

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

‘LET US CONSIDER one another in order to stir up love and good works not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another.’

HOLY APOSTLE PAUL (HEB. 10:25)

‘TAKE HEED often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when you assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith.’

HOLY HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER
OF ANTIOCH, + 107 A.D.

‘PAUL KNEW that much strength arises from being together and assembling together. It is said “where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20); and again, “that they may be one, as We also are” (John 17:11); and: “they had all one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32). And not this only, but also because love is increased by gathering together, and love being increased, of necessity the things of God must follow also. And let us consider one another, he says, to provoke unto love and to good works. He knew that this also arises from gathering together. “For as iron sharpeneth iron” (Prov. 17:17), so also association increases love. For if a stone rubbed against a stone send forth fire, how much more soul mingled with soul!’

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, ARCHBISHOP OF
CONSTANTINOPLE, + 407 A.D.

‘ONE DAY of the week you should keep holy (Ex. 20:8), that which is called the Lord's Day, because it is consecrated to the Lord, Who on that day arose from the dead, disclosing and giving prior assurance of the general resurrection, when every earthly activity will come to an end. On this day you should go to the house of God and attend the services held there and with sincere faith and a clean conscience you should receive the holy Body and Blood of Christ. You should make a beginning of a more perfect life and renew and prepare yourself for the reception of the eternal blessings to come. For the sake of these same blessings you must not misuse material things on the other days of the week either; but on the Lord's day, so as to be constantly near to God, abstain from all activities except those which are absolutely necessary and which you have to perform in order to live.’

**SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS, ARCHBISHOP OF
THESSALONICA, + 1359 A.D.**

‘DO NOT SEPARATE yourself from Christ and from the Church. Do you hear the priest ringing the bells? Rise at once, wash yourselves, and go to church. Attend the Orthros [Mattins] attentively, and likewise the Divine Liturgy.’

**HOLY NEW HIEROMARTYR & PEER OF THE
APOSTLES COSMAS AITOLOS, + 1779 A.D.**

‘AT THE APPROACH of the great festivals, you must be especially watchful over yourself. The enemy endeavours beforehand to chill the heart towards the subject of the event celebrated, so that the Christian should not honour it by the heartfelt consideration of its reality.’

SAINT JOHN OF KRONSTADT, + 1908 A.D

‘A MAN who is growing cold towards God begins first of all to flee attending church. At first he tries to come to services later, and then he ceases altogether to visit God's house.’

VEN. BARSANUPHIUS OF OPTINA, + 1913 A.D

WHY THE NATIVITY FAST WAS ESTABLISHED

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH prepares Her children that they might worthily greet the Nativity of Christ by means of the forty-day Nativity Fast, which lasts from 15th November until 24th December (on the Church calendar).

In addition to the reasons which are generally known, the Nativity Fast is observed by Orthodox Christians so that they might honour the sufferings and afflictions which, immediately before the all-holy event of the Nativity, the Most Holy Theotokos was made to endure from the scribes and Pharisees.

Sacred Tradition tells that some little time before the Righteous Joseph and the All-holy Virgin set off for Bethlehem, the following testing befell them. A certain scribe, Ananias, visited their house and saw that the Virgin was pregnant. He was scandalized by this, and he went to the high priest and the whole council of the Jews and said, 'Joseph the Carpenter, who is considered righteous, has behaved unlawfully. Secretly he has corrupted and defiled the Virgin, who was entrusted to him from the Temple for safe-keeping. And now she is pregnant.' Then servants of the high priest were sent to Joseph's house and finding the Virgin indeed pregnant, they took her and Joseph and brought them before the high priest, who began to accuse and shame the the holy Maiden.

However, in her deep affliction, the Virgin responded weeping: 'As the Lord lives, my God, He is my Witness that I am pure and have not known a man.' The high priest then accused the righteous Joseph, but with an oath he affirmed that he was not guilty of this sin. The high priest did not believe them, and subjected them to the testing that was used at that time (see Numbers 5:19-31). However, this testing only served to demonstrate the innocence of Most Holy Virgin and of Joseph. All those in the council wondered at this, for they were unable to understand how the Virgin could be pregnant and at the same time innocent.

Nonetheless the high priest let the holy couple go in peace. The Righteous Joseph, taking the Virgin Mary, returned to his home rejoicing and praising God.

But this was not the end of the things which the Most Holy Theotokos had to endure. With Joseph she shared the difficulty of the three day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. In Bethlehem no place could be found for the Immaculate Virgin either in the inn or in any of the houses, and the day was declining into evening. She and the Righteous Joseph had to find shelter in a cave which was used as a stable for domestic cattle. In this wretched shelter, the most blessed Virgin continued in prayer and in Godly thoughts. Here it was that she gave birth, without pain, to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

From what has been told above, we can see that the days immediately before the Nativity, were for the Most Holy Theotokos not days of peace and comfort. During these days she had to endure various afflictions and temptations, but through all this she remained steadfast in prayer and in thoughts upon God.

The Holy Church suggests to her children that they participate, even though it be to the smallest degree, in the All-holy Theotokos' struggle, that they constrain their flesh during the Nativity Fast, and that they nourish their souls with prayer. However, the Church also gives us advance notice that a merely outward fast is not sufficient. We must also keep an inner fast, which consists in restraining and estranging ourselves from evil, from falsehood, anger, vanity and the other vices. It is essential during the fast, as it is always, to manifest love for our neighbours, to do acts of mercy, increasing our help for those in need and in affliction. Then our fast will be a real one, and not hypocritical; it will be truly pleasing unto God and we shall approach the radiant festival of Christ's Nativity with joy.

Translated from 'Pravoslavnaya Rus',

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THE VENERATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

BY PROTOPRESBYTER MICHAEL POLSKY

‘The Mighty One hath done great things to me’ (Luke 1:49).

INTRODUCTION

THE VENERATION OF THE MOTHER OF THE LORD is of the same order as the veneration of all the saints, and shares with it a common foundation with the following exception: the Most Holy Virgin Mary naturally occupies the first place among the saints and stands higher than them all.

The ‘blessing’ or veneration of the Most Holy and blessed Virgin is expressed in the Church of Christ on earth, in the first instance, by hymns and readings, praising and glorifying her in the divine services. The principal, solemn church hymns are texts from the sacred Scriptures: the salutation of the Angel, ‘Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with thee’ (Luke 1:28), and the hymn of the Most Holy Virgin herself, ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord’ (Luke 1: 46).

The second expression of her veneration is manifest in the prayerful invocation of her aid in the multifarious needs of our temporal life and for our eternal salvation. Such prayer to the Virgin, and to all the saints, is based on the firm conviction of Orthodox Christians that all who have left the body and the earth are alive, and that the Heavenly and earthly Church are united under the one Head, Christ, that she is indeed His one Body, comprised of many members, who show compassion for one another and support one another.¹

¹ ‘For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ’ (1. Cor. 12:12); ‘Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him’ (Eph. 1:9-10).

But how naturally, simply and easily for the Church of Christ is her understanding of the great things of the Most Holy Virgin, which the Mighty One hath done for her, and which are the bases and the aspects of her veneration; and, on the contrary, how difficult for others, who are outside the Body of Christ which is the Church, is such understanding and remembrance, whereby with all their desire and with their whole soul they might gain salvation for themselves.¹

At the same time, the common, authoritative foundation for Christians both within and outside the Church, is the pure fount of knowledge, the Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures; those outside the Church find the Scriptures difficult to agree upon, because only inside the Church are found 'able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit' (2 Cor. 3:6).

It is difficult for them to trust that the very same Holy Spirit, Who granted the Scriptures, also abides in the Church and that the Scriptures the doubt themselves were only granted to the Church on the premise that the Holy Spirit, 'Who shall teach you all things' (John 14:26), abides unchangeably and inseparably in Her.

They believe that the Holy Spirit is in the Scriptures, but they do not believe that the same Spirit is unfailingly also in the Church. Because of this doubt they possess only the letter of Scripture without the spirit and life, without experiences, without incidents, without history, without practice, without life in Christ. Woe to those Christians outside the Church! It is difficult for them, the poor ones, to be saved, for what 'increase' in the knowledge of God can they offer unto God, not themselves having the Holy Spirit?²

May the Lord help us to unfold the teaching of Christ's Church about the veneration of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in accordance with the mind and spirit of the Word of God, and in accordance with the witness of the holy and God-inspired Fathers of the Church of the first centuries of Christianity, those who were immediately united to the Apostolic age, and were good witnesses of the activity of the Spirit of God in their minds, their words, their actions and in the whole of their church-life.

¹ The exact meaning of this passage is not clear; part of the text in the original is missing (trans.).

² That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).

THE VIRGIN MARY AND EVE

Christ proceeded forth from the Virgin Mary, as Adam had from the earth. Adam by the inbreathing of the Spirit of God: 'and breathed into him the breath of life' (Gen. 2:7); Christ by the coming of the Holy Spirit as was said to the Virgin Mary: 'the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee' (Luke 1:35). Thus Christ came forth according to the likeness of Adam.

Christ, however, also came forth according to the likeness of Eve; Eve came forth from a father without a mother, 'from the rib' (Gen.2:22); Christ came forth from a mother without a father, for the Virgin 'knew not a man' (Luke 1:34).

Just as the first Adam brought forth from Eve without the participation of a woman, so Mary brought forth Christ without the participation of a man. Eve appeared only by the 'seed' of a man, and Christ appeared only by the 'seed' of a woman.

The means whereby Eve and Christ came into being are identical: both received human nature by the power of God from one sex. At first the woman (Eve) did so from a man, and thereafter the man (Christ) did so from a woman.

Christ received the nature of the first Adam, the nature of all mankind, or the whole Adam from Mary, who gave Him this nature of Adam. For this reason as Adam said of Eve so can we say of Mary, and through her even of Christ: 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh' (Gen. 2:23). Through the Virgin Mary our nature exists in Christ, the Second Adam.

Just as Christ is the Second Adam, so Mary is the second Eve. This is evident from a comparison of the temptation of Eve with the Annunciation of Mary. Then there was a manifestation of a fallen Angel, the serpent, the devil. Here there is a manifestation of a holy Angel, Gabriel.³

The first promised Eve, that through her man would be as

³ 'Now the serpent was the most crafty of all the brutes on the earth, which the Lord God made, and the serpent said to the woman, Wherefore has God said, Eat not of every tree of the garden?' (Genesis 3:1); 'and in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth' (Luke 1:26).

God: 'ye shall be as gods' (Gen.3:5). The second promised Mary that through her God would become man: 'He shall be called the Son of the Most High' (Luke 1:32), 'the Son of God' (Luke 1:35), and 'Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us' (Matt. 1:23).

Through Eve – the fall: through Mary – salvation. When Eve was deluded and desired to be as God, she was not made God. Now God is made man so that man can in reality become divine; Mary is the first, in whom He dwelt as the 'firstborn over all Creation (Col. 1:15). Woman was the first to fall, and the first to be saved.

Eve was shown as one who did not trust God's commandments, who did not believe God and who longed to be deified by her own empirical knowledge. Mary trusted God completely, and by faith she rejected knowledge. She said to the angel 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' (Luke 1:34), but then 'be it unto me according to thy word' (Luke 1: 38), understanding that it was not necessary to know one.

Before, when a woman fell [Eve], there came doubt and unbelief for all people; now there is salvation for a woman [Mary], and through her faith for all people. Eve showed disobedience to God and to His commandment 'ye shalt not eat of the tree' (Gen. 3:3) but she took the fruit thereof and ate. Mary was obedient to the will of God at the Annunciation without any doubt and she said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord' (Luke 1:38).

Eve became proud in her thoughts when the serpent said: 'ye shall be as gods' (Gen. 3:5). Mary was the humble handmaid of the Lord in receiving the good tidings of the advent through her of God in the flesh, and also even before this event. It was for this cause that He 'regarded the low estate of his handmaiden (Luke 1:48); it was precisely for this quality of her soul that He turned His attention to her, and for it that He deemed her worthy to be His Mother.

Eve through pride desired to be God, but now in humility Mary is deemed worthy to receive God into herself and give Him human nature for the sake of our salvation.

Eve was deprived of the grace of the Holy Spirit and was no longer permitted to approach the tree of life. Mary received in herself the Son of God, Life Eternal; she found grace, God; she received the salutation 'Rejoice, full of grace! the Lord is with thee!' (Luke 1:28), and she conceived according to the word: 'the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee. ...' (Luke 1:35). In these first and very important examples we see that 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble' (James 4:6).

For her sin Eve was given over to the afflictions and pains of childbearing; Mary as one without a husband and one who had not sinned, painlessly gave birth to a Son.

But it was because Eve was seduced by the sweetness of the fruit of the tree of life, that a sword pierced the soul of Mary, when she saw her Son on the tree of the Cross. Christ redeemed the sin of Eve. The rib, from which Eve was fashioned, was pierced in the second Adam and, as a sign of expiation and cleansing of the first sin, blood and water poured therefrom.

Mary's affliction at the Cross of Son was a guiltless, redemptive suffering for the sin of Eve, because it was on account of the sin of Eve that her Son ascended the Cross. Mary suffered on account of Eve and at the very Cross itself, where the sin of Eve was washed away.

We see that if Christ is the second Adam, then Mary is in reality the second Eve; if Eve was made as a helper for and like unto Adam, so Mary in all her qualities appeared as a helper and like unto the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In so far as the greatness of the second Adam is boundless, so too the greatness of the second Eve is holy and exalted, worthy of this Adam.

There is none among men to compare with her. At the beginning and in the middle of history, there stand two women, Eve and Mary. Eve is the mother of fallen and sinning mankind. Mary is the mother of a new, reborn mankind which is being saved. In the first there was the cause of universal evil; in the second, the cause of universal good.

THE LIFE OF THE ALL-HOLY VIRGIN MARY FROM HER BIRTH TO THE ANNUNCIATION

1. The Birth of the All-holy Virgin Mary

The birth of the All-holy Virgin Mary is the beginning of the sacred history of the New Testament, the beginning of the history of our salvation. It was the preparation for the incarnation of the Son of God, the advent of God in the flesh.

Through this birth, the human nature, which was to receive God Himself, is made ready, that the race of man might be saved. This human nature had to be made worthy of God, had to be holy and immaculate; it needed a holy origin, upbringing and development. She, out of all mankind, was chosen by God to give Him, in return, the common nature of man.

The time of the Virgin's birth is the time of the awaiting of the coming of the Messiah, Christ. Her parents are Joachim and Anna; he was of the kingly, and she of the high priestly, lineage.⁴ The spouses, well advanced in age did not have any children. This was regarded as a disgrace among the people, and for this reason they were considered as deprived of God's blessing.

In abasement and humility they desired a child, as a mercy from God and to take away their disgrace and reproach among the people. In this way, humility, prayer and the holy promise to dedicate their child to God for service in the Temple were the spiritual prerequisite of its birth. And God heard them, and to them there was born a daughter, whom they called Mary. The name Mary is a translation from the Hebrew and means 'high, exalted over all'.

⁴ *Original Footnote:* The name 'Joachim' is related to 'Eliakim' (2 Kings 23:34), which can be rendered as "Eli," which explains the use of this name by the holy Evangelist Luke (3:24). The Talmud also refers to the All-holy Virgin as 'the daughter of Eli', which apparently was the modified form of the name Joachim. The names, Joachim and Anna, themselves not only derive from certain apocryphal writings, but also from Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus and are reproduced by Saint John of Damascus. In the ancient catacombs there is found a depiction of St Anna with a reference to her name and that she is the mother of the All-holy Virgin. The Emperor Justinian dedicated a newly built church to them in 550 A.D.

The Mother of the Lord was born of pious parents who were already elderly and whose flesh was withering, but who were living according to the spirit. The birth was the fruit of their spiritual endeavour, their heartfelt striving, and their tearful prayers to God, and through the action of God's especial mercy and grace.

A spiritual existence is the fruit of the spirit; it is initiated not according to the natural, blind inclinations of the flesh and the natural laws of the requirements of the nature of the flesh, but according to the aspirations of the spirit. If the origin be holy, so shall the whole, and if the root be holy, so are the branches (Rom 11:16). From a holy root there came forth a holy fruit.

An example of a promise with reference to a future child is given by the barren Hannah [Anna], the mother of the holy Prophet Samuel.

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of Sabaoth! if Thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of Thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life (1 Kings 1:10-11).

Joachim and Anna also followed the example of the parents of the righteous Samuel. The mother of the Saviour, a King according to His earthly descent and according to His eternal ministry, the High Priest of the future good things, naturally, had in herself to join together the two lines of descent: the royal and high priestly. Through her father she was of the tribe of Judah and the house of David, and through her mother she was of the tribe of Levi and of the house of Aaron.

Christ came forth from a mother alone without a father, and Joseph was only the betrothed husband of Mary, the protector and guardian of her virginity and therefore the nominal father of the Saviour.

The Saviour, however, was not nominally of the royal house, but was in reality, through his mother and according to the flesh, of this house, of which in the person of David it had been said of the Lord, 'Thy throne shall be established unto the ages' (2 Kings 7:16). This throne could not be overturned; Mary was

herself descended from the house of David that she might be the mother of the Lord.

2. The Entrance into the Temple of the All-holy Virgin Mary

When Mary was three years old, Joachim and Anna fulfilled their vow and brought her to the Temple in Jerusalem, that she might stay there in the Lord's service. The maiden, thus consecrated to God, was brought up at the Temple and lived nearby in the special apartments [attached thereto].

Customarily the high priest received and blessed all those consecrated to God at the gates of the Temple, but when they brought in the infant Mary, he, by the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, led her into the Temple's Holy of Holies, where he himself was permitted to enter only once a year.

The All-holy Virgin Mary lived at the Temple until her fourteenth year, continuing in labours, in prayer and in the reading of the word of God, in the fulfilment of every virtue. But at that time it was necessary for her either to return to her parents or be given in marriage. As Joachim and Anna had at that time already reposed, and the All-holy Virgin had no desire to enter marriage, the priests of the Temple betrothed her to a distant relation, the elder Joseph, for him to be the guardian of her virginity.

The All-holy Virgin was consecrated to the Lord after fulfilling three years, following the example of the Old Testament injunction regarding the fruits of the trees: 'Three years shall it be uncircumcised unto you, it shall not be eaten of, but in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be consecrated for the festivals of the Lord' (Lev. 19:23-4). Thus also did Hannah say of her son Samuel:

When the child shall be taken from the breast and weaned, then Will I bring him that he may appear before the Lord and there abide for ever. And she brought him unto the house of the Lord in Silom, and the child was still an infant ... and she said: For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath fulfilled my petition, which I asked of Him; therefore also have I given him over to the Lord all the days of his life, that he may serve the Lord (1 Kings 1:21-28).

In a similar spirit, we must suppose, Mary's parents brought and gave over their little child in the Temple for service.

How far this comparison is true and represents the actual entry of the All-holy Virgin Mary into the Temple can be judged from the fact that that the All-holy Virgin herself sang her festive song 'My soul doth magnify the Lord' (Luke 1:46). Her thanksgiving to God for her election to be His mother according to the flesh follows the example of the song of Hannah, the mother of the Prophet Samuel: 'My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord' (1 Kings 2:1-10).

It is evident that certain of the most important verses in the composition of these wondrous hymns parallel each other. There are clear parallels between the All-holy Virgin and the Prophet Samuel in their manner of birth and their being presented in the Temple. These ministers of the same work had the same upbringing. In addition, Samuel sought out the child David, the originator of the royal house, to anoint him king and Mary gave birth to David's last Descendent, the Messiah, the King of an Eternal Kingdom.

Anyone in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is a temple of God;⁵ God abides by grace in them. But only in one person in the world did God Himself abide, in His very Being, in His nature, taking human nature and abiding in her – this one was the All-holy Virgin Mary. She is actually the Temple of God and the place of His presence and of His glory. She is thus herself the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant through which the Lord shall be manifested again unto the race of man.⁶ However, the All-holy Virgin does not simply enter the Temple but goes into the very Holy of Holies, behind the veil with its depictions of the Cherubims.

Just as Simeon the God-receiver came by inspiration into the Temple to meet the Infant Lord, so also by the inspiration of God

⁵ 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' (1 Cor. 3:16). 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?' (1 Cor. 6:19).

⁶ 'There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel' (Exodus 25:22).

the high priest met the Virgin in an extraordinary way, and led her into the holy place which corresponded to her:

Against the wall of the temple [Solomon] built chambers all around, against the walls of the temple, all around the sanctuary and the holy of holies. Thus he made side chambers all around it (3 Kings 6:5).

It was here, in the Temple built by Solomon, that the All-holy Virgin spent her youth.

To be continued in the next issue



THE NEW MARTYR CATHERINE OF ATTICA

Thou didst receive the crown of martyrdom, O Catherine, by struggling steadfastly for the tradition of our Fathers, and thou didst surrender thy soul to Jesus the Bridegroom, when, on the festival of the Archangels at Mandra of Megaris, thou didst sincerely proclaim the dogmas of the Faith of the Scriptures.

The True Orthodox Christians were tried just as gold is purified in the furnace, because they preciousy guarded the Orthodox Faith, received from the Holy Fathers, as a priceless treasure. In depicting briefly the essential part of the New Martyr Catherine's witness, we are fulfilling an imperative duty. The triumph of our Orthodox Faith must be made known; the sacrifice of this faithful ewe-lamb of our Lord's flock, full of the flame of faith and the love of Christ, must be proclaimed.

The New Martyr Catherine was born in Mandra, in Attica, in 1900, of poor but pious parents, the ever-memorable Maria and John Peppas. Being the youngest in the family, wherever necessary she offered her services cheerfully and was hardworking.

At the age of 22, she married Constantine Routis, from the same village. God gave them two children, Christos and Irene.

The devout Routis family joined the resistance of the True Orthodox Christians, participating in all the services and public demonstrations of their Faith, even when this was perilous, and all to the sacred defence of the traditions of the Holy Fathers.

It was in fact at the end of the Divine Liturgy on 8th November, 1927, that Catherine was to sacrifice herself, thus receiving the crown of martyrdom, which does not wither.

Every Christian has heard that rivers of blood have been shed to make steadfast the True Faith in Christ, but who would have foreseen that the blood of Martyrs was still necessary to save the Church from heretical influences and innovation?

Come, Christians, you who bear patiently the contempt of the crowds who call you 'Old Calendarists'. Come, and learn the way our fathers and brothers, who lived during the first years after the schism, contested; how they glorified the Church of the True Orthodox Christians, that you might live in all freedom and honour, and adore God.

Mandra in Attica, a place of heroic and tragic events, is also the place which offers as an example to our materialistic age a heroine for the Faith, the young New Martyr Catherine Routis.

Let us follow the thread of the bloody events at Mandra, which started during the All-night Vigil and the Liturgy in honour of the Holy Archangels, at dawn on the 8th November, 1927, and which ended tragically in the church at that place.

On the eve of the festival of the Heavenly Orders, some pious women from Mandra, together with the brave Catherine, had cleaned the church and prepared it, so that nothing was lacking for the awaited festival. They had also done everything they could to find an Orthodox priest, faithful to the calendar of the Fathers, for at that time such clergymen were literally overwhelmed by the demands of the faithful.

The faithful at Mandra had therefore welcomed the ever-memorable Fr Christopher Psallidas with enthusiasm. The whole population greeted him with joy, whilst the bells of all the churches rang out merrily, so greatly esteemed and loved were faithful priests, those first fighters in the sacred struggle of the True Orthodox Christians, which was then just beginning.

Vespers started quietly, in peace. The Vigil could have started

and ended in the same atmosphere, if the police, who were not welcome on such an evening, had not appeared and, with evil intent, surrounded the church. It is reasonable to inquire the reasons for this state of siege. Neither malefactors nor gangsters were hidden in the church.

The church was only "occupied" by decorous guardians of Patristic Orthodox Tradition, who, in a decorous manner, had gathered to celebrate their guardian saints. What was it then that the police so insistently wanted? They were only obeying the orders of the schismatic Archbishop of Athens, namely to arrest the priest and scatter the "mob" of the Faithful.

The police had received their orders, but the Christians of Mandra also had to obey the God-given order, and not to permit the celebration to be disrupted. Thus the door of the church was closed, and the Liturgy was able to proceed with even more compunction because of the ever-present threat of arms. The police then hit the doors with their butts, trying to knock them down. They broke the window panes. And yet we are in the Twentieth Century, in the middle of an era of progress, an era of religious liberty! Here is a terrible example from the motherland of the Hellenes, from the motherland of Orthodox Christians!

The faithful carried on praying inside the church, quietly, piously, whilst outside the schismatic forces were moving up and down shouting insults. Inside the faithful were asking for the Lord's support, that they might patiently bear the unjust persecution.

Outside, the police also demanded reinforcements so that they might attain their impious goal. But did they need reinforcements? Did they need so much to arrest one pious, quiet and brave priest? But how were they to break the resistance of the faithful people, if not without arms?

It was nearly dawn. Inside the church most of the faithful received Communion, and they were waiting for the blessing of the priest to end the service, to take him out safely and let him have a rest in a neighbouring house. But how could they do this, when the praetorians of the schismatics were on guard outside? But they had just received the only strength they needed; they had just communed of the Body and Blood of Christ! Nothing was frightening for them any more. They advanced; the door opened; the faithful started to go out. A living wall of pious

women from Mandra surrounded the endangered priest. From the shadows, the schismatic forces sprang in front of them, like rapacious wolves. They demanded that they surrender the priest into their hands.

But why? – the faithful wondered with reason. Has he committed a crime? Has he done wrong? No, nothing like that. But still they demanded the priest. Who would go and hand him over to them? Among the faithful there were no Judases. ‘You will arrest our priest only over our dead bodies!’ Such were the noble words that came from the mouth of one woman. That was the voice of Catherine Routis, who, having made sure her husband and children were safely hidden at home, came back to rejoin the priest.

It is a fact that the surviving parents of the New Martyr Catherine have witnessed that, after Vespers, her husband had suggested that they go home because he feared an incident. But it was impossible for Catherine to stay there; so when her sister told her of the dangers that the faithful were facing in the church, besieged by the police, she left the house and rushed in among the combatants. She ran to her martyrdom!

The police, failing to break through the human cordon, started to shoot with their rifles to frighten them. They only succeeded to a degree. A few faithful moved away, but the human wall stayed intact around the priest. The people there too were taken aback by the savagery of the police attack. A bullet hit the ever-memorable Angeliki Catsarellis in the temple. To the end of her life, Angeliki had and proudly showed the "mark of the Lord" on her forehead, which had been inscribed there by a murderous bullet on that night.

However, Catherine Routis herself did not flinch. She went on courageously denouncing the praetorian forces of the schismatics, until she saw a policeman raise his butt to strike the priest.

As soon as she realised his evil intention, with courage and complete self-sacrifice, she covered the priest with her body, and she received the mortal blow on the back of her head. Catherine fell, staining the floor of the church with the blood of martyrdom. However one could just hear her whisper for the last time, ‘Most Holy Mother of God’

The anxious and crying women took up her bloodied body, and having told her husband, Constantine, took her to the Hospital of the Annunciation in Athens. The pious Angeliki, who had been injured by the bullet, was also taken there at the same time as Catherine, but she came out after a few days.

Catherine stayed motionless on her bed, suffering for seven days. She suffered enormously, not even being able to speak. So by gestures, she asked for paper and a pencil to write to her husband, to commend to his care their two little angels, their two little children, the elder of whom was only four and the second only a few months old.

On 15th November, 1927, according to the Orthodox Calendar, on the first day of the Nativity Fast at 4 a.m. Catherine gave her martyric soul into the hands of Christ, Who crowned her.

The Church Council of the Parish of the True Orthodox Christians then mobilised all the faithful they could contact. Hers was no funeral, but the procession of the relics of a martyr. Thousands of faithful people followed the procession, some with flowers, some with candles, still others with palm branches.

Christians, take strength from the example given by a young mother of 27, who gave her life for the sacred faith. The New Martyr Catherine is the honour, the glory, and the pride of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians, and her memory will be remembered as an example of faith, love, a witness full of selfdenial and of sacrifice for the tradition of the Fathers.

Catherine, in our times, there were no swords, stakes or spears. They had only the butts of their guns to try and frighten you. What a miserable weapon to make you deny your faith! But you gave your life for it. May your mediation support us, and may your prayers protect the Body of our Orthodox Church from every malicious arrow of the enemy. Amen.

The Church of the True Orthodox Christians believes and proclaims that Catherine contested unto blood, that she belongs to the choir of the holy Martyrs. The 15th November, the day of her death, is the anniversary festival of the New Martyr Catherine.



THE COMING MONTH

IT IS IN NOVEMBER that the Holy Church begins to direct our minds and hearts to the Holy Days at the end of December and the beginning of January, when we celebrate the Nativity of the Saviour in Bethlehem and His Baptism in the River Jordan.

The Church does this first by the institution of the Nativity Fast which lasts for forty days, beginning on 15th/28th November and ending on Christmas Day; and secondly by the celebration on 21st November/4th December of the third Great Feast in the Church Year: **the Entry of the All-holy Theotokos into the Temple.**

It is on this feast that we first hear the Christmas hymns chanted in Church, with the inclusion into the services of St Cosmas of Mamma's Christmas katabasia. The first of these proclaims very emphatically, "Christ is born, give ye glory." Thus, not only are we urged to look forward to the coming feast and prepare for it, but an important truth is revealed to us: that, no matter what season of the year it may be, Christ is born, and that those who would tempt us into looking for some other "Christ" are leading us astray.

The festival of the Mother of God's Entry into the Temple as it were completes the Old Testament dispensation and looks forward to the inauguration of the New with the Incarnation of the Word of God. There were two Old Testament temples, one built by Solomon, which was later destroyed, and one built after the Babylonian exile. The second one, which was greatly embellished by Herod (leading some to speak of three temples), was in some sense incomplete. The first had contained the Ark, which itself contained the tablets of the Mosaic Law, – this was lost at the time of the destruction of the first Temple, and so could not be placed within its replacement. The entry into the Temple, into the very Holy of Holies, of the Mother of God, who is the Ark which was to contain not the Law but the Giver of the Law and of Grace, is a completion of that Temple, its consecration for its role in our Saviour's earthly ministry. The Mother of God herself also undergoes a consecration, preparing herself by her life in the Temple to become the Bearer of God.

Among the Saints in November, we have:

Saint Marcellus of Paris (1st/14th) lived in the fifth century. His parents were people of means and were thus able to provide their son with an education. He was ordained reader by Prudentius the Bishop of Paris, whom he served for many years. It is recorded that as a youth he had occasion to go to the locksmith, and as a tease the man asked him to take a bar of red-hot iron he was working and guess its weight. The Saint did so without suffering any harm.

On another occasion Bishop Prudentius had appointed that a choir boy sing a special antiphon appointed for that day. However, ignorant of this, the archdeacon had another boy do it. The Bishop was furious and ordered the boy who had sung to be whipped. St Marcellus fearlessly rebuked the Bishop for his injustice and the cruelty that he had shown the innocent chorister. He thus brought the Bishop to repentance.

When Bishop Prudentius died in the year 400, Marcellus was elected by the clergy of the city to be his successor. The Saint's ministry as shepherd of his flock continued until his death in the year 436. As his earlier life had been, it was also accompanied by many miracles.

Venantius Fortunatus records one: a lady of rank, whose life had not corresponded with her position in society or her Christian confession, died and was buried in the cemetery outside the town. No sooner was she interred than a huge black serpent was seen to emerge from nearby woods, approach her grave and burrow into it, thus exposing her mouldering corpse.

St Marcellus was called and when he approached the beast, it reared up and threatened him, but the Saint struck it with his pastoral staff and rebuked it, and wrapping his priestly stole around its neck he led it away. Because of this miracle, he is sometimes represented with the serpent.

Our **Venerable Father Barlaam of Khutyn** (6th/19th) was born in 1156 in Novgorod. His parents were well-to-do, and they named him Alexis. From his earliest years he had a desire to take up the monastic life, and after his parents' death, he distributed their wealth and properties to the poor, and joined the Lisich Monastery, where he was tonsured with the name Barlaam. Desiring to lead a more solitary life than the

monastery afforded, he built himself a cell at Khutyn where he continued in prayer and fasting. A number of disciples gathered and his hermit's cell became the nucleus of a monastic community. Saint Gregory, the Archbishop of Novgorod, ordained Fr Barlaam to the priesthood, and he was appointed abbot of the monastery which was dedicated to the Lord's Transfiguration.

Fr Barlaam's renown as a spiritual counsellor spread, and princes and prelates came to him for advice and spiritual help. For his great purity and virtue, he was glorified by the Lord with the gifts of clairvoyance and wonder-working. He ended his earthly course in 1192 A.D. In 1452 A.D. his sacred relics were uncovered and were found to be untouched by corruption.

The **Venerable Æmilian** (12th/25th) lived in the sixth century, and his life was recorded by Braulius the Bishop of Saragossa within a few decades of his death. Æmilian was in early life a shepherd, but he took up the monastic life, placing himself in obedience to a hermit named Felix. When he had progressed in the eremitic life, the Elder Felix blessed him to live in solitude, and he settled in the mountains of Disterce and lived in solitude for forty years.

His virtue came to the notice of the Bishop of Tarazona, Didymus, who ordained him a priest and appointed him pastor of the church of Vergege. This was a foolish move, as Æmilian's charity was such that he dissipated all the wealth of the church by his almsgiving, and the other clergy complained against him. Realising his mistake, the Bishop blessed the saint to return to his hermit's solitude, in which at the age of one hundred, he gave up his soul in the year 574.

The **Holy Martyr Bieuzy** (24th November/7th December) was a native of the British Isles who lived in the seventh century. Wishing to take up the monastic he departed for Brittany and placed himself in obedience to his fellow-countryman, Saint Gildas. He was ordained to the priesthood, and it is said that he was granted the gift of wonder-working. However, in the exercise of his pastoral ministry he came into conflict with a violent and wicked man, who, when he could not force the godly priest to be unfaithful to his pastoral conscience, murdered him. Thus the Saint died as a Christian martyr.

Saint James, Bishop of Rostov (27th November/10th December) was consecrated to that see in the year 1386. During his short episcopate there, a certain teacher named Marcian encouraged the people to reject the veneration of the holy icons. St James countered this false teaching with Orthodox doctrine, and eventually had the deceiver expelled from his city.

A little later a poor woman was sentenced to death in Rostov, but the Saint had her sentence commuted to a period of penance. For some reason, this kindly decision incurred the wrath of the citizens, and they rose up against the Bishop and cast him out of their city. He made his way to Lake Neri and, having traced the sign of the Cross over its waters, he threw his episcopal *mantia* upon them. Then sitting himself upon the vestment as upon a raft, he floated across the lake. The people were moved to repentance on seeing this miracle.

Saint James pardoned them and blessed them, but would not return to his see. Instead he settled in a confined cell and lived the remainder of his days in the strictest asceticism; disciples gathered, seeking his spiritual direction and counsel, and a monastery was founded, which was dedicated to the Conception of the Theotokos. Saint James ended his earthly course in 1392 A.D., and his sacred relics were preserved in his monastery.

On the same day, we have **Saint Maximus the Bishop of Riez**. He was born in Provence to Christian parents and as a young man entered the renowned monastery of Lerins, while the great St Honoratus was still abbot there. In 426 A.D., St Honoratus was consecrated as Bishop of Aries and Maximus succeeded him as the abbot of Lerins. When the see of Frejus was widowed, Maximus was fearful that he would be made Bishop, and so he fled and lived in solitude in the forest until he was assured that a new bishop had been consecrated. However, in 433 A.D., he was elected to be Bishop of Riez, and as such he attended the Church Council there in the year 439, and subsequent ones in Orange (441 A.D.) and Aries (454 A.D.) In his cathedral city he erected a church to Saint Albinus, and he was one of the Bishops of Gaul who joyfully received the letters of the Pope St Leo the Great to St Flavian the Patriarch of Constantinople, in which the errors of Eutyches were condemned. He confirmed the condemnation of that heresy (Monophysitism). He died in the year 460, and his body was enshrined in the cathedral at Riez.

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

FOUR CHRISMATIONS

On Sunday 6th/19th October **Ioanis Papas, Loukia Charalambous, Maria Papacharalambous** and **Michelle Papacharalambous** were received into the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece by **Presbyter Evangelos Liassi**. The mysterion was celebrated between Matins and the Divine Liturgy at which the newly-chrismated received the Holy Mysteries.

NEW CATECHUMEN

On the Sunday after the Exaltation of the Cross, 15th/ 28th September **Edward Whicker** was received as a catechumen, the prayers being read by **Priestmonk Sabbas**. Edward kept his pre-catechumen name, it being the name of our patron, Saint Edward the Martyr.

GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

Priest Borislav Popov returned from a brief trip to Bulgaria with an enamel hanging lamp: a gift from the Popov family and an anonymous parishioner from the Cathedral of the Dormition, Sofia. **Priest Gabriel Lawani** has also donated a complete set of the *Menaion* in twelve volumes.

CEMETERY GARDEN

On Wednesday 24th September **Frs. Niphon and Thomas** attended the opening of the Reflective Garden on land belonging to South West Railway near the exit from Brookwood

Station into the cemetery. The opening was attended by Councillor **Amanda Boote**, the **Mayor of Woking**, who later paid a visit to the Church accompanied by **John Clarke** who gave a brief tour of the cemetery to the visiting dignitaries.

VISITORS TO THE BROTHERHOOD

Woking Ramblers visited the church on 8th October; the Walton and Hersham Foodbank Volunteers visited on 11th October.



Practical Tip

WE LIVE in an increasingly rushed world with hardly a moment to spare but, for that very reason, much time wasted: in traffic queues, in living hand to mouth, in being exhausted. A result of this is that our spiritual life seems often to gain the very least of our attention. Everything else takes priority over it, except of course when we want some "magical" solution to our various problems. Our life as Christians is meant to be therapeutic, to heal our various passions and sicknesses, but even in everyday life no therapy is going to help us if we do not apply ourselves to it. So, we have consciously and conscientiously to put aside time for our spiritual needs. One way in which we can make a start – it is only a start – in this regard is to mark in our diaries the various church observances throughout the year. Thus we can make sure from the start that we do not arrange holidays during fasts, or appointments which will mean that we miss major feasts. We can arrange to take time off from work so that we can celebrate the Holy Week services, the greatest feasts, and our namedays. Put a block on Saturday nights, so that even if you cannot attend Vespers you can at least prepare in quiet at home for the Sunday Eucharist. You may not be able to keep to all your good intentions, but it is a sure thing that, if you do not make provision for them, there are very few indeed that you will observe.