

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

‘ACCORDING to the blameless faith of the Christians which we have obtained from God, I confess and agree that I believe in one God the Father Almighty; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; I adore and worship one God, the Three. I confess to the œconomy of the Son in the flesh, and that the holy Mary, who gave birth to Him according to the flesh, was Mother of God. I acknowledge also the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs; and I invoke them to supplication to God, that through them, that is, through their mediation, the merciful God may be propitious to me, and that a ransom may be made and given me for my sins. Wherefore also I honour and kiss the features of their images, inasmuch as they have been handed down from the holy apostles, and are not forbidden, but are in all our churches.’

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT † 379 A.D

‘WE DO NOT WORSHIP the figures and images of the saints as gods. If we worshipped the wood of the image as God, then we would have to worship all other wood as well, and we would not throw the image into the fire when the picture fades, as we often do.’

SAINT LEONTIUS NEAPOLIS † 668 A.D.

‘OF OLD, GOD the incorporeal and uncircumscribed was never depicted. Now, however, when God is seen clothed in flesh, and conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see. I do not worship matter, I worship the God of matter, who became matter for my sake, and deigned to inhabit matter, who worked out my salvation through matter. I will not cease from honouring that matter which

works my salvation. I venerate it, though not as God. How could God be born out of lifeless things? And if God's body is God by union, it is immutable. The nature of God remains the same as before, the flesh created in time is quickened by a logical and reasoning soul.'

SAINT JOHN OF DAMASCUS † 749 A.D.

'THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE, they say, between "idol" and "icon", for both words mean the same. "Idol" comes from εἶδος, meaning "form" in general and "icon" comes from εἰκῶς in the sense of "likeness". A likeness is simply that which is not its prototype, and so are both "idol" and "icon". For both words amount to the same in meaning. We use the word "icon" rather in reference to the bodily form of Christ; as in the beginning, in the creation of the world, this was already indicated at the formation of the first man. For God said, "Let us make man in our image (icon) and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). And again the word is used in the divine question, "Whose image (icon) is this?" (Matt.22:20).'

SAINT THEODORE STUDITE † 826 A.D.

'WE ACCORD RELATIVE VENERATION to the holy icon of the Son of God, who is circumscribed as having become incarnate for us, ascribing veneration in relative manner to the Prototype. We venerate the precious wood of the Cross, and all the symbols of His sufferings, as being true divine trophies over the common enemy of our race. Likewise, we venerate the icons of all the saints, because of our love for them and for God, whom they truly loved and served, in our veneration ascribing the meaning to the figures depicted in the icons. We also venerate the relics of the Saints, since the sanctifying grace of the same has not departed from their most sacred bones, just as the Godhead was not separated from the Master's body in His three-day death.'

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS † 1359 A.D



BYZANTINE ICONS

ICONOGRAPHY IS A LITURGICAL ART that our inimitable Byzantine cultural tradition has bequeathed to us and which has been preserved by the Orthodox Church as a living liturgical treasure, and not as a dead museum piece from her past.

So great is the significance of the Icon for the Orthodox Church, that the Church's teaching about Icons was established by the dogmatic authority of the Seventh Œcumenical Synod (787), while the Church's triumph and victory over all heresy is celebrated with a radiant procession, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, commemorating the restoration of the Holy Icons.

Icons essentially function like an open book: they explain and teach with colours what the sacred books of the Church narrate with the written word.

As well, Byzantine iconography expresses, in a most profound and lofty way, Orthodox spirituality, that is, the experiences and the ethical and dogmatic teachings of the Apostolic Church.

For this reason, when Icons are used in their 'natural' surroundings (in the Church or in the Icon corner of a home), they have a liturgical function: we burn vigil lamps, incense, and candles and prostrate and pray in front of them.

In this way, we give expression to a fundamental Orthodox truth: that man prays, is sanctified, and is united with God both in soul and in body, his whole being participating in the process of deification.

Of course, it should be underscored that the veneration of Holy Icons does not constitute the perfect kind of worship that belongs only to God, but is relative, a display of honour which 'passes on to the prototype'.

An Icon 'theologises' and 'offers up prayer' only by way of colours. Thus, it cannot convey to us its 'instructive messages' unless we have personal experience of the spiritual life.

Icons reveal to us the true experience of the ecclesiastical life in Christ: God became man and bestowed His Grace on man, that man might become God.

This path towards deification – the joyful sorrow of the Cross and the Resurrection, the hope for and joy of the new world of the Kingdom of

Heaven – is expressed by means of Byzantine iconography.

In a painting, in a religious piece of art, we see fleshly ‘loveliness’, transitory beauty. In contrast, the Icon presents the human person and creation in the eternal realm, that is, transformed, restored, and made whole by the Grace of God; for this is loveliness indeed, actual spiritual comeliness.

The Holy Icon presents to us the eternal seemliness of the incorruptibility which clothes the human creature within the light of the Trinity, light three times brighter than that of the sun.

Thus, Byzantine iconography is a conveyer of hope, a harbinger of the joy of the life of the Kingdom of God, which is not only a future condition, but something to be experienced here and now in the liturgical and ascetic confines of the Orthodox Church.

It is obvious, then, that the Icon has a multifaceted function: it is a ladder which not only takes us up to Heaven, but which brings Heaven down to the earth; it is a meeting-point between the created and the uncreated, the past, present, and future, the ‘now’ and the ‘Eternal’.

Only with these basic notions in mind can one comprehend, beyond its artistic, decorative, and aesthetic dimension, the eternal value of the Byzantine Icon as part of a classical art which is not subject to change, since its message is apocalyptic.

This perfectly explains why iconographers who paint Holy Icons with prayer and fear of God are aware of the fact that they are carrying out a sacred task, a ministry of obedience to the eternal message of the Holy Church, to the common conscience and catholic experience of which they give expression.

An Orthodox iconographer does not, when he paints, put forward his own feelings and ideas about life and art in an arbitrary way, but believes that he is lending his hand to God, so that He might ‘paint’ the inexpressible beauty of Paradise.

So it is that we see signatures on Icons, such as ‘through the hand of P.K. [Photios Kontoglou],’ while some very humble iconographers prefer to remain anonymous, leaving all to Divine Grace...

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THE WONDERWORKING ICON OF PANAGIA MACHAIRIOTISSA

Reverend Father Evangelos Liassi



ON THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER our Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, the beloved physician and faithful companion of the Apostle Paul. On this same day the Church also commemorates one of the great spiritual treasures of Cyprus, the wonderworking icon of the Most Holy Theotokos known as Παναγία ἡ Μαχαιριώτισσα – Panagia Machairiotissa, which is preserved in the Holy, Royal and Stavropegic Monastery of Machairas. These two commemorations are intimately connected, for according to the sacred tradition preserved by the

Monastery of Machairas, this holy icon is one of the seventy icons of the Mother of God believed to have been painted by Saint Luke.

Saint Luke holds a unique place among the four Evangelists. Saint Paul calls him “Luke, the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14), and the tradition of the Church remembers him as a man of learning, skilled not only in medicine but also in the art of painting. Yet his greatest work was the healing of souls through the Gospel of Christ which he preached and committed to writing.

It is particularly through Saint Luke that we are permitted to enter into some of the most intimate events in the earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos. He alone among the Evangelists gives us the detailed account of the Annunciation, telling us how the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth and entered into the presence of the Virgin with the greeting: ‘Rejoice, thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women’ (Luke 1:28). Luke records the Virgin’s astonishment, Gabriel’s revelation that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and that the Child to be born would be called the Son of God, and finally that sublime response of humility and obedience: ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word’ (Luke 1:38).

Saint Luke also tells us of the visitation of the Panagia to Saint Elizabeth, of the unborn Forerunner leaping within his mother’s womb, and of Elizabeth crying out, ‘Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb’ (Luke 1:42). It is Luke who preserves for us the hymn of the Theotokos, ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour’ (Luke 1:46-47), words which have never ceased to resound in the worship of the Church. From him also we receive many of the precious details concerning Bethlehem, the shepherds, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the righteous Symeon and the prophecy of the sword which would pierce the Mother’s soul.

How did Saint Luke know such intimate details? At the beginning of his Gospel he explains that he carefully investigated the events from the beginning and received the testimony handed down by eyewitnesses. Twice, however, when speaking of the Mother of God, he gives us a significant indication. After the Nativity he writes that ‘Mary kept

all these things, and pondered them in her heart' (Luke 2:19), and later that 'His Mother kept all these sayings in her heart' (Luke 2:51). The tradition of the Church therefore preserves the understanding that Saint Luke learned much concerning these early events from the Most Holy Theotokos herself and from those who had witnessed them. In this sense Saint Luke became an iconographer even before taking up the artist's brush, for with words he painted Nazareth, the Annunciation, Bethlehem and the Mother of God holding her newborn Son.

Holy Tradition also remembers Saint Luke as the first iconographer of the Theotokos. The Church preserves the tradition that he painted her sacred image and that the Panagia herself saw and blessed her likeness. This ancient tradition is important because it points us towards the true theology of the holy icons. An icon is not merely a religious decoration, nor is its veneration something added to Christianity many centuries after the Apostles. Its theological foundation lies in the mystery of the Incarnation itself. The invisible Son and Word of God truly became man; He truly took flesh from the Virgin, entered human history and possessed a human face which could be seen and touched. Thus the icon bears witness in colour to the same truth which the Gospel proclaims in words.

Among the many ancient icons associated by Orthodox tradition with Saint Luke or with prototypes attributed to him are the celebrated Hodegetria, the Tikhvin, Smolensk and Jerusalem icons of the Mother of God. Cyprus is particularly blessed in possessing ancient traditions concerning two famous icons attributed to the Evangelist: the Panagia of Kykkos and the Panagia Machairiotissa, whose Synaxis is fittingly celebrated upon Saint Luke's own feast.

According to the history and tradition preserved by the Holy Monastery of Machairas itself, the Machairiotissa was originally associated with the celebrated Church of the Theotokos at Blachernae in Constantinople, where the Holy Soros¹ connected with the sacred Robe and Belt of the Mother of God was preserved. For this reason the icon was originally known as Παναγία ἡ Ἀγιοσορίτισσα – Panagia Hagiosoritissa.

¹The word Σορός (*soros*) means 'chest' or 'reliquary'. The golden reliquary at Blachernae housed the holy veil and sash of the Virgin Mary. Ἀγιοσορίτισσα (*hagiosoritissa*) means 'of the holy chest'.

During the terrible period of Iconoclasm in the eighth century, when holy icons were being destroyed and their defenders persecuted, a devout ascetic rescued the sacred image and carried it away from Constantinople. He brought it across the sea to Cyprus and found refuge in the remote mountainous interior of the island. There, within a cave, the icon was preserved and the ascetic remained until his repose. With the passing of the years the entrance to the cave disappeared beneath thick vegetation and the icon was forgotten. Generations came and went, and for centuries the sacred image remained concealed within the mountain, forgotten by men but never abandoned by the providence of God.

In the twelfth century an ascetic named Neophytos came to Cyprus from Palestine because of the incursions of the Saracens. Together with his disciple Ignatios he settled at the Monastery of Saint John Chrysostom at Koutsoventis in the Pentadaktylos. From there, according to the tradition preserved by Machairas, the ascetics repeatedly saw a mysterious light shining towards the mountains. Understanding that this was no ordinary occurrence, they set out to discover its source and were eventually led to the forgotten cave.

The entrance, however, had become inaccessible beneath the dense bushes and thorns which had grown across it. By Divine Providence the monks found a knife, and the tradition relates that the Panagia instructed them to use it to clear the entrance. Cutting through the vegetation they entered the cave and there, after centuries of concealment, discovered the sacred icon.

From this event arose the name by which the icon has ever since been known. The Greek word *μαχαίρι* – machairi means ‘knife’; hence the icon became *Παναγία ἡ Μαχαίριώτισσα* – Panagia Machairiotissa, commonly rendered in English as Our Lady of Machairas. The surrounding region and subsequently the monastery itself likewise became known as *Μαχαίρας* – Machairas, preserving in their very name the memory of the miraculous finding of the icon.

The discovery soon became the beginning of an organised monastic community. After the repose of Neophytos, another ascetic, Prokopios, joined Ignatios. As the brotherhood increased, Ignatios and Prokopios travelled to Constantinople seeking assistance and re-

ceived the support of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos for the establishment of the monastery. Later, under Saint Neilos, the monastery developed further: its coenobitic life was established, its Typikon composed and its foundations strengthened. The monastery therefore honours Saints Neophytos, Ignatios, Prokopios and Neilos as its four holy founders, whose common memory is celebrated on 13 December. At the heart of the monastery they established remained the sacred icon, and there the wonderworking Panagia Machairiotissa continues to be venerated to this day.

This history, however, should not be regarded simply as a fascinating story belonging to the Byzantine past. It reveals something fundamental about the Orthodox Church and about our own relationship with the Faith which we have received. Orthodoxy possesses a living memory. The Church did not begin with our generation, nor with that of our parents or grandparents. She carries within herself the memory of the Apostles who saw Christ, of the martyrs who shed their blood for Him, of the Fathers who defended the Faith and of countless monks and faithful who guarded what had been entrusted to them and handed it on to those who came afterwards.

This is the true meaning of Holy Tradition – Ἱερὰ Παράδοσις. Tradition is not simply the preservation of things because they are old. The word *paradosis* means that which has been delivered or handed down. Thus Saint Paul commands the faithful to ‘stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle’ (2 Thessalonians 2:15). We receive what has been entrusted to us, we live it and guard it, and in turn we hand it faithfully to those who follow.

The history of Panagia Machairiotissa becomes a beautiful image of this truth. Men could order an icon to be destroyed; an ascetic could be forced to carry it into exile; the sacred image could disappear within a mountain and the entrance to its cave become covered with thorns. Centuries could pass and empires could rise and fall, yet at the appointed time a light appeared upon the mountains, the thorns were cut away, and the icon was revealed once more. What had been hidden had not been lost.

Neither do Orthodox Christians honour such an icon merely because of its antiquity. We venerate the holy icons because they proclaim

the reality of the Incarnation. Worship (λατρεία), belongs to God alone, while the honour given to the sacred image passes to the person depicted. When we kiss an icon of Christ, our love is directed towards Christ; when we venerate an icon of the Theotokos, our honouring of it passes on to the Mother of our Lord. The wood and paint are not themselves the object of our worship: the image leads us to its prototype.

And the Theotokos herself always leads us beyond herself to her Divine Son. Her last words recorded in Holy Scripture, spoken at the marriage feast of Cana, contain the whole spirit of her ministry: 'Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it' (John 2:5). She points always towards Christ.

Thus Saint Luke and Panagia Machairiotissa belong beautifully together upon this feast. Saint Luke gives us the Gospel in words, while the holy icon bears witness to that same Gospel in colour. Luke tells us of Gabriel standing before the Virgin and records her words, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.'

On the eighteenth of October, therefore, we are not merely recalling an Apostle who lived almost two thousand years ago or venerating an ancient object which survived the accidents of history. We are encountering the living continuity of the Church. The Gospel which Saint Luke wrote is still proclaimed; the icons for which the confessors suffered are still venerated; the Divine Liturgy is still offered, and the lamps still burn before the Panagia.

What our fathers received, they guarded; what they guarded, they handed down, and what has now been entrusted to us must not end with us. May the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke intercede before Christ our God for us, and through the prayers of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, Παναγία ἡ Μαχαριώτισσα, may the Lord preserve the Holy Monastery of Machairas, the island of Cyprus, and all faithful Orthodox Christians throughout the world.

Ἄγιε Απόστολε καὶ Εὐαγγελιστὰ Λουκᾶ, πρέσβευε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. Ὑπεραγία Θεοτόκε, Παναγία Μαχαριώτισσα, σκέπε καὶ φύλαττε ἡμᾶς. Ἀμήν.

Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, intercede for us. Most Holy Theotokos, Panagia Machairiotissa, protect and preserve us. Amen.

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

Continued from previous issue:

12. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath given me strength. Lest he should appear to boast by saying in the previous verse ‘which was committed to my trust’,² Paul now refers everything to God by saying *who hath given me strength* to undertake such an onerous task: to face death daily is not within human power. This is true humility; our humility largely consists of words, not in the disposition of the mind.

ST NICODEMUS: The divine Chrysostom says: ‘Just as soldiers who bear the imperial emblem’ commonly called a ‘standard’ require both strength and skill to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy; so those who bear the name of Christ, not only in war but in peace, need great strength to avoid exposing it to scorn, and instead to bear it worthily and uphold the Cross. For he who in action, or word, or thought, does anything unworthy of Christ, does not bear – nor does he possess – Christ

² In accordance with the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to my trust (! Tim. 1:11)

within him and has not Christ dwelling in him. However, he that bears it well, bears it in triumph, not merely in the assembly of men but in the very heavens, while all angels stand in awe, and attend upon him, and admire him.'

Because He considered me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Let none of the unbelievers say, 'if everything is down to God, and we contribute nothing why did He make Paul like this, but not Judas?' He dilutes this objection by saying: 'He did not simply strengthen me without judgment, but because I was found faithful.' Yet he does not say, 'it is true that I am faithful,' but *He considered me faithful*, again concealing his virtues. 'For I do not assert,' he says, 'that I was faithful, but that He thought me so. How is this clear? From the fact that He placed me in the ministry: for how could He have placed me unless he had seen in me an aptitude for it?' For this reason domestic stewards are grateful when their masters entrust them with the management of the house and they take this as an indication that they are considered more faithful than the others. Moreover, God also says of him: 'He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name' (Acts 9:15). Paul was therefore able to bear it, and he received strength from God to finish the work here. For he who is going to bear the great name of Christ, in order to impress it upon the souls of believers by means of preaching, needs no little strength. Whoever thinks, says, and does everything worthy of Him, bears it himself. Likewise, he who does not, does not bear it at all, for how can one bear Christ when He is not within him? Paul was also faithful in all other things, but he did not claim these things for himself, but rather ascribed all his achievements to the Lord. 'For I laboured,' says he, 'more abundantly than all others but not I, but grace' (1 Cor. 15:10) and many other things of that kind.

ST NICODEMUS: The godly Isidore of Pelusium, in one of his epistles says: 'Be of humble mind, not of humble speech!' It is proper, however, that one should humble oneself both in words and in appearance, for from this one comes to the humility of mind. For the mind and the soul are humbled and renewed in-

wardly from outward appearance and movements of the body much more so than from mere words, as John of the Ladder says. And Theodoret says that Paul was recalling his former persecution of the Church when he said earlier that the Gospel of God was entrusted to him. Therefore he thanks God by saying 'this Grace I owe to Christ, to Him Who strengthened me.'

13. I, who was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious. See how Paul emphasises the mercy of God by recounting his life before believing in Christ. Moreover, when he speaks of the Jews as worthy of all condemnation, he relates nothing of the kind about them, but he enumerates such things about himself: 'I was not only a blasphemer,' he says, 'nor did I keep my malice to myself: but I also persecuted others who wished to live piously: and not straightforwardly, but carrying it out with harshness and violence.'

But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; He shows that he was deserving of punishment, but was shown mercy by God. Why was there no mercy for the rest of the Jews? For they sinned not out of ignorance, but very knowingly. Most of the Pharisees believed, but they did not confess because they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God. Christ also said: 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another' (John 5:41). Moreover, the Jews themselves said, 'Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him' (John 12:19). For everywhere they were troubled and troubled by the lust for power. The Jews also said: 'No one can forgive sins but God alone' (Luke 5:21). But immediately Jesus did, which they had asserted was a sign of divinity. How then did they not believe? Are these sins of ignorance? But perhaps someone will say: 'Where was Paul then?' He was at the feet of Gamaliel, not mingling with the crowd. Gamaliel was a man who minded his own affairs. Why then did Paul later imprison the Christians? Because he saw that the Christian preaching was spreading, and he was incited by zeal for the law; the Jews, however, were burning with the love of power. But how did Paul, being so well-versed in the law, not come to knowledge of Christ through the Scriptures? He does

actually condemn himself for this, because he suffered from the disease of ignorance, which was born from unbelief. Only on this account, does he say that he obtained mercy.

ST NICODEMUS: Eustratius, presbyter of the Great Church,³ recounts that this Gamaliel was the uncle of Saint Nicodemus, the friend of the Lord by night, who buried Him, and who later became His friend by day too through martyrdom. Both Gamaliel and his nephew Nicodemus were baptised by the Apostles Peter and John; the Jews, on learning of his baptism beat Nicodemus and tortured him severely. Having endured all this steadfastly, the ever-memorable one swiftly departed this life and received the crown of martyrdom.

Kallistos Xanthopoulos,⁴ in the *Synaxarion for the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women*, says that Saint Nicodemus wrote the first account of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord, for he was one of the assembled Jews and knew in detail their counsels and words. The teacher Nicetas⁵ explains: ‘Nicodemus cherished the knowledge of Christ in his mind, but was sparing his body from sufferings and the blows of demons, like a coward, holding back for fear of the Jews. Yet it is a great thing that such a man could think well of Christ and not speak blasphemies. And he, who spoke about the Master well, praising God, buries the Master’s body sprinkling it with fragrant oils that sent forth spiritual fragrance.’

Like the aforementioned Eustratius, Nicetas the Paphlagonian⁶ says something similar about Gamaliel, the teacher of the law, and the uncle of the Martyr Nicodemus in his Sermon on the uncovering of the relics of Saint Stephen. He says that both were

³ Sixth century priest of Agia Sophia in Constantinople (which is called the Great Church).

⁴ Fourteenth century priest, church historian of the Great Church

⁵ Eleventh century teacher and deacon of the Great Church. He wrote commentaries on the Gospels, Psalms, Pauline Epistles and a commentary on the Sermons of St. Gregory the Theologian.

⁶ Late ninth century Byzantine writer sometimes referred to as Nicetas *scholastikos*, which means ‘lawyer’.

baptised and that Nicodemus found his end in beatings. He adds that Gamaliel's son, whose name was Abibas, was baptised too and died a virgin, unmarried. Their holy relics were placed in three shrines which were laid in the same place with the shrine containing sacred relics of the first martyr and arch-deacon Stephen. When, after many visions and explorations, the relics of Saint Stephen were discovered, the relics of these saints were found with them. Nicetas also adds that Gamaliel was a relative of Saint Stephen (for both were from the seed of Benjamin, like Paul and Nicodemus), and was renowned and beloved. After the holy body of Stephen was unearthed from under the stones piled over him, Gamaliel pleaded with the Holy Apostles to be given the body of the first martyr in order to bury it in his village, not far from Jerusalem; the Apostles were persuaded by his pleas. Gamaliel taking the body with honour, carried it there and buried it, lamenting greatly over his burial, as it is written: 'And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.' (Acts 8:2).

14. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul had said many and great things concerning Christ's love for mankind in showing mercy on someone worthy of the most severe punishment. He now continues: 'Not only did God do all this, but He also afforded me the dignity of adoption, and made me a brother, a son, a friend, a co-heir, so much did the grace of His love for man overflow.' But if anyone should say, 'If grace is everywhere, there can be no free will' he goes on to add: *with faith and love*. Paul says: 'I have offered faith, believing that it can save me, and love which I also acquired in Christ Jesus, for Christ is author of my love for God, not the law'. Now he indicates that love must accompany faith, for love is the fulfilment of the commandments of the law, as the Lord said: 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15).

ST NICODEMUS: The divine Chrysostom also says: 'For not only faith is needed, but also love. Because even now there are

many who believe that Christ is God, but, not loving Him, they do not do His commandments. How can they, when they prefer money, birth, fate portents, soothsaying, omens? And tell me, since we live in defiance of Him, where is our love? Someone who loves a friend with a warm and burning love, let Him love Christ likewise. God did not reject us, His enemies (even after His countless good deeds and acts of care), but He gave His Son for us. After we have obtained such good things, and been counted worthy of being called His friends, have we loved Him as a friend? What hope then can be ours?’

15. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Because Paul had said earlier, ‘When I was a persecutor, he had mercy on me’ (1 Tim. 1:13) he goes on to say: ‘Do not be surprised, nor distrust the greatness of the gift and grace: for this reason He came into the world, that he might also save all sinners.’ This is the *faithful saying* that is *worthy of all acceptance*.

The fact that the gifts bestowed are great is no reason to disbelieve the truth; rather, because the goodness of the Giver is immense, it is fitting that we believe and receive. Moreover, this applies also to the Jews who opposed the law, showing them that without faith they cannot be saved.

Of whom I am chief. How, is it, having said elsewhere that he was ‘concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless’ (Phil. 3:6) does Paul now call himself foremost among sinners? This is because the righteousness of the law is sin, when compared to the righteousness that is in Christ; the time for the law has now passed away. The righteousness of the law lasted for as long as its time lasted, in the same way that the moon and a torch shine at night. But when Christ shone like the sun, then He hid it. Anyone who uses a torch when the sun is shining is clearly both wrong and foolish. Paul also says elsewhere: ‘For what was glorified was not glorified’ (2 Cor. 3:10).

16. Nonetheless, for this cause I obtained mercy that, in

me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might show all long suffering as a pattern for those who should hereafter believe in Him for life everlasting. See Paul's humility! 'For this reason,' he says, '*I obtained mercy*, so that no sinner may henceforth despair, but may conceive a good hope that his offences will be forgiven when he sees that Paul, who had sinned more grievously than all the rest, was saved.' By this Paul shows that he was not worthy of pardon, but that he obtained God's clemency for the sake of the salvation of others. He does not say 'that He might show long-suffering in me', but *all long suffering*. He is saying, in other words, 'when I had sinned immeasurably, I needed all His mercy, and all His clemency, not just a part of it, as those who are sinners in part.' *As a pattern* means 'as a model, for the comfort and encouragement of all who wish to believe.'

ST NICODEMUS: Beautiful, too, is the example given here by the wise Theodoret who says: 'If, in a hospital filled with sick people despairing of ever regaining their health, a doctor were to take one of those near death, treat him and heal him, he gives all the others hope that they too will regain their health.' In the same way – says the blessed Paul – the Lord Christ, the physician of souls, having become man to save man took me, the most lawless of all, and, bringing me forward, not only cleansed me of my former sins and transgressions, but also enriched me with great gifts. And thus, through me, showed to all His immeasurable long-suffering, so that none of those who have sinned greatly, looking at my example, might despair of their salvation.

To be continued in the next issue.



THE COMING MONTH

OCTOBER is one of the most beautiful months in the year, a quiet time and one graced with all the beauties of Autumn, and so it is also in the Church Calendar. There are no Great Feasts or special fasts, but the month is graced with the celebration of some of the most beloved saints, beginning with the festival of the Protection of the Mother of God on the very first day. Among the saints in October, we have:

The New Hieromartyr Agathangel of Yaroslavl (3rd/16th) was one of the senior hierarchs of the Russian Church at the time when it faced the first great wave of persecution from the Soviets. When, after the death of St Tikhon the Patriarch of Moscow, Metropolitan Sergius usurped the rule of the Church and issued his infamous declaration of 1927, Metropolitan Agathangel was one of the foremost of the churchmen who withstood him.

In a letter of 1928, Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich, seeking a resolution to the problems that Sergius' betrayal had created within the Church of Russia, wrote:

*It seems to me that one way out of the situation that has been created would be for you [i.e. Metropolitan Sergius] and all the faithful in our land who think in an Orthodox way to direct your gaze to the eldest Hierarchy of the Russian Church, His Eminence Agathangel, Metropolitan of Yaroslavl. Go to him with trust and love. Despite his advanced age, he has remained wise and powerful in spirit. His appeal from Perm was an act of zeal for the salvation of the Church. Stretch out your brotherly hands to him, give him a warm, brotherly greeting, ask him to help you out of this terrible and burdensome situation, and hand over to him your rights as Substitute until His Eminence, Metropolitan Peter should return to power.***

On many occasions Metropolitan Agathangel in his love tried to call Metropolitan Sergius to repentance, but to no avail. Exhausted by his labours, Metropolitan Agathangel died on 3rd /16th October, 1928

**The canonical head of the Russian Church at that time, then in detention.

at the age of seventy-four. For his struggle for righteousness' sake, he is numbered among the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia and depicted on their icon.

Our Venerable Father Ammon the Egyptian (4th/17th) was one of the great Desert Fathers and a contemporary and fellow-ascetic of St Antony the Great. He was orphaned when he was a small child and was brought up by an uncle. In his youth, he was required by his uncle to marry, but as soon as he and his bride entered the bridal chamber, they began to read the Scriptures. Coming upon St Paul's words about marriage and virginity in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, they resolved that they would live together in virginity, married in the sight of the world but secretly living an ascetical life.

After some time, they moved to a desert place so that they could more easily live the ascetic life, and they settled in a hut on Mount Nitria. However, they found from experience that living together in this way was not expedient, and so they parted to live separately.

Ammon lived a very strict ascetical life, never using wine or oil in his diet, and eating only dry bread every two or three days. Through his struggles he was deemed worthy to receive grace from the Lord, and disciples began to gather around him. Each lived in a separate cell so as to maintain quiet or stillness. But when a new member joined the community, St Ammon would leave his own cell for the new brother, and build himself a new one, thus giving them an example of hospitality and of love of labour. The community grew so large that some of the brethren conceived the idea of living some distance from the Nitrian community.

Once when St Antony visited Ammon, he asked the great Elder's advice on this matter, and after the meal at the ninth hour (three in the afternoon) they both set out into the desert and walked until sunset. There they set up a Cross, and the two saints blessed those who wished to build their cells where the cross was planted. Thus a second community was founded which became known as 'the Cells' (*Kellia*).

When St Ammon ended his earthly course, St Antony was far away in his mountain hermitage, but at that moment he broke off his conversation with some of the monks, and beheld the soul of Ammon being escorted into the heavenly realms by choirs of Angels. Some of

the words of St Ammon have been recorded and come down to us for our edification. One perhaps which in these days of great irritation we can all profit from is: 'Bear with everyone as God bears with you.'

Venerable Andronicus and his wife Athanasia (9th/22nd). Saint Andronicus was a citizen of Antioch, and a goldsmith by profession. He lived during the fourth century. He and his wife lived devoutly, and they kept a rule whereby they divided their income into three portions. One third they gave to the poor, and one to the churches and monasteries, leaving only a third for their own use. They were granted two children, and, having a sufficient family, thereafter resolved to live together as brother and sister.

However, through the providence of God, both their children died on the same day, and they grieved inconsolably. The holy Martyr Julian appeared to them to take away their grief. He assured them that their children were in the Kingdom of Heaven, and that it was better for them there than to struggle on earth.

Andronicus and Athanasia then resolved to take up the monastic life, and gave all their possessions to the poor. Then setting off together, as is proper in such cases, they went into Egypt, where Andronicus placed himself under obedience to the Elder Daniel at Scetis, and Athanasia joined a women's community at Tabennisi. They ended their days in virtue. First Athanasia died, and then after a short period of only eight days, manifesting the love that they had for each other, Andronicus joined her.

Saint Cosmas the Hymnographer (14th/27th) was orphaned as a small child, and he was adopted by the father of St John of Damascus, whose name was Sergius. Sergius saw to it that his son and his adopted son both received an excellent education, and for this purpose he employed an erudite Sicilian monk, also called Cosmas, who instructed the boys in the various sciences and disciplines of that period. In time both Cosmas and John became monks in the Lavra of St Sabbas the Sanctified in Palestine and there they studied the 'science of sciences', prayer.

In time St John was ordained priest, and St Cosmas was elected to be the Bishop of Maiuma, where he tended the flock for many years until his righteous repose. Like St John, St Cosmas was an extremely

gifted poet and many of the hymns that we use to this day in church are compositions of this holy father, who has been named for this gift, received from God.

Saint Lull, Archbishop of Mainz (16th/29th) was a native of England, probably from Wessex. He took up the monastic life at Malmesbury, but in 725, as a young man probably not yet twenty, he went to Germany to assist the mission of Saint Boniface there. Ten years later he was ordained priest and assisted St Boniface in every way.

In 751 on St Boniface's behalf he went to Rome to petition the Pope for certain privileges for the monastery of Fulda, which the saint had founded. As the end of his life approached, St Boniface took the unusual, but – in the missionary circumstances in which they were working – probably necessary, step of asking the Pope if he might nominate his successor. Such permission was not forthcoming, although the king, Pepin, assented to the idea, and in 754 St Boniface resigned his archiepiscopal see to St Lull, and set out to Frisia on more missionary endeavours, during which he was slain as a martyr.

St Lull received the precious relics of his Elder at Fulda. St Lull's episcopate was later disturbed by a dispute between himself and the abbot of Fulda, and for a period he deposed the latter, but at the insistence of the monks he was subsequently reinstated. St Lull governed the archiepiscopal see of Mainz for thirty-four years, before resigning to live in quiet and prepare for his end. He retired to the monastery of Hersfeld, where he died on 1st November, A.D. 786.

St Peter of Cetinije, the Metropolitan and Prince of Montenegro (18th/31st). St Peter was born in the village of Njegushi in 1749 A.D. At the age of twelve he took up the monastic life, and in 1782, he succeeded Metropolitan Sabas. He dedicated his whole life to saving the people entrusted to his care both as their Archpastor and as their prince. He brought peace to a land which was riven by wars between rival clans, and defended them from attacks by enemies without. Thus it was that his forces repulsed the Napoleonic forces at the battle of Boka in Dalmatia.

While caring for his peoples as their defender and prince, he also cared for them spiritually, and although he was their civic ruler, he lived the simple life of a monk in a narrow cell. He gave up his soul on

18th October, 1830, and his incorrupt relics repose in the Monastery of Cetinije where they are a source of healings for those who have recourse to them in prayer.

The Venerable Ethbin (19th October/1st November) lived in the sixth century and was born in Britain. He went to the continent to take up the monastic life under the spiritual direction of St Sampson of Dol. Hearing the Gospel call of complete renunciation, he felt like St Antony before him that he should take up a more ascetic manner of life and obtained a blessing to place himself in obedience to St Winwaloc the Younger in the monastery at Tauroc. This house was destroyed by the Franks in the year 560, and Ethbin took refuge in Ireland, where at a place called Necton Wood, he built a small cell and lived as a hermit. There at the age of eighty-three he brought his earthly course to an end.



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

BAPTISM AT FILI

On Thursday 21st Aug/3rd September (the feast of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus) the catechumen **Alexis Halligan** of High Wycombe was baptised at the Sacred Monastery of Sts Cyprian and Justina, Fili, Greece. The Godparents are **His Eminence Metropolitan Ambrose of Methoni** and (*in absentia*) **Aquilina Steel**. Alexis is presently at Fili to learn the art of iconography. We pray that he be granted Many Years!

FORTY DAY PRAYERS

On Sunday 24th Aug/6th September (14th of Matthew) the forty day prayers were read for **Polyxenia Lazarou** and the infant **George**.

NEW ICON

The Brotherhood have been given an icon of the New Hieromartyr Maxim of Serpukhov – commemorated 23rd June – painted by the sisters of the Holy Angels Convent, Afidnai. The icon was donated by **Nedelya Nenova** and **Elena Matthews**. We are grateful to them for remembering and honouring the new martyrs and confessors so often overlooked in our times. May God bless them for their act of love. We are planning to have icons cards printed in the near future.

A VISITATION OF TWO METROPOLITANS

This year, for the feast of Saint Edward the Martyr (3rd /16th September) we were joined by **Metropolitan Gerontios of Salamina and Piraeus** and **Metropolitan Ambrose**. The two bishops served together for the vigil on the eve of the feast assisted by **Archimandrite Loukas, Priestmonk Sabbas, Priests Gabriel Lawani, Evangelos Liassi, Simeone Desrobitu** and **Deacon Ioan Turcu**.

On the next morning, with the exception of Fr. Simeone the same clergy concelebrated the Divine Liturgy. The sermon was given by Metropolitan Ambrose during the clergy communion as Metropolitan Gerontios and Fr. Lukas needed to catch a fast train to Edinburgh to visit spiritual children in Scotland.

Metropolitan Ambrose was able to meet parishioners and enquirers during the festal meal and to discuss pastoral issues with them. The meal was provided most generously by the **Olivo Restaurant, Guildford** as an offering to the church.

On the morning of 5th /18th September Metropolitan Ambrose departed the UK for Belgium. We appreciate the concern and love shown by our hierarchs in coming from Greece to celebrate the Patronal Feast of our parish.

VISITORS

On Thursday 3rd September **Priest Borislav Kovacevic** (Serbian Patriarchate) visited the Brotherhood accompanied by some of his parishioners. Fr. Borislav had travelled from Bedford to serve a burial in the Serbian Cemetery at Brookwood.

On Saturday 12th September **Jon Leech** of the Brookwood Cemetery Society brought a group to visit the church; the group was so large that they had to be split into two sections!

On the same day, **Deacon Ioan Turcu** and **Raphael Quincieu** spent the day cleaning the church in preparation for the feast of Saint Edward. We are very grateful to them for their love for our saint.

SAINT TRYPHON GARDENING GROUP

On Saturday 29th August the St Tryphon Gardening Group met and, despite the stormy weather, spent a day helping to clean the garden. As is always the case, their help is much valued.



Practical Tip

THE FAITHFUL should be aware – and many of us who convert from other religious backgrounds often are not – that it is considered disrespectful to sit in church with one's legs crossed. When sitting in church, which, contrary to a widespread misconception, is sometimes enjoined upon us, one should sit straight with both feet firmly planted on the floor. This rule also applies when visiting a monastery or convent where the buildings and indeed the whole monastic property is set apart for God. If you observe carefully, you will notice that monastics never sit with their legs crossed for this is regarded as irreverent and worldly behaviour. One should try to show that, although sitting, one is aware of the holiness of a place consecrated to God.