1:11; Col. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:9).

The holy Apostle says to the Christians on earth: 'we do not cease to pray for you.' If the prayer of the Apostles on earth was unceasing, how is it possible that it should cease when they are 'absent from the body, and present with the Lord'? For, 'charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away' (Col. 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:8).

If the saints, while on earth, had love for people, and by this love they obtained an earnest of life eternal, then it is apparent that, when they pass over in love 'from death into life' (1 John 3:14), they are not deprived of this love for people, but they continue to possess it, or else they would have been deprived of the Kingdom of God itself and would have ceased to experience it.

If they had compassion for people on earth, if they had an unremitting desire for their salvation, if they had prayer for them before God; if here they heard and accepted requests for prayer, if they knew the needs and deeds of man, even those which are hidden and secret, and were able to help the people by the power of grace granted them by God and by their holy

prayers before God, then they will lose none of these abilities when they are ‘absent from the body, and present with the Lord’

On the contrary, ‘whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord’ and ‘know in part’, yet ‘when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away’ (1 Cor. 13:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:6). In Heaven the saints have the fullness of gifts of grace and knowledge, and are always ready to help, and for this they have greater possibilities than they had while on earth.

It is clear from the undoubted truth of the Word of God that all that a man [spiritually] acquires on earth remains with him, and after his death with his soul, and it serves as an earnest of his future fate and of the blessedness of Paradise itself, and thus that this earthly life is a preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Everyone receives in accordance with what he has ‘done while living in the body, whether it be good or bad’ (2 Cor. 5:10). ‘Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap...he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting’ (Gal. 6:7-8). ‘We have passed from death unto life,’ says the Apostle, because we love the brethren’. Every one who loves his brother already has eternal life abiding in him, and has already tasted the blessedness of the future life (1 John 3:14-15). Further: ‘the Kingdom of God is within you’ (Luke 17:21).

In this way, the active love instilled into the souls of the saints here on earth abides with them eternally in the Heavens.

Many and various are the gifts of grace of the saints which are so essential for the Church on earth. And as soon as the saints leave ‘the body to be present with the Lord’ (2 Cor. 5:8) they cannot be deprived of and lose these gifts; rather they continue to possess them exclusively unto the profit of the Church on earth, that is, without any change they grant her aid through these very gifts of theirs. As long as the Church exists on earth, it is not possible that the saints should be left without a concern for her, and their gifts have significance only in this.



# THE COMING MONTH

THE ONLY GREAT FEAST in February is that of **Meeting of the Lord in the Temple** (2<sup>nd</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> February) when Christ was received by the Elder Simeon in the presence of the Prophetess Anna. It is celebrated on this day because it falls forty days after Christmas, as did the original event, when as a forty-day-old Infant, the Saviour was presented in the Temple according to the Law.

The festival is thus part of the sequence of celebrations intimately connected with the Nativity, but in prophesying the sorrows that the Mother of God would experience at the Passion, Simeon the God-receiver anticipates the coming Passion (see (Luke 2:35). And so the feast itself links the Nativity with the Passion and Resurrection, and actually falls about midway between these two feasts. He spoke of the Christ-Child, saying 'This Child is set for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel.' That fall and resurrection were both first achieved in the people of the Old Israel, the Chosen People of the Old Testament, for many fell when they did not believe on Him, while others, believing, found resurrection. So in the New Israel, the Church, through the generations we see the same thing happening, many falling away through unbelief, and others being raised up through faith.

This year, the Feast of the Meeting falls on **Judgment Sunday**, the day on which we commemorate the events surrounding the end-times and in particular the Lord's dread Judgment at the end of time. So, this year the services of this Sunday will be combined with those of the Meeting. It may appear rather inappropriate that a feast celebrating our Saviour's being presented in the Temple as a forty-day-old infant is combined with texts which tell of death and the particular judgment which follows it, and the coming apostasy, of the tribulations at the end of the world, of the reign of the Antichrist, of the Second Coming and the Judgment itself. And yet, in the Gospel reading for the Meeting itself, we hear the aged Simeon speaking of judgment (See Luke 2:34). The Judgment centres around this little Child, and it is entirely appropriate and indeed beautiful that these two festivals fall on the same day.

The next Sunday is **Forgiveness Sunday**. Perhaps one of the

things which first strikes the newcomer to Orthodoxy, especially the English one, is the emphasis on mutual forgiveness. For the Englishman asking forgiveness, except in a perfunctory way, is something we are very loath to do. We prefer to let things simply die down and cease to be an issue, or simply to walk away. Among the Orthodox asking forgiveness is common currency. People ask each other's forgiveness after every upset, they do so before going to confession, and they bow and ask forgiveness before receiving the Holy Mysteries.

Each day in the full monastic cycle of services, we bow or prostrate to each other at the end of the day at Compline and ask forgiveness. And we have this special Sunday, when on the very cusp of Great Lent, we ask each other's forgiveness for all our sins and offences committed during the past year, so that as Saint John of Shanghai explains, we may set out upon the course of the fast, lightened of a burden. Also, so that we may receive God's forgiveness. The Saviour says: 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you' (Matt. 6:14). He does not say, 'if ye keep the fast, your heavenly Father will forgive you.' If we do not begin our fast with forgiving each other, and maintain that forgiveness through its course, we shall be little profited by our efforts.

Among the saints we honour in February, we have:-

**Our Venerable Father Isaacius the Recluse of Kiev** (14<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup>) was the son of a rich merchant from the town of Toropits, but he distributed his wealth to the poor and took up the monastic life, joining the brotherhood of the Kiev Caves Monastery when Sts Antony and Theodosius were still alive.

Having been tested he received the monastic tonsure from St Antony, and having made some progress in the ascetical life, he adopted a life of complete reclusion. In his cell, he lived the most austere life, keeping the strictest of fasts, eating only a small prosphora every other day, and he was subjected to various demonic temptations.

Some element of pride must have crept in, for he was deluded and when the evil one appeared to him in the form of Christ, surrounded by 'angels of light', he fell down and worshipped him. As a result of this fall, he became completely paralysed. He was nursed back to physical and spiritual health only over a period of

two years, and Saint Theodosius himself would feed him during this period. Having recovered he did not return to his seclusion, but now took up the struggle of being a Fool-for-Christ, and being now more wise concerning the wiles of the evil one, by his foolishness he mocked him who had earlier mocked him.

At the end of his life, he retired to live as a recluse again, but although he was again beset by demonic temptations, he was now more experienced and always guarded himself with the Cross and with prayer. Before his death in 1090 A.D. he was granted the gift of working miracles. His sacred relics are in the Caves of St Antony at Kiev.

**Saint George of Amastris** (21<sup>st</sup> Feb/5<sup>th</sup> March) was born and grew up at a place called Chromna, near Amastris on the shores of the Black Sea. As a child he fell into a fire and burnt his hands and his foot, which were thereafter disfigured with scars, but he was not deprived of their use.

As a youth, he went out into the desert of Mount Sirik, where he placed himself under obedience to a hermit-monk, who instructed him in the monastic life. When this Elder died, fearing to be deprived of the blessing of obedience, he went to the monastery of Bonysa and joined the brotherhood there. Here, on account of his continual prayer and his life of ascetical struggle he became widely renowned, and when the Bishop of Amastris died, the faithful elected George to be consecrated in his place.

Although the Emperor had a preferred candidate, noting that the people had clearly elected this chosen one the Patriarch St Tarasius performed the consecration, and the hierarch became a luminary of the Church. He took special care over the ordering of the divine services and the education of the clergy, and he also took particular care of the widows, orphans, the sick and the needy.

At one point his diocese was invaded by Saracens, and foreseeing this St George travelled round his diocese calling the people to flee within the city walls for protection. He gave up his soul in the year 805. Sometime afterwards invaders from what is now Russia invaded the region and attempted to rifle the Saint's tomb, but they were fixed motionless to the spot, and it was only through the prayers of the Saint that they were released from this binding.

# POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*What is the Church's position on substitute foods that we eat on fasting days such as soya milk or vegan sausages? Surely part of the reason for lenten fasting is denying ourselves non-fasting food. Are substitutes a 'cheat' that allows us to follow the letter of the law, rather than the spirit. P.D., Essex*

I DON'T THINK as yet we can talk of a Church position, after all most of these products have become available only in the last twenty years and so the Church as a whole has not yet pronounced on them. Secondly, we must remember that the fasting regulations were made when people prepared their meals from scratch, now it is more common that we eat shop brought prepared products, indeed sometimes even prepared meals! And thirdly we must remember that the fasting regulations evolved in a Mediterranean culture. For instance, we may eat lobster during Lent which in England would be considered a luxury food, but it was not in the classical world in the Mediterranean.

The three points above only deal with rather external cultural points. We must also consider the purpose of fasting. It is not a sacrifice – the one Sacrifice we need has already been offered for us. The regulations are to teach us discipline, they are an instruction and bring our attention to our Church membership even in our daily life at home. When I first became Orthodox I was instructed that the non-fasting foods are also heavy and they weigh you down spiritually, and St Basil the Great mentions a similar phenomenon saying, more poetically, from eating the flesh of beasts we become more bestial.

There is also the matter of convenience. Another difference between our times and earlier ones is that we have sadly much more to do. We have to travel to and from work, both partners in a marriage usually have to go to work to be able to earn enough to support their families. Even in going to church we have difficulties, whereas only two or three generations ago people simply had to take a short walk down the road. So one has to do the best one can.

It may appear more heroic to abstain from all vegetarian and vegan substitutes for meat and dairy products, but that could be a cause of another fall, pride. The substitutes do not break the regulations that we have. We are being obedient the Church and at one with our fellow believers in using them, and so they are acceptable. It would be wiser here in England, I believe, to have a slice of vegan 'cheese', than to dine on lobster every day in a fast.

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

### **FUNERAL**

The funeral service for one of our most loyal parishioners, **Valentine Meade**, took place on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026; Valentine was laid to rest near her brother, Subdeacon Dimtri Galitzine, and her sister, Irina Galitzine. Valentine reposed on 2<sup>nd</sup> January and Fr. Evangelos ministered to her at the last. The funeral service was served by **Priest Evangelos Liassi**, **Priest Gabriel Lawani**, **Priestmonk Sabbas** and **Deacon Ioan Turcu**.

The funeral was attended by her children, **Nicholas**, **Tatiana**, **Catherine** and **Elizabeth**, her grandchildren and many mourners; a fasting meal was provided in the Old Mortuary. Valentine remained loyal to traditional Orthodoxy until the end of her life and was always supportive of the Saint Edward Brotherhood. May her memory be eternal!

### **CHRISMATION**

On Christmas Eve, **Tatiana Hinds** was received by Holy Chrismation into the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians. Tatiana's sponsor is **Deborah Cameron**. The celebrant of the mysterion was **Archimandrite Daniel (Toyne)**. Tatiana was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (MP) and left that body due to its compromising of the Orthodox faith.

## FOUR BAPTISMS

On Christmas morning, prior to the Hours and the Divine Liturgy, a family of four catechumens, **James, Daria**, and their children **Lilian** and **Aaron** received the Grace of Holy Baptism. The Godparents are John Caminis, Larissa Bouaka, Stephanie Toseva and Joshua Bailey; the celebrant of the mysterion was **Priestmonk Sabbas**. The newly-illumined received the Immaculate Mysteries at the Divine Liturgy and at the Liturgies served in the following week. On the eighth day (1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Jan) – the Feast of the Circumcision – the wedding service was celebrated for James and Daria by **Priest Evangelos Liassi** whilst their were still wearing their baptismal robes. The prayer for the removal of the robes was read by Priestmonk Sabbas.

## CHRISTMAS AND THEOPHANY

After the celebration of the Hours and Divine Liturgy, the Christmas party took place at Brookwood Memorial Halls. The children performed a play entitled the ‘First New England Christmas’ produced and directed by **Ekaterina Spirogloou**; the children also sang a selection of traditional carols. The booking of the hall was arranged, and paid for, by **Christopher Hunter**, to whom we are exceedingly grateful.

After the Theophany Divine Liturgy, a car convoy departed for Chertsey for the Great Blessing of the Waters at the Abbey River where we were cordially welcomed by **Mary Haigh** who generously allowed us to use the Abbey Bridge (St. Edward’s Bridge) for the blessing, and the Tithe Barn for refreshments. May God bless Mary for her kindness to us.

## NEW KITTEN

On Christmas Day, the **Papanicolaou Family** gave us a young white and black kitten, a nephew of Smudge, he will replace Biggles who died last year. We have named the kitten Oyster; he gets on well with Bruna and Smudge.

## GIFT FOR THE CHURCH

An anonymous donor kindly gave us a beautiful Persian Rug for the narthex of the church; it looks very impressive.

## NEW ICON

The **Sisters of St Philothei Convent**, Sweden, have painted an icon of St. James the Deacon of York (17<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> August), who single-handedly maintained the Christian mission in Northumbria during an assault by the local pagans. It is believed that St James was personally known to the Venerable Bede.

## VISITOR TO THE BROTHERHOOD

On Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, **Jonathan Kewley** of English Heritage visited the Old Mortuary and the Shrine Church on a visit to Brookwood Cemetery.

## ORTHODOX AID FUND

During 2025 the Brotherhood's Orthodox Aid Fund distributed £24,667.14 in alms; £20,639.71 was given to our Sister Churches in response to various appeals and the remainder to various humanitarian and environmental causes. In addition, £23,000 was distributed by the Brotherhood from the funds of the former Convent of the Annunciation for our missions in Africa. In these days of universal shortages and needs, donations are greatly appreciated and thankfully received.

## Practical Tip

IN EVERY SPHERE of life (family, career, housing, social life), before embarking on any change, always reflect carefully on whether the proposed change will help to bring you closer to Christ and His Church, or will put you back further from Him.

