

# *The Shepherd*

*An Orthodox Christian  
Pastoral Magazine*

---

VOLUME XLIII

NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER 2022

---





## FROM THE FATHERS

“WHEN you sit down to eat, pray. When you eat bread, do so thanking Him for being so generous to you. If you drink wine, be mindful of Him Who has given it to you for your pleasure and as a relief in sickness. When you dress, thank Him for His kindness in providing you with clothes. When you look at the sky and the beauty of the stars, throw yourself at God’s feet and adore Him Who in His wisdom has arranged things in this way. Similarly, when the sun goes down and when it rises, when you are asleep or awake, give thanks to God, Who created and arranged all things for your benefit, to have you know their love and praise of their Creator.”

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT, + 379 A.D.

“HE WHO LOVES God yearns to be with Him always and to converse with Him. This happens to us through pure prayer. Therefore let us apply ourselves to it as much as we can. For it by nature unites us with the Lord.”

SAINT THEODORE OF EDESSA, + 848 A.D.

“THERE is no other virtue that is either higher or more necessary than sacred prayer, because all the other virtues - I mean fasting, vigils, sleeping on the ground, asceticism, chastity, almsgiving and all the rest - even though they are ways of emulating God, even though they cannot be taken away from us and constitute the immortal ornaments of the soul - do not unite man with God, but only render man fit to be united. Sacred prayer, and it alone, unites. It alone joins man with God and God with man, and makes the two one spirit.”

VEN. NICODEMUS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, + 1809 A.D.

“EVERY GOOD work done for the sake of Christ gives us the grace of the Holy Spirit, but prayer provides it most of all, for prayer is, as it were, always at hand as an instrument of the acquisition of the grace of the Spirit. For instance, you would like to go to church, but either there is no church or the service is over. Or, you would like to give alms to a beggar, but there is no beggar or you have nothing to give. Or, you would like to preserve your virginity, but you have not the strength, either because of your constitution or because of the machinations of the enemy which you cannot withstand on account of your human weakness. Or you would like to do some good deed or other for Christ’s sake, but you have not the strength or the occasion does not arise. But nothing stands in the way of prayer: it is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and lowly, strong and weak, healthy and sick, righteous and sinful... Great is the power of prayer. More than anything else, it brings with it the Spirit of God, and its practice is available to everyone.”

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

“CHRIST, ... is both my Father and yours and of all men, and loves all, cares for all, and provides for all. Believe on Him, have hope in Him, love Him with all your heart and soul, and whatever you ask of Him with faith and is to your benefit, He will give you. Especially ask for the Kingdom of Heaven.”

VEN. ARSENIUS OF PAROS, +1877 A.D.



*DOUBTLESS, some of our more super-correct brethren will be shocked that we are including the following article in the first monthly issue in the Church New Year. After all, surely we recall the end times just before the Great Lent, on the Sunday of the Dread Judgment? However, in the last few years particularly we have lived through distressing times, with epidemics, the atrocious war upon Ukraine, revolutions, the overthrow of governments, unprecedented moral depravity, and the promotion of vice, corruption and greed, and of senselessness. Some have tried to deal with this by resorting to various theories, conjectures and delusions, which seem to satisfy them for a while, but have little real foundation, and perhaps only give their proponents a self-satisfying sense of superiority over the rest of us and to give the more pretentious among them a spurious rôle as teachers. These notions also give those who entertain them a “welcome” distraction from attending to the one thing needful. They search the internet for back-up opinions, rather than searching the Gospels and the Fathers for the truth. Our Venerable Father Ephraim the Syrian sets out a completely different approach, the way of humility and repentance, an approach in which the light of Christ shines forth.*

# On the Second Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ

VEN. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN, + 373 A.D.

ATTEND AND COME, ye sons of light, and hearken to that blessed voice of our Saviour, Who says to us: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom of the heavens* (Mt. 25:34). Look, my brethren: let none of you be deprived of this blessed inheritance. For, behold, He is at the gates. Light from Light has come down to us and has illumined us and brought us up toward the Light. He has come down to us by becoming as we are, that we might be made like Him. The Immortal descended to mortals and, making them immortal, ascended again to the Father. Now He comes with the glory of the blessed Father to judge the living and the dead. He has become a Way for us, full of light and glory, that we might walk in light towards the Father.

Come, beloved, let us walk in the Way which the Lord has shown us, that with joy we might enter into His kingdom. Let us take provisions and oil in our coffers, for the length of this Way is not slight. Let us gird our loins with purity and truth as men and genuine slaves receiving their Master. Let us hang our lamps and nobly keep vigil. For we are waiting to receive our Lord from the heavens. Let us not slumber, that our lamps might not be extinguished. Come, it is time. The night is spent and the day draws near. Ye sons of light, approach the Light. Go out with joy to meet our Lord. Show Him your virtues. Bring Him your asceticism and your discipline, your tears and your poverty. Do not be indolent. Do not drift off or sleep. Let none of you look back, but direct the eye of your soul upwards, to that celestial beauty. Lift your eye to that joy, ye heirs of the Father and co-heirs of the Only-begotten Son of God. Behold, all these things has our Lord given us. What, then, shall we render unto Him, beloved?

Come, let us tear from ourselves every thought and care of this age, and with great zeal and much desire, let us serve Him alone. For behold the day has truly drawn near, and His coming has truly arrived. Come, then, brethren, let us prepare ourselves and keep watch, receiving our Lord and immortal Bridegroom. For, behold, He has shone forth. Behold, He has dawned. For that cry rings out suddenly: *Behold the bridegroom cometh*. Go out to meet Him, all ye that love Him, and prepare to see Him with glory. For He will make glad all them that long for Him, in that ineffable and eternal bridal chamber, full of light and radiance. Take heed, my brethren, lest, when that cry rings out, any of you be found holding a lamp that is dark and lacking oil, or, being clad in a soiled and tainted garment, any of you be condemned to the outer darkness, and to that undying and eternal punishment, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Let us assure ourselves, my beloved, that we do not know when our Lord comes. For that day comes as a thief in the night, and as a snare. As the fastest lightning, so does the coming of the Lord occur. For the trumpet will sound, and the earth will tremble at its foundations. The heavens, with their hosts, will be shaken, and all the dead will rise. Alas, alas, beloved! Who, in that hour, will not fear the examination of his heart? Forgive my weakness. For I understand that, in that hour, every breath will tremble. But the grace of God strengthens and gladdens the hearts of the righteous; and they are taken up in the clouds to meet Him. While those who have become indolent and sluggish like me remain trembling on the earth.

Let us lift ourselves up a little from the earth, my beloved, and let us ascend without hesitation to heaven. What does the world profit us, when we shackle ourselves to its concerns? Or what do we gain from the beautification of our garments except unquenchable fire? Or what do we reap from obsession over food except eternal chastisement? Know for certain that unless we struggle in this brief period of time, we will repent in that place for eternity.

Dearest brethren, why are we negligent, and why are we indolent? Why do we not prepare ourselves? For behold, the

day of the Lord has drawn near to us. Why do we not tear from us every unprofitable concern and lift ourselves up from the burden of things? Do you not know that the gate is narrow and strait, and the heavy-laden cannot enter in through it? For it loves those who have nothing, and who afflict themselves voluntarily in asceticism and vigils, who prepare themselves to see the immortal Bridegroom with glory, that they might inherit the kingdom of the heavens.

For behold, my beloved, the gate calls to us, saying, "Make haste and come to me." Behold, our mother, Jerusalem, also tells us, "Come, my dear children. Come to me. Multiply your number in me and in the bridal chamber of your Lord. Let your choirs be magnified with the holy angels in the light. I see you with glory and majesty, and with gladness and rejoicing. Desire me, my children, as I desire you. Acquire nothing on the earth. Take care for nothing. For behold the Bridegroom is ready to proceed on the clouds of heaven with the glory of His blessed Father. He will call you each by name, and He will place you within the ranks of those saints who abide in that ineffable light, in the life that is untainted, immortal, and eternal, in proportion to your toils."

Let us be zealous, my brethren. Let us be zealous in this brief period of time. Let us not be negligent here, my beloved, lest we be rueful for endless ages, where tears and groans will be of no avail; where there is no repentance. In your zeal, my beloved, the angels and archangels rejoice, while in your indolence the enemy rejoices. Be zealous, my dear children. Be zealous, that I may be glad in you, and you in me, for eternity. I fall down before Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God. Grant to me, and to those who love Thee, to see Thee with glory in Thy kingdom, and to inherit it with those who desire Thee, O Lord, my Master.

My beloved, if we are negligent in this brief period of time, we will have no defence on that fearful day. For we will not find an excuse for our sins. For when our Lord and Saviour descended to earth for our sake, our every excuse was taken away. For by His coming He bestowed on us eternal life. We were His enemies,

and He brought us reconciliation; earthly, and we have become heavenly; mortal, and we have been deemed immortal; slaves of sin, and we have been freed; poor, and we have been made rich. We were lost and have been found; hated, and we have been loved; unrighteous, and we have been made righteous. We were without mercy, and we have been shown mercy; sinners, and we have been saved; scattered, and we have been gathered together; earth and dust, and we have become sons of God; naked, and we have been covered. We have become heirs of God, and co-heirs of His Only-begotten Son. Behold, our Lord has bestowed all these things upon us. What, then, shall we give Him in return, my beloved?

Come, let us tear from us every concern and care of this futile age, and let us serve Him alone with great zeal and much eagerness. For, behold, His day has truly drawn near, and His coming has really arrived. Come, then, my brethren, prepare yourselves and keep watch, awaiting our Lord and immortal Bridegroom. For, behold, He has shone forth. Behold, He has dawned. Behold, He has come. The night is far spent, and the day draws near. Sons of light, approach the Light. Go out to meet Him with joy. Show Him your virtues. Bring to Him your asceticism and your self-discipline, your vigils and your struggles, your tears and poverty. Do not be indolent, then. Do not doze. Do not sleep. Let none of you look back, but direct the eye of your soul upward to that super-celestial beauty. Hold your eye up to that joy of the immortal Bridegroom, whereby our soul is satiated from the contemplation of His glory, brilliance, and comeliness.

Let anyone who is hungry be patient. For, behold, the table of the kingdom awaits him. Let anyone who is thirsty endure. For, behold, the delight of Paradise is prepared for him. Let anyone who keeps vigil, who chants, prays, and laments, be strong, for the joy of our Lord's bridal chamber will comfort him. Seeing all these things, let us acquire nothing on the earth, my beloved brethren. On that day each of us must show which virtue we have acquired in the present, or which struggles we endured, or which asceticism, or which act of vigilance we performed.

What, my brethren? When the martyrs show the wounds of their sufferings and tortures, and when the noble ascetics show their asceticism and self-discipline, their patience and affliction, and their poverty, will the indolent, the sluggish, and the indifferent have anything in which to boast? Will they boast of their vanity, their indolence, and their perdition? Woe to them, for they wickedly indulged in negligence! Woe to them, for they were indolent!

Come, my friends. Come, let us be zealous. Come, let us fall down before Him. Let us be contrite and lament unceasingly before His face, that He may grant illumination to our soul. Let us understand the wiles of our enemy, our adversary and hater of what is good. He throws before us ways to slip, scandals, the harm that comes from having too much, the lengthening of this age, carnal pleasure, further expectation for more years in the present life, cowardice in asceticism, sluggishness in prayer, sleep in psalmody, and carnal rest. The more zealous he is, the more negligent and indolent we are. The more he plots, the more contemptuous we are, resenting the fact that the days have been shortened, and the time has come, and the Lord of glory comes with the majesty of His comeliness, and with the fearful hosts of His kingdom, to render to each according to his deeds. I fear, my brethren, lest the word that the Lord spoke be fulfilled in us, that *they will come from the east and from the west and from the north and from the sea, and will recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens, but ye will be cast out.*

I beseech Thee, Christ, the Light of truth, Offspring of the blessed Father, impress and effulgence of His hypostasis, Who sits at the right hand of His greatness, uncircumscribed Son, unsearchable Christ, and inscrutable God, boast and joy of those who love Thee, Christ my life: save me a sinner in Thy kingdom. The weary labourer hopes to receive his rewards. Woe is me: my tongue is weary of doxology. But do not render to me according to me deeds as I have done. But save me by Thy grace, and have compassion on me by thy tender mercies. For Thou art blessed and glorified unto the ages. Amen.



# *Heretical Theologians and the Good News of Christ*

SAINT NIKOLAJ OF OCHID AND ŽIČA, + 1956 A.D.

THE LORD said: “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” True repentance is not only to grieve over the sins one has committed, but it is a complete return of the soul from darkness to light, from the worldly to the heavenly, from me to God.

What does faith in the Gospel mean? It means to believe the Good News that the Heavenly Messenger (Angel), the Son of God and God, brought to the human race. In other words, it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and His revelation. The Revelation of Christ is the greatest revelation since the creation of the world. It is the only revelation that can change the man-worm into man-god and a son of God.

Only “the One Who descended from Heaven, the Son of Man Who is in Heaven” (John 3:13) could bear witness to the world *what* exists in Heaven, *who* God is, *what* the spiritual reality is in the other world, how the spiritual world *is* that encompasses God, and what happens to human souls after bodily death. “What we saw we preach and what we heard we confess” (John 3:11).

We could say His witness is on a spiritual level, completely empirical. He does not bear witness according to worldly logic, or according to the conclusions of human understanding, or according to the wisdom or philosophies of the earthly man, but according to Him Who has seen and heard. He is the Heavenly Messenger of the heavenly reality. “And to this end am I come to this world, that I should bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37), which no one of those born on earth could bear witness to accurately. He Himself calls this witness Good News.

The Heavenly Messenger of the Good News bears witness that: God is one, in the triune harmony of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; that God is not only the Creator but also Father, namely the most beloved and closest relative of all

who wish to become His children; that God as Father is true Love, and out of love for the human race He sent His only-begotten Son to save the world. He bears witness: that the soul of man has greater value than the whole material world and that there are legions of innumerable Angels in that world who - sometimes invisibly and at other times visibly, - ceaselessly nonetheless - work for people in the events of this world; that after their death, the righteous of this world shine like the sun in the other world; and that the Son of God came down to the world with the purpose of making wormish men the sons of God, to make them gods, according to the will and mercy of the Father. He bears witness to the just judgment of God, the Resurrection of the dead and eternal life, and to many more things - each one more joyous than the other.

Christ called men to believe this Good News: repent and believe in the Gospel. This means that He called us to believe Him and in Him, in His every word. Since for humans there is no other way to come to the knowledge of the truth about the most important questions of life and existence, other than accepting to believe His words, seeing as He is an eyewitness to the heavenly and spiritual truths. Either they will believe in Christ or they will continue to walk in the dark and stormy seas of life, guessing and hypothesising about the earth and the edge of the ocean. A third solution has never existed in the history of the human anthill to this day.

From this it becomes obvious that the Christian faith does not in the least resemble the other faiths and theories of the world, since the other faiths are man-made, from the earth and of the earth, by people who spoke about the spiritual world, either according to their natural reasoning or through the deceit of evil spirits. None of the founders of other religions said about himself that he had descended from heaven, or that he had been sent by the Father, or that he bears witness to that concerning heaven which he saw and heard and that he will return to heaven. For this reason, there can be no talk about the equality of or similarity between the witness of Christ and that of the other religions and confessions of the rest of the world.

Do not ask a Christian if he believes in God but ask if he believes in the Gospel, in the Good News of Christ. For if he says he believes in God according to his own logic but not in the Gospel, then he is regressing and is a pagan, since he arrived at faith just as people who lived some two thousand years ago (e.g. some of the philosophers of Greece and Asia). Then for what reason did Christ descend from Heaven? For what reason did He seal with His blood His revelation to the world, the Good News? Such a “Christian” has in truth the All-Holy Blood of the Son of God on his head like those who cried, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”

The Orthodox Church - the only Church of Christ in the world - has kept the faith in the Gospel, without looking right or left, without being supported by other faiths, or by pagan philosophies or by the natural sciences. For if one follows a far-sighted and keen-eyed leader, it is useless and laughable to ask the crooked and blind for directions.

While Christ says: “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5), the heretical world in thousands of ways expresses the following saying: “Without Christ we can do Everything.” The entire contemporary culture is turned against Christ. All the modern sciences compete in seeing who will succeed in serving the hardest blow to Christ’s teaching. It is a revolution of the vulgar servants against the mistress of the house, a revolution of worldly science against the heavenly science of Christ. However, this whole revolution in our days boils down to what has been written with such clarity: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22).

Truthfully, no one knows where the greatest insanity of the modern world that has fallen away from Christ lies: in each person’s private life or in marriage? In school or in politics? In the economic structure or legislation? In war or in peace? Everywhere one sees what we call vulgar and barbaric. Falsehood and violence triumph.

Just as the faithless Jews once trampled upon the commandments of God, one after the other, and marched according to the wishes of the world and their hearts, they now have done the

same with the teaching of Christ, the Master of all teachings. They have undermined and abolished one dogma after the other. They have got rid of all the Gospel commandments. They have rejected the apostolic and patristic decrees. They have ridiculed all the sayings of the saints, and the ascetic examples they have reduced to myths.

The strongest blow the heretic theologians have imparted to the Gospel is in their questioning the Divinity of the Messiah of the world, some doubting it and others totally rejecting it. This was followed by a whole string of denials of spiritual truths such as: the existence of angels and demons, of paradise and hell, of the eternal glory of the saints and the just, fasting, the power of the Cross, the value of prayer, etc.

Simply put, the heretic theologians have concerned themselves with adaptations and homogenisations (of different faiths), even since the schism of the West from the East, with greater emphasis in the last 150 years [Bear in mind this was written more than sixty-six years ago now, and things have not improved - ed.]. They conformed the heavens to earth, Christ to other “founders of religions” and the Good News to other religions: the Jewish, Muslim and pagan. Everything allegedly in the name of “tolerance” and “for the benefit of peace” between people and nations. However, this is where the beginning of wars and revolutions lie, such as have never been heard of before. For the Truth can in no way tolerate joining with half-truths and lies.

The theosophical view that the truth is scattered among all the religions, philosophies and mysteries got the best of the heretic theologians of the Western world. Thus, they say that there must be some truth in Christianity, as well as in Islam, and Hinduism or Brahmanism, in Plato and Aristotle, in Zed-Avesta, in Tantra and the Mantras of Tibet. If it were so, then the ark of humanity would keep on sailing without hope in the dark seas of life, without compass or captain.

Then, why did Christ say this strange word: “I am the Truth” (John 14:6). He did not say “I am a part of the truth,” but “the Truth.” Also, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). So, He is

the whole truth and the whole light. Moreover, according to His word, He is the only guide to the path to eternal life and the only One who knows God. He said to the Jews: "And ye have not come to know Him, but I know Him and if I say that I do not know Him I will be a liar like you" (John 8:55). Is it possible Christ was deceived? Or perhaps He deceived us?

May God forgive us for putting forth such questions. We do not pose them ourselves, but the heretics posed them from very early on. And they are constantly answering them, one so and so and another differently - the one like the Jews, that Christ was a deceiver, and the other like the theosophists, that He was deceived. For us such a case does not exist.

The Orthodox believe and confess that Jesus Christ is the one and only Messiah, Saviour of the World, the One Who has redeemed the human race from sin and restored it, the Son of God who was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, God of God, the fulfilment of truth, the source of life, the victor over death, the cause of resurrection, the only true path toward the proper goal, the judge of the living and the dead.

There is something which has remained unexplained till now and forms the basic difference between our Eastern Church and the heretical churches of the West. However, before we proceed to its explanation, we must settle the fact that the new period for the heretics of the West did not start with the Reformation or with the French Revolution, but from the 11<sup>th</sup> century when the Christian West fell away from the Christian East. From that point on, Western Christianity started with the adaptations and the homogenisations. This constitutes the essence of this new period for them, of the contemporary age of modernism about which they even brag. For the Eastern Church, from the time of Christ's appearance in the world, there is no old and new age but everything is exactly the same and real, independent of periods, situations and subjugations.

Dogmatics is an applied science. This is something that the heretic theologians either do not realise or neglected. From the beginning dogmatics was an applied science - something that

the Apostles were aware of, as well as the saints and the ascetics of the Eastern Church and for this reason they struggled to personally fulfil every dogma in their life.

The dogma of the Holy Trinity, for example, concerning the one Triune God, seemed to many lay people and even to heretical theologians as the most abstract of all dogmas. However, in the Menaion of the Orthodox Church, it mentions many saints who through asceticism made themselves “the abode of the Holy Trinity.” They illumined their mind, their heart and their will, these three, like connected receptacles which they filled with the Holy Spirit according to the Lord’s parable of the leaven in the bread (Luke 13:21).

The Apostle Paul expressed it beautifully by saying: “What? Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Which is in you, Which ye have of God and ye are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19). Of course wherever God the Holy Spirit is, there God the Father and God the Son are: the Holy Trinity, indivisible, inseparable and life-giving. This is why in some *stichera* of the Saints we sing, “Ye became the abode of the Holy Trinity.”

All the mysteries of the Orthodox Church, but also of many of the services, begin with the prayer to the Holy Spirit, “Heavenly King, the Spirit of Truth... come and dwell in us.” We pray, therefore, for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in us. This does not happen immediately but after much asceticism with prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and toil. And then after all these things, with frequent weeping and sighing, the heart is cleansed and the Holy Spirit dwells in it (the heart) to enlighten the heart and the mind and the will. Then the Most High God dwells in man and works everything through him.

Mind, heart and will comprise the triune man. In the sinful and passionate soul, these three do not exist in union and divine harmony but are divided and ill-sorted. In such a case man looks like a house that is split, cannot stand and falls. Such a dwelling of the soul cannot then be saved, except through repentance and faith in the Gospel.

# How to live in accord with the Gospel

A TRANSLATION OF A BOOKLET PUBLISHED BY THE SYNODAL PRESS IN RUSSIA IN 1905, SOMEWHAT ADAPTED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR TIMES.

## How to live in accordance with the Gospel in the World : continued

DAVID, who was glorified and was a King, writes Saint John Chrysostom in another place, and the purple and the crown did not in any wise distract him. Another who is glorified even governed a whole nation - I am thinking of Moses - and what is more difficult than holding autocratic authority, - but he was glorified both when he had riches and when he was impoverished, even though he was married and had children.

You wish to see if those who are in the military can be saved? Look at Cornelius. Whether those who manage households can be saved? Look at the Ethiopian eunuch. No one can cause harm to one who is heedful. Joseph was living in slavery, but remained virtuous. Daniel and the Three Children were captives and yet were exceedingly glorified, for in every condition virtue is glorious and unconquerable, and no one can object to it.

Virtuousness nothing can overcome, neither riches, nor poverty, neither power, nor being under authority, nor being in charge of things, nor sickness, nor dishonour, nor banishment. Only have a noble spirit, for it will not be in any way contrary to virtuousness. If you say, I cannot be concerned with many things and so I must live in solitude, then you are abusing virtuousness for it can employ every circumstance to your profit and can be manifested on all occasions, only let it be within your soul.

Similarly, when once a layman who paid little attention to his salvation came to Saint John of the Ladder and wanted to

excuse his blameworthiness and negligence, asking, “How can we live a life of struggle, when we have a wife and are caught up in community affairs which entangle us like nets?” Saint John answered, “Do these good deeds as well as you can: do not speak ill of anyone, do not steal, do not slander anyone and then praise them to their face, do not bear hatred towards anyone, do not absent yourselves from the church gatherings, be compassionate to the poor, do not lead anyone into disrepute, do not get close to a woman with whom you are unfamiliar, and safeguard your marital faithfulness. If you hold fast to this, then you will not be far from the heavenly kingdom.”

Turning to the Gospel, go through Jesus Christ’s life’s journey, and you will see that there is not even a hint of denying life or renouncing it. The image of Christ, radiant with the Divine light, is it not at the same time that of a perfect man, Who had within Himself all the virtues, Who was, as He called Himself, the Son of Man, the Second Adam, worthy to be the Head of mankind?

He loved His mother and, as He died during the sufferings of crucifixion, He showed a concern for her lot. He loved His earthly homeland and wept over the sad fate of Jerusalem at the time when He anticipated the end of His own life. He loved His poor people and was grieved by their pitiable situation and took all measures to help them. Finally, He loved all mankind, shouldered all our weakness and died for our salvation.

He blessed pure pleasures, even taking part in them. By these steps He became approachable to the people who in the eyes of their proud rulers were held in disdain, so that none of His enemies was able to accuse Him of excessive strictness, even though they judged Him for His simplicity and His accessibility to all, calling Him “a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners” (Luke 7:34, Matt. 9:11).

No, He did not come to earth in order to annihilate the earth for heaven, but to reconcile it with heaven. He did not deny earthly life, but only taught that it must serve as a preparation for the heavenly. Speaking of the impossibility of serving God and mammon at one and the same time, He was not taking a stand



against wealth itself, but against craving for it. In forbidding concern for food or clothing and worries about the morrow, He was not condemning making provision for these things, without which a person's life would be impossible, but He was forbidding that sick apprehension which gnaws at the heart, and instructing us to assume a peaceful disposition, placing all our trust in the Heavenly Father, Who feeds the birds and adorns the lilies of the field. If riches do flow in, it is not necessary to cast them aside, only do not let them take hold of your heart. Do not be the slave of your wealth, but the master of it. All this bears witness to the fact that in order to live in accord with the Gospel you are not required to go into the desert. You can live in the world and be saved.

*... to be continued.*



## THE COMING MONTH

SEPTEMBER, the first month of the Church Year, like August rejoices in two Great Feasts, that of the **Nativity of the Mother of God** (8<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup>) and that of the **Exaltation of the Honourable and Life-giving Cross** (14<sup>th</sup> / 27<sup>th</sup>). In the one we celebrate the All-holy Theotokos, though whose ministry, God the Word became flesh and one of our kind. In the second we celebrate the Holy Cross on which Christ suffered that He might conquer death and the power of the devil and free us from their tyranny over us, and being one of our kind grant the victory to us in His loving kindness. Thus with the first month of the year, we have the unfolding of the mystery of the work of our redemption. On the Exaltation, remembering that our sins caused Christ thus to suffer, we keep a strict fast.

Also, of course, here at Brookwood we have the principal feast of our church, 3<sup>rd</sup> / 16<sup>th</sup> September, the commemoration of the deposition here of the sacred relics of our heavenly patron, **Saint Edward the Martyr**, which took place in 1984, under the spiritual guidance of **Bishop Gregory of Washington**.

Among the saints we celebrate in September we have:-

The **Holy Great Martyr Mamas** (2<sup>nd</sup> / 15<sup>th</sup>) was born in Paphlagonia, Asia Minor in the third century to pious and illustrious parents, the Christians Theodotus and Rufina. The parents of the saint were arrested by the pagans for their open confession of their faith and locked up in prison in Caesarea in Cappadocia. Knowing his own bodily weakness, Theodotus prayed that the Lord would take him before being subjected to tortures. The Lord heard his prayer and he died in prison. Saint Rufina died also after him, after giving birth to a premature son. She entrusted him to God, beseeching Him to be the Protector and Defender of the orphaned infant. God heard the prayer of the dying Rufina, and a rich Christian widow named Ammia reverently buried the bodies of Saints Theodotus and Rufina, and took the boy into her own home and raised him as her own son. She called him Mamas, because for several years he did not speak and then he uttered his first word, calling her Mama. Saint Mamas grew up in the Christian Faith. His foster mother concerned herself with the developing of his natural abilities, and early on she sent him off to study. The boy learned easily and willingly. He was not of an age of mature judgment but distinguished himself by maturity of mind and of heart. By means of prudent conversations and personal example young Mamas converted many of his own peers to Christianity. The governor, Democritus, was informed of this, and the fifteen-year-old Mamas was arrested and brought to trial. In deference to his illustrious parentage, Democritus decided not to subject him to torture, but instead sent him off to the Emperor Aurelian. The Emperor tried at first with kindness, but then with threats to turn Saint Mamas to the pagan faith, but all in vain. The saint bravely confessed himself a Christian and pointed out the madness of the pagans in their worship of lifeless idols. Infuriated, the Emperor subjected the youth to cruel tortures. They tried to drown the saint, but an angel of the Lord saved Saint Mamas and bade him live on a high mountain in the wilderness, not far from Caesarea. Bowing to the will of God, the saint built a small chapel there and began to lead a life of strict temperance, in struggles of fasting and prayer. He received a remarkable power

over the forces of nature: wild beasts inhabiting the surrounding wilderness gathered at his abode and listened to the reading of the Holy Gospel. Saint Mamas nourished himself on the milk of wild goats and deer. The saint did not ignore the needs of his neighbours. Preparing cheese from this milk, he gave it away freely to the poor. Soon the fame of Saint Mamas's life spread throughout all of Caesarea. The governor sent a detachment of soldiers to arrest him. When they encountered Saint Mamas on the mountain, the soldiers did not recognise him, and mistook him for a simple shepherd. The saint then invited them to his dwelling, gave them a drink of milk and then told them his name, knowing that death for Christ awaited him. The servant of God told the servant of the Emperor to go on ahead of him into Caesarea, promising that he would soon follow. The soldiers waited for him at the gates of the city, and Saint Mamas, accompanied by a lion, met them there. Surrendering himself into the hands of the torturers, Saint Mamas was brought to trial under a deputy governor named Alexander, who subjected him to intense and prolonged tortures. They did not break his will, however. He was strengthened by the words addressed to him from above: "Be strong and take courage, Mamas." When they threw Saint Mamas to the wild beasts, these creatures would not touch him. Finally, one of the pagan priests struck him with a trident. Mortally wounded, Saint Mamas went out beyond the city limits. There, in a small stone cave, he gave up his spirit to God, Who in the hearing of all summoned the holy Martyr Mamas into His heavenly habitation. He was buried by believers at the place of his death. Christians soon began to receive help from him in their afflictions and sorrows. Saint Basil the Great speaks thus about the holy Martyr Mamas in a sermon to the people: "Remember the holy martyr, you who live here and have him as a helper. You who call on his name have been helped by him. Those in error he has guided into life. Those whom he has healed of infirmity, those whose dead children he has restored to life, those whose life he has prolonged: let us all come together as one, and praise the martyr!" Saint Mamas is revered as a patron of animals and his godly parents are commemorated with him on his feast day.

Our **Venerable Father Evphrosynus the Cook** (11<sup>th</sup> / 24<sup>th</sup>) was born to parents who were peasants from the country. Having been raised with a common and uneducated upbringing, he later left to take up the monastic life. When he was dressed in the monastic schema, he became a servant of the monks. As a countryman, he was despised by all the monks and ridiculed and was put to do the cooking. The blessed one endured all the disdain with a brave heart and mind, and with quiet thoughts, without being troubled. For, although he was a common man according to his words, he was not a common man according to his knowledge. This can be clearly shown by the following narration. In the monastery where Evphrosynus lived, there was a priest who was a friend of God, who eagerly supplicated that God would show him those good things of the future that will be received by those who loved Him. One night, as the priest was sleeping, it appeared in his sleep that he was in a garden, and he saw the most cheering good things that were to be found there with amazement and astonishment. There he also saw the monastery cook, Evphrosynus, who was standing in the middle of the garden, and he was receiving those various good things. He approached him, and asked to learn which garden this was, and how he came to be there! Evphrosynus answered: "This garden is the dwelling-place of the elect of God. Because of the great goodness of my God, I was permitted to be here." And the priest said to him: "And what do you do in this garden?" Evphrosynus replied: "I have dominion over all that you see here, and I rejoice and am glad in its vision, and rest." The priest said to him: "Are you able to give me any of these good things?" Evphrosynus responded: "Yes, take of these with the grace of my God." The priest then showed him some apples, and asked to be given some. Evphrosynus took some apples, and put them on the outer-garment of the priest, saying: "Behold, delight in the apples which you asked for." Because the semantron was struck for the fathers to get up for Matins, the priest woke up. And while he thought the vision that he saw was just a dream, he stretched out his hands for his outer-garment and - O the miracle! - he found the apples to be real. And being in wonder of the strange fragrance, he remained motionless for a long time. He then went to church, and seeing Evphrosynus standing there, he took him to a place aside, and he had him pledge to tell him where he had been that night. Evphrosynus

said: "Forgive me, Father. I was nowhere last night, and just now came to the service." The priest said: "I bind you with oaths, in order for the majesty of God to appear to all, and are you not persuaded to reveal the truth?" Then the humble Evphrosynus replied: "I was there, Father, where the good things are, which those who love God will acquire in the future, of which many years ago you asked to see. There you also saw me receiving the good things from the garden. The Lord wanted to inform your holiness of the good things of the righteous that you asked to see, and He brought about this wondrous thing through me the worthless one." And the priest said: "And what, Father Evphrosynus, did you give me of the good things in the garden?" Evphrosynus replied: "The beautiful and fragrant apples, which you have now placed on your bed. However, Father, forgive me, for I am a worm and not a man." The priest narrated to all the brothers the vision he saw. And by this he moved all of them to wonder and astonishment, and to the zeal which is good and to virtue. The blessed Evphrosynus fled the glory of men, and secretly left the monastery. He fled to such a distance, that he remained completely unknown. Many who were sick that ate of that apple, were healed of their sicknesses.



## POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

### *IN RESPONSE TO QUERIES from S.O.*

Recently you have put about half-a-dozen questions in the box. I have not answered them in church, as the basic question behind most of them has already twice been answered, first by Fr Daniel, when he said that the Chaldean Church was a Church that had died, and the following week, when, because you asked whether we could recognise it as a true successor to the Church of the East, I said that as Orthodox Christians, we do not recognise anything that is untrue. If we did recognise them as you suggest we would be in communion with them. We are not.

The Chaldeans followed the erroneous teachings of Nestorius whose teaching was anathematised by the Third Œcumenical Council at Ephesus in 431A.D., and the Chaldeans followed him.

Many of them further compounded their situation by joining the Roman Catholics when the Portuguese arrived in the East - thus they joined a “church” that had broken away from the One, True Church in the eleventh century and which since then has added heretical belief to heretical belief. There are no grounds for accepting them as the true successors of the ancient Church in the East; they hold a different faith.

The Syriac Saint Thomas churches are divided among themselves, and again most of them left Orthodoxy very early on, not accepting the Fourth Council. Again some of them later went into full communion with the Roman Catholics, but none of them has rejoined the One, True Church, the Orthodox Church. So they cannot be recognised as true Churches, because they are not. I cannot look at my dog, and recognise her as a pony. If I did so, I would be thought to be insane. And similarly I cannot look at “churches” who have not followed the tradition handed down to us as true in any sense of the word; they are not.

You say in one question that you are an aspiring catechumen, but it seems that that aspiration has not brought you very far on your journey. The first task of someone approaching to join the Orthodox Church is, as Saint Paul told those converting from paganism, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

Such a course was taken in the Old Testament by that most beautiful example of a convert, our foremother Ruth. “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

She did not keep saying, can we recognise the Moabites as true Israelites? She identified herself wholly with Naomi, who was indeed a true Israelite. And if you desire to become Orthodox then you must do the same with the faithful of the One Church. If you have any thought for those of “churches” you have been affiliated with before, it should not be a hope that they be recognised, but it should be a prayer that they be converted.

You ask about the directorship of catechumens (though in the Church we do not have directors, but fathers) and even about the noviciate, but before you can consider that, you need to come to the commitment that Ruth so beautifully taught us.

I hope you will not find this letter hurtful, or indeed, if it does hurt, it will be unto your benefit, and that you will perhaps one day seek to come freed from the shackles of the past to truly seek to become one of our people.



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

**BAPTISM OF A PARISHIONER**

DURING a pilgrimage to the Holy Land our catechumen **Stephanie Molas** was baptised by **Metropolitan Ambrose of Methoni** in the Jordan River, on the feast day of the Icon of the Mother of God, “Joy of All Who Sorrow,” Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July / 5<sup>th</sup> August. Her godmother is **Georgette Turcu**, the wife of our subdeacon Ioan. After the pilgrimage, with her fiancé, Pavel, Stephanie travelled to Bulgaria, where they hope to get married.

**BURIAL IN THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX  
CEMETERY**

ON SAINT ELIAS DAY, Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> July / 2<sup>nd</sup> August, **Vera Stanojlovic** was laid to rest in the Serbian Orthodox Cemetery which adjoins our own. Vera, who died on 2<sup>nd</sup> / 15<sup>th</sup> July, was 101 years old and was the widow of **Bosko**, one of our founders and benefactors, who expressed the desire to be the first person buried in the new Orthodox section of the cemetery here, and was granted that. Vera’s funeral had earlier been served at the **Serbian Orthodox Church of Saint Sava** in Ladbroke Grove, London, W11. **Protopresbyter-Stavrophore Goran Spaic** and **Protodeacon George Cekeravac** accompanied Vera to her resting place, next to her husband. To the end of her

long life, Vera maintained her friendship with our Brotherhood, and two members of our community attended her interment. On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> August, Fr Goran returned to the grave with members of Vera's family and friends to serve the fortieth day memorial for her. May her rest be with the Saints and her *Memory Eternal*.

### ***ARCHIMANDRITE DANIEL***

FATHER DANIEL has now returned to reside in England, and so we hope he will be with us more at Brookwood. His contact details are on the back cover of this issue. To these we are now able to add his phone number: 07946 602124.

### ***CHURCHING AT SAINT EDWARD'S***

ON SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup> / 23<sup>rd</sup> July, before the Ninth Hour and Vespers, the prayers for the fortieth day after the birth of **Christos Pitidis** were read over him and his mother **Georgia**. Christos celebrates his name day on the feast of the Saviour's Nativity, and the family live in Finchley. The prayers on the first and eighth days had earlier been read by Georgia's spiritual father in Greece.

### ***SATURDAY CATECHUMEN TALKS***

ON most Saturday evenings, **Fr Nippon** gives instruction classes to our catechumens and any who want to become catechumens, in the narthex of the church. It is arranged that the informal talks begin at 5 p.m. so the participants can then stay for Vespers - lest they are trained to fall into the fatal trap of becoming "Liturgy-only Christians." We have noticed that a large number of people who are Orthodox are often very ignorant of the basic tenets and practices of our Church and so disadvantaged when trying to instruct their children, and so if any of you would also like to join these talks you will be welcome.



## ***ICON DONATED TO SAINT EDWARD'S***

PARISHIONER **Alexandra Galbeaza** recently donated a hand-painted icon of the **holy unmercenary healers Zenais (Zenaida) and Philonilla** to our church. The icon was painted for us in Alexandra's native Romania.

## ***GIFT OF BOOKS AND ICONS***

ON Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> August, **Doug and Cate Thrower** from Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, brought us a substantial number of religious books and icons, that had belonged to Cate's father, **Peter Williams**, who is laid to rest in our cemetery. Some of these will find a home in our church and our library, and others we are putting out on a table so that parishioners can take them and leave an offering. Our thanks to the Throwers for making the journey in their van to deliver them, and to Cate's brother, **Paul**, for arranging everything.



## **Practical Tip**

PARENTS do take special care to train your children to pray, and make that a real part of their lives. Often when they come to church children are bored and do not know what to do with themselves. They jig about and are distracted, largely because they have not been schooled in prayer at home. This, of course, means that their attachment to the Faith is simply to a code of conduct, or a schedule of beliefs and it lacks heart. It gives them no basis to want to love, defend or stand by their Faith, and eventually they lapse. So pray with them, explain the prayers to them, inspire them to love them.



“THE SPIRIT OF GOD never enters into the house wherein there are delights and pleasures.”

ABBA POEMEN THE GREAT, + 450 A.D.