

# *The Shepherd*

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## FROM THE FATHERS

“THE STRICTNESS of the Forty Days mortifies the passions, extinguishes anger and rage, cools and calms every agitation springing up from gluttony. And just as in the summer, when the burning heat of the sun spreads over the earth, the northern wind renders a benefaction to those who are scorched, by dispersing the sultriness with a tender coolness: so too fasting provides the same, by driving out of bodies the burning which is the result of overeating.

SAINT ASTERIUS OF AMASIA, + 410 A.D.

“OUR VIRTUE, therefore, must not be contaminated with fault, but must be single-minded and blameless, and free from all that can bring reproach. For what profit is there in fasting twice a week, if thy so doing serve only as a pretext for ignorance and vanity, and make thee supercilious and haughty, and selfish?”

SAINT CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, + 444 A.D.

“HE THAT does not know how to travel the spiritual path does not take concern or correct his passionate thoughts, but devotes all of his exercise and care to the flesh. Such a person is either a glutton and dissipated, or gets depressed, loses his temper, holds grudges and so darkens his mind, or through excessive abstinence he misses the mark and disturbs his mind.”

SAINT HESYCHIUS, + C. 450 A.D.

“THE right practice of abstinence is needful not only to the mortification of the flesh but also to the purification of the mind. For the mind then only keeps holy and spiritual fast when it rejects the food of error and the poison of falsehood.”

SAINT LEO THE GREAT, POPE OF ROME, +461 A.D.

“FASTING is acceptable to God when abstention from food is accompanied by refraining from sins, from envy, from hatred, from calumny, from vainglory, from wordiness, from other evils. He who is fasting the true fast that is agreeable to God ought to shun all these things with all his strength and zeal, and remain impregnable and unshakeable against all the attacks of the evil one that are planned from that quarter. On the other hand, he who practices abstention from food, but does not keep self-control in the face of the aforesaid passions, is like unto one who lays down splendid foundations for a house, yet takes serpents and scorpions and vipers as fellow-dwellers therein.”

SAINT PHOTIUS THE GREAT, + 891 A.D.

“BODILY PURITY is primarily attained through fasting, and through bodily purity comes spiritual purity. Abstinence from food, according to the words of that son of grace, Saint Ephraim the Syrian, means: ‘Not to desire or demand much food, either sweet or costly; to eat nothing outside the stated times; not to give oneself over to gratification of the appetite; not to stir up hunger in oneself by looking at good food; and not to desire one or another sort of food.’”

“DID NOT the Lord Jesus Himself begin His divine ministry of the salvation of mankind with a long, forty day fast? And did not He, in this way, clearly show that we must make a serious beginning to our life as Christians with fasting? First, the fast, and then all the rest comes together with, and through, the fast.”

TWO QUOTES FROM SAINT NIKOLAJ VELIMIROVIĆ,  
+ 1956 A.D.

# The Cross of Christ:

Our Symbol and Our Weapon: Our Joy and Our Praise

THE EVER-MEMORABLE ARCHBISHOP AVERKY, + 1976 A.D.

*“Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).*

“BUT GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

In the very middle of Great Lent, the road upon which we are now travelling, the Holy Church offers us the opportunity to honour and venerate our holy Cross of the Lord. The image of the Honourable and Life-Creating Cross of the Lord is ceremoniously brought out of the altar into the middle of the church, and we all make three prostrations before it with the singing of the words, “Thy cross do we worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection do we glorify.”

There is profound meaning in this church ritual, with great edification for us faithful. If we conscientiously followed the first half of Lent: only ate Lenten food, ate less and less frequently, abstained from pleasures and entertainment, honestly battled our sinful tendencies and habits, we cannot but feel some degree of fatigue and even faltering of energy from the unusual exertion of will power and physical weakness. When we think that only one half of Lent has passed, some may unwillingly grumble “How hard this is! I can’t go on! When will it end?”

And so in order to lift our spirits and strengthen our will to continue observing Lent, the Holy Church offers us spiritual consolation—the Cross of the Lord is solemnly brought out for veneration.

“It is hard for you, you grumble,” the Church says, “but how difficult was it for the Lord to suffer for you, enduring unimagin-

able sufferings on this Cross? Or do you think that His suffering was less than yours? Still, He endured all in order to save you. He did that for your sake, do this for Him, for His sake! Especially since this patience is not needful for Him or for anyone else, but specifically for you, which you need for your salvation. Remember His great love for you, which He revealed in giving Himself over to crucifixion and humiliating death, and your spirits will be lifted! His love and the miraculous power of the Cross will support you and help you complete the struggle of Lent and will bring you to the joyful, radiant feast day of the Resurrection.”

In other words, the Cross of the Lord, brought out for veneration, is our military banner, the sort historically brought out during earthly battles so as to inspire; it is brought out for us, warriors in Christ, for our morale and courage to successfully wage battle and win victory over the enemy. Beholding this glorious symbol, the symbol of victory over the devil, we feel a wave of new energies, inspiring us to continue our struggle. All the hardships and sorrows endured thus far are forgotten, and, in the words of the Apostle, we “forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before” (Phil. 3:13), and with greater earnestness strive for our goal—to defeat sin, to defeat the devil, in order to attain “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14), where inexpressible joy awaits us, promised to us by our Saviour, Who suffered upon the Cross of the Lord.

But the Cross of the Lord is not only a symbol for us, but an “unconquerable weapon,” for it crushes the power of the devil, as we sing in the Holy Church: “Thou gavest us Thy Cross as a weapon against the devil, O Lord; for he trembleth and quaketh, unable to bear the sight of its strength.”

In the teachings of the Synaxarion, the Cross of the Lord is compared with the Tree of Life of the Garden of Eden, with the wood which sweetened the bitter waters of Marah during the forty years the people of God spent in the wilderness, and also with the shady trees which give relief to travellers on the road to the promised land of eternal life.

“Crucified together with the One crucified for us, let us mortify all fleshly temptations in fasting and prayers,” is what the Holy Church calls us to, instructing us to boldly continue the trials of holy Lent, turning our minds to the Lord Who was crucified for our sake.

At the same time, the emergence of the Cross of the Lord for veneration during Great Lent reminds the faithful of the great days when we remember the Passion of Christ and the Radiant Feast Day of the Resurrection of Christ. As a victorious general is greeted, preceded by the symbols of his victory, his emblems and trophies, so here, before the Pascha of Christ, comes the ceremonious procession of the Victor over sin, hell and death, His Life-Giving Cross. It is a living reminder that if we suffer with Christ, then with Him, too, we will be glorified; we die with Him and are resurrected with Him.

In this way, the Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross is a foretaste of the bright Paschal joy that awaits us, because, in glorifying the Cross of the Lord, we also praise His Resurrection, thrice singing: “Thy Cross do we worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection do we glorify.”

And so the Cross of the Lord is for us Christians a military symbol and at the same time a weapon, since Christ the Saviour has nailed our sins to the Cross, and, trampling down the power of the devil, granted us eternal life. That is why it is a “sign of rejoicing,” as the Holy Church calls it, and this is the only glory we can boast of, as Apostle Paul said: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

The cross became a wellspring for us, bountifully pouring forth Divine grace upon us. But each Christian must become a participant in this saving power of the Lord’s Cross only by bearing his own cross. This is what our Teacher of endurance, Jesus Christ, clearly teaches us: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mk 8:34).

“Our cross” is the freely-taken spiritual struggle in the life of the Christian in the world, the symbol of which is Lent, for every

true Christian life is a strategy of fasting, a spiritual feat of self-restraint and abstention. Every true Christian is called to this, to be an ascetic, for without this there cannot be true Christianity, for we must force ourselves to every good deed and turn away from all wickedness. The Lord Himself summons us to this: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24), for “wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

From these words of Christ we clearly see how far from true Christianity are all contemporary modernists who wish to reform our Church and Christianity in general, who reject any limitations and restrictions and give their passions free reign.

So Christ the Saviour gave us the commandment to struggle, to enter the narrow gate, that is, to endure all and to restrain our sinful passions and desires, for “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12).

And the Holy Apostle Paul, in full accord, says “mastery is temperate in all things” (1 Cor. 9:25),” and so “I mortify my body and enslave it, else I will be enslaved,” that is, everyone must learn temperance.

The way of the Cross is this actual observance of constant, complete bodily and spiritual abstinence, which is required of every earnest follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The humble endurance of all sorrows and sufferings we face on earth, the constant struggle with our sinful tendencies and the complete devotion to the will of God is the personal cross of every true Christian. Those who bear this cross emulate Christ the Cross-Bearer, and become true followers of Him. And just as the Cross of Christ led to the joy of Resurrection, so the personal cross of each of us will lead to the same resurrection from the dead and eternal inexpressible joy and blessedness, the never-ending day of the Kingdom of Christ.

Great Lent is nothing other than the symbol of Christian life, and also the annual exercise of Christian living, an annual

reminder of how the Christian must live, and what the final goal of his life must be.

Now we see why the enemy of God and mankind, the devil, exerts all his efforts to deprive us of this great, saving holy symbol of the Cross of the Lord, and compels us to refuse to bear our cross, turning us astray from following Christ.

That is why we see less frequently the image of the Cross of the Lord, which is being replaced everywhere by other symbols and emblems, leading Christians to forget the Cross of the Lord and forget to bear their own crosses. Even buildings which pretend to the name “church” rarely exhibit this symbol.

The enemy wishes to tear this symbol of victory and glory from our hands, in order to disarm and vanquish us. Sorrow to anyone who gives in to imprisonment by Satan easily, to face eternal, inconsolable sorrow and suffering! Sorrow to all who join with the enemies of the Cross of Christ, and do their bidding! They will become traitors and betrayers of our Lord and Saviour, and their eternal fate will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12).



## The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

*Said at all the lenten services*

O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, ambition, and vain talking give me not (*make a prostration*).

But rather a spirit of purity, humility, patience and love, bestow upon me Thy servant (*prostration*).

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see mine own faults and not to judge my brother; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen (*prostration*).

*Then we make twelve bows from the waist, and then repeat all three verses above with one prostration at the very end.*



# On Fasting

THE EVER-MEMORABLE ARCHBISHOP ANDREW,  
+1978 A.D.

WITH A VERY TIMELY INTRODUCTION BY  
METROPOLITAN CHRYSOSTOMOS OF ETNA, +2019 A.D.

*Clergy, Faithful, and Friends*

*Evlogia Kyriou.* May God bless you.

As I so often note, we are seeing today, in the “externals” of intellectual confession and under the guise of an “official” Orthodoxy, the birth of a religion foreign to the ethos of Orthodoxy and based on invented customs, invented theologies, and contrived “traditions.” This frightful distortion of Orthodoxy authenticates itself through political entities, as in the few surviving “state Churches;” by neo-papal Patriarchalism, as though genuine Orthodoxy can be authenticated by an historical administrative body, instead of a continuity of Holy Tradition and by Apostolic Succession; and through the creation of “official” Orthodox bodies by the WCC and the ecumenical movement, of all things!

In this “Orthodoxy” of convenience and contrivance, the first “victims” of innovation and false tradition have been monasticism, fasting, and the other ascetic traditions of the Church, as manifested in churches filled with pews, clergy who look more like corporate managers than those set apart to imitate the Prophets and serve the “peculiar people” of God, and a transformation of Orthodoxy from a way of life to a typical Sunday religion. (I should add, too, that even cultism has made its appearance in some of these modernist Orthodox groups, hidden as it is under slogans about Orthodoxy’s historical primacy.)

With this “new Orthodoxy,” every sort of pseudo-scholar, preaching the rubrics of doubt and adhering to a snide view of our oral traditions holds forth with suggestions for changing the Orthodoxy which they claim to have embraced, and this often before having even the slightest experience in Orthodox spiritual life. The lives of Saints and the Fathers are dismissed as myths, since they come down to us in hagiographic “*topoi*” and pious language, lacking the “rigours” of “scholarly” attention that introduce us to what is sarcastic, dismissive, and ultimately blasphemous approaches to the Saints and Fathers.

We are now, in this spirit, being served up a “Vatican II” sort of proposal from these Orthodox innovators, who wish to bring “under examination” the entire “fantasy” of an Orthodoxy “built on word of mouth and unreliable witnesses.” Presumably these statements, which have appeared here and there, reject Saint Paul’s exhortation that we adhere to traditions passed down by Scripture and by word of mouth and consider a myth the tradition that the Fathers and Saints of the Church, deified by Grace and union with Christ, have preserved what “the Lord taught” and the “Apostles preached.”

If one were to take all of this posturing seriously, he would have to be formed in true fantasy - who can imagine the Orthodox, whom no one could accuse of being part of “*organised* religion,” ever succeeding in producing something like “Vatican II,” even if this were desirable and even if such a thing could be called an “*œcumenical*” synod as we Orthodox understand this appellation? In fact, however, all of the posturing is easily understood, since it is sponsored by those who want the historical claims of Orthodoxy without the ascetic life, without the mystical elements, and without the costly price of becoming a people apart and forming the eternal remnant of Christ’s Body. They want form without function, authority without authenticity, and the letter without the costly spirit.

This “new Orthodoxy” is a sham that draws on Grace for which it has not sacrificed and which it has grasped by entering from the proverbial “back door.” It is exposed, above all else, by its assault, as I have said, on orthopraxy, or the practice and

observance of a Faith that is insufficient as an intellectual confession, but which reaches authenticity only when it is followed in obedience and submission to the ascetic and mystical traditions by which it is reified and made effective. No asceticism, no Orthodoxy. No right practice, no right belief. Right belief without right practice is a dead game of letters at the cost of the spirit. (What we are seeing in this distortion of Orthodoxy can also be found in the course of Western Christianity.)

Since it is Lent, I thought it appropriate to share with you some excerpts on one of the more important practices of Faith, fasting, and what the late Archbishop Andrew of Novo-Diveyevo has to say. He was a profound teacher of Orthodoxy and a Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad before its lamentable union with the Moscow Patriarchate. He represents, in his views, a genuine Orthodox Hierarch, preaches genuine Orthodox doctrine, and stands in sharp contrast to the “new Orthodoxy” with which his former Church, and our former Sister Church, is now in communion. Here, for all to see, is orthopraxy as it is correctly taught and as it is being attacked by those who use, rather than practice, Orthodoxy, especially in the “modernist” (read: “innovationist”) jurisdictions in this country.

My comments are taken from a translation of His Eminence’s writings from the Russian that was sent to me this morning by a clergyman in Australia, and for which I am most grateful.

Our “new Orthodox” and those who deliberately innovate to serve their human weakness in the name of faith should quake at the Archbishop’s wise words, which express the conscience of the Church.



## **On Fasting**

“For this kind is expelled only by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:21). With these words the Lord Himself indicated to us two kinds of weapons in our combat against our enemy - the dark and evil spirits. At the same time, He indicated to His disciples the need for them to fast at a time “when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them” (Matt. 9:15). The grace of the Holy Spirit is

taken away from us through our sins. And its return to us is achieved primarily by means of repentance, assisted by prayer and fasting.

However, if the necessity of prayer for the salvation of the soul is recognised by all Christians, the necessity of fasting is often inadequately realised. And that is one of the cunning traps of the evil spirits into which fall many modern Christians.

In former not too distant times the confession of Christ was tied in with the fulfilment of all Church rules. For this reason, in the daily life of erstwhile [Orthodox] families we see a strict observance of Lenten days - Wednesdays and Fridays, and the four fasts established by the Church. The pious lay people of ancient Russia were not far behind the monastics in the sphere of fasting.

The time of fasting is an especially important time for spiritual life, it is “a favourable time, it is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). If the soul of a Christian pines for purity and seeks spiritual health, then it must try to make the best possible use of this time that is so beneficial for the soul. For this reason it has become the custom among genuinely God-fearing people to congratulate each other upon the beginning of a fast.

### **Abstinence in food**

For physically healthy people the basis of fasting is considered to be abstinence in food. Here one can distinguish five levels of physical fasting: (1) the giving up of meat, (2) the giving up of dairy products, (3) the giving up of fish, (4) abstinence from vegetable oil, (5) complete abstinence from food for a certain period of time. Naturally the last levels of fasting can be accomplished only by healthy people. For the sick and the old the first levels of fasting are more appropriate.

The power and efficacy of the fast can be evaluated by the strength of deprivation and sacrifice. And, naturally, it is not only the formal replacement of non-Lenten foods with Lenten foods that makes up the true fast: one can prepare exquisite meals from Lenten foods as well, and thus satisfy to some degree both one's voluptuousness and one's gluttony.

We should remember that it is improper for a penitent sorrowing over his sins to eat deliciously and abundantly during the Lent, even though the meals be formally Lenten. It may be said that that is not a fast at all, if a person gets up from a table laden with delicious Lenten foods and feels a satiation of the stomach. This does not equate with sacrifice or deprivation, and without the latter there is no genuine fasting. “Wherefore have we fasted, and Thou seest not?” - the prophet Esaias calls out, denouncing the Jews who hypocritically observed all the rules, yet in their hearts stood far from God and His commandments (Es. 58:3).

In some cases ailing Christians on their own replace the usual fasting in food with a “spiritual” fast. The latter usually means paying stricter attention to oneself: keeping oneself away from sin - abstaining from irritation, the judging of others, quarrelling, etc. All of this is good and well, but can a Christian in normal times allow himself to sin, to become irritated, judgmental of others, etc.? It is obvious that a Christian must always be sober and attentive, guarding himself from sin and all that which may offend the Holy Spirit. If, however, he is unable to restrain himself, then the same thing will probably occur both on regular days and during the Lent. In such a case the replacement of fasting in food with a similar “spiritual” fasting is usually a matter of self-deception.

## **Lent and children**

How early should children begin to keep the fast? According to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, a healthy infant does not fast only while he is being nursed by his mother, i.e. approximately until the age of three.

Together with the need to keep the fast to some degree, it is also necessary to ensure that children are prevented from acquiring the habit of satiation or of eating too frequently and at the wrong time. In this regard, the holy hierarch Theophan the Recluse gives the following advice to parents: “Children must be fed in such a way that, while expanding the body’s growth and making it strong and healthy, the soul should not be incited by bodily indulgence. One should not think of the child as being too

small, but from the earliest years one must teach it to restrain the flesh and control it, so that both in infancy, and in youth, and even afterwards the individual could easily and freely cope with this need.”

### **Observing the fast in conjugal life**

Spouses should strictly follow the customs and regulations of the Church in regard to conjugal abstinence on feast days, Sunday, and Lenten days (Wednesdays and Fridays and the four fasts), remembering the words of Saint Seraphim and the Elder Ambrose that a disregard for these Church regulations may lead to illness of the spouse and children. At the same time, one should bear in mind that the church day begins from six in the evening before and, therefore, one should abstain from the eve of the feast or Lenten day until the eve of the following day.

But what if one of the spouses does not wish to observe the Lenten day or the feast? Here we come across one of the hazards of a marriage between people of differing opinions and points of view. Such a situation inevitably leads to family drama and deep sorrow. According to Saint Paul, a spouse may not be refused, but this will lead to a violation of the sanctity of the feast or the fast.

At this point we come to the conclusion that a prudent choice of spouse is of great importance in ensuring happiness in marriage. The marriage, which in essence constitutes a voluntary obedience, will be easy and happy only when the soul submits to a pious and righteous spouse, and it is impossible to avoid misfortune if the spouse turns out to be in the grip of passion and sin. It is for this reason that the Apostle Paul grieves for those who have entered into marriage: “Such shall have trouble in the flesh; but I pity you” (1 Cor. 7:28).

### **Conclusion**

A Christian’s attitude towards fasting is essentially a touchstone for his soul in gauging his attitude towards the Church of Christ and towards Christ Himself. A soul which lives with a lively faith in Christ cannot neglect fasting. Otherwise it will ally itself with those who are indifferent to Christ and religion. In

addressing Christians, the New Martyr Priest Valentin Sventitsky writes: “Keep and cherish the fast as one of the greatest sacred church treasures. Each time you abstain from what is forbidden on the days of fasting, you are one with the entire Church. You are doing with one mind that which the entire Church and all the saints have done from the very first days of the Church’s existence. This will give you power and strength in your spiritual life.”

A certain opponent of Lent once said to the holy Elder Ambrose of Optina: “What does it matter to God what kind of food we eat?” To this the Elder replied: “It is not the food that matters, but the commandment; Adam was expelled from Paradise not for gluttony, but for tasting, just tasting what was forbidden. For this reason even now you may eat whatever you want on Tuesday and Thursday, and you are not punished for it, but for Wednesday and Friday you are punished, because meekness is developed through obedience.”

The Jews cried out to God: “Wherefore have we fasted, and Thou seest not?” And the Lord replies to them through the mouth of the prophet: “Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact heavy labours from others. Is it such a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Here is the fast that I have chosen: loose the bands of wickedness, let the oppressed go free, and undo the heavy burdens; share thy bread with the hungry and bring the poor that are cast out into thy house. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say: ‘Here I am!’” (Es. 58:3-9).

This marvellous piece from the Book of Esaias denounces those who think to be saved only by following the letter of the fast and forgetting the commandments of charity, loving one’s neighbours, and serving them.

The significance and purpose of genuine fasting in the life of

a Christian may be summarised by the following words of Saint Isaac the Syrian: “The fast is the guardian of all virtue, the beginning of the struggle, the crown of abstinence, the beauty of virginity, the source of chastity and prudence, the teacher of silence, the forerunner of all good deeds... Fasting and abstinence produce a wondrous fruit in the soul, knowledge of God’s mysteries.”



## From the Writings of the Reposed Athonite Elder, Priestmonk Arsenii On Prayer

PRAYER is the soul’s conversation with God; it is, according to the words of Saint Macarius the Great, the choir leader in the choir of the virtues; for through prayer we can always beseech God. Every virtue, every good thing is besought of God through prayer; and through it the head of the serpent, who seeks our destruction, is crushed. Essentially this truth is contained within a few words in the Gospel: “Without Me ye can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

That our prayer may be acceptable unto the Lord, the following things are particularly important:

Do not hold on to any kind of anger, so that you may speak from a pure heart - “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12).

Pray with humility, emulating the publican, who thought of himself as a great sinner, not daring even to raise his eyes up to heaven. From the words of the Lord we can see how acceptable to Him are humility and the grieving of the heart. “To this man will I look, even to him that is meek and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word,” (Es. 66:2) says the Lord.

Our enemy the devil, knowing how inducive of salvation prayer is to us, does not rise up against anything with such rage as he does against prayer, enveloping us with clouds of thoughts, so as to divert us from prayer and render it unprofitable. We cannot forbid the thoughts coming, just as we cannot forbid the wind and stop it



blowing, but we can and must resist the thoughts, not giving them attention, knowing that they are demonic emissaries. The more cruel this battle against the thoughts is, the more glorious will be the reward for repelling them.

... To be completed with "On the Path to the Kingdom of Heaven."



# THE COMING MONTH

THE MONTH of March this year leads through the last weeks of **Great Lent** to the very cusp of the **Lord's Pascha**, which falls this year on 3<sup>rd</sup> / 16<sup>th</sup> April. And within it we have the two **Great Feasts of the Annunciation and Palm Sunday**, which this present year fall just two days apart, each side of **Lazarus Saturday**. His Grace, **Metropolitan Ambrose** is hoping to visit England for that three day period, and will serve at the old Convent Chapel on the Annunciation and at Saint Edward's on Palm Sunday, when he is hoping to ordain **Sub-deacon Ioan Turcu** to the diaconate.

Among the saints celebrated in March we have:-

Our **Holy Father David of Wales** (1<sup>st</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup>), the son of King Sant, a prince of Cardigan in far western Wales. All the information we have about him is based on the 11<sup>th</sup> century biography written by Rhygyfarch, the son of Bishop Sulien of St David's. His main purpose was to uphold the claim of the Welsh bishopric to be independent of Canterbury, so complete reliance cannot be placed on the document. David lived during the golden age of Celtic Christianity when saints were plentiful, many of them of noble rank who lived the monastic life, built oratories and churches, and preached the Gospel. Saint Cadoc founded the great Monastery of Llancarfan, and David was his cousin and a pupil of Illtyd, who was educated in the White House of Carmarthen and who founded the Monastery of Menevia. According to his Life, David became a priest and studied under Saint Paulinus, the disciple of Saint Germanus of Auxerre, on an unidentified island for several years. He then engaged in missionary activities, founded twelve monasteries from Croyland to Pembrokeshire, the last of which, at Menevia in southwestern Wales, was known for the extreme asceticism of its rule, which was based on that of the Egyptian Desert

Fathers. His rule was strict, with but one daily meal of only bread with salt and herbs (eating meat and drinking beer were prohibited), frequent fasts and hours of unbroken silence. Their days were filled with hard manual labour and no plough was permitted in the work of the fields. "Every man his own ox," said Saint David. The monks spent their evenings in prayer, reading and writing. No personal possessions were allowed: even to say "my book" was considered an offence. Nor did the Saint exempt himself from the same rigorous discipline: he drank nothing but water and so came to be known as David the Waterman; and long after Vespers, when the last of his monks had retired to bed, he prayed on alone through the night. He was said to be of a lovable and happy disposition, and an attractive and persuasive preacher. It was perhaps to his mother, the saintly Non, who had nurtured him carefully in the Christian faith, that he owed so many of his own fine qualities. It was not surprising, therefore, that when the time came for the appointment of a new Archbishop of Wales the choice fell upon him. At Brevi, in Cardiganshire, a great synod had been convened about 550, attended by a thousand members, but David, who kept aloof from temporal concerns, remained in his retreat at Menevia. The synod, however, insisted on sending for him. So great was the crowd and so intense the excitement that the voice of the aged and retiring holy Archbishop Dubricius could hardly be heard when he named David as his successor. David, who at first refused, came forward reluctantly, but when he spoke his voice was like a silver trumpet, and all could hear and were deeply moved; and in that hour of his succession a white dove was seen to settle upon his shoulders as if it were a sign of God's grace and blessing. In some accounts it is said that David was consecrated Archbishop by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and given an altar stone by him while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He loved Menevia and could not bring himself to leave it for Caerleon, the seat of the Archbishopric, which he transferred to his own monastery by the wild headlands of the western sea, and which to this day is known by his name and remains a place of pilgrimage. Again, although evidence is unreliable, David convened a synod, called the Synod of Victory, because it marked the final demise of Pelagianism, and drew up regulations for the British Church. Giraldus tells us that in his time congregations and monasteries grew all over Wales and "to these Father David, as if placed upon a lofty eminence was a mirror and pattern of life." "He opened," we are told, "many fountains in dry places, and across the centuries his words spoken in the hour of death

still reach us: ‘Brothers and sisters, be joyful and keep your faith and do the little things.’” On the last Sunday before his death after he had received the Holy Gifts he gave the flock his blessing, bidding them to be joyful and to keep the faith for they would see him no more in this world. He died on Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March, and the monks cried out with anguish: “Who will help us? Who will pray for us? Who will be a father to us as David was?” Saint David was laid to rest in his cathedral and his tomb became, and still is, a great place of pilgrimage. Even the Norman Kings William the Conqueror and Henry II visited it to pay homage. In the late thirteenth century the Cathedral was rebuilt largely from offerings at the Shrine, and the relics were translated to their present place. The exact dates of Saint David’s life are lost in the mists of time, but he was active in the sixth century. He is, of course, the patron saint of Wales. A mile or so up a narrow country lane from the Cathedral brings one to Saint Non’s Well and Chapel, overlooking the rocky coastline with its small islands, and this is reputed to be the birthplace of Saint David.

Our **Holy Father Theophylactus of Nicomedia** (8<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup>) was from the East, and his native city is unknown. He came to Constantinople in the eighth century during the time of the iconoclast heresy, where he received a great education and quickly gained fame and had friendly relations with government officials and dignitaries. After the death of the iconoclast Emperor Leo IV, the Emperor Constantine VI ascended the throne. At the same time, Patriarch Paul, not having the strength to continue guiding the flock in the face of iconoclasm, voluntarily resigned his office in A.D. 784. Saint Tarasius was chosen in his place. At that time, he was an eminent imperial counsellor. Under the supervision of the new Patriarch, the Seventh Ecumenical Synod (A.D. 787) was convened to condemn the iconoclast heresy. A relatively peaceful time began for the Church, and monasteries again began to fill with monastics. Theophylactus, a gifted disciple of Saint Tarasius, with his blessing, went to a monastery on the coast of the Black Sea with Michael, the future Bishop of Synnada and saint. God granted the zealous ascetics by their God-pleasing labours and intense prayer the gift of wonder-working. During a drought, when the workers in the field were weakened by thirst, the Saints prayed and an empty vessel became filled with enough water to last the entire day. After several years in the monastery, Patriarch Tarasius consecrated them both as Bishops around the year 780. Saint Theophylactus was made Bishop of Nicomedia, and he cared for the flock entrusted to him. He built churches,

hospices and homes for wanderers, as well as the Hospital of the Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian; he generously distributed alms, was the guardian of orphans, widows and the sick, and personally attended those afflicted with leprosy, not hesitating to wash their wounds with warm water. When the iconoclast Leo the Armenian came to the imperial throne, the terrible heresy burst forth with renewed strength. After the death of Saint Tarasius in A.D. 806, his successor Saint Nicephorus called together a number of Bishops to help him in fighting the iconoclasm of the Emperor. Among them was Saint Euthymius, Bishop of Sardis, who had attended the Seventh Ecumenical Synod. Euthymius was exiled three times for the sake of the holy icons, and for defying the Emperor Theophilus' command to renounce the veneration of the icons was scourged from head to foot until his whole body was one great wound, from which he died eight days later, around the year 830. Saints Joseph of Thessalonica, Michael of Synnada, Aimilianus of Cyzicus and Theophylactus boldly rebuked Leo to his face, telling him that because he despised the long-suffering and patience of God, utter destruction was about to overtake him, and there would be none to deliver him. Leo the Armenian, according to the Saints' prophecy, was slain in church on the eve of our Lord's Nativity, in 820. For his bold prophecy, Saint Theophylactus was sent into exile to the fortress Strobilos in the Cibyrrhaeot Theme (southern coast of Asia Minor), where he languished for thirty years until his death around 840. After the restoration of Orthodoxy in the year 842 under the Empress Saint Theodora, the holy relics of Saint Theophylactus were returned to Nicomedia and interred in the Church of the Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian, which he had built. Saint Theodore the Studite called Saint Theophylactus a pillar of truth, a support of Orthodoxy, a protector of piety, a bulwark of the Church. A chapel dedicated to Saint Theophylactus was built in the imperial palace in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, probably by Emperor Romanus I, the father of Patriarch Theophylactus of Constantinople. He was the first patron saint of the island of Hydra, until the martyrdom of Saint Constantine of Rhodes on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1800, who then became established as its patron. However, the first mayor of Hydra, Lazarus Kountouriotis, in gratitude for the miraculous intervention of Saint Theophylactus in preserving the island during the earthquake on 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1837, dedicated a large portable icon of the Saint to the Monastery of Panagia Phaneromeni, founded around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which is currently the Cathedral of the Dormition in Hydra. A service of praise was composed in his honour by Euthymius

of Simonopetra.

The **Right-believing Rostislav-Michael, Great Prince of Kiev** (14<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup>) was the son of the Saint Mstislav, and the brother of holy Prince Vsevolod-Gabriel. His name is connected with the fortification and rise of Smolensk, both its principality and diocese. Up until the twelfth century the Smolensk land was part of the Kievan realm. The beginning of its political separation took place in the year 1125, when holy Prince Mstislav the Great, gave Smolensk to his son Rostislav (in Baptism Michael) as an inheritance from his father, the Kievan Great Prince Vladimir Monomakh. Thanks to the work and efforts of Saint Rostislav, the Smolensk principality, which he ruled for more than forty years, expanded and was built up with cities and villages, adorned with churches and monasteries, and became influential in Russian affairs. Saint Rostislav founded the cities of Rostislavl, Mstislavl, Krichev, Propoisk, and Vasiliev among others. He was the forefather of the Smolensk princely dynasty. In 1136 he succeeded in establishing a separate Smolensk diocese. Its first bishop was Manuel, installed in 1136 by Metropolitan Michael of Kiev. Prince Rostislav issued an edict in the city of Smolensk assuring Bishop Manuel that he would provide him with whatever he needed. In 1150 he also ceded Cathedral Hill at Smolensk to the Smolensk diocese, where the Dormition cathedral and other diocesan buildings stood. The Dormition cathedral, originally built by his grandfather, Vladimir Monomakh in the year 1101, was rebuilt and expanded under Prince Rostislav. The rebuilt cathedral was consecrated by Bishop Manuel on the Feast of the Dormition, 1150. Prince Rostislav was a “builder of the Church” in a far wider sense: he endowed the Smolensk Dormition church of the Mother of God, and transformed it from a city cathedral into the ecclesiastical centre of the vast Smolensk diocese. Holy Prince Rostislav was the builder of the Smolensk Kremlin, and of the Saviour church at the Smyadynsk Boris and Gleb monastery, founded on the place of the murder of holy Prince Gleb. Later his son David, possibly fulfilling the wishes of his father, transferred the old wooden coffins of Saints Boris and Gleb from Kievan Vyshgorod to Smyadyn. In the decade of the fifties of the twelfth century, Saint Rostislav was drawn into a prolonged struggle for Kiev, which involved representatives of the two strongest princely lines: the Olgovichi and the Monomakhovichi. On the Monomakhovichi side the major contender was the Great Prince Yurii Dolgoruky, Rostislav’s uncle. Rostislav, as Prince of Smolensk, was one of the most powerful rulers of the Russian land and had a decisive voice in military and diplomatic

negotiations. For everyone involved in the dispute, Rostislav was either a dangerous opponent or a desired ally. This had a providential significance, since he distinguished himself by his wisdom regarding the civil realm, by his strict sense of justice and unconditional obedience to elders, and by his deep respect for the Church and its hierarchy. After the death of his brother Izyaslav, he became Great Prince of Kiev, but he ruled Kiev at the same time with his uncle Vyacheslav Vladimirovich. After the latter's death, Rostislav returned to Smolensk, ceding the Kiev principdom to his other uncle, Yurii Dolgoruky, and he removed himself from the bloodshed of the princely disputes. He occupied Kiev a second time on April 12, 1159 and he then remained Great Prince until his death. More than once, he had to defend his paternal inheritance with sword in hand. The years of Saint Rostislav's rule occurred during one of the most complicated periods in the history of the Church of Russia. The elder brother of Rostislav, Izyaslav Mstislavich, a proponent of the autocephaly of the Church of Russia, favoured the erudite Russian monk Clement Smolyatich as Metropolitan, and wanted him to be made Metropolitan by a council of Russian bishops, without seeking the usual approval from the Patriarch of Constantinople. This occurred in the year 1147. The Russian hierarchy basically supported Metropolitan Clement and Prince Izyaslav in their struggle for ecclesiastical independence from Constantinople, but several bishops headed by Saint Niphon of Novgorod, did not recognise the autocephaly of the Russian metropolitanate and shunned communion with it, having transformed their dioceses into independent ecclesial districts, pending the resolution of this question. Bishop Manuel of Smolensk also followed this course. Saint Rostislav understood the danger which lay hidden beneath the idea of Russian autocephaly for these times, which threatened the break-up of Rus. Yurii Dolgoruky, who remained loyal to Constantinople, occupied Kiev in the year 1154. He immediately banished Metropolitan Clement and petitioned Constantinople for a new Metropolitan. This was to be Saint Constantine, but he arrived in Rus only in the year 1156, six months before the death of Yurii Dolgoruky. Six months later, when Saint Rostislav's nephew Mstislav Izyaslavich entered the city on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, Saint Constantine was obliged to flee Kiev, while the deposed Clement Smolyatich returned as Metropolitan. Then a time of disorder began in Russia, for there were two Metropolitans. All the hierarchy and the clergy came under interdict: the Greek Metropolitan suspended the Russian supporters of Clement, and Clement suspended all the

supporters of Constantine. To halt the scandal, Saint Rostislav and Mstislav decided to remove both Metropolitans and petition the Ecumenical Patriarch to appoint a new archpastor for the metropolitan See. But this did not end the matter. Arriving in Kiev in the autumn of 1161, Metropolitan Theodore died in spring of the following year. Following the example of Saint Andrew Bogoliubsky, who supported his own fellow ascetic Bishop Theodore to be Metropolitan, Saint Rostislav put forth his own candidate, who turned out to be the much-suffering Clement Smolyatich. The fact that the Great Prince had changed his attitude toward Metropolitan Clement, shows the influence of the Kiev Caves monastery, and in particular of Archimandrite Polycarp. Father Polycarp, who followed the traditions of the Caves (in 1165 he became head of the monastery), was personally very close to Saint Rostislav. Saint Rostislav had the pious custom of inviting the abbot and twelve monks to his own table on the Saturdays and Sundays of Great Lent, and he served them himself. The prince more than once expressed the wish to be tonsured a monk at the monastery. The monks of the Caves, a tremendous spiritual influence in ancient Rus, encouraged the prince to think about the independence of the Church of Russia. Moreover, during those years in Rus, there was suspicion regarding the Orthodoxy of the bishops which came from among the Greeks, because of the notorious "Dispute about the Fasts." Saint Rostislav's desire to obtain the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople for Metropolitan Clement came to naught. The Greeks believed that appointing a Metropolitan to the Kiev cathedra was one of their most important prerogatives. This served not only the ecclesiastical, but also the political interests of the Byzantine Empire. In 1165 a new Greek Metropolitan arrived at Kiev, John IV, and Saint Rostislav accepted him out of humility and churchly obedience. The new Metropolitan, like his predecessor, governed the Russians there for less than a year. The See of Kiev was again left vacant, and the Great Prince was deprived of the fatherly counsel and spiritual wisdom of a Metropolitan. His sole spiritual solace was Archimandrite Polycarp and the holy Elders of the Kiev Caves monastery and the Theodorov monastery at Kiev, which had been founded under his father. Returning from a campaign against Novgorod in the spring of 1167, Saint Rostislav fell ill. When he reached Smolensk, where his son Roman was prince, relatives urged him to remain at Smolensk, but the Great Prince gave orders to take him to Kiev. "If I die along the way," he declared, "put me in my father's monastery of Saint Theodore. If God should heal me, through the prayers of His



All-Pure Mother and Saint Theodosius, I shall take vows at the monastery of the Caves.” God did not fulfil Saint Rostislav’s last wish to end his life as a monk of the holy monastery. The holy prince died on the way to Kiev on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1167. His body, in accord with his last wishes, was brought to the Kiev Theodosiev monastery.



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

**VISITORS**

ON 26<sup>th</sup> January, **Fr Abbadear Elmakary** of the **St John Coptic Church, Bromley**, visited Saint Edward Brotherhood, with two of his parishioners. They visited the church and then were taken to the exhibition room where they were offered hospitality.

ON 8<sup>th</sup> February, **Fr John Somers** arrived from the United States at Brookwood, bringing with him a very generous gift of beeswax candles from **Metropolitan Demetrius of America**. The candles were made at the **Monastery of St John of San Francisco, Cobleskill**, New York. The next day he visited the shrines of Saints Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, Bede of Jarrow and Oswald at Durham Cathedral. On his way back from the north, he visited parishioners in East Anglia, and on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, he concelebrated the Divine Liturgy at Saint Edward’s with **Frs Borislav Popov and Sabbas**. After the Parish Breakfast, he gave a talk on the work of the **Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Educational Initiative** (website: <https://orthodoxlearninggoc.com>) of which, under the hierarchal oversight of **Metropolitan Moses of Toronto**, he is the headmaster. Although this talk was slipped into his schedule very late in the day, about forty of our parishioners arranged to stay over longer to attend it and benefit from his teaching. On the Monday, Fr John was taken to Gatwick by Fr Sabbas and returned to the States, taking with him some water we had collected for him from the River Somer.



## **MEMORIAL TREE PLANTED**

A LIQUIDAMBAR TREE has been planted at the west end of our church. It was purchased from **Landford Trees** near Salisbury, Wiltshire, and was originally ordered to be planted to commemorate the **Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II**, but delivery was delayed on the advice of the nursery because of the series of droughts and then extremely cold spells that we experienced. So it is now there as a thanksgiving memorial of both the late Queen and **Prince Philip**, who on three occasions made donations to our community from his charitable funds.

## **POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE**

*“CAN YOU please answer this troubling question for me? Is it acceptable to have a memorial in Church for a non-Orthodox ruler or monarch during the Liturgy? If not, why not?” - J.U. Poole.*

FROM an Orthodox point of view it is impossible to have a memorial service for someone who is not Orthodox, for the simple reason that if you study the texts of the services, they all presuppose that the deceased is an Orthodox Christian, that they are members of Christ’s household, and that their hopes and aspirations are those of the members of the household. We cannot assume this of anyone who has not fully joined us in worship, showing thereby that they are of one mind and heart with us, without imposing our views upon them. For those who have died outside the Church, whether monarchs or loved ones dear to us, we say prayers for them privately and ask God’s mercy for them.

## **Practical Tip**

ON WEEKDAYS in Great Lent, say the Prayer of Saint Ephraim (see page 7 above) every morning and evening in your family prayers before the icons. In addition to its great spiritual benefit, it is a good opportunity while at home to teach young children how to make prostrations properly. And even if you cannot get to church on a particular day, you will be praying with the Church and Orthodox Christians everywhere, as indeed we always do when we are careful to read the morning and evening prayers published in our prayer books.