

# *The Shepherd*

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## FROM THE FATHERS

‘ENOCH WAS TRANSLATED so as not to see death, and was not found. But at his translation he did not leave his body, or any part of his body, behind. If he had, he would have seen death, but being translated with his body, he did not see death. He is in a living body, and because he has been translated his state is spiritual, not ensouled, though he is in a spiritual body. The same has been said of Elias; moreover, he was taken up as if in a chariot of fire and is still in the flesh; however this is a spiritual flesh which will never again need, as it did when it was in this world to be fed by ravens, to drink from the brook of Horrath, and to be clothed with a fleece. It is fed by another, spiritual, nourishment the supplier of which is God, the knower of secrets and the Creator of things invisible, and it receives food which is immortal and pure.’

### SAINT EPIPHANIUS OF CYPRUS † 403 A.D.

‘EVERY ONE OF THE SAINTS of old, when understood correctly, was a “forerunner” of the mystery that was disclosed and prefigured through him. Through the saints the Word suffered, acted, and spoke while announcing the original meanings of the mysteries in anticipation. For this reason every saint is perfectly interchangeable with another, and all can be taken in place of all, and each in place of each. The Lord clearly shows this by attributing the qualities and the name of Elias to John the Baptist, “either because of their equal possession of virtue”, as the teachers say, “and the equal purity of mind in all things and the intensity of their way of life, or because of the identity of the power of grace that is in both”, or for some other hidden reason that the one who said it, being God, would know, as would those who have been instructed in such mysteries by Him.’

### SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR † 662 A.D.

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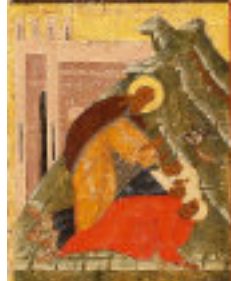
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# A HAGIOGRAPHICAL ICON OF THE PROPHET ELIAS

**1. The birth of the Prophet Elias.** Scripture is silent concerning the birth of the Prophet, but Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus says that ‘when Elias was born, his father Sobach saw in a vision angels of God around him. They swaddled him with fire and fed him with flames.’

**2. Elias prophesies to King Ahab** (3 Kings 17:1). Ahab reigned as King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Elias prophesied that no rain or dew would fall on the earth except by his word.

**Centrepiece. Elias in the wilderness** (3 Kings 2:6-16). God commanded Elias to hide in the wilderness where he was fed by two ravens: one bringing bread and one bringing meat. He drank water from the brook Horraht until it dried up from the lack of rain.

**3. Elias and the widow of Sareptha** (3 Kings 17:7-16). God sent Elias to Sareptha in Sidon, where he encountered a widow. He commanded the widow to bake him a cake and, in return, Elias prophesied that her pitcher of meal and cruse of oil would never be exhausted.

**4. Elias resurrects the child of the widow** (3 Kings 17:17-24). The son of the widow took ill and died. Elias breathed on the child three times and the boy was brought back to life.

**5. Elias and the priests of Baal** (3 Kings 18:20-29). King Ahab gathered all the priests of the pagan god Baal together on Mount Carmel. Elias challenged them to offer a calf on their altar and pray to Baal to send fire down and consume the calf as a whole burnt-offering.

**6. Elias’s sacrifice consumed by fire** (3 Kings 18:30-19). The priests of Baal called upon their god, cutting themselves as was their custom from morning until evening. Elias built his altar with twelve stones, and commanded that four pitchers of water be poured upon the altar; this was done three times until the trench around the altar was full. Elias prayed and fire came down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice, the water and even the stones of the altar.

**7. Elias slays the priests of Baal** (3 Kings 18:40). Elias commanded the people to seize the priest of Baal and he slaughtered them by the Brook of Kisson.

**8. God appears to Elias** (3 Kings 19:9-18). After hearing of the slaying of the priests of Baal, Jezebel, Ahab's wife, threatened Elias with death. Elias fled to Mount Horeb where God appeared to him. God revealed to Elias that there were seven thousand faithful Israelites who had not bowed the knee to Baal. All the appearances of God in the Old Testament are of the Son which is why Christ is depicted appearing to Elias. The mandorla surrounding Him signifies that it is a glorious appearing outside our understanding of time and space.

**9. Elias throws his cloak over Elisseus** (3 Kings 19:19). After this, Elias found Elisseus ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen and threw his cloak over him; after having slaughtered the oxen, and cooking them using the wood of his plough for fuel, Elisseus gave the meat to the people and became Elias' disciple.

**10. Fire from heaven falls on the captains of fifty** (4 Kings 1:9-15). King Ochozias, the son of King Ahab was a dedicated worshipper of Baal and reigned, like his father, from Samaria. Ochozias had fallen through the latticework in an upper room and was confined to bed. Elias revealed to the King's messengers that Ochozias would never leave what would become his death bed. The King sent messengers and commanded Elias to come down from his mountain. The first captain and fifty soldiers he sent were consumed by fire falling from heaven. Likewise a second captain and his fifty. Lastly a third captain beseeched Elias to spare him and his soldiers and Elias did so.

**11. Elias prophesies to King Ochozias** (4 Kings 1:16). In this verse Elias repeats his prophecy to the king in person: 'the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down from it, for thou shalt surely die.' Ochozias died according to the word of the Prophet Elias.

**12. Elias is taken up** (4 Kings. 2:9-15). Elias is taken up as if in a chariot of fire throwing down his mantle to his disciple Prophet Elisseus.



# SERMON ON THE DAY OF THE HOLY PROPHET OF GOD ELIAS

**Archpriest Leonid Kolchev**

Today we are making a prayerful commemoration in honour of one of the greatest prophets of ancient time, Elias the Thesbite (i.e. from the town of Thesbe).

We generally think that people are called prophets who can foretell the future. But this is far from true. The prophets, these were pious people chosen by God, who instructed the people in the Faith, who dared to convict the dishonourable, threatening them with punishments from God.

Pious people, however, they comforted with the hope of the coming into the world of the promised Saviour, and, to confirm that they had been sent by God, the Lord gave them the power to work miracles and to foretell the future. In doing this, they sincerely and often boldly besought the Heavenly King with regard to those sinners who were dallying in lawlessness.

It is exactly such a man that the glorious Elias was, who is called an angel in the flesh by the Church because of his rigorous manner of life, full of every kind of deprivation, and the constant striving of his heart and mind towards God.

Elias appeared in the days of the impious Israelite King Ahab and the latter's evil wife, Jezebel, when almost all the people, forgetting the true God, had sunk into lawlessness. As stern instruction did not work, some other, stronger remedy was necessary. And so Elias appeared before Ahab and remonstrated with him: 'As the Lord God of Israel liveth, in these years there shall be neither dew nor rain except at my word' (3 Kings 17:1).

The heavens were shut up, the earth dried up, and a great famine fell upon that land. Seeing such affliction, the people came to the understanding that this was a punishment from God, and little by little they began to repent. Ahab and his Jezebel alone

would not humble themselves at all, and they sought Elias everywhere, because they considered that he was responsible for what had come to pass.

How like our situation this is! When our behaviour is shown us as bad in some way, we never think of correcting this, but before anything else we dig ourselves in lest anyone might see this. Grant us here and now such a man that he might make us aware!...

In the end Elias appeared before Ahab, his wife Jezebel and a multitude of pagan priests, all of whom still worshipped idols, and he proposed that he would demonstrate the power of the true God before all the people.

For this purpose, two altars with sacrifices were made ready, one in honour of Baal and the other for the God Whom Elias worshipped. And it was agreed among all the people that the One who sent down fire from heaven on His sacrifice would be accepted as the true God.

The pagan priests of Baal prayed long and until they grew weak, and, of course, as soon as Elias prayed immediately a heavenly fire fell upon the sacrifice though it was soaked in the water which had been poured around abundantly. And then all the people, struck by such a wonder, cried out: 'The Lord, Whom Elias worshippeth, is the true God!' (see 3 Kings 18:39). On that very day, at Elias' word, rain fell, though there had been none for three years and six months.

Even before this the Lord had several times been attentive to the supplication of His servant. It is known that through the prayers of Elias a handful of flour and a small quantity of oil, belonging to a certain pious widow of Sarepta in Sidon, were sufficient to feed several persons in the days of that dreadful famine. When the son of this widow died, then Elias prayed and he rose again. Such is the power of prayer!

But someone will say, he was a great prophet. Yes, that is true. That is why the Church calls us to emulate him, which is fully possible for Elias was a man like unto us (see James 5:17). Know that it was not to the prophets and Apostles only that Christ said,

‘Ask and it shall be given you’ (Matt. 7:7), but it was said in general to all His true followers. Listen: ‘it shall be given you’ provided only that we pray with perseverance, with deep faith, and that the object of our petition is not contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God or the good of the person who prays.

Unfortunately, we confine ourselves only to exterior prayers. In actual fact, two or three prayers we have learned, the sign of the Cross with a prostration - and that is all! We skate, as one might say, on the surface, and we think that we have already prayed. No, this is only a preparation for real prayer.

Imagine a cold, unheated room. Then you put wood in the stove; it flares up but still the room is not warmed. The desired temperature will be reached later, when the wood is burning through and the stove closed down. It is something like this with prayer.

The holy words that you have learned are like the logs, warming up your soul and bringing it to the boil. Then, and only then, the reading of the appointed prayers may be curtailed, the soul speaks herself, and from the eyes tears of joy will flow.

Oh, what a blessed condition!... It does not last for long, and of course, it rarely happens, but should we experience it only once we will unremittingly yearn for it to be repeated. Here, indeed, is the prayer which is capable of bowing Heaven down and the mercy of God to work great signs and even miracles....

Holy Prophet of God, glorious Elias, such was thy power in prayer that the heavens were shut up, and again fire and water were called down from heaven, help us sinners that our hearts may be set alight with the flame of prayer and that tears of repentance might flow, that the Lord might also deem us worthy to be with thee....

**Holy, glorious Elias, pray unto God for us! Amen.**

From the *Collection of Teachings* published in Copenhagen, 1938.

This translation first published in *The Shepherd*, July 2006



# THE PRAYERS ON THE FIRST DAY AFTER A WOMAN HATH GIVEN BIRTH TO A CHILD

ARCHBISHOP BENJAMIN OF NIZHEGOROD &  
ARZAMASS

The Church, ready to grant a blessing to a woman giving birth, does not wait for her to leave her home [or the hospital] and come to the Lord's house; on the contrary, immediately after the delivery She calms the pangs of the birth-giving by the reading of the prayers appointed, and also comforts the woman herself.

The most important reasons why the Church was moved to appoint and administer these prayers, are discovered in the prayers themselves. They are: first, to beseech God to grant in a seasonable time an end to the weakness and infirmity which accompany the pangs of childbirth. Second, that the pure eyes of God will not turn away from the fruit which has proceeded from a carnal conceiving, nor from the mother who has conceived in impurity and sin [see Ps 50:5], lest both mother and offspring be cut off from the almighty help of God, and even more, so that following His commandment, to increase and multiply, the Lord, who orders things for the continuation of the race of man, forgives the carnality of the conceiving and cleanses bodily defilements, will not give them over to the full measure of the consequences of the condemnation that sin deserves.

Third, that the child, which has come forth from the womb, as from a prison, and is yet a child of the darkness, held captive to the demon by reason of the sin of the firstborn [ancestral sin], he who has not yet attained to the protection of God might (along with his mother, who is found in the uncleanness of birth-giving) not be subject to harm from any enchantment.

Therefore in her prayers, the Holy Church remembers in their little affliction both the woman who has given birth and the child

that has been born of her, and to the utmost She strives to encourage, comfort and calm them, who are subject to those harms and afflictions, in which She finds them. To the question, Why is there a priestly prayer at the birth of a child? Saint Simeon of Thessalonica answers:

*When we are born according to the flesh, this birth according to the flesh itself indicates to us the way to rebirth according to the spirit. For this reason the Church of Christ, being herself undefiled and sanctified in Christ, cleanses our fleshly child which, though it might be born from pious parents, is nonetheless born from sinful ones and is consequently itself sinful. Thus when a pious woman gives birth to an infant, then the priest comes and glorifies God, thanking Him that a man has been born into the world; then he blesses the newborn with the sign of the Cross, and asks that God's mercy might be upon him throughout his life and that he will be deemed worthy of the grace of Baptism and Chrismation. And he prays for the mother and for the women that are with her that they be granted grace, sanctification, freedom to do their works, and that they be not prohibited from the Church by anything, that they not consider themselves defiled on account of touching something unclean, and that they not lose faith on account of the malicious delusions of the evil one.*

## **FIRST PRAYER**

**O** Master, Lord Almighty, Who healest every infirmity and every weakness: Heal Thou also this Thy handmaid (*Name*) who this day hath given birth to a child, and raise her up from the bed whereon she lieth. For, according to the words of the Prophet David, in sin are we conceived, and we are all vile in thy sight. Preserve her and this child which she hath borne. Cover her with the shadow of Thy wings, from the day that now is even unto her last end; through the prayers of the all-pure Theotokos and of all the Saints, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.

## SECOND PRAYER

O Master, Lord our God, Who wast born of our all-pure Lady, the Theotokos, and as a babe didst lie in a manger, and as a little Child wast held in arms: Show mercy also upon this Thy handmaid, who today hath borne a child; and forgive her sins, both voluntary and involuntary; and preserve her from every oppression of the Devil; and preserve the child which hath been born of her from every poison and perplexity, from every storm of adversity, and from evil spirits, whether of the day or of the night. Keep her under Thy mighty hand, and grant that she may speedily arise, and purify her from uncleanness, and heal her sickness; and vouchsafe unto her health and strength both of soul and body; and hedge her round about with bright and shining Angels; and preserve her from every invasion of invisible spirits. Yea, Lord, and from infirmity and weakness, from jealousy and envy, and from the evil eye; and have mercy upon her and upon the child, according to thy great mercy; and purify her from bodily uncleanness, and from the divers inward troubles which assail her. And lead her forth by thy speedy mercy, in submissiveness of her body, unto recovery. And grant that the child that hath been born of her may do reverence to the earthly temple which Thou hast prepared to glorify Thy holy Name. For unto Thee are due all glory, honour and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**And forgive her sins voluntary and involuntary.** Among the sins there are involuntary sins, which, although we are not immediately responsible for them, nonetheless make an impression on the soul and render us unworthy before God. In theological terms, involuntary sin has as its origin the sin of the firstborn, and is appropriated by us through our forefathers; the fault is of another and not of our own will. That also is called involuntary sin, which, although committed by ourselves, does not stem from the full consciousness of our mind, and consequently is not a result of a direct inclination to it of our will. These sins,

because they stem from ignorance, or from our not assenting to them fully, are thus involuntary, but they are nonetheless sins.

**From evil spirits, whether of the day or of the night.**

The demons, by evil design, conspire to tempt people with various and false impressions – one arouses people to one sin, another to another. Therefore these same spirits are called by various names: Asmodei (see Tobit 8:3) – the spirit of fornication; Lucifer – the spirit of pride; there is a spirit of envy, a spirit of infirmity, and so on. Also some of them strive to seduce us by day; others make a catch by night. And is this not the meaning which the Sacred Scriptures proclaim, when they say: ‘thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the thing that walketh in darkness, nor for the mishap and the demon of noonday’ (Ps. 90:5-6). From all such perils, the Holy Church asks that the newly-born child might be delivered by Her prayers.

**From jealousy and envy, and from the evil eye.** The words, ‘from jealousy and envy’ refer to a material enchantment, whereby the soul of an evil man, filled with jealousy and envy, might affect the infant by an injurious and corrupt atmosphere and by harmful influences, which not infrequently might injure the tender body of the infant, as it is soon affected by even the very slightest setback. The words, ‘from the evil eye’, mean the magical enchantment or sorcery which a malicious spirit employs, uniting his own contrivances with a glance, touch, or some other activity of evil people.

### **THIRD PRAYER**

**O** Lord our God, who wast graciously pleased to come down from heaven, and to be born of the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, for the salvation of us sinners, and who knowest the frailty of man’s nature: Forgive thy handmaid (*Name*) who today hath given birth, according to the multitude of thy bounties. For thou hast said, O Lord: Increase, and multiply, and fill the earth, and possess it. For which cause also do we, thy servants, pray, and emboldened

by thy long-suffering love towards mankind, with awe do cry aloud to the kingdom of Thy holy Name: Look down from heaven and behold the weakness of us who are condemned; and pardon this Thy handmaid, and all the house wherein the child hath been born, and those who have touched her, and all those who are here present; inasmuch as Thou art a good God and lovest mankind; for Thou only hast power to remit sins. Through the prayers of the all-holy Theotokos and of all the Saints. Amen.



## A MIRACLE OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR MARINA

A FEW years ago, a family from Lemessos, Cyprus, named Vassiliou, received the following miracle. In Greece they are well known from the televised requests they made in order to find a donor for their young boy Andreas (Andrew), who suffered from leukaemia. The donor was indeed found and the parents began preparing for their trip to Texas, U.S.A. where the bone marrow transplant was going to be performed.

Meanwhile, they also prayed and begged Jesus Christ to save their boy. Before they left for the U.S.A. the parents heard of St. Marina's miracles and they called the monastery of St. Marina located on the island of Andros in Greece to ask for her blessing. The Elder of the monastery, Archimandrite Cyprianos, promised that he would pray to Saint Marina. He also wished the parents for St. Marina to be with Andreas in the operating room, to help him.

With Elder Cyprianos' blessing and with strong faith that Saint Marina would help indeed, the Vassiliou family went to the U.S.A. After the necessary pre-operation tests that Andreas had to undergo, he was taken to the operating room.

A short time before the operation was to begin, a woman came to see the surgeon who would be operating on Andreas. She said

that she was Andreas's doctor and asked to be allowed to observe the operation. The conversation that ensued proved that the woman was indeed a doctor. However, the surgeon replied that 'outside' doctors were not permitted to be present in the operating room and that his medical teams' policy was that no doctor other than those on the team be involved in such delicate operations.

The persistence of the woman, however, convinced the surgeon to allow her in the operating room. But before, he asked her to leave her credentials at the administration desk. The unknown doctor did as told, and then entered the operating room with the surgeon. During the operation, she gave several directions regarding the progress of the procedure. The operation went well and in the end the surgeon thanked the woman and exited the operating room.

Andreas's parents immediately went to inquire about the outcome of the surgery and the surgeon replied that all had gone very well, adding that he could not understand why they had brought Andreas to him when they had such a fine doctor. The parents were surprised and responded that they had not brought any doctor with them. The surgeon insisted however.

He also told them that when he came out of the operating room Andreas's doctor had remained there for a little longer with the rest of the operating team and therefore, she would probably still be around. He recommended that they look for her. The search, however, proved pointless as the 'woman doctor' was nowhere around. The Vassiliou couple then concluded that it must have been a doctor from Greece or Cyprus who had decided to travel to the U.S.A. and contribute to the delicate operation. They expressed the wish to know who she was so that they may be able to thank her, and at the surgeon's recommendation they then went to the administration desk to ask for her credentials.

It was with utter surprise that they read that the unknown woman had signed with the name 'Marina from Andros'. Tears of gratefulness and joy filled their eyes as they recalled that the Elder at the monastery had said to them that he wished Andreas to have Saint Marina in the operating room to help him.



Andreas's parents shared with the media their joy both for the successful operation and Andreas's recovered health and for the miracle they received. The Vassiliou family made the vow that the entire family will be present at the Saint's monastery every year on the Saint's feast day (17<sup>th</sup> July), and Elder Cyprianos reports that the family has been making the annual trip from Lemessos to Andros every summer to thank Saint Marina for saving Andreas. Miracles performed by the saints have never ceased to take place in the Orthodox Church. With these miracles, may our Lord Jesus Christ help us build our faith.



## THE COMING MONTH

IN JULY there are no Great Feasts, and, except for the normal Wednesday and Friday fasting, no special periods of fasting. The only other month which is always like this is October. Among the saints we celebrate this month, though, we have:

**The Holy Great Martyr Procopius** (8<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>), before his conversion Neanius, a native of Jerusalem, lived and suffered during the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284-305 A.D.). His father, an eminent Roman by the name of Christopher, was a Christian, but his mother, Theodosia, was a pagan. His father died when he was a child, and he was raised by his mother. Having received an excellent secular education, Neanius was presented to Diocletian in the very first year of the Emperor's accession, and he found favour and quickly advanced in government service.

Towards the year 303, when open persecution against Christians began, Neanius was sent as a proconsul to Alexandria with orders to mercilessly persecute the Church of God. On the way to Egypt, near the Syrian city of Apamea, Neanius had a vision

of the Lord Jesus, similar to the vision of Saul on the road to Damascus. A divine voice cried out, 'Neanius, why do you persecute Me'? Neanius asked, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' 'I am the crucified Jesus, the Son of God.' At that moment a radiant Cross appeared in the air. Neanius felt an inexpressible joy and spiritual happiness in his heart and he was transformed from being a persecutor into a zealous follower of Christ.

However, the words of the Saviour came true for the saint: 'A man's foes shall be those of his own household' (Matt. 10: 36). His mother went to the Emperor to complain that her son did not worship the ancestral gods. Neanius was summoned to the procurator Judaeus Justus, where he was solemnly handed the decree of Diocletian. Having read through the blasphemous directive, Neanius quietly tore it up before everyone. This was a crime, which the Romans regarded as an insult to authority. Neanius was held under guard and sent in chains to Caesarea of Palestine, where the Apostle Paul had once languished.

After terrible torments, they threw the saint into a dank prison. That night, a light shone in the prison, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself baptized the suffering confessor, and gave him the name Procopius. One day twelve women appeared before his prison window and said to him: 'We too are the handmaids of Christ.' Apprehended they were thrown into the same prison, where Saint Procopius taught them the Faith of Christ and particularly about how they would receive the Martyr's crown. For this reason in the marriage service of our Church, Saint Procopius is commemorated along with the God-crowned Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena. After this, those twelve women were brutally tortured and slain.

Repeatedly the Roman authorities demanded that Saint Procopius renounce Christ, and they subjected him to more tortures. He remained steadfast and was slain by the sword. Inspired by the example of Procopius, many of the holy martyr's former guards and Roman soldiers went beneath the executioner's sword together with their tribunes Nikostrates and Antiochus.

Struck by the great faith and courage of the Christians, and seeing the firmness of her son in bearing terrible sufferings, Theodosia repented and died as a martyr.

**The Venerable Theophilus the Myron-Streaming of Athos** (8<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>) was born in the Macedonian village of Ziki. He was an extremely learned but humble man, and was ordained priest. He comes to notice during the time that Saint Niphon was Patriarch of Constantinople. Then it was heard that the Patriarch Joachim of Alexandria had literally moved a mountain.

Rumours of this wonder had spread and had caused confusion, and St Niphon decided to investigate the matter and sent Fr Theophilus to look into it. It transpired that the Moslems had tempted Patriarch Joachim, telling him that the Christian Faith was not true because the Saviour had said that we would be able to move mountains and it was never done. They did not, of course, understand that the mountains that we are urged to move are the mountains of our sins.

However, so that the Faith should not be mocked, Patriarch Joachim humbly prayed and besought the Lord to move a mountain. Which thing happened, confounding those who were mocking our Faith. When he had investigated this matter, Father Theophilus reported back to the Patriarch of Constantinople, St Niphon. Then, fulfilling his heart's desire and perhaps moved by the things he had witnessed in Egypt, he retired to the Holy Mountain Athos, living first at Vatopedi Monastery and later at the cell of St Basil near Karyes.

At that time, the see of Thessalonica fell vacant and the faithful there urged the then Patriarch, Theoleptus, to consecrate Theophilus as their archpastor. Patriarch Theoleptus was from the same region as Saint Theophilus and knew him well and urged him to accept the Archbishopric.

Fr Theophilus had no such thought, however, and instead took the Great Schema, simply writing back to the Patriarch: 'If God wills, we shall meet again in the heavenly Kingdom.' He continued

his ascetical life on the Holy Mountain and achieved dispassion, becoming a vessel of God's graces.

When his end approached he instructed his disciple, Isaac, that he was not to be buried reverently, for he considered himself a great sinner, but that Isaac was to tie a cord round his ankles and drag him out and cast him into a ravine. When the time came, in obedience, Isaac did this, but a city set on a hill cannot be hid, and later his sacred relics were retrieved incorrupt and taken to his cell. Then a miracle was manifest for they were found to be myrron-streaming, a healing ointment flowing from them. St Theophilus ended his earthly course on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1548 A.D.

**The Holy New Martyr Michael the Gardener of Athens** (9<sup>th</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> July) was born to poor but pious and faithful parents near Athens in 1753. He did not go to school but learned gardening instead. A devout Orthodox Christian, Michael was a parishioner at the church of *Panagia Vlassarou*, which today is in ruins. During the harvest season Michael would load his donkey with products and peddle them in the villages surrounding the city of Athens.

When he was eighteen years old, as he was returning from such a journey with his donkey, he was once seized by some Muslims and accused falsely of transporting gunpowder to some rebel Greeks (*klefts*), who had become allies of the Russians who had ships in the Mediterranean.

The Muslims beat him and brought him before the *kadi* (judge), and he was imprisoned. There, he was visited by other Muslims who threatened him and tried to convert him to Islam. A pious and zealous Christian named George, who heard of this, bribed the guards so that he might visit him in prison and give him much needed support.

George feared that Michael would deny his Orthodox Faith, seeking to spare his life since he was only eighteen years old, and was a rather simple and uneducated person. However, George saw Michael in his prison cell on his knees, praying with tears. For

many hours they stayed together and prayed and sang hymns.

After thirty days of incarceration, Michael was returned to the kadi who began to flatter him and promised not only to spare his life, but to reward him with all kinds of good things if he would embrace Islam. He, however, refused saying: 'I will not become a Muslim! I will not become a Turk!'

Consequently he was sent to the so-called *kalopasha* (good pasha) from Ioannina to decide on his fate. The same thing occurred: the same threats and promises, but also the same refusal from Michael, who, though simple, was mighty in faith: 'I will not become a Muslim!' As a result, he was sentenced to death. On the way to his execution, Michael asked forgiveness from all the Orthodox Christians he encountered.

The place of his execution was to be the site of the ancient temple of Zeus. Michael knelt and bent his head. The executioner, to frighten him and weaken him at the last minute, hit him with the blunt edge of the sword asking the martyr to reconsider. The martyr responded: 'I told you, I am a Christian. I refuse to become a Muslim.' It is said that this was done a few times to terrify the martyr. But Michael, full of the Holy Spirit, shouted with courage: 'Strike for the Faith!' This infuriated the executioner so much that he struck off Michael's head with one swing of the sword. Thus Michael the Gardener gave his life for the love of Jesus Christ in Athens on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1771. He is also celebrated by the Church on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

**Saint Hedda, Bishop of Winchester** (17<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup>) was an East Saxon by birth. He took up the monastic life in the monastery of the famed St Hilda of Whitby, which was a double house for both men and women. In 676 he was consecrated as the Bishop of Wessex by St Theodore of Tarsus, the Archbishop of Canterbury. At that time the episcopal seat of the Wessex diocese was at Dorchester-on-Thames, but presumably because of demographic changes, St Hedda moved it to Winchester.

As Bishop he helped King Ina of Wessex to draw up a code of laws for his people. St Bede reports of him that 'he was a good and

just man, and exercised his episcopal duties rather through an innate love of virtue than through the learning he had acquired.' St Hedda reposed in the year 705, having served as a Bishop for twenty-nine years.

**The Venerable Moses the Hungarian** (26<sup>th</sup> July/8<sup>th</sup> August) is yet another Saint of Russia, although as his title indicates he was not a Russian by birth. He was an extremely handsome and strong man and served at the court of the Prince, Saint Boris the Passion-bearer.

When his master was slain, Moses was taken as a captive to Poland. There he was sold to the widow of one of the King Boleslaw's generals. This woman paid a thousand gold pieces for Moses, because she was enamoured of his comeliness. She attempted in various ways to entice him into living with her in sexual depravity, but the Saint always resisted her and resorted to prayer.

She later offered to marry him, such was her desire for him, but Moses had set his heart upon taking up the monastic yoke and so refused her. An Athonite father visited those parts, and Moses was able to tell him of his plight and received the monastic tonsure from him. When she learned of this, his mistress was enraged and had him bound, flogged and castrated. For five more years, she kept him as a slave, treating him spitefully because he had frustrated her desires. Then King Boleslaw perished in a coup, and Moses' mistress was among his favourites who were also slain.

This change of regime gave Moses an opportunity to escape, and he made his way to Kiev, where he joined the Caves Monastery of Saint Antony. He lived there for another ten years, dying on 26th July, 1043 A.D. With Saint John the Much-Suffering of the Kievan Caves, he is invoked in prayer by those who suffer from carnal temptations.



# POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

*'I have a question regarding last month's Practical Tip on kissing. We kiss the hands of bishops and priests. Monks are called Father – do we kiss their hands too?' – Anon*

WELL, first we should perhaps consider what kissing the hand means. Is it an obligatory form of greeting? If so we can set hard and fast rules regarding whose hand should be kissed and whose should not. But it is not an obligatory form of greeting. Such a concept would be clean contrary to Orthodoxy, one which could well inculcate a sense of superiority in the heart of the person whose hand is kissed, and imply that those whose hands are not kissed are in some way relegated to a servile position.

Such an attitude to the practice would be spiritually destructive for both parties. But it is not so. Kissing the hand, except within the context of the Liturgy itself (when the Bishop's or priest's hand is kissed every time one hands something to him or takes something from him) is rather a sign of loving respect, and therefore we may kiss the hand of anyone for whom we feel such loving respect.

Among peoples raised in traditional piety it would not be uncommon to kiss your parents' hands, your godparent's, or those of a teacher, and certainly the monastics – men and women who have dedicated their whole lives to Christ.

It is related in the life of Abba Pambo, one of the great Fathers of the Egyptian Desert, that he was travelling with some monks in the districts of Egypt, and seeing some lay men sitting down, he said unto them, 'Rise up, and greet the monks so that ye may be blessed, for they are always holding converse with God, and their mouths are holy.' It may well be (as those who know us at Brookwood) that such is not always the case with monks nowadays, but then it is not for us to judge.

The clergy we similarly respect with love because of their ministry for the flock of Christ. We kiss their hands because



through them the Holy Mysteries are imparted to us and other blessings given. And this indeed reveals where the loving respect is really directed, not to the person of the clergyman or monastic but to Christ of Whose ministry he is an instrument.

We might add here two abuses of hand-kissing which arise. Among the modernising Orthodox, one sometimes finds those who will not permit their hands to be kissed, presumably because they wrongly assume that the loving respect is directed to them personally and not to Christ. And contrarily, usually with people not long ordained, one notices priests who are over-keen that you kiss their hand and almost thrust it to your lips, or linger waiting to bestow 'their' blessing upon you. This again is a misunderstanding of the custom and a sad manifestation of an element of self-importance.



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

### **BAPTISM**

On the Sunday of Holy Pentecost (18<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> May) **Antony Wiles** of Bordon was baptised, his Godfather being **Benjamin Waterhouse**. The celebrant of the Holy Mystery was **Archimandrite Daniel (Toyne)**. The baptism took place before the Hours and Divine Liturgy – at which the newly baptised received his first holy communion. We wish Antony a fruitful Christian life and a blessed struggle.

## ***CHRISMATION***

On the Sunday of All Saints (25<sup>th</sup> May/7<sup>th</sup> June) **Sabina Hasanova** was received into the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece by Holy Chrismation being renamed **Solomonias** (1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> August). The holy mystery took place between Matins and the Divine Liturgy and was celebrated by **Priest Evangelos Liassi**. Solomonias was formerly a member of the Moscow Patriarchate; we congratulate her and pray that she remains steadfast in her newfound confession of the faith.

## ***VISIT OF METROPOLITAN DEMETRIUS OF AMERICA AND PILGRIMS***

His Eminence **Metropolitan Demetrius**, accompanied by **Priestmonk Theologos**, arrived in England on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May at Southampton. They were met at the dock by **Deacon Ioan Turcu** who drove them to the Brotherhood, arriving at the end of the Liturgy. After the meal, and meeting the congregation Fr. Ioan took the two pilgrims to Glastonbury and then to St. David's cathedral in Wales.

The next day, after visiting Saint Non's spring they returned to Brookwood shortly before Vespers. On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May Metropolitan Demetrius served the Liturgy assisted by **Priestmonk Sabbas, Priestmonk Theologos, Priests Gabriel Lawani, Borislav Popov, Evangelos Liassi** and Deacon Ioan Turcu. On Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May Fr. Borislav and **Presbytera Marina** took the Metropolitan and Fr. Theologos to Oxford, where they visited Christ Church Cathedral and St Frideswide's well.

The remainder of the 59 pilgrims arrived in the UK on Wednesday and a small group, led Metropolitan Demetrius, visited St Albans Abbey on the same day. Food was provided at the Brotherhood by Olivo Restaurant, Guildford, who kindly donated extra portions for the parishioners.

The pilgrims venerated the relics of Saint Edward before the Vigil for the Ascension of the Lord. For the Feast, Metropolitan Demetrius was joined by **Archimandrite Daniel Toyne** and **Protopresbyter Theodoros Giannakopoulos**.

After the festal meal, the pilgrims departed for Ely and then onwards to Newcastle for the night. On the next day they travelled to Durham and Lindisfarne and visited Holywell on their journey back to Woking.

The Metropolitan served the Divine Liturgy at the Brotherhood on Sunday together with a large number of parishioners and the pilgrims. After the parish breakfast the pilgrims visited Winchester.

The pilgrims left on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May by ferry for France – spending four days visiting the holy places of central and northern France, two days in Brussels and a final two days in Germany.

**Metropolitan Demetrius** returned to the Brotherhood on the evening of the Sunday of All Saints (25<sup>th</sup> May/7<sup>th</sup> June) accompanied by **Priestmonk Joachim**.

On the next day, the feast of Saint Augustine of Canterbury, the Metropolitan attended the Divine Liturgy at which he kindly thanked the Fathers of the Brotherhood for their hospitality and said that for many of the pilgrims visiting the Brotherhood to venerate the relics of Saint Edward the Martyr was the highlight of the pilgrimage.

After the Liturgy, Deacon Ioan drove the visitors to Canterbury, and on Tuesday, Presbyter Marina took the Metropolitan and Priestmonk Joachim to Saint Osyth's well. On Wednesday, Fr Ioan took His Eminence and Fr. Joachim to Southampton in order to return to the U.S.A.

Our especial thanks to Fr. Deacon Ioan Turcu and the Popov Family for chauffeuring Metropolitan Demetrius to numerous holy places in England and Wales. Our thanks also to **Ioan** and **Diana** of the Olivo restaurant for generously supplying extra meals for all our parishioners. We are most grateful.

## ***GIFTS TO THE CHURCH***

**Metropolitan Demetrius** gave a relic of St Nectarius of Optina to the Brotherhood. A new polyeleos in gold-plated brass was donated by **Stuart** and **Elena Matthews**. A group of thirty parishioners donated a new seven-branched gold and enamel lamp holder with a Byzantine style cross for the holy table; new brass and enamel lamps for the icon screen, and new lamps for the sanctuary and body of the church. **Aidan Marshall** donated a beautiful canvas icon of Saint Aidan of Lindisfarne. May God bless those who love the beauty of His House.

## ***DECORATING WORK***

The exterior decoration of the monastic house has now been completed, the building has been fully painted and the roof cleaned and sealed. Work continues with painting the exterior of the church and restoring the exterior wood.

# **Practical Tip**

IN THE SUMMER MONTHS, remember that one should come to church modestly dressed. One can wear something light and attractive, but be properly covered to come before the Lord to beg His mercy. Women should not wear low-cut, sleeveless or backless dresses or short skirts. Also, take care that an otherwise modest light and summer dress is not see-through in strong sunlight! Men should not wear shorts or vests; in many monasteries in Greece men are required to wear long sleeved shirts in church. Dressing modestly and with due respect for the holy place one is entering is important. Particularly in a monastic setting, it is not only the church building which is consecrated and set apart for God, it is the whole property. Even out on the streets one should have a modicum of modesty in one's dress. Why even in one's own bedroom, where no one sees, one should be modest!