

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

‘ON THE FOREHEAD, and over the eyes, and on the mouth, and on the breast, let us place the life-giving Cross. Let us arm them with the invincible armour of Christians, with this hope of the faithful, with this gentle light. Let us open Paradise with this weapon, with this support of the Orthodox faith, with this saving praise of the Church. Not for one hour, nor for a moment, let us forget the Cross, nor let us begin to do anything without it. Whether we sleep, whether we arise, whether we work, whether we eat, whether we drink, whether we go on our way, whether we sail on the seas, whether we cross the river, let us adorn all our members with the life-giving Cross. And let us not be frightened by the terror of the night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the thing that walketh in darkness, nor for the mishap and demon of noonday (Ps. 90:5-6). If, O Christian, you always take up the Cross of Christ on yourself as a help, then no evils shall come nigh thee, and no scourge shall draw nigh unto thy dwelling (Ps 90:10): for the opposing power, seeing it, trembles and leaves.’

VENERABLE EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN † 373 A.D.

‘AMONG the ascetics of old, as it is today, the sign of the Cross was the most powerful weapon against the temptations of the demons. The most horrible fears of the devil vanish into nothing, like smoke, when a person traces the sign of the Cross over himself.’

SAINT NIKOLAI OF ŽIČA †1956

Preliminary Note: On 10th March 1924, the State Church in Greece introduced the New Calendar, naming that day 23rd March. Thereafter the Orthodox Christians who refused to accept the innovation were pressured and persecuted for their faithfulness. The next year on the Great Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross according to the Church calendar, in confirmation of the stance of the Traditionalist Orthodox, the Lord graciously permitted the following miraculous sign.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE SIGN OF THE CROSS NEAR ATHENS IN 1925

IN 1925, on the eve of the feast of the Exaltation of the All-Honourable and Life-giving Cross of our Saviour, 14th September according to the Orthodox Church calendar, the all-night vigil was served at the church of St. John the Theologian in suburban Athens. By 9 o'clock that evening, more than two thousand of the true-Orthodox faithful had gathered in and around the church for the service, since very few true-Orthodox churches had been accidentally left open by the civil authorities. Such a large gathering of people could not, however, go unnoticed by the authorities. Around 11 p.m. the authorities dispatched a battalion of police to the church "to prevent any disorders which might arise from such a large gathering." The gathering was too large for the police to take any direct action or to arrest the priest at that time and so they joined the crowd of worshippers in the already overflowing courtyard of the church.

Then, regardless of the true motives for their presence, against their own will, but according to the Will which exceeds all human power, they became participants in the miraculous experience of the crowd of believers.

At 11:30 p.m., there began to appear in the heavens above the church, in the direction of North-East, a bright, radiant Cross of light. The light not only illuminated the church and the faithful but, in its rays, the stars of the clear, cloudless sky became dim and the churchyard was filled with an almost tangible light. The form of the Cross itself was an especially dense light and it could be clearly seen as a Byzantine cross with an angular cross bar toward the bottom. This

heavenly miracle lasted for half an hour, until midnight, and then the Cross began slowly to raise up vertically, as the cross in the hands of the priest does in the ceremony of the Elevation of the Cross in church. Having come straight up, the Cross began gradually to fade away.

Human language is not adequate to convey what took place during the apparition. The entire crowd fell prostrate upon the ground with tears and began to sing prayers, praising the Lord with one heart and one mouth. The police were among those who wept, suddenly discovering, in the depths of their hearts, a childlike faith. The crowd of believers and the battalion of police were transformed into one, unified flock of faithful. All were seized with a holy ecstasy.

The vigil continued until 4 a.m., when all this human torrent streamed back into the city, carrying the news of the miracle because of which they were still trembling and weeping. Many of the unbelievers, sophists and renovationists, realizing their sin and guilt, but unwilling to repent, tried by every means to explain away or deny this miracle. The fact that the form of the cross had been so sharply and clearly that of the Byzantine (sometimes called the Russian) Cross, with three crossbars, the bottom one at an angle, completely negated any arguments of accidental physical phenomenon.

The fact that such an apparition of the Cross had occurred during the height of the first great heresy¹ must strike the Orthodox with an especial sense of the magnitude of the importance of the calendar question and of all that is connected with it. No sensible person can discuss this issue lightly, with secular reasoning or with worldly arguments. Renovationists, like the Arians in 351,² are left without extenuation or mitigation.

From *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (March-April, 1972)

¹ The expression here is not entirely clear, but “first great heresy” refers to Arianism and the author sees the heresy of Ecumenism as on a par with that. Ecumenism can be categorised as a ‘pan-heresy’ in that, unlike earlier heresies, which each attacked one teaching of the Orthodox Church, Ecumenism destroys the Church’s teaching concerning Himself, and therefore endangers the whole edifice of Orthodoxy.

² This refers to the appearance of the Cross on 7 May 351 A.D. over the city of Jerusalem.

The Explanation
of the
First Epistle of Saint Paul to
Timothy
by
Blessed Theophylact
With additional commentary by Saint
Nicodemus the Hagiorite

INTRODUCTION

Timothy was a favoured disciple of Saint Paul and was so close to him, that he consented to be circumcised by Paul through an exercise of economy, although Paul had forbidden circumcision to others, and had stood up to Peter over this issue. Paul often bears witness to Timothy's great virtue. In this particular epistle he addresses various practical matters, but why did he write to Titus and Timothy, but not to Silas, Clement or Luke, or to any of the others who followed him? The answer may be that they were still with him, but he had already committed churches to Titus and Timothy. It was therefore necessary to warn them in writing, and to explain what they needed to do. But you might ask, why did he not perfect them in divine wisdom first, and then put them in charge of the task of teaching? Why did he entrust them with the task of teaching, and then write to prepare them for it? First of all, you must learn that no one is perfect, not even a teacher; he also needs instruction and guidance from those who are more perfect. Also, it was not possible for the bishop of a newly-established church to discuss every single issue in person with Paul. Observe also that, throughout this Epistle, Paul does not instruct Timothy as a disciple, but addresses him in a manner befitting someone who is already a teacher.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the commandment of God our Saviour. Since Paul is framing laws for Timothy, he proclaims himself an apostle to make his words worthy of belief. 'I am not speaking my own words, but the words of Him whose ambassador I am; see, therefore, that you are not disobedient.' But because the dignity of an apostle is so great, lest he should be seen an arrogant boaster he adds, *according to the commandment of God*. 'I have not taken this task upon myself', he says, 'but this inescapable duty weighs upon me, and I am fulfilling the Lord's command.' In this instance, the phrase *according to the commandment* is more effective than simply being 'called'. It is actually not recorded anywhere in Scripture that the Father commanded Paul. Christ said: 'I will send thee far hence to the nations' (Acts 22:21) and the Holy Spirit also: 'separate Paul for me' (Acts 13:2). Nevertheless, the commandments of the Son and the Spirit are those of the Father which is clear from what follows.

And Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope. See how in this commandment everything is common to all? Observe how David talks about the Father: 'The hope of all the ends of the earth' (Ps. 64:6). In addition, the blessed Paul says in another place: 'I have hoped in the living God' (1 Tim. 4:10). Now the Son is called *our hope* showing that all things are common to both the Father and the Son. He refers to the Father as *Saviour* and the Son as *our hope* for a teacher struggles with many difficulties. The whole war is turned upon him for, if he were to fall those under his care will quickly follow as the prophet says: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered' (Zach 13:7). 'It doesn't behove us', Paul asserts, 'to become despondent for we have a Saviour, not a man, but the very God and Father Himself, Who will swiftly deliver us from dangers; even if we are not immediately saved from them, we must nevertheless hope for better things because our hope, which cannot be put to shame, is Christ.' For these two reasons we can endure dangers, either because we are speedily saved from them, or because we are sustained by good hope.

2. Unto Timothy, my genuine child in the faith: That is so say, ‘begotten through faith’ as he says in another place: ‘I have begotten you through the Gospel’ (1 Cor. 4:15). In this instance the preposition *in* is used instead of ‘through’. Paul praises Timothy not just as a *child*, but as a *genuine child*. He calls Timothy *genuine* because Timothy was more like him than the rest, and because Paul himself bestowed on him genuine love. And very wisely, he says *in the faith*, to encourage Timothy all the more towards it. From the very beginning Timothy had displayed such faith, that Paul calls him not only a ‘child’ but a *genuine child*. Now he must be all the more fortified, and not lose heart or become despondent, for this is the definition of faith, namely, to trust in things to come.

Grace, mercy, and peace. Nowhere in the other Epistles did he put *mercy*, but here only³ out of great fatherly affection, wishing for greater things for his son; such was his fear and trembling over him, that he instructs him even with regard to his diet;⁴ for teachers are in greater need of mercy.

From God our Father, and to the Lord Jesus Christ our Lord. He consoles us that *God is our Father*; He will take care of us His children. Therefore He will have mercy on us, and give us grace, so that we may be gracious to all, and have peace with our enemies.

3. I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, See Paul’s meekness, see how he expresses himself more like a servant than a teacher! He does not say, ‘I commanded’ but, *I besought*. We must be infused with affection for all our students, but only the genuine are treated like this. He asks Timothy to remain in Ephesus for the Epistle which Paul had written was not sufficient – people tend to pay less attention to letters. Perhaps this request was made before Paul wrote to the Ephesians. It is sometimes suggested that he had already

³ A small percentage of manuscripts omit ‘mercy’ in Titus 1:4 as does the text used by Saint John Chrysostom on which Theophylact’s commentary is based.

⁴ See ‘Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23).

appointed Timothy a bishop there, and this is quite probable considering what Paul goes on to say.

That thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. He does not say ‘that thou mightest ask’, but *that thou mightest charge*, which is more severe. He does not mention any by name, lest an open rebuke cause them more to be more impudent. By *teach no other doctrine*, he is referring to novel teachings. For there were many false apostles from among the Jews in this city, who inclined to the law from vainglory and from a desire to be called teachers and instructors.

4. Neither give heed to fables. By *fables* he does not mean the law, but rather inventions and perverse doctrines.

ST NICODEMUS: Theodoret says: ‘By “fables” Paul is not referring to the teachings of the law, but rather to its Jewish interpretation.’

And endless genealogies. The Jews enumerated their ancestors and forefathers in order to receive honour for their historical knowledge. However, this exaltation was only temporary as these genealogies had no end, or none of any use or easy to understand; they could only be grasped with difficulty, and were varied and complicated. It is also possible that he is referring to the Ancient Greeks, who enumerated their gods by legends and genealogies.

ST NICODEMUS: Theodoret says that there were some among the Jewish converts to Christianity who, proud of their knowledge of the Old Testament, questioned those Christians from among the nations as they were illiterate in the divine words; they attempted to persuade these Christians to live their lives according to the law. These Jewish converts also counted the descendants of Abraham and David, in order to examine whether Christ was truly born of them according to the flesh. Coresi says that the Jews examined the genealogies found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah seeking to discover from which lineage the

Messiah, that is, Christ, would be born.⁵ However, there is now no longer any need to concern ourselves with them, for Christ is come.

Which promote speculation rather than the dispensation (οἰκονομίαν) of God that is by faith.⁶ In other words, ‘God indeed ordained that all things should be received by faith; but these, introducing their own questions, frustrate the *dispensation* of God.’ Or it can be understood thus: ‘the great God willed to reveal unto us His indescribable dispensation but His good plan is received by faith, and absolutely not through genealogies.’ Some posed questions, such as ‘How could this happen?’ and ‘How can we believe in future things?’ Such questioning drives away faith. The Lord says ‘seek and ye shall find’ (Matt. 7:7) and ‘search the Scriptures’ (John 5:39). By ‘seek’, he means ‘with fervent prayer’, and by ‘search’ he means ‘learn their exact meaning’, that we may hold them firmly and may at last desist from questioning and investigating.

ST NICODEMUS: Basil the Great says that ‘faith is an unwavering assent to what is heard in full assurance of the truth of what is proclaimed by the grace of God.’ For this reason, the divine Chrysostom also says: ‘Let us not then give heed to questions. For we were called faithful, that we might unhesitatingly believe what is delivered to us, and entertain no doubt. For if the things asserted were human, we ought to examine them; but since they are of God, they are only to be revered and believed. If we believe not, how shall we be persuaded of the existence of a God? For how do you know that there is a God, when you call Him to account?’ The godly Diadochus also says: ‘The deep waters of faith seem turbulent when we peer into them too curiously: but when contemplated in a spirit of simplicity,

⁵ Deacon Coresi was a 16th century Romanian typographer and translator, who edited and printed some of the earliest books in the Romanian language.

⁶ The Textus Receptus, of which the King James Version is a translation, reads οἰκοδομίαν (*oikodomian*) in this verse which the KJV renders ‘edification’. Theophylact’s text reads οἰκονομίαν (*oikonomian*) which means ‘dispensation’ or ‘plan’

they are calm. The depths of faith are like the waters of Lethe,⁷ making us forget all evil: they will not reveal themselves to the scrutiny of meddlesome reasoning. Let us therefore sail these waters with simplicity of mind, and so reach the harbour of God's will.⁸

5. Now the aim of the commandment is love out of a pure heart. 'If you command', the apostle says, 'to teach in no other way, you will accomplish this, that is, *love*. If you sow this, every perverted dogma will perish. For formerly, when there was no love, there was envy; from this the lust for power and the ambition to teach was born, and thence arose heresies: but now it is not so.' He requires sincere love – a love which shares in suffering out of sympathy and compassion – not one that is mere words, but a love that comes from a *pure heart* and which is not overshadowed by hypocrisy.

With a good conscience and with sincere faith. Robbers also love robbers, but this comes not from a *good conscience*, but from a bad one; nor is it from *sincere faith*. He who sincerely believes in God can never bear to fall away from true love since he embraces and cherishes all. But the robber kills those who pass by, from which you will be able to gather that he that lacks love is not of the Faith.

ST NICODEMUS: Coresi says that a love of this kind, springing from a pure heart and a clear conscience, despises death as a thing of no consequence. To this end, as he was dying, Abba Hilarion said: 'O soul! do not fear leaving the body, for behold, you have served God for seventy years.' And Paul said: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, therefore the crown of righteousness is reserved for me' (2 Tim. 4:7). The martyrs also considered death a delight.

6. From which some having swerved (ἀστοχήσαντες) have turned aside unto idle talk. The word *astochēin* is used for

⁷ According to the myths of the Ancient Greeks, the souls of the dead drank from the Waters of Lethe to wash away the memories of their mortal lives before being reincarnated.

⁸ G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, K. Ware (trans.), *The Philokalia Volume 1* (London: Faber and Faber) 1979 .p.258

archers who shoot arrows unskilfully.⁹ Here, therefore, he says that it necessary to have skill in order to aim straight and not miss the target. But some have gone astray both from faith and from love, and have turned aside to idle talk. And how this happens, he goes on to add:

7. Desiring to be teachers of the law. That is, they are diseased with the lust for power and maddened by a desire for fame. They would not have been like this if they possessed love and faith.

Understanding neither what they say nor that which they affirm. Here Paul rebukes them, because they are ignorant not only of the law's aim but also that it only retained authority for a period of time. If, therefore, they sinned out of ignorance, do they deserve condemnation? In this case, ignorance came from the desire to rule, and because they did not retain love. They who wished to be legislators and teachers of the law failed to understand that they were the authors of their own ignorance. What exactly did they *affirm*? Perhaps the purifications of the law and other bodily observances.

ST NICODEMUS: Theodoret says that these Jews were not inveterate enemies of the faith, but believed in God, yet they distorted the Gospel teachings and weighed their own reasoning wiser than the divinely inspired words of the Scriptures.

8. But we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully. This means 'if a man not only explains the law in words but also accomplishes it in deeds.' For whoever teaches the things of the law and does not do them in the meantime uses the law unlawfully. Or, alternatively, 'he that uses the law lawfully, is led to Christ by it.' For the law, although it cannot lead us aright, or justify us, sends us on to Christ, and this is its goal. Wherefore he who uses the law *lawfully*, as the law itself commands, esteems Christ more than the law.

9. Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous man. Such a man does not wait for the law to teach him what he should

⁹ The KJV renders ἀστοχήσαντες (*astochēsantes*) as 'having swerved' but it literally means 'having missed the mark'. Hence Theophylact's reference to archers in his explanation.

do; he knows this from within and not from fear of punishment. By *righteous man* understand he who has reached perfection in virtue, not through fear of the law, but for the sake of virtue itself; he despises evil and embraces virtue and surpasses that which the law requires. He deems it unworthy to be taught by something which threatens him with punishment, but walking fearlessly in virtue, he rises above the things that apply only to children.¹⁰ In the same way, a doctor is of use to one who has wounds or is sick, but not to the healthy. A bridle is necessary for a disobedient and unruly horse, but not for one who is obedient and docile.

9-10. But for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for homosexuals, for slave traders, for liars, for perjurers. He explains the sins in particular so as to shame those who were subject to the law – that is, the Jews. They who frequently worshiped idols, who sacrificed their children to demons, who tried to kill Moses by stoning, whose hands were full of blood, were they not impious and murderers? Therefore, the law was given to them to suppress these vices, as he says in another place.¹¹ The law is the father of grace, but for the righteous, who turn away from transgressions, the law is not necessary.

And for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine. Although what had been mentioned had certainly been sufficient, yet for completeness' sake he adds: *And for whatever else*. Here he shows that affections of this kind allow the ingress of corrupt dogmas: for they are opposed to sound doctrines.

¹⁰ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:24-26).

¹¹ What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. (Gal. 3:19)

11. In accordance with the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God. Interpret this together with what came before. *Sound doctrine* is that which is according to the Gospel. He refers to the *Gospel of glory* because of those who were ashamed because of the persecutions, and because of the Passion of Christ. He reminds us that suffering and persecution for Christ are glory and splendour for they lead to future glory. ‘For though the present’, he says, ‘have dishonour, yet the future will have glory: and this the Gospel announces to us; for all the gospel is of the future, not of the present.’ Or by the *glory of God* he means the worship of God, which the Gospel teaches us.

Which was committed to my trust. ‘To me’, he says, ‘not to the pseudo-apostles: for their gospel is of shame, not of glory.’

ST NICODEMUS: Commenting on this, Theodoret says: ‘He shows that the necessary precepts of the law are in harmony with the Gospel, and these are: Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal and the like. Superfluous are the ordinances concerning sacrifices, days, the dead, lepers, and the like, the fulfilment of which was bound to the consecrated place, that is, to Jerusalem. God commanded the Jews to gather there and observe those three great feasts – Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of the Tabernacles – and the other customs of the Law, so that, with the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple the abolition of these might also be made manifest.’

To be continued in subsequent issues:



THE FORTIETH DAY PRAYER FOR A WOMAN WHO HAS GIVEN BIRTH

ARCHBISHOP BENJAMIN OF NIZHEGOROD &
ARZAMASS

Bending down his head to the mother, as she standeth with the infant the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the infant; and touching its head, he says the prayer:

THE PRAYERS FOR THE MOTHER OF THE CHILD

Let us pray to the Lord.

O Lord God Almighty, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by Thy word hast created all things, both men endowed with speech and dumb animals, and hast brought all things from nothingness into being, we pray and implore Thee: Thou hast saved this Thy handmaid (*Name*) by Thy will. Purify her, therefore, from all sin and from every uncleanness, as she now draweth nigh unto Thy holy Church; and make her worthy to partake, uncondemned, of Thy Holy Mysteries.

If the child is not living, the Prayer is read only thus far. If the child is alive, the following is added to the end:

And bless Thou the child which hath been born of her. Increase him (her); sanctify him (her); enlighten him (her); render him (her) chaste, and endow him (her) with good understanding. For Thou hast brought him (her) into being, and hast shown him (her) the physical light, and hast appointed him (her) to be vouchsafed in due time spiritual light, and that he (she) may be numbered among Thy chosen flock. Through Thine Only-begotten Son, with Whom, also, Thou art blessed, together with Thine all-holy, and good, and life-giving Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Lord our God, who didst come for the redemption of the human race, come Thou also upon Thy servant/handmaid (*Name*) and grant unto

her, through the prayers of Thine honourable priest, entrance into the temple of Thy glory. Wash away her bodily uncleanness, and the stains of her soul, in the fulfilling of the forty days. Make her worthy of the communion of Thy holy Body and of Thy Blood. For sanctified 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 ages of ages. Amen.

THE PRAYERS FOR THE CHILD

The priest, making over the Sign of the Cross over the child, prays:

O Lord our God, who wast brought, on the fortieth day, as an infant into the Temple according to the Law, by Mary the Bride Unwedded, who also was Thy holy Mother; and wast borne in the arms of Simeon the Righteous: Do Thou, O Master all-powerful, bless also unto every good deed this infant which hath been brought hither, that he (she) may present himself (herself) unto Thee, the Creator of all men, and may grow up well-pleasing unto Thee in all things; and drive far from him (her) every adverse power, through sealing with the sign of Thy Cross; for thou art He who preserveth infants, O Lord. And grant that having been vouchsafed holy Baptism, he (she) may receive the portion of the elect ones of Thy kingdom, and be preserved, together with us, through the grace of the holy, consubstantial, and undivided Trinity. For unto Thee are due all glory, thanksgiving and worship, together with Thy Father Who is from everlasting, and Thine all-holy, and good, and life-giving Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O God the Father Almighty, who by Thy trumpet-voiced Prophet Esaias didst foretell unto us the incarnation through a Virgin of thine Only-begotten Son and our God; who in these latter days, by Thy good pleasure and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of us men, and because of Thy boundless compassion, didst graciously deign to become a babe by her; and according to the custom of the holy Law didst suffer thyself to be brought into Thy holy Sanctuary, after that the days of purification were fulfilled, being Thyself the true law-

giver; and didst condescend to be borne in the arms of the righteous Simeon, of which mystery we have recognised the prototype, revealed by the coal in the tongs to the prophet aforetime; which thing also we faithful by grace do imitate: Do Thou now also, O Lord, Who preservest children, bless this infant, together with his (her) parents and his (her) sponsors; and grant that, in due season, he (she) may be united, through water and the Spirit of the new birth, unto Thy holy flock of reason-endowed sheep, which is called by the name of Thy Christ. For Thou art He who dwelleth on high, and looketh down upon the humble of heart; and unto thee do we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Then the priest holds the child and makes the sign of the Cross with it in front of the doors of the church and says the following with the appointed psalm verses as he enters the church:

The servant./handmaid of God (*Name*) is churchd: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The priest then enters the sanctuary with the child if he be male, but only as far as the Royal Doors if the child be female.¹² He then exclaims:

Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace O Master for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light of revelation to the nations and the glory of Thy people Israel.

The Prayer for the Mother after Forty Days

The number forty is appointed in all the written and printed Books of Needs; it is also recorded in the novella of Leo the Wise, as Matthew Vlastaris remarks:

Concerning women that have given birth, we ordain that, according to the ordinary rule of natural cleansing, for forty days they be not permitted to approach and receive the

¹² This is the Russian practice, but there are variations concerning children entering the sanctuary and whether the baptism is performed before or after the fortieth day.

Mysteries; that is the Mystery of Baptism, if they belong to another faith, or, if they be Orthodox, the Communion of the Divine Mysteries. But if they are subject to some severe infirmity, and in danger of death, then they are permitted Baptism immediately (if they have not been baptised), and they can communicate of the Holy Mysteries.

Moreover, these prescriptions and other rulings are followed so that the women who have given birth show their obedience to the Holy Church concerning purification, emulating the Theotokos and Virgin, who, although she needed no cleansing, being the immaculate Ever-Virgin, nonetheless fulfilled the law of purification.

The servant of God is church

‘To church’ means to bring the faithful into the church assembly and reckon them as one with that assembly. Vlastaris says: ‘The Bishop is the overseer and the one who has charge of the souls of all the church.’ Therefore, the first time the baby is brought into and received in church, where the prayers and sacred rites are performed and the Word of God is heard, it is church.

The Sponsor at Baptism

At the end of the ceremony it is the baby’s sponsor or, if it has not been baptised, its future sponsor who receives the baby again. This signifies that this person takes spiritual care of the baby. The rubrics of the service make mention that the infant is given to ‘him that desireth to receive it’. The one who desires to receive the baby is the sponsor, who is called in the church canons the receiver [sponsor] or godparent, that is the baptismal father, because he receives the catechumen [whether baby or adult] at Holy Baptism, that he might instruct him in piety, and the newly-baptised becomes his son. In the Book of Needs there is mention not only of godfathers but also of godmothers. Moreover it states: ‘One must know that in Holy Baptism, one sponsor is appointed, a male if a male is to be baptised, and a female if a female is to be baptised; however, when there is danger of death one may be baptised even without a sponsor.’

The Churching

The manner of performing the churching is explained by Saint Simeon of Thessalonica thus:

On the fortieth day the infant is again brought to the church by its mother, and here, like a gift, it is presented to God. The priest, standing before the doors of the church – for it is not possible to enter there before the prayer – signs the mother together with the child, hallows them with prayer, and pronounces the purification of the mother from that which was sensual and unclean in the birth-giving (for she has now completed the forty days), and he permits her to enter into the church, which till this time she has considered herself unworthy to do, and he permits her to communicate of the Holy Mysteries; then himself taking the infant in his hands in imitation of Simeon, who received the infant Lord, he exclaims Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart...praying that the infant be cleansed of sin and will see the light, which is Christ, the revelation to the nations and the glory of the New Israel. If the infant is already baptised, then the priest takes the infant into the altar, and carries him around it, making as it were a reverence, showing that he is an offering unto God and he worships his Creator. If the infant is not baptised then he stops before the entrance to the sanctuary, makes a reverence with the infant towards the altar table, and returns him to his mother, and dismisses them. From this time the infant has become a catechumen and the mother, now purified, is free to come to church and to receive the Holy Mysteries if she has prepared herself and so desires.

The Prayer for a Woman who has Miscarried her Child

According to an ancient tradition and a thoroughly praiseworthy custom, the Holy Church prays for those women who have lost the fruit of their womb. By these prayers, although She does not forgive any carelessness on the part of the mother who has miscarried and does not deliver her from the chastening appropriate for any lack of care for the child, because these things can only be effected through

the power of absolution in the Mystery of Repentance (confession) nonetheless by means of Her intercession She does beseech the kindheartedness of God.

For, apart from the full Mystery of Repentance what can the Church offer a sinner and one who requires Divine help, except her pious prayers alone? Who can consider this rite unnecessary, when even for a completely involuntary abortion the 23rd canon of Ancyra and the eighth of St Basil the Great are referred to?¹³

Thus, at no time must the Church withdraw offering prayers for women, who may be subject to fear of sin having suffered a stillbirth, especially when their inner grieving over the loss of their child can in no other way be alleviated except through the prayers of the Church. The prayer for a woman after a miscarriage refers to a 'loss of a life, whether voluntary or involuntary'. In the 91st canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, it is ordained that, 'women who furnish drugs for the purpose of procuring abortion, and those who take foetus-killing poisons, they are made subject to the penalty prescribed for murderers.' Thus it can sometimes be that a woman aborts her foetus voluntarily and therefore with mortal sin, and sometimes involuntarily and thus without any blame. When they abort voluntarily, they are subject to a prolonged *epitimea*, but when this happens involuntarily, that is by accident, Vlastaris assesses the matter thus:

If it was clearly through the calumny of the enemy, then the parents are accounted guiltless of the killing. However, although this circumstance is one which calls for mercy, some epitimea might be required that the conscience of her who has miscarried might be calmed. There is reason to think that the Lord, Who protecteth the infants, permitted this misfortune to occur on account of certain secret and unconfessed sins of the parents. For it is said: 'Give not thy foot unto moving, and may he (the angel) not slumber that keepeth thee' (see Ps. 120:3).

¹³ St Basil's canon categorises women who have voluntary abortions as murderesses, and the canon from Ancyra deals with involuntary homicide, so here Archbishop Benjamin is doubtless saying that one should have the teachings of these canons in mind when assessing whether there was any guilt on the part of the mother and whether she should be given an *epitimea*.

POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

‘ONE QUESTION comes to mind that I really would like to ask – it is whether those such as Miss H. and indeed myself, who have been baptised into the Anglican Church are regarded as being baptised by the Orthodox Church? I have read about Chrismation as something necessary, but if someone has been christened by a non-Orthodox Church do they need to undergo baptism by the Orthodox Church as well to enter into the Orthodox Church or at least to be regarded as Christian?’ - M. G., by email

THE SHORT ANSWER to your [initial] question is No, because there are no Mysteries (Sacraments) outside the Church. How could there be? There is one Church. There is one Baptism – that administered within that one Church. However, for pastoral reasons, on occasion the Orthodox have received people simply by Chrismation. Properly this could only be done if the form of a Baptism were present in the rite outside the Church, i.e. that the candidate had been immersed in water three times in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Sadly two things have happened; first this practice, *œconomia* as it is called (a departure from the strictness of proper practice as a condescension to pastoral needs) became widespread at various times and in various national Churches. This led to the commonly held misconception that we accept the baptism of certain denominations. The Traditionalist Orthodox Christians, seeing this spreading error, are careful to apply the strictness of the practice, except in such cases where there is real pastoral need for *œconomia*, when the person is on their death bed, totally infirm, etc. And then *œconomia* is permitted if the Bishop blesses.

The other sad development is that the Orthodox engaged today in Ecumenism have accepted that idea that we share ‘one Baptism’ with the various denominations with whom they foster ecumenical relations, but they will not find a patristic consensus which supports this novel idea.

THE COMING MONTH

THE CHURCH CALENDAR begins on 1st September, and the first Great Feast in the year is that of the **Nativity of the All-Holy Virgin**. This falls on 8th September and was fixed on that day because the first seven days of the year represent to us the seven days of creation. The birth of the Mother of God is the beginning of the New Creation; it also betokens the life of the Age to come, which has even from Old Testament times been represented by the figure of the eighth day.

Tradition tells us that like Abraham and Sarah, Joachim and Anna were childless until deep old age. They lived in Nazareth, and on one occasion when Joachim went up to Jerusalem to make an offering at the Temple, he was turned away by one of the priests, who reproached him because of his childlessness and suggested that this resulted from God's being displeased with them. In his sorrow at this rejection, Joachim went away to the desert, to the cave at Chozeva where centuries before the Great Prophet Elias had found refuge, where today there is an Orthodox monastery. Here he prayed and fasted for forty days; his wife hearing of this also kept a fast at home. Both were granted visitations from an angel, who announced to them that they would be granted a daughter, through whom all the tribes of the earth would be blessed. Shortly thereafter Anna conceived, and we celebrate her conceiving on the 9th December. The present feast of the Virgin's Nativity, which naturally follows nine months after, is celebrated in the words of Saint John of Damascus as 'a feast of universal rejoicing, because through the Theotokos the whole race of man has been renewed, and the grief of the foremother, Eve, has been transformed into joy.'

The feast of the Virgin's Nativity is a short one – it comprises a one day forefeast and four day afterfeast. Its second day is dedicated to the parents of the Theotokos, Sts Joachim and Anna. The feast is short because it is followed swiftly by a second Great Feast, that of the **Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-creating Cross** (14th/27th September).

Among the saints we commemorate in September, we have the feast of **Saint Edward the Martyr**, our heavenly patron. This feast, 3rd/16th September, is the commemoration of the enshrinement of the relics of Saint Edward at Brookwood in 1984. The day of the martyrdom of St Edward (18th/31st March) always falls in Great Lent – this may be so, because the King was preparing to marry after Pascha (marriages not being permitted in fast periods) and so his enemies, who wanted Ethelred on the throne, had to slay him before he could marry and beget an heir. In the Middle Ages, the translation of his relics from Wareham to Shaftesbury was commemorated on 20th February, and the enshrinement at Shaftesbury on 20th June. These feasts, like our present one, permitted the Saint to be commemorated outside the penitential period of Lent.

Saint John, the Archbishop of Novgorod (7th/20th) was born in Novgorod of noble parents, Nicolas and Christina, and he and his brother, Gabriel, were brought up by them in piety. He was ordained priest and served at the Church of Saint Basil in his hometown. He received the monastic tonsure and was renamed Elias, living a strict ascetic life, and he became known for his struggles of piety and his deep reverence. In 1165, he was chosen to be the Archbishop of Novgorod, and it was during his episcopate there that the Mother of God delivered the city from the incursion of the Suzdalians in 1170. The Archbishop himself was renowned for his compassion and his care for the poor, and he was characterised by his meekness and guilelessness. He continued as Archbishop to live a severely ascetical life, and he was on several occasions instrumental in quieting civil disturbances among the people. He founded two monasteries and several churches, and took care that his churches were fittingly adorned. In old age, he was tonsured into the Great Schema, taking his former name of John, and he died in peace in 1186. His sacred relics were uncovered in 1439 and enshrined in the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom. There too his pastoral staff and mantia were preserved, and many were healed who approached them with faith and reverence.

The Right-believing King Ina and his consort, **Ethelburga** (8th/21st) were rulers over the Kingdom of Wessex in the early eighth century. King Ina succeeded to the throne when his kinsman

Ceadwalla abdicated in order to go to Rome, visit the tombs of the Apostles and prepare for his death. Ina was successful in wars with the Welsh, the East Angles and the people of Kent, and managed to consolidate his kingdom. He was also an able administrator, and being a man of piety, tried to further the mission of the Church.

During Ina's reign the vast diocese of Wessex was divided into two, and a see established at Sherbourne. Saint Aldhelm, the king's friend and spiritual advisor, was appointed first bishop there. Through the king's efforts the ancient monastery at Glastonbury was refounded, and that at Malmesbury and other religious houses were endowed.

Saint Ethelburga was a worthy consort of the king. When the town of Taunton was seized by rebels, she wrested it from their control. However, it was for her piety that she was more renowned, and it was probably under her influence that, like his predecessor, King Ina decided to abdicate and go to Rome to end his days there. Ina founded an English hospice in Rome, but it is unclear whether he and Ethelburga were tonsured as monastics there. Some writers claim that Ethelburga returned to England and became a nun at Barking, however it is more likely that they have confused her with the foundress of that community, another Saint Ethelburga.

The **Holy Martyr Porphyrius the Actor** (15th /28th) was an actor who apparently did comic turns. During the birthday celebrations of the infamous Emperor Julian the Apostate, he mocked the Christian Mystery of Holy Baptism, immersing himself in a vat of water and proclaiming that he was baptised 'in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' However, the Grace of God touched him, and what was intended to be a blasphemous joke turned into a reality. He was illumined. He proclaimed himself a Christian. This was great fun for the Emperor and his cronies, but when the saint continued to proclaim the reality of his conversion, they tired of the 'joke', and he was taken out and on the Emperor's orders immediately beheaded. Theatre, media and literature today are so littered with puerile blasphemies, such as this martyr was involved in before his miraculous conversion, that his prayers should doubtless be asked for the enlightenment of those involved in these anti-Christian antics.

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

BURIAL AT ST EDWARD'S

On Wednesday 12th August, **Vladimir Zukov** was laid to rest in the Saint Edward Brotherhood Cemetery. The graveside funeral was served by **Archpriest Maxim Nikolsky** (MP – Ennismore Gardens), a friend of the deceased. May Vladimir find the mercy of God and rest with the saints.

GIFT TO THE CHURCH

Deacon Alexandru and **Diaconissa Ambrosia Uytterhaegen** kindly gave us fragments of the holy relics of St Helena the Augusta, the mother of St Constantine the Great. May God bless them for their generosity to our community. The fragments were brought back from Grenoble by **Deacon Ioan Turcu**.

RIMA CONFERENCE

The annual Young Adults' Conference took place once again at The Mill, Forest Green, Surrey, between Monday 27th July and Friday 31st July. The conference was organised and supervised by **Patrick and Rima Lewis**. The speakers were **Fr. Daniel, Fr. Alexander** and **Fr. Thomas**. The first talk took place at the Brotherhood and then the participants moved to The Mill. On the Thursday everyone attended the Divine Liturgy at Brookwood, and a talk was given in the church after the parish breakfast. The theme of the conference was the Ecumenical Councils. On Friday, at the end of the conference, there was an outing to Winchester Cathedral. Fr. Alexander served a brief service to the saints of Winchester, and **Fr. Niphon** gave a brief talk about the saints.

LIGGY CAMP

The camp was once again led by **Fr. Alexander Hahr** from Sweden who also served as the camp's resident spiritual father.

SAINT TRYPHON GARDENING GROUP

On Saturday 25th July the Saint Tryphon Gardening Group helped with clearing and tidying the vegetable garden. This was a tremendous help for the monastic brotherhood and much needed. We are as usual most grateful.

VISITORS

On Friday 24th July four parishioners from **St Dunstan's Roman Catholic Church**, Woking, visited the Brotherhood. They were particularly interested in iconography and wanted to visit an Orthodox Church to ask questions about our faith and worship.

Practical Tip

BY THE TIME, you receive this issue of the magazine, the holiday season will be drawing to a close. In the last two or three decades, holidays seem to have become something of an obsession. No one begrudges people having a break, travelling, etc, but perhaps now is a good time seriously to take stock. Just how much do you spend on your holidays each year, how much time and effort do you invest in them? Everywhere the Church's mission is hampered by lack of means and lack of helpers – does what you give to the Church (in time, money and effort) compare at all with what you devote to your holidays? Does what you give in alms, showing the needy the love of God, compare with what you have spent on your holidays? If it does not, isn't this an indication that you are living selfishly and not in a way which manifests Christian love? And yet, do you still call yourself a Christian?