

# *The Shepherd*

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## From the Fathers

“PRAYER, fasting, vigil and all the other Christian practices - they do not constitute the aim of our Christian life. Although it is true that they serve as the indispensable means of reaching this end, the true aim of our Christian life consists of the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. As for fasts, and vigils, and prayer, and almsgiving, and every good deed done for Christ’s sake, they are the only means of acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. Mark my words, only good deeds done for Christ’s sake bring us the fruits of the Holy Spirit. All that is not done for Christ’s sake, even though it be good, brings neither reward in the future life nor the grace of God in this life.”

VEN. SERAPHIM OF SAROV, THE WONDERWORKER, + 1833 A.D.

“USUALLY, we pray with Church prayers which we learn from childhood. This is necessary, because they lead us into that prayerful atmosphere by which the Church breathes. In this, one must beware not to slide into an automatic, mechanical reading of prayers without attention and penetration into the sense and meaning of the words of the prayer. To this end, a full reverence and concentration of attention is demanded, so that one actually prays - converses with God. According to the harmonious testimonies of the great ascetics of prayer, in addition to reading the Church prayers, one must add one’s own prayers in one’s own words, praying for one’s own spiritual needs, and for neighbours and enemies. Often, a Christian cannot fully express his feelings and afflictions in the words of the written

prayers. In this case, a living, sincere prayer in one's own words is more appropriate, together with a confession of one's daily sins and an expressed determination to struggle, with God's help, against those daily sins. Such a prayer will come from the depth of the human soul."

SAINT PHILARET THE NEW CONFESSOR, +1985 A.D.



## On Curing the Illness of Pharisaism

METROPOLITAN ATHANASIOS OF LIMASSOL

Introductory note: It may raise a few eyebrows that we are including a piece by a Hierarch within World Orthodoxy, but we do so following the counsel of Saint Gildas the Wise: "A wise man recognises the gleam of truth whoever utters it."

N. B. The piece is presented in a conversational tone.

HAVING promised yesterday, I will say a few words on the topic of Pharisaism.

All these things that take place - everything that we do - our pilgrimages, our candles, our night-vigils, our prayers, our fasts, our gestures of charity - everything that we do in our life - are for what purpose and what is the reason that we do them? The answer to this question is very important, because correctness about our spiritual life is dependent on it.

Let me give you an example: I ask children at our summer camps: "What is God's greatest commandment? What is God's most important commandment, my children?" And all the children - all of them - quote various commandments: do not steal..., do not lie..., do not be unjust to your fellow-man..., respect your parents..., love your neighbour... However, none of the children suspect that not a single one of these is God's first commandment. I suspect that the same is likely true among most grown-ups as well.

God's first and only commandment - all others are in reality the result of this first one - is to love God with all of your heart.

Christ Himself said that the first commandment is: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment (Mk12:30).

And a second commandment, similar to the first - which springs from within the first commandment - is the one that says love thy neighbour. Everything else is a result of these. If you love your neighbour, you will not rob him, you will not lie to him, you will not be unjust with him, you will not take his things, you will not tamper with his wife, you will not interfere with his home, you will not censure him... That is what we mean by "it springs from the first commandment." The love thy neighbour is likewise a result of the first commandment. If you truly love God, it is impossible to not love your neighbour. Therefore, the first and only commandment by God is to love God Himself with all our heart. Subsequently, whatever we do in church, has that precise purpose. And that is why we go to pilgrimages, why we fast, why we pray, why we go to confession, why we light candles, why we read the lives of saints, ... It is our way of loving Christ.

Now, where is our mistake? The mistake is that, unfortunately, we say that we do all these things in order to just become good people... and that is where the big hoax lies. It is the step that we all stumble over. Because, if the purpose of the Church was just to make us better people, then there wouldn't be any need for a personal relationship with Christ, nor would there be any reason for Christ to have come to the world. Why do you think we aren't able to understand the saints? Or, to ask it in a simpler manner, why is it that we cannot understand those who love God?

We often ask whether it is necessary to do certain deeds in order to be saved, to be near to God. Is it necessary, let's say, to depart to the mountains or the desert (as some saints did)? Of course not. If we could understand that our relationship with God is not only for the sake of salvation, but is a relationship of love, only then will we understand the saints and why they did the things they did (much of which cannot be interpreted

rationally). This is because love transcends logic. Even secular love-the way that one person loves another person- for example when one wants to get married, he loves the young lady that he will wed, and the same applies to the young lady- then they do things that seem totally irrational. If, for example, you were to ask her or him who is the most beautiful or handsome one in the world, they will probably say it is their beloved. Naturally, they are seeing the other through their own eyes... Our eyes see something entirely different... The prospective bride will describe her man with the finest words. She sees no flaws in him, no faults... she can't see anything bad about him, because love transcends all these things. And, of course, the same holds true for the groom as well.

Love cannot be forced into the moulds of logic. Love is above logic. That is how God's love is. God's love surpasses human logic. That is why we can't judge with logical criteria those people who love God. That is why the saints reacted with a logic of their own; they had a different kind of logic, and not the logic of humans; because their logic was the "logic" of love. So, the Church does not teach us just to become good people, not in the least. It is only natural, that we have to become good people, because if we don't, then what have we succeeded in doing? Our Church teaches us to love Christ, to love the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Inside the Church, a relationship develops. It is a personal relationship between man and Christ; not with the teaching of Christ and not with the Gospel. The Gospel is something that helps us to reach the point of loving Christ. When we reach that point of truly loving Christ, the Gospel "will no longer be needed." Nothing will be needed... all these things will cease... only man's relationship with God will remain. That is the difference between the Church and religion.

Religion teaches you to do your duties, the way the idolaters did. An example: let's say that we went to our pilgrimage sites, paid our respects, left some money in the charity box, left some lit candles, some oil, or even our entreaties, our names, our offering-bread [prosphoras?], everything. All these things are reli-

gious duties, but our heart has not changed in the least. The hour of duty ends, and we are the same as we were before: we are ready to attack the other, ready to protest about the other, ready to be sour again, the way we were before.... Our heart has not changed. And so, we do not acquire that relationship with Christ, because we simply confine ourselves to duties - to religious duties.

And you must know that such people - you know, “religious” people - can become the most dangerous kind in the Church. May God protect us from them! Once, when I was officiating in church and we were citing the words *Lord, save the pious...*; a Holy Mountain monk jokingly remarked: “Lord, save us from the pious.” In other words, God save you from those “religious” types, because their behaviour often implies a warped personality, which has never had a personal relationship with God. These types merely perform their duties towards Him, but without any serious relationship involved and that is why God says nothing about this type of person. And I too, must confess, that -from my own experience—I have never seen worse enemies of the Church than this type of “religious people.”

Whenever the children of religious people, or of priests and theologians - or even of those who in church act like theologians and with self-importance - tried to become monks or priests, they [the parents] became even worse than demons. They would become exasperated with everyone. I remember parents who would bring their children to our homilies, and when their child progressed spiritually, they became the worst among all and found faults with all others. And I would say to them: “But you were the ones who brought the child to the homily; I didn’t bring him.” Another time, I told a father whose daughter I could tell had a zeal for the Church: “Make sure you don’t bring her again to any homily. Don’t bring her to talk with me, because your daughter will become a nun and afterwards you will say that I was to blame.” He replied: “Oh no, father, far be it! We adore you!” And his daughter did in fact become a nun. It has been seven years now, and he still isn’t talking to me.

People who wouldn’t miss a single homily, all those who were always the first to show up at homilies, night-vigils, Bible

studies... they would also bring their children along; however, when the time came for the children to exercise their freedom - to decide by themselves which path to choose - then those people would move to the extreme opposite camp, thus proving that Christ had never spoken to their hearts. They were merely "religious people." That is why religious people are the toughest kind in the Church. Because, you know what? Sometimes, people like these will never be cured, because they only think they are close to God.

Sinners, on the other hand, the "losers," so to speak - at least they are aware of their sinful nature. That is why Christ said that publicans and prostitutes will go to the Kingdom of God, whereas of the Pharisees He had said: *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me* (Mt 15:8). They had merely adhered to the observance of religious formalities.

Therefore, we should all pay close attention and understand that the Church is a hospital that cures us and helps us to love Christ, and our love for Christ is a flame that ignites inside our heart so that we can examine ourselves, to see if we are within God's love. If we discern all those forms of malice and selfishness and wickedness inside us, then we should be concerned, because it is not possible for Christ to be in our heart when we are full of "vinegar" inside. How can you be praying and at the same time be full of bile towards another person? How is it possible to read the Gospel and not accept your brother? How is it possible to be part of the Church for so many years - either as a monk or a priest or whatever - and yet, where is the alpha and omega of our faith, which is love? Where is that patience towards your brother? By not embracing true love, it means that you have accomplished absolutely nothing.

We saw how Christ reached the point of telling those virgins that He would have nothing to do with them. He threw them out of the wedding hall even though they had all the virtues; what they didn't have was love. It is as if He was telling them that "you may have external virtues, you may have remained virgins, you may have done a thousand things, but you didn't achieve



the essence of that which is the most important.” What’s the use, whether I consume olive oil today, or I don’t? I may [fast and] not eat olive oil, for example, but I devour my brother from morning to night... They used to say on the Holy Mountain, “Don’t ask if I eat fish; as long as one doesn’t eat the fisherman, he can eat fish;” or, “as long as you don’t eat the oil-bearer, you can have a drop of olive oil to eat.” To “devour” someone with a sharp tongue is far worse than consuming a spoonful of olive oil. And yet, we focus on things like that: we eat oil, we don’t eat oil; we eat fish, we don’t eat fish...

You can see how ridiculous these things are and how the demons make fun of us, along with all those who are outside the Church. And when such non-Orthodox minded folks approach us, instead of seeing the people of our Church transformed into Jesus Christ-into sweet-natured people and mature people, well balanced, fulfilled people, full of harmony inside them - they instead observe us driven by all of our passions and the sourness that goes with them; and they will inevitably say: “What? And become like one of them? I’d rather not!”

You, who are a churchgoer, tell me how the Church has benefited you. You have visited several pilgrimage sites, you saw the fathers, you saw the holy relics, you saw the Holy Mountain, the Holy Mother at Tinos Island. What was the end benefit of all these experiences? Was your heart transformed? Did you become humbler people? Did you become sweet-natured? Did you become meeker people in your homes, your families, your monastery? Or at your place of work? That is what truly counts. If we did not achieve those things, let us at least become humbler, with true repentance. And, if we did not manage that either, then we are worthy of many tears - we are truly pitiful...

When asked how many years he had lived on the Holy Mountain, Elder Paisios used to say: “I came here the same year as my neighbour’s mule.” (His neighbour, old Zitos, had a mule - and you know how every cell on Mount Athos has an animal, a mule, for carrying their things. That animal has a long life span; you don’t buy a mule every day - they are too expensive). “Well, the year that I came here, to the Holy Mountain, my neighbour



purchased his mule in the same year. We have the same number of years on the Holy Mountain, and yet that poor beast remained a mule, but then so did I. I didn't change at all."

So, we quite often say "I've been here for forty years;" and we, priests and monks, tend to say these words: "I have been in the monastery for forty years." But what we do not realise is that all these years are not in our favour. God will say to us, "Forty years, and you still haven't managed to become something? You are still angry after forty years, you still censure, you still contradict, you still resist, you still are not submissive to your Elder? You've had forty years, and you still have not learnt the first thing about monastic life and about Christian life. What am I supposed to do with your years? What am I to do with you, if you have spent fifty years with frequent confessions and you cannot respond to another person with a kind word? What use are all these things to Me?"

All of these facts weigh against us. And I am saying all these things first about myself, because they apply to me first... And because I know these things from myself, that is why I am telling you about them (and why you must also think I am saying them to each one of you). People think that I'm referring to them, but it is not so. It is first about me that I mentioned these things... about me first... We need to consider these things to at least humble ourselves; let's keep our mouth shut, as all those ego-tistically-driven behaviours ridicule us and make us look foolish in the presence of the Lord.

If we humble ourselves and cease to have grand ideas about ourselves, maybe then we can begin to correct ourselves, gradually, through true repentance, which is born out of true humility. He who does not strive to justify his actions truly repents. He who keeps justifying himself will never repent; and that person who always justifies himself-either externally or internally-will never learn the meaning of repentance. That is why we should always examine ourselves. As the Apostle says, let us test ourselves, to see if there is the love of God inside us, if we are living within the realm of repentance, so that God can cure our existence, this kind of association with the Church can heal us, and

thus we can become people who have been cured of their passions and their sins.

Many ask how we can reach this point. How do we get there? Well, we do it by leaving ourselves in the hands of the Good Physician, God; when we leave ourselves trustingly in His hands; because when we are in various circumstances, in difficulties, God knows what is best for each one of us and will lead us along those paths that will slowly, over the years, perfect us. All we need to do is give ourselves to God with trust, the way we give our trust to a doctor, or the captain of a ship. We show trust. He leads us, and we do not worry about the destination and the arrival time; we know that the one steering the ship is mindful, vigilant, and he knows the way and is careful.

Another important element that I would like to discuss a little further with you (also because some of you have asked me to do so) is on the issue of time.

Did you notice during these days that we have been spending on this ship, how we had no external distractions? We had nothing to draw our attention elsewhere, like we have at home, for example our televisions [We might now add internet, mobile phones, chat-rooms, etc. - Ed.]. Did you see how much time we had available? We even conversed among ourselves. You who are married had time to talk to each other. The children played together, they talked amongst themselves, and we had lots of time to ourselves and we communicated with each other, and that is the most important element of all: that we could communicate. The most tragic thing is at home, when everyone is sitting in front of the television and they don't talk to each other... time slips away and people do not communicate with each other. And even worse than this are the programmes we see on television! They are the source of the worst corruption for us, for our children and for our souls.

One day, when we had disembarked and were walking about, I noticed in one of those refreshment cafes, that a television was on; and, even though nobody was paying attention to it, the TV was still on. So I stood there for a moment, to see what it was

showing: I guess it was something like some people who were chasing after some other people all the time, and there was a constant chase, there were guns, bullets, cars, explosions, jumping from one house to another, etc. But these are things that your children, your young children, sit and watch; so much violence... and I'm not even discussing the obscenities that can be heard, which have destroyed even elderly folks. I hear about such things during confession. Elderly people, very old people, who are otherwise very respectable, have been ruined by television, from all that vulgarity that they are exposed to every day. I'm not referring to that specific damage right now; I am referring to all the other things - all the violence that the television projects. Our children become over-familiarised with violence and will naturally become unruly and disobedient; they will do things that are entirely foreign to their human nature!

Have you any idea what an ugly sight it is, when you see young children mimicking older people? They mimic adults, and they destroy their innocent childishness. Sometimes, when I am invited to an event, they bring along tiny toddlers and tell them to dance. And you see these little girls or boys, ten or twelve years old, full of innocence, making dance moves that they have seen older men and women do, entirely disgraceful, with another morality altogether. You can actually see how those children are being destroyed, with their emulations of the adults that they see on television. And also doing all sorts of things and entertaining themselves with choices that are catastrophic. And I am not saying this from the spiritual aspect only, but from every aspect—psychological, social and family.

Keep your children as far away as possible from such things. Help your children to not be dependent on television, because they will be filled with obscene images, and so will you. If you don't allow your children to watch obscene movies, but you the adult does, then what's the use? And what about those silly warnings that they put on screen - that the movie is not suitable under 17 or 13 or... Does that mean that if they turn 13 this sight becomes a suitable one? Of course those warnings only arouse the youngsters' curiosity, and every one of them will inevitably

watch the film. They think to themselves that if this movie is forbidden for those younger than 13, it must have something that is deserving of every curiosity...

In my opinion, the destruction that is inflicted on people's inner world is incalculable. All positive and good images that one absorbs are extremely beneficial in one's spiritual life. The same applies in reverse; the bad images that a person observes create damage that is literally extreme, and sometimes we cannot tell if it can be cured.

If someone studied this phenomenon, he would see just how great a catastrophe television can wreak on a person's psyche, and especially in younger people. But that is only the beginning; one evil will bring on another. It will be a whole chain of evils, because it destroys communication, it destroys time, it destroys the innocence of a person's soul, and then man becomes exhausted; and being exhausted, he has no desire to do anything, especially anything spiritual. His soul gets filled with things that weary him, and then he wonders why he is tired - he cannot understand why... Try eliminating television and the like (or at least minimise these evils), and you will see how much more relaxed you will become and how much free time you will have at your disposal.

Naturally, these things are not unrelated to our spiritual life, because a person's spiritual life is a product of all the activities that a person does. By this, I don't mean to say stop watching television altogether. I am not against it *per se*; it's just that things like these make our life more difficult instead of making it easier, and they destroy it, the way it was destroyed by technological "progress" which has - otherwise - facilitated our lives. You catch a plane, and you are there. You get on a ship, and you get there quickly... or a thousand other conveniences. In the long run, such conveniences may have facilitated our lives, but they also trapped us and made us lose ourselves; they made us lose the beauty of our life and we eventually destroyed the world we live in, and now we want even more sciences and discoveries, to see if we can salvage what is left of it...

All these things that constitute the tragedy and by-product of our Fall make it abundantly clear just how impossible it is to humanly tackle this problem; and yet, if one turns to God, then we will see that which Christ has said that: *With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible* (Mt 19:26). We can see around us that miracle of God, which, even in our day, with all the information and all these provocations taking place around us, and the accessibility to sin, still, there are people who love God and from among the thorns, we see roses spring forth.

Roses blossom from among the thorns, and the immense miracle of man's salvation becomes reality, regardless of our own human weaknesses, our wretched state, our problems, the difficulties with our self, our church, our family, our society and the other elements that unfortunately bombard every person. That is why, to return from all these things, we need to return where we started from, when we said that the solution and the answer to all problems is for man to turn towards loving God, and that when man loves God, then God will cure him; God will resurrect him - even if that person is dead and decomposing - God will restore him, provided man discards from inside him all that is useless and puts in his heart a love for God, and builds his life around that love for God. And atop that love for God, to build his life, his marriage, his family, his path, his studies, his course in life. If man does that, then he will truly come to enjoy life and his life will become a paradise, because paradise is nothing more than God's love, whereas hell is nothing more than the absence of God's love.

So, it is my wish, as a conclusion to this homily, that the love of God will always accompany all of you, and that we should not forget that everything we do, we must do for that reason, and not just to be people who behave religiously. We must become God-loving people, so that our lives can be transformed correctly and we ourselves be transformed into Jesus Christ our Lord. God be with you.

Transcript of a homily by Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol, Cyprus (as transcribed by the Orthodox Center for Dogmatic Enquiries – translated by the staff of "Orthodox Heritage," edited for length, by them and a little also by Saint Edward Brotherhood).

# THE COMING MONTH

AUGUST is in many ways the opposite of July for us. In July there were no Great Feasts and no additional fasts, but in August we have the last two Great Feasts of the Church Year, the **Transfiguration of our Saviour** (6<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup>) and the **Dormition of His All-holy Mother** (15<sup>th</sup> / 28<sup>th</sup>) and one of the strictest fasts in the year, that which prepares us for the feast of the Dormition and encompasses that of the Transfiguration. This change of pace is of course for our benefit. If nothing else it keeps us spiritually on our toes.

On the feast of the Transfiguration Saint Anastasius of Sinai exhorts us: “Jesus goes before us to show us the way, both up the mountain and into heaven, and - I speak boldly - it is for us now to follow Him with all speed, yearning for the heavenly vision that will give us a share in his radiance, renew our spiritual nature and transform us into His own likeness, making us for ever sharers in His Godhead and raising us to heights as yet undreamed of. Let us run with confidence and joy to enter into the cloud like Moses and Elias, or like James and John. Let us be caught up like Peter to behold the divine vision and to be transfigured by that glorious transfiguration. Let us retire from the world, stand aloof from the earth, rise above the body, detach ourselves from creatures and turn to the Creator, to Whom Peter in ecstasy exclaimed: ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here.’” The keeping of the fast will help us to do this.

The present Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, in speaking on the Dormition of the All-holy Theotokos, the Panagia, gave us this beautiful teaching, “Christ is the Fountain of Mercy, and our Panagia also because She received the Fountain of Mercy, and so we are called to also become a fountain of mercy, with the intercession of our Most Blessed Theotokos to become like God, to be united with God, and become a fountain of mercy and compassion to all mankind just as He is. Our Lord gave us a command which we neglect or we don’t delve deeply into, but we remain in fasting, prayers and other virtues and we

neglect this one candle of our Lord, which gives life to all the other virtues and makes us like God – ‘become merciful as your Father in Heaven is Merciful.’ We are grateful to the Theotokos always but especially today, and exactly because of this Truth that we don’t live by and we neglect, and that’s why we are not real Christians. This is the deification of Christians...in other words, to be like God and to unite with God and become fountains of mercy and compassion to all of mankind, just as He is.”


Among the commemorations in August, we have:

The **Seven Holy Maccabee Martyrs, their mother Solomone and their teacher, Eleazar** (1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup>). The seven, Abimus, Antony, Gurias, Eleazar, Eusebonus, Achimus and Marcellus, suffered in the year 166 before Christ under the impious Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This foolish ruler loved pagan and Hellenistic customs, and held Jewish customs in contempt. He did everything possible to turn people from the Law of Moses and from their covenant with God. He desecrated the Temple of the Lord, placed a statue of the pagan god Zeus there, and forced the Jews to worship it. Many people abandoned the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but there were also those who continued to believe that the Saviour would come. A ninety-year-old elder, the scribe and teacher Eleazar, was brought to trial for his faithfulness to the Mosaic Law. When the tyrannical king brought Eleazar to trial and compelled him to eat pork if he desired to save his life, Eleazar adamantly rejected it. Then some of Eleazar friends handed him a piece of other meat, not swine's flesh, begging him to eat that in the presence of the king and the people in order to safeguard both his life and his conscience. The elder refused this offer saying to his friends: “Hypocrisy is not becoming to me an old man to the scandal of many young people.” He suffered tortures and died at Jerusalem. The elder Eleazar was slain in the body but he saved his soul. The disciples of Saint Eleazar, the seven Maccabee brothers and their mother Solomone, also displayed great courage. They were brought to trial in Antioch by the king. They fearlessly acknowledged themselves as followers of the True God, and refused to eat pork, which was forbidden by the Law. The eldest brother acted as spokesman for the rest, saying



that they preferred to die rather than break the Law. He was subjected to fierce tortures in the sight of his brothers and their mother. His tongue was cut out, he was scalped, and his hands and feet were cut off. Then a cauldron and a large frying pan were heated, and the first brother was thrown into the frying pan, and he died. The next five brothers were tortured one after the other. The seventh and youngest brother was the last one left alive. Antiochus advised Solomone to persuade the boy to obey him, so that her last son at least would be spared. Instead, the brave mother told him to imitate the courage of his brothers. The child upbraided the king and was tortured even more cruelly than his brothers had been. After all her seven children had died, Saint Solomone stood over their bodies, raised up her hands in prayer to God and died. The martyric death of the Maccabee brothers inspired Judas Maccabeus, and he led a revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. With God's help, he gained the victory, and then purified the Temple at Jerusalem. He also threw down the altars which the pagans had set up in the streets.

**The Holy King and Martyr Oswald of Northumbria** (5<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup>) was born around A.D. 605, the second of the seven sons of the Anglo-Saxon king Aethelfrith, who was the first ruler to unite the provinces of Bernicia and Deira into the kingdom of Northumbria. King Edwin of Deira refused to accept the Bernician control of both provinces, so he attempted a coup while Aethelfrith was away in the north. Edwin was defeated and driven into exile. However when Aethelfrith was killed later, Edwin became King of Northumbria. Oswald's mother Acha (Edwin's sister) fled to Ireland with her children. It is believed that during his seventeen years of exile, Saint Oswald received Christian baptism at Iona and also learned the Gaelic language. Edwin was killed in A.D. 633 while fighting King Penda of Mercia and King Caedwallon of Gwynedd. Eanfrith, Oswald's older brother, returned to paganism and was killed in battle against Caedwallon. Now Oswald had to lead the struggle against the Britons. In A.D. 634 Oswald assembled an army and prepared to meet the forces of Penda and Caedwalla at Heaven-field near the Roman Wall seven miles north of Hexham. On



the eve of the battle, Saint Oswald set up a great wooden cross on the field. With his own hands, the king steadied the cross while his men filled in the hole which had been dug to receive it. Although only a few of his men were Christians, Oswald ordered the army to kneel and pray to the true and living God to grant them victory. "Let us now kneel down and pray to the omnipotent and only true God, that He will mercifully defend us from our proud enemy," he told them, "for He knows that we fight in a just war in defence of our lives and our country." A modern replica of this cross now stands on the site, near the church of Saint Oswald. The night before the battle, King Oswald had a vision of Saint Columba of Iona, who stretched his cloak over the sleeping soldiers and promised that the Saxon army would defeat Caedwallon. Following the battle, Oswald established his supremacy in Northumbria and his right to the title of Bretwalda (High King). He was godfather of King Cynegils of Wessex at his baptism, and married his daughter in 635. By A.D. 637, Oswald's authority was recognised by almost everyone. For the next five years Britain was blessed with a rare period of stability. While governing his earthly realm, Saint Oswald also laboured to attain a heavenly crown and to bring his people into the Kingdom of God. Turning to the Celtic monks of Iona, rather than the Roman clergy at Canterbury, Oswald invited missionaries to proclaim the Gospel to his subjects. The first bishop sent to lead the mission proved unsuitable, for he alienated many people by his harshness. The bishop was recalled, and an ideal candidate was found to replace him. Saint Aidan was consecrated bishop and sent to Northumbria to take charge of the mission. King Oswald gave him the island of Lindisfarne near the royal residence of Bamburgh for his episcopal see. Saint Aidan also founded the famous monastery on Lindisfarne. Since Bishop Aidan was not yet fluent in the Anglo-Saxon tongue, Saint Oswald would accompany him on his missionary journeys. The king translated the bishop's words and explained the word of God to his subjects, playing an active role in the evangelisation of his kingdom. People flocked to receive baptism, drawn both by Aidan's preaching and King Oswald's example of godliness and virtue. Saint Oswald was a devout and sincere Christian

who was often seen sitting with his hands resting palms upwards on his knees in a gesture of prayer. He granted land and money for the establishment of monasteries, and he was famous for his generosity to the poor. Once, after attending the services of Easter, King Oswald sat down to a meal with Bishop Aidan. Just as the bishop was about to bless the food, a servant came in and informed the king that a great number of needy folk were outside begging for alms. The king ordered that his own food be served to the poor on silver platters, and that the silver serving dishes be broken up and distributed to them. Aidan, deeply moved by Saint Oswald's charity, took him by the right hand and said, "May this hand never perish." According to tradition, Saint Oswald's hand remained incorrupt for centuries after his death. Saint Bede says that the hand was kept in the church of Saint Peter at Bamburgh, where it was venerated by all. The present location of the hand, if it still survives, is not known. Saint Oswald was killed in battle against the superior forces of King Penda on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 642, at a place called Maserfield. He was only thirty-eight years old. Before his death, Saint Oswald prayed for the souls of his soldiers. This has become almost proverbial: "O God, be merciful to their souls," said Oswald when he fell." Some identify the battle site with Oswestry (Oswald's tree, or cross) in Shropshire, but this seems an unlikely place for a battle between Mercians and Northumbrians. Others believe that Lichfield is the probable site. Lichfield means "field of the body," and was founded by Oswald's brother Oswy. The city was an archbishopric for seventeen years under Offa, who had a particular veneration for Saint Oswald. Following the Battle of Maserfield, Saint Oswald's body was dismembered, and his head and arms were displayed on poles. Many miraculous healings took place at the site of the battle. This is not surprising, for during his lifetime Saint Oswald always helped the sick and the needy. Pilgrims took earth from the place where Saint Oswald fell, and many sick people were healed by mixing some of the dust with water and drinking it. A year after his death, Saint Oswald's arms were brought to Bamburgh by Oswy, and his head was brought to Lindisfarne. There the grief-stricken Bishop Aidan interred them in the

monastery church.

The Commemoration of the **Great Miracle of Saint Spyridon** in 1716 (11<sup>th</sup> / 24<sup>th</sup>): In 1716 the Turks had the island of Kerkyra (Corfu) under a tight siege. They had 50,000 troops and a good number of ships surrounding the island, cutting its lifeline from land and sea. The Turkish armies had concentrated at the far walls of the city. Andrea Pisani, a general of the forces of the Venetian Republic, was anxiously anticipating the oncoming enemy attack (since Kerkyra and the nearby islands had been occupied by the Venetians since 1386). At daybreak on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1716, Saint Spyridon, the patron saint of the island, appeared in front of the enemy lines holding a glistening sword in his right hand. His austere and grandiose appearance horrified the aggressors who began to retreat. The Hagarenes, panic-stricken by the most awesome presence and fearless attack of the Saint, abandoned weapons, machinery and animals, running for their lives. This great miracle became known throughout the island. The Turks had left behind 120 cannons, a large number of weapons, ammunition, animals and food. After this powerful, surprising and most obvious miracle, the Venetian ruler Andrea Pisani, who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, wanted to erect a Latin altar inside the Orthodox Church of Saint Spyridon - the Latin Cardinal of the island was also forever pushing for this. However, Saint Spyridon appeared to Pisani in a dream saying: "Why are you bothering me? The altar of your faith is unacceptable in my church!" Naturally, Pisani reported this to the Latin Cardinal who answered that it was nothing but an evil fantasy of the devil who wanted to nullify the noble deed. After this, Pisani was much encouraged, so he ordered the necessary materials to commence construction of the altar. The materials were piled up outside of the church of Saint Spyridon. When the Orthodox priests of the church and the Greek leaders of the island realised what was going on, they were greatly grieved. They asked to meet with Pisani to beg him to put a stop to this. Pisani's response was quite disheartening. He said quite bluntly, "As a ruler I will do whatever I please!" At that moment, the Orthodox community of the island turned to their Saint, beseeching him to put a stop to this abomination. That same night, Saint

Spyridon appeared to Pisani as a monk and said, "I told you not to bother me. If you dare to go through with your decision, you will surely regret it, but by then it will be too late." The next morning, Pisani reported all this to the Latin Cardinal who now accused him of being not only faithless but also of being "yellow." Again, after this, the ruler mustered up enough courage to order the construction of the altar. The Latins of the island were celebrating their triumph while the Orthodox were deeply grieved. Their grief could not be comforted and with tears they begged for the Saint's intervention to save them from the Latin abomination. The Saint heard their prayers and intervened powerfully. That evening, a terrible storm broke out, unleashing a barrage of thunderbolts on the Old Fort, Pisani's base and his ammunition barracks. The entire fort ended up in a holocaust. 900 Latin soldiers and civilians were instantly killed from the explosion, but not a single Orthodox was harmed (as they were not allowed inside the fort after dark). Pisani was found dead with his neck wedged between two wooden beams. The body of the Latin Cardinal was found thrown a great distance from the fort. But the most incredible fact was that the same night and at the same hour, another thunderbolt struck in Venice, targeting the compound of Pisani, burning his portrait that hung on the wall. Strangely enough, nothing else was damaged.



## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

ACTUALLY, this query arose in conversation at a parish breakfast with a parishioner; they wanted to know if all the free-will offerings put in the alms box at the back of the church went to Saint Edward Brotherhood. The short answer is No. It is used in various ways. The biggest single portion goes to paying the travel costs of the clergy who do not live in the Brotherhood. Depending on the amount collected this accounts for about 50% of the whole. Some is spent on church requisites, olive oil for the lamps, charcoal for the censer, communion wine, cleaning materials, dry-cleaning various hangings, etc., although of course

some of you do help provide some of these things. Some is the price of books and prayer-ropes and other artefacts on sale (We hope people deposit the right amount each time!). Some goes towards the heating and lighting of the church. Some is used for the costs of providing for the parish breakfasts in the mortuary: heating, lighting, water, toilet paper, and the like. And of course it is impossible to calculate these things exactly because they vary from week to week, as does the amount in the alms-box! But the rest, if any, is used by the Brotherhood itself and supplements the monies we earn by book-binding, candle and incense-making, and publishing books and even this magazine. We are extremely grateful for it, and hope our Saviour bless all those who give in this way, both for doing so and for doing so anonymously, not looking for recognition.



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

**BAPTISM AT SAINT EDWARD'S**

ON the feast of the holy Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, 29<sup>th</sup> June / 12<sup>th</sup> July, before the Hours and the Divine Liturgy, **Ann Harvey** was baptised and chrismated, and she received her first Communion at the Liturgy. The celebrant was **Priestmonk Sabbas** and her godmother is **Ekaterina Spiroglou**. During the following eight days Ann attended the divine services nearly every day and received the Holy Mysteries at the Liturgies and on Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> July her baptismal robe was removed. Pray that she remain steadfast in the Faith until the end of this mortal course, and that Ekaterina guide her aright.

## ***NEW CATECHUMEN***

ON Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> July, the feast of the Holy New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke, **Theo Devenish** made his vows as a catechumen and was received by **Priestmonk Sabbas**. Theo, a former Pentecostalist Protestant, was given the new name **Moses**, after our **Venerable Father Moses the Ethiopian** (feast day 28<sup>th</sup> August / 10<sup>th</sup> September). Please pray for him that he in time receive the grace of Holy Baptism.

## ***BURIAL IN OUR CEMETERY***

ON Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup> July, **Galina Aleseeva** was laid to rest in our cemetery. The funeral and interment were conducted by **Archpriest Joseph Skinner** of the **Sourozh Diocese** of the Moscow Patriarchate. Pray that Galina find rest with the Saints and that her loved ones may be comforted in their bereavement.

## ***TWO AGMS***

ON the Sunday of All Saints, 17<sup>th</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup> June, immediately after the Divine Liturgy, the Annual General Meeting of the **King Edward Orthodox Trust Co Ltd**, the registered charity which administers our property, was held in the exhibition room of the Old Mortuary building. Two trustees, **Simon Teague** and **Irina Aldersley**, sent apologies for absence. This year as the various reports had been sent round beforehand, the main business was conducted quite quickly. There was some discussion about our hope of buying a house in which we can put up people who live far away and yet wish to attend church at Saint Edward's, and it was resolved to raise the grave reservation fees to £5,500 for a single depth grave and £7,000 for a double depth grave for a husband and wife together.

And on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> July, the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** held their AGM in the main hall of the Old Mortuary building. **Kim Lowe**, the chairman, and **Jon Leech**, the treasurer, presented the minutes and the treasurer's reports in turn. This year there was no speaker to give a talk and so again the meeting was



conducted quite quickly. Afterwards the participants were treated to refreshments and able to chat together.

## **GIFTS TO THE CHURCH**

AN icon and sacred relic, in a beautiful reliquary, of the newly glorified **Venerable Hieronymus of Parnithi** was given our church by the sisters of the Convent of the **Holy Virgin Martyr Paraskeve in Acharnai, Attika**, on the southeastern foothills of Mount Parnes, which he was instrumental in founding, and where his glorification was celebrated by our hierarchs on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> May / 8<sup>th</sup> June this year. We were also sent numerous icon prints of the saint and the full service to him in Greek, which we are hoping one of our volunteers will be able to translate. These things and various gifts from the **Convent of the Holy Angels at Afidnai**, were kindly brought us by **Tanya James**, who had been on pilgrimage there.

**Alexandra Galbeaza** (aka Oliver) has donated to our church a hand-painted icon of **Saint Callinicus of Cernica**, a great luminary in the Church of Romania.

**Alla Sion** also made a recent pilgrimage to the **Holy Angels' Convent** with her daughter **Teodora**, and from **Abbess Taxiarchia** and her sisters brought back a relic of the **Ever-Memorable Abbess Kypriane**, the first abbess there, and a portrait photograph of her. From **Abbess Justina** of the **Saint Paraskeve Convent** she also brought back an icon of **Saint Hieronymus of Parnithi**, and from Sister Filareta pieces of blessed apple from the feast of **Saint Eirene Chrysovalantou**. We are overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of our sisters in the Faith in Greece.

## **BABY NAMED**

ON Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> July, **Father Sabbas** named the newborn daughter of **Anthony and Procla Bell** of **Ash, Aldershot**, on her eighth day. The baby was named **Edith** after our **Venerable Mother Edith of Wilton**, the half-sister of our Saint Edward.

## VISITORS

ON Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> June, **Kim Lowe** brought six members of the **Surrey Historic Environment Planners** to see the church. Afterwards they left a comment, “A truly wonderful building of great significance in an important historic site.”

**Chobham and Horsell Commons Trefil Group** visited the church on Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> June.

On Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, **Archimandrite Michael** (Moscow Patriarchate) from Frankfurt, Germany, visited the church.

On 5<sup>th</sup> July and again on the 12<sup>th</sup>, **Avril Kirby**, the Manager of the Brookwood Cemetery, brought first **Tristan** and then **Sophie** to see the church. The visitors were in the cemetery in order to gain work experience.

**David Cooper** of the **Kingston Ramblers** brought a small group of walkers to visit the Brotherhood on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> July.

On Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> July, **Rachel Boxer**, Primary RE Consultant (Guildford Diocese) and Adviser to Surrey Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, brought a group of fourteen teaching assistants from a total of **eight Anglican Dioceses** (Durham, Gloucester, Lichfield, Chichester, Oxford, Chelmsford, Southwark and Guildford) to visit Saint Edward's. They spent about two hours in the church, and asked many informed and serious questions about our Faith and worship. Subsequently Rachel sent us a message of thanks and in it commented, “We so loved being in your beautiful church and hearing such interesting stories about this sacred space and about your community. We were so sad to have to steal ourselves away before tea, but next time we come, we will ensure we have a little longer”!

On 27<sup>th</sup> July, **Protodeacon Edward (Kurt) Jordan** and his wife **Diaconissa Victoria** from the Canadian Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church of America visited us and prayed at the Shrine of Saint Edward.



“My dog is better than I am, for he has love and does not judge.”

ABBA XANTHIAS

# Practical Tip

MAKE absolutely sure that you do not become a Liturgy-only Orthodox, except perhaps if you are very elderly and infirm, or have to live far from a church and can do nothing else. In this instance we can learn a salutary lesson from the Roman Catholics. In the early nineteen-sixties, although they held to an erroneous belief system they did have a full round of liturgical services. Gradually this was whittled away so that they were left more or less with only the Mass, and their churches gradually emptied, and in this country probably would be empty were it not for the recent immigrants. But much the same thing will happen to Orthodox who limit their church attendance only to the Liturgy. After all, that service's primary concern is to impart the Holy Mysteries to the faithful. There is relatively little teaching in it; it is more concerned with our preparation to receive the Gifts. Vespers and Matins are the services with the bulk of teaching in them. Without the foundation of that teaching our faith becomes shallow and eventually meaningless, and our observance, such as it is, becomes nothing more than rote and humdrum. We slowly die spiritually.



SOME monks who are called Euchites went to Enaton to see Abba Lucius. The Elder asked them, "What is your manual work?" They said, "We do not touch manual work but, as the Apostle says, we pray without ceasing." The Elder asked them if they did not eat and they replied they did. So he said to them, "When you are eating, who prays for you then?" Again he asked them if they did not sleep and they replied they did. And he said to them, "When you are asleep, who prays for you then?" They could not find any answer to give him. He said to them, "Forgive me, but you do not act as you speak. I will show you how, while doing my manual work, I pray without interruption. I sit down with God, soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes, and I say 'God, have mercy on me, according to your great goodness and according to the multitude of Thy mercies, save me from my sins.'" He asked them if this were not prayer and they replied it was. Then he said to them, "So when I have spent the whole day working and praying, making thirteen pieces of money more or less, I put two pieces of money outside the door and I pay for my food with the rest of the money. He who takes the two pieces of money prays for me when I am eating and when I am sleeping; so, by the grace of God, I fulfil the precept to pray without ceasing."

FROM THE DESERT FATHERS