

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

“PRAYER comprises the complete fulfilment of the commandments; for there is nothing higher than love for God.”

VEN. MARK THE ASCETIC, EARLY MID-FIFTH CENTURY

“WHEN we are in trouble or despair or have lost hope, we should do what David did: pour out our hearts to God and tell Him of our needs and troubles, just as they are (cf. Ps. 141:2). It is because He can deal with us wisely that we confess to God: He can make our troubles easy to bear, if this is for our benefit, and can save us from the dejection which destroys and corrupts.”

VEN. HESYCHIUS THE PRIEST, DATE UNCERTAIN

WHATEVER a man loves he inevitably clings to, and in order not to lose it he rejects everything that keeps him from it. So he who loves God cultivates pure prayer, driving out every passion that keeps him from it.”

VEN. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, +662 A.D.

“IT is necessary to rouse the heart to pray, otherwise it will become quite dry. The attributes of prayer must be: love of God, sincerity, and simplicity.”

RGHT. JOHN OF CRONSTADT, +1908 A.D.

THIS MONTH we begin a rather long piece on the Lord's Prayer, which we shall have to continue next month, but we have done so because of its importance. Every day the conscientious Orthodox Christian recites the Lord's Prayer five or six times in their prayers at home, and it is included in each and every one of the services of the Church, but often we just simply say it by rote, with little attention. In some traditions in the Liturgy it is sung, but that in turn leads to distraction, because it is often clear that the prowess of the choir is given more emphasis than the meaning of the words themselves. Often too we interpret each petition according to our own preconceived and often erroneous conceptions and so it is important that we learn from the Fathers of the Church its true wealth and beauty.

On the Lord's Prayer

HOLY HIEROMARTYR CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE,
+ 258 A.D.

THE evangelical precepts, beloved brethren, are nothing else than divine teachings - foundations on which hope is to be built, supports to strengthen faith, nourishments for cheering the heart, rudders for guiding our way, guards for obtaining salvation - which, while they instruct the docile minds of believers on the earth, lead them to heavenly kingdoms. God, moreover, willed many things to be said and to be heard by means of the prophets His servants; but how much greater are those which the Son speaks, which the Word of God who was in the prophets testifies with His own voice; not now bidding to prepare the way for His coming, but Himself coming and opening and showing to us the way, so that we who have before been wandering in the darkness of death, without forethought and blind, being enlightened by the light of grace, might keep the way of life, with the Lord for our ruler and guide!

He, among the rest of His salutary admonitions and divine precepts wherewith He counsels His people for their salvation, Himself also gave a form of praying - Himself advised and instruc-

ted us what we should pray for. He who made us to live, taught us also to pray, with that same benignity, to wit, wherewith He has condescended to give and confer all things else; in order that while we speak to the Father in that prayer and supplication which the Son has taught us, we may be the more easily heard. Already He had foretold that the hour was coming “when the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:23) and He thus fulfilled what He before promised, so that we who by His sanctification have received the Spirit and truth, may also by His teaching worship truly and spiritually. For what can be a more spiritual prayer than that which was given to us by Christ, by whom also the Holy Spirit was given us? What praying to the Father can be more truthful than that which was delivered to us by the Son who is the Truth, out of His own mouth? So that to pray otherwise than He taught is not ignorance alone, but also sin; since He Himself has established, and said, “You reject the commandments of God, that you may keep your own traditions.”

Let us therefore, brethren beloved, pray as God our Teacher has taught us. It is a loving and friendly prayer to beseech God with His own word, to come up to His ears in the prayer of Christ. Let the Father acknowledge the words of His Son when we make our prayer, and let Him also Who dwells within, in our breast, Himself dwell in our voice. And since we have Him as an Advocate with the Father for our sins, let us, when as sinners we petition on behalf of our sins, put forward the words of our Advocate. For since He says, that “whatsoever we shall ask of the Father in His name, He will give us,” (Jn 16:23) how much more effectually do we obtain what we ask in Christ’s name, if we ask for it in His own prayer!

But let our speech and petition when we pray be under discipline, observing quietness and modesty. Let us consider that we are standing in God’s sight. We must please the divine eyes both with the habit of body and with the measure of voice. For as it is characteristic of a shameless man to be noisy with his cries, so, on the other hand, it is fitting to the modest man to pray with moderated petitions. Moreover, in His teaching the Lord has

bidden us to pray in secret - in hidden and remote places, in our very bed-chambers - which is best suited to faith, that we may know that God is everywhere present, and hears and sees all, and in the plenitude of His majesty penetrates even into hidden and secret places, as it is written, "I am a God at hand, and not a God afar off. If a man shall hide himself in secret places, shall I not then see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:23-24). And again: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). And when we meet together with the brethren in one place, and celebrate divine sacrifices with God's priest, we ought to be mindful of modesty and discipline - not to throw abroad our prayers indiscriminately, with unsubdued voices, nor to cast to God with tumultuous wordiness a petition that ought to be commended to God by modesty; for God is the hearer, not of the voice, but of the heart. Nor need He be clamorously reminded, since He sees men's thoughts, as the Lord proves to us when He says, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" (Matt. 9:4). And in another place: "And all the churches shall know that I am He that searches the hearts and reins." (Rev. 2:23).

And this Hannah in the first book of Kings, who was a type of the Church, maintains and observes, in that she prayed to God not with clamorous petition, but silently and modestly, within the very recesses of her heart. She spoke with hidden prayer, but with manifest faith. She spoke not with her voice, but with her heart, because she knew that thus God hears; and she effectually obtained what she sought, because she asked it with belief. Divine Scripture asserts this, when it says, "She spoke in her heart, and her lips moved, and her voice was not heard; and God did hear her" (1 Sam. 1:13). We read also in the Psalms, "Speak in your hearts, and in your beds, and be pierced." The Holy Spirit, moreover, suggests these same things by Jeremias, and teaches, saying, "But in the heart ought God to be adored by you."

And let not the worshipper, beloved brethren, be ignorant in what manner the publican prayed with the Pharisee in the temple. Not with eyes lifted up boldly to heaven, nor with hands proudly raised; but beating his breast, and testifying to the sins

shut up within, he implored the help of the divine mercy. And while the Pharisee was pleased with himself, this man who thus asked, the rather deserved to be sanctified, since he placed the hope of salvation not in the confidence of his innocence, because there is none who is innocent; but confessing his sinfulness he humbly prayed, and He who pardons the humble heard the petitioner. And these things the Lord records in His Gospel, saying, “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, unjust, extortioners, adulterers, even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. But the publican stood afar off, and would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and whosoever humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:10-14).

These things, beloved brethren, when we have learned from the sacred reading, and have gathered in what way we ought to approach to prayer, let us know also from the Lord’s teaching what we should pray. “Thus,” says He, pray: ***“Our Father, Which art in the Heavens, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Amen.*** (Matt. 6-9).

Before all things, the Teacher of peace and the Master of unity would not have prayer to be made singly and individually, as for one who prays to pray for himself alone. For we say not “My Father, Which art in the Heavens,” nor “Give me this day my daily bread;” nor does each one ask that only his own debt should be forgiven him; nor does he request for himself alone that he may not be led into temptation, and delivered from evil. Our prayer is public and common; and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people, because we the whole

people are one. The God of peace and the Teacher of concord, who taught unity, willed that one should thus pray for all, even as He Himself bore us all in one. This law of prayer the three children observed when they were shut up in the fiery furnace, speaking together in prayer, and being of one heart in the agreement of the spirit; and this the faith of which sacred Scripture assures us, and in telling us how such as these prayed, gives an example which we ought to follow in our prayers, in order that we may be such as they were: "Then these three," it says, "as if from one mouth sang an hymn, and blessed the Lord." They spoke as if from one mouth, although Christ had not yet taught them how to pray. And therefore, as they prayed, their speech was availing and effectual, because a peaceful, and sincere, and spiritual prayer deserved well of the Lord. Thus also we find that the Apostles, with the disciples, prayed after the Lord's Ascension: "They all," says the Scripture, "continued with one accord in prayer, with the women, and Mary who was the mother of Jesus and with His brethren" (Acts 1:14). They continued with one accord in prayer, declaring both by the urgency and by the agreement of their praying, that God, "Who makes men to dwell of one mind in a house," only admits into the divine and eternal home those among whom prayer is unanimous.

But what matters of deep moment are contained in the Lord's Prayer! How many and how great, briefly collected in the words, but spiritually abundant in virtue! So that there is absolutely nothing passed over that is not comprehended in these our prayers and petitions, as in a compendium of heavenly doctrine. "After this manner," says He, "pray: ***Our Father, Which art in the Heavens.***" The new man, born again and restored to his God by His grace, says "Father," in the first place because he has now begun to be a son. "He came," He says, "to His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name" (Jn 1:11). The man, therefore, who has believed in His name, and has become God's son, ought from this point to begin both to give thanks and to profess himself God's son, by declaring that God is his Father in heaven; and also to bear witness, among the very first words of his new birth, that he has

renounced an earthly and carnal father, and that he has begun to know as well as to have as a father Him only Who is in heaven, as it is written: "They who say unto their father and their mother, I have not known you, and who have not acknowledged their own children, these have observed Your precepts and have kept Your covenant" (Deut. 33:9). Also the Lord in His Gospel has bidden us to call "no man our father upon earth, because there is to us one Father, Who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). And to the disciple who had made mention of his dead father, He replied, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22), for he had said that his father was dead, while the Father of believers is living.

Nor ought we, beloved brethren, only to observe and understand that we should call Him Father Who is in heaven; but we add to it, and say our Father, that is, the Father of those who believe, of those who, being sanctified by Him, and restored by the nativity of spiritual grace, have begun to be sons of God. A word this, moreover, which rebukes and condemns the Jews, who not only unbelievably despised Christ, Who had been announced to them by the prophets, and sent first to them, but also cruelly put Him to death; and these cannot now call God their Father, since the Lord confounds and confutes them, saying, "You are born of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. For he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (Jn 8:44). And by Esaias the prophet God cries in wrath "I have begotten and brought up children; but they have despised me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel has not known Me, and My people has not understood me. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with sins, a wicked seed, corrupt children! You have forsaken the Lord; you have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger" (Es. 1:3). In repudiation of these, we Christians, when we pray, say "Our Father," because He has begun to be ours, and has ceased to be the Father of the Jews, who have forsaken Him. Nor can a sinful people be a son; but the name of sons is attributed to those to whom remission of sins is granted, and to them immortality is promised anew, in the words of our Lord Himself: "Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house for ever, but the son

abides ever” (Jn 8:34).

But how great is the Lord’s indulgence! How great His condescension and plenteousness of goodness towards us, seeing that He has wished us to pray in the sight of God in such a way as to call God Father, and to call ourselves sons of God, even as Christ is the Son of God, - a name which none of us would dare to venture on in prayer, unless He Himself had allowed us thus to pray! We ought then, beloved brethren, to remember and to know, that when we call God Father, we ought to act as God’s children; so that to the extent that we find pleasure in considering God as a Father, He might also be able to find pleasure in us. Let us converse as temples of God, that it may be plain that God dwells in us. Let not our doings be degenerate from the Spirit; so that we who have begun to be heavenly and spiritual, may consider and do nothing but spiritual and heavenly things; since the Lord God Himself has said, “Them that honour Me I will honour; and he that despises Me shall be despised” (1 Sam. 2:30). The blessed apostle also has laid down in his epistle: “You are not your own; for you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear about God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:20).

After this we say, “**Hallowed be Thy name;**” not that we wish for God that He may be hallowed by our prayers, but that we beseech of Him that His name may be hallowed in us. For by whom is God sanctified, since He Himself sanctifies? Well, because He says, “Be holy, even as I am holy” (Lev. 20:7), we ask and entreat, that we who were sanctified in baptism may continue in that which we have begun to be. And this we daily pray for; for we have need of daily sanctification, that we who daily fall away may wash out our sins by continual sanctification. And what the sanctification is which is conferred upon us by the condescension of God, the apostle declares, when he says, “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor deceivers, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such indeed were you; but you are washed; but you are justified; but you are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9). He

says that we are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. We pray that this sanctification may abide in us and because our Lord and Judge warns the man that was healed and quickened by Him, to sin no more lest a worse thing happen unto him, we make this supplication in our constant prayers, we ask this day and night, that the sanctification and quickening which is received from the grace of God may be preserved by His protection.

There follows in the prayer, *Thy kingdom come*. We ask that the kingdom of God may be set forth to us, even as we also ask that His name may be sanctified in us. For when does God not reign, or when does that begin with Him which both always has been, and never ceases to be? We pray that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, which was acquired by the blood and passion of Christ; that we who first are His subjects in the world, may hereafter reign with Christ when He reigns, as He Himself promises and says, "Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Christ Himself, dearest brethren, however, may be the kingdom of God, Whom we day by day desire to come, Whose advent we crave to be quickly manifested to us. For since He is Himself the Resurrection, since in Him we rise again, so also the kingdom of God may be understood to be Himself, since in Him we shall reign. But we do well in seeking the kingdom of God, that is, the heavenly kingdom, because there is also an earthly kingdom. But he who has already renounced the world, is moreover greater than its honours and its kingdom. And therefore he who dedicates himself to God and Christ, desires not earthly, but heavenly kingdoms. But there is need of continual prayer and supplication, that we fall not away from the heavenly kingdom, as the Jews, to whom this promise had first been given, fell away; even as the Lord sets forth and proves: "Many," says He, "shall come from the east and from the west, and shall recline with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11). He shows that the Jews were previously children of the kingdom, so long as they

continued also to be children of God; but after the name of Father ceased to be recognised among them, the kingdom also ceased; and therefore we Christians, who in our prayer begin to call God our Father, pray also that God's kingdom may come to us.

We add, also, and say, ***“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven;”*** not that God should do what He wills, but that we may be able to do what God wills. For who resists God, that He may not do what He wills? But since we are hindered by the devil from obeying with our thought and deed God's will in all things, we pray and ask that God's will may be done in us; and that it may be done in us we have need of God's good will, that is, of His help and protection, since no one is strong in his own strength, but he is safe by the grace and mercy of God. And further, the Lord, setting forth the infirmity of the humanity which He bore, says, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” and affording an example to His disciples that they should do not their own will, but God's, He went on to say, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39). And in another place He says, “I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me” (Jn 6:38). Now if the Son was obedient to do His Father's will, how much more should the servant be obedient to do his Master's will! As in his epistle John also exhorts and instructs us to do the will of God, saying, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the ambition of life, which is not of the Father, but of the lust of the world. And the world shall pass away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever, even as God also abides forever” (1Jn 2:15-17). We who desire to abide for ever should do the will of God, Who is everlasting.

Now that is the will of God which Christ both did and taught. Humility in conversation, steadfastness in faith, modesty in words, justice in deeds, mercifulness in works, discipline in morals, to be unable to do a wrong, and to be able to bear a wrong when done, to keep peace with the brethren, to love God with all one's heart, to love Him in that He is a Father; to fear

Him in that He is God, to prefer nothing whatever to Christ, because He did not prefer anything to us, to adhere inseparably to His love, to stand by His cross bravely and faithfully, when there is any contest on behalf of His name and honour to exhibit in discourse that constancy wherewith we make confession, in torture that confidence wherewith we do battle, in death that patience whereby we are crowned - this is to desire to be fellow-heirs with Christ; this is to do the commandment of God; this is to fulfil the will of the Father.

Moreover, we ask that the will of God may be done both in heaven and in earth, each of which things pertains to the fulfilment of our safety and salvation. For since we possess the body from the earth and the spirit from heaven, we ourselves are earth and heaven; and in both - that is, both in body and spirit - we pray that God's will may be done. For between the flesh and spirit there is a struggle; and there is a daily strife as they disagree one with the other, so that we cannot do those very things that we would, in that the spirit seeks heavenly and divine things, while the flesh lusts after earthly and temporal things; and therefore we ask that, by the help and assistance of God, agreement may be made between these two natures, so that while the will of God is done both in the spirit and in the flesh, the soul which is new-born by Him may be preserved. This is what the Apostle Paul openly and manifestly declares by his words: "The flesh," says he, "lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adulteries, fornications, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murders, hatred, variance, emulations, wraths, strife, seditions, dissensions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, magnanimity, goodness, faith, gentleness, continence, chastity" (Gal. 5:17-22). And therefore we make it our prayer in daily, yea, in continual supplications, that the will of God concerning us should be done both in heaven and in earth; because this is the will of God, that earth-

ly things should give place to heavenly, and that spiritual and divine things should prevail.

And it may be thus understood, beloved brethren, that since the Lord commands and admonishes us even to love our enemies, and to pray even for those who persecute us, we should ask, moreover, for those who are still earth, and have not yet begun to be heavenly, that even in respect of these God's will should be done, which Christ accomplished in preserving and renewing humanity. For since the disciples are not now called by Him earth, but the salt of the earth, and the apostle designates the first man as being from the dust of the earth, but the second from heaven, we reasonably, who ought to be like God our Father, Who makes His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust, so pray and ask by the admonition of Christ as to make our prayer for the salvation of all men; that as in heaven - that is, in us by our faith - the will of God has been done, so that we might be of heaven; so also in earth - that is, in those who believe not - God's will may be done, that they who as yet are by their first birth of earth, may, being born of water and of the Spirit, begin to be of heaven.

... *To be continued next month.*



THE COMING MONTH

IT IS on 1st / 14th September that the Church begins her **New Year**. Referring to this day Saint Demetrius of Rostov exhorts us: "Therefore, offering Him thanksgiving, let us celebrate that acceptable year of the Lord, for we have received many and ineffable good things from His hand. Let us make haste to be well-pleasing in His sight. Let us celebrate, not the Indiction enacted by the Roman Emperors, but that which has been ordained for us by Christ, the heavenly King of Glory. The tribute due to Christ from us on the occasion of the Indiction is the keeping and the fulfilment of His holy commandments, for

Christ our King does not ask of us iron and brass [coinage]. Neither does He exact silver nor demand gold, as David has made clear, saying to Him: *Thou art my Lord; for of my goods no need hast Thou* (Ps. 15:1). That we might with an upright heart believe in Him, He requires of us not iron and brass, but the virtue of faith, grounded firmly and strongly in Orthodox piety, which is founded upon the blood shed by the holy martyrs, who were tortured for the Christian faith with weapons of iron and implements and vessels of brass, as it is said: *His life was spent in irons* (Ps. 104:18)... Instead of silver, Christ our King requires of us the virtue of undoubting trust in God, which more than silver assures a man of a prosperous life... Such is the immaterial silver which the Lord requires of us. He commands that we trust not in riches, which quickly perish, but that we trust in the living God, Whose words *are pure words, silver that is fired* (Ps. 11:6)... Instead of gold, Christ our King demands the most precious virtue, unfeigned love for God and our neighbour, always represented by the teachers of the Church as gold because of its great value. Just as gold is more precious than silver, brass, or iron, so love is more honourable than hope and faith, as it is written: And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13).” Our New Year resolution should be to heed this advice.

We have two Great Feasts in September, the **Nativity of the All-holy Mother of God** on 8th / 21st - after the seven days of creation the new creation is inaugurated - and the **Universal Exaltation of the Honourable and Life-Creating Cross** on the 14th / 27th.

And this month we also have the following commemorations:-

Saint Cornelius the Centurion (13th / 26th September): Soon after Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Ascension into Heaven, a centurion by the name of Cornelius settled at Caesarea in Palestine. He had lived previously in Thracian Italy. Although he was a gentile, he distinguished himself by deep piety and good deeds, as the holy Evangelist Luke says (Acts 10:1). According to Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, he

was not a pagan, but a gentile who practiced the religion of the Jews, like those Greeks mention in John 12:20-26. In fact, Saint Nicodemus says that Cornelius was one of those Greeks praised by the Lord. The Lord did not disdain his virtuous life, and so led him to the knowledge of truth and to faith in Christ. Once, as Cornelius was praying in his home, an angel of God appeared to him and said that his prayer had been heard and accepted by God. The angel commanded him to send people to Joppa to find Simon, also called Peter. Cornelius immediately fulfilled the command. While those people were on their way to Joppa, the Apostle Peter was at prayer, and he had a vision: three times a great sheet was lowered down to him, filled with all kinds of beasts and fowl. He heard a voice from Heaven commanding him to eat everything. When the apostle refused to eat food which Jewish Law regarded as unclean, the voice said: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:15). Through this vision the Lord commanded the Apostle Peter to preach the word of God to the pagans. He understood that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). When the Apostle Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius in the company of those sent to meet him, he was received with great joy and respect by the host together with his kinsmen and comrades. Cornelius fell down at the feet of the apostle and requested to be taught the way of salvation. Peter talked about the earthly life of Jesus Christ, and spoke of the miracles and signs worked by the Saviour, and of His teachings about the Kingdom of Heaven. Then Peter told him of the Lord's death on the Cross, His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, Cornelius believed in Christ and was baptised with all his family. He retired from the world and went preaching the Gospel together with the Apostle Peter, who made him a bishop. When the Apostle Peter, together with his helpers Timothy and Cornelius, was in the city of Ephesus, he learned of particularly vigorous idol-worship in the city of Skepsis, in the region of Troas. Lots were drawn to see who would go there, and Cornelius was chosen. In the city lived a ruler by the name of Demetrius, learned in ancient Greek philosophy, hating Chris-

tianity and venerating the pagan gods, in particular Apollo and Zeus. Learning about the arrival of Cornelius in the city, he immediately summoned him and asked him the reason for his coming. Cornelius answered that he came to free him from the darkness of ignorance and lead him to knowledge of the True Light. Demetrius, not comprehending the meaning of what was said, became angry and demanded that he answer each of his questions. When Cornelius explained that he served the Lord and that the reason for his coming was to announce the Truth, the prince became enraged and demanded that Cornelius offer sacrifice to the idols. The Saint asked to be shown the gods. When he entered the pagan temple, Cornelius turned towards the east and uttered a prayer to the Lord. There was an earthquake, and the temple of Zeus and the idols situated in it were destroyed. All the populace, seeing what had happened, were terrified. Demetrius was even more vexed and began to take counsel together with those approaching him, about how to destroy Cornelius. They bound the Saint and took him to prison for the night. At this point, one of his servants informed Demetrius that his wife Evanthia and child Demetrian had perished beneath the rubble of the destroyed temple. After a certain while, one of the pagan priests, by the name of Barbates, reported that he heard the voice of the wife and son somewhere in the ruins and that they were praising the God of the Christians. The pagan priest asked that the imprisoned one be released, in gratitude for the miracle worked by Cornelius, and the wife and son of the Demetrius remained alive. The joyful Demetrius hastened to the prison in the company of those about him, declaring that he believed in Christ and asked them to bring his wife and son out of the ruins of the temple. Cornelius went to the destroyed temple, and through prayer the suffering were freed. After this the ruler Demetrius, and all his relatives and comrades accepted holy Baptism. Cornelius lived for a long time in this city, converted all the pagan inhabitants to Christ, and made Eunomius a presbyter in service to the Lord. Cornelius died in old age and was buried not far from the pagan temple he had destroyed. Close by his tomb a plant sprang up that healed every sickness. When his relics were translated to the church

built nearby in his honour, it moved of its own accord to a position near the altar.

The **Holy Martyr Porphyrius the Mime** (15th / 28th) was an actor in the days of Emperor Julian the Apostate. In the course of his birthday celebration, the Emperor persuaded Porphyrius to mimic and make fun of the Christian Mysteries, specifically Holy Baptism. So Porphyrius entered into a font with water, and cried out: “The servant of God Porphyrius is baptised in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And having immersed himself into the water, he got out and put on the white robe of the newly-illuminated, crying out: “Now I am a Christian.” Although everyone at first thought he said this in jest, his act and confession caused a change to come over Porphyrius, for he was touched by the grace of God, and came to truly believe in Christ, whose name he boldly confessed before the Emperor and all the spectators. For this reason Porphyrius was ordered to be beheaded, thus sealing his bold confession with his blood, and completing his act. Saint Nicolas Velimirovich reflects on this, saying: “*God is not mocked* (Gal. 6:7). God either punishes the mockers in order to correct them or He converts them into that which they had mocked... A similar thing happened to the comedian Gennesus, probably in Diocletian’s time. This Gennesus parodied the Christian Divine Liturgy before a crowd of pagans, amusing them with his mockeries and witticisms. Suddenly, he changed, and cried out before the people: ‘I believe, and I desire to be baptised.’ At first, the spectators thought his words were a part of his farce, but he repeated his statement of faith in Christ. When Gennesus remained steadfast in his new faith, even when interrogated by the court and the Emperor himself, he was tortured and slain. Thus, the mocker of Christ became a martyr for Christ.”

The **Righteous Gideon, the Judge of Israel** (26th September / 9th October) was from the tribe of Manasseh and his father's name was Joash. One day the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour!” Gideon said to Him, “O my Lord, if the Lord is with us,

why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles that our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites" (Judg. 6:12-13). Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my tribe is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." And the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." Gideon said to the Lord, "If now I have found favour in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You Who talk with me. Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You." He said, "I will wait until you come back." So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them. The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. Then the Angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight" (Judg. 6:14-21). The Lord commanded him to destroy the idols and their altars and to build an altar for the Lord and to offer sacrifices and burn them with the wood (Judg. 6:25-31). When God commanded him to fight the Midianites, he asked the Lord to show him a sign to encourage him and said, "Look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand as You have said." And it was so. Again Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more. Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground (Judg. 6:33-40). God fulfilled

his servant's request, not only to show that he had been well and truly chosen, but also to give a prophetic sign of the virginal conception of Christ, the true dew from heaven Who came down into the womb of the Mother of God as onto the fleece, thereby overcoming all the laws of nature. This is seen in the verse from the Acahst Hymn to the Theotokos: "Rejoice, O Virgin, fleece covered with dew which Gideon foresaw." Then Gideon and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the Midianites. And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand people returned, and ten thousand remained. But the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Everyone who drinks from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart from those who get down on their knees to drink." And the number of those who drank by lapping, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Then the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place" (Judg. 7:1-7). As God commanded, they silently advanced at dead of night on the Midianite camp, each man holding in one hand a trumpet and in the other a pitcher containing a lamp. All at once, led by Gideon, they blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers to make such a noise that their panic-stricken enemies fled and they pursued them to the other side of the Jordan River. When Gideon had conquered the rest of the country he refused to become king, for God alone was king over Israel. Gideon presided as judge over the people of Israel for forty years in peace. He

died at a good old age and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“I HAVE a question based on my reading of the book ‘A Spiritual Biography of St Seraphim of Sarov.’ I have come to the section ‘Conversation with Motovilov,’ most of which is going completely over my head. Whilst discussing the power of prayer, St Seraphim says, ‘Many explain that this stillness refers only to worldly matters, in other words, that during prayerful converse with God you must ‘be still’ with regards to worldly affairs... not only is it necessary to be dead to them at prayer, but when by the omnipotent power of faith... the Holy Spirit condescends to visit us... we must be dead to prayer too’. I confess I don’t understand either the first part about being dead to worldly affairs at prayer (so am I wrong to pray to God to help me find a better job where I will not be so stressed, is it wrong of me to ask for people’s health, or for help to sort out problems with my material life, or to ask for a baby?), and neither do I understand the second part about being dead to prayer. I couldn’t possibly imagine consciously thinking to myself that the Holy Spirit has visited me and now I must stop praying. I have probably grossly misunderstood this and wonder if I should just stick to more basic books as I am afraid of creating misconceptions in my mind which might do more harm than good. - N.P.

RE your questions about Saint Seraphim and prayer. I cannot think why you are asking me. Could there be anyone less competent at prayer? I will simply hazard some thoughts and hope that God will bless them to help you. When the Saint counsels that we should be dead to worldly concerns in prayer, I am sure that he does not mean to imply that we should not pray about our worldly concerns. That would run counter to a great deal of Church practice and tradition - after all we have

petitions for our worldly well-being and that of others in the Divine Liturgy itself. Perhaps part of the answer to your question lies in the Liturgy and in the daily prayers that are appointed for us to read each morning and evening at home. In these, we have a model of prayer to instruct us. And one thing we should notice is that although worldly concerns are present there, they do not predominate. Those prayers contain praise, thanksgiving, and prayers for the forgiveness of our sins, our correction of life, our cleansing from passions, and other spiritual concerns and these predominate over the concern for worldly things. We should be instructed by this. Secondly, we have to consider our disposition. The ancient pagan Romans had a very utilitarian view of religion. When you wanted something, you chose the right god or idol, you made the appropriate sacrifice, and you expected to get what you wanted. Our God is NOT an idol, and our prayer does not work like this (although one sometimes gets the impression that many Orthodox think this is how one should approach Him). We bring our worldly concerns to Him, not to tell Him what to do, much less expecting automatically to get what we want, because God loves us so much that instead He always grants us what is most beneficial for us, -but we bring those petitions to bear witness to our trust in Him and in His beneficence. And we pray for others, to manifest our love for them, entrusting them also to God's mercy, which is greater than anything we can begin to comprehend, and, as we often forget, greater than our love for them. So, in a sense we have to be dead to those concerns, i.e., dispassionate about them. We voice them as we trust in God, we voice them as an expression of love, but we do not clamour for the fulfilment of our petitions in the way we crave. I think this truth is shown by the way in which the Church prays for people. Among the Protestant denominations, for instance, one often finds that they offer prayers, giving God full details of whom they are praying for, what they think is wrong, what they want and what He should do. Often this is backed up with florid expressions of how righteous/earnest they, the petitioners, are! In Orthodoxy, we simply add their Christian names to our petitions, either in the Liturgy or in special prayers. We simply, quietly, dispassionately place the

concern in the abyss of God's loving kindness. When St Seraphim speaks of being dead in prayer when the Holy Spirit visits us, he is speaking of a state which neither you nor I are likely to experience, because of our spiritual laxity, immaturity, our uncleanness, our sinfulness. It is perhaps better, knowing nothing of that state, that I say nothing about it, but it is a state of which St Seraphim knew by experience, as did many of the Saints, and we should simply reverence the integrity of his words.



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

ARCHPASTORAL VISIT & ORDINATION

OUR BISHOP, **Metropolitan Ambrose of Methoni**, came to England, arriving at Gatwick on the feast of the holy Prophet Elias. A little after the Bishop arrived at Brookwood, **Protodeacon Evgueni Doroshine** from Lyons, France also arrived. Nearby parishioners kindly put up his family during their stay in England. At the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, 22nd July / 4th August, the feast day of Saint Mary Magdalene, the Bishop celebrated the Divine Liturgy here, assisted by Archimandrite Daniel, Priest Borislav Popov, and Priestmonk Sabbas, and during this service Father Evgueni was ordained to the priesthood. Before the ordination itself, Metropolitan Ambrose addressed the candidate with a lengthy exhortation in French. Besides Fr Evgueni's immediate family, there were in fact a number of parishioners from France and Belgium with us. At the end of the Liturgy the Bishop awarded **Father Borislav Popov** the gold cross in recognition of his faithful and loyal service to our community, and his coming almost every week to help at the divine services here, even for some weekday services, even though he lives almost 100 miles away and, having a family, has to be fully employed. After the Parish Breakfast and

his usual mingling among the faithful, Metropolitan Ambrose was taken from us to visit the **Liggy Camp** on the Norfolk-Suffolk border. Fr Evgueni stayed at the Brotherhood to get used to serving the Divine Liturgy as a priest and we tried, but failed because of illnesses, to celebrate the Liturgy on every day of his ten day stay here. Fr Sabbas had the task of instructing him. On the few days when we were unable to serve the Liturgy he was instructed in serving daily Vespers and Matins. Father returned to France on Thursday 15th August, having very generously throughout his stay here helped us with the work-schedule, given us various gifts and made a generous donation to the Brotherhood. Pray for him in his new ministry.

TWO BAPTISMS AT SAINT EDWARD'S

ON the feast day of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, Saturday, 4th / 17th August, catechumen **Noah Seeback** of West Horsley was baptised and chrismated at Saint Edward's. The celebrant of the mysterion was **Fr Daniel**, and **Gregory Ferguson** stood as his godfather. Members of his family attended the service. He received the Holy Mysteries at the Sunday Liturgy the next day, and then stayed at the Brotherhood for the eight days of wearing his baptismal robe.

On Monday, 6th / 19th August, the Great Feast of the Transfiguration of our Saviour, before the Hours and the Divine Liturgy, **Edith Bell**, the infant daughter of **Anthony and Procla**, was baptised and chrismated. The celebrant was **Priestmonk Sabbas** and Edith's godmother is **Marina Ferguson**. The newly-illuminated handmaid of God received the Holy Mysteries for the first time at the festal Divine Liturgy on that day, and non-Orthodox members of her family attended and stayed with us for the Parish Breakfast. The prayers for Procla's churching were read just before Vespers for the feast day of the holy Apostle Matthias.

Please keep the newly-illuminated Edith and Noah in your prayers, and ask that they remain steadfast in the Faith until the very end of their earthly course.

SIX NEW CATECHUMENS

ON the feast of the Transfiguration also, at the end of the Divine Liturgy, **Josh Bailey**, until recently Rector of the Anglican parish of Bungay and Rural Dean of the Waveney and Blyth deanery, and his family made their vows and were received as catechumens. Josh was named **Joshua** after the Righteous Joshua (Jesus of Navi) (feast day 1st / 14th September); his wife Pippa was named **Philippa** after the Martyr of Pamphylia (21st August / 3rd September); and their four children were named **Elijah** after the holy Prophet Elias the Thesbite (20th July / 2nd August), **Mary** after the Venerable Mary of Egypt (1st / 14th April), **Phoebe** after the Righteous Deaconess at Cenchreae (3rd / 16th September, the same day as Saint Edward!), and **Jonah** after the holy Prophet Jonas (21st September / 4th October). Please pray for them all, beseeching the Saviour to bring them in good time to receive the grace of Holy Baptism.

THE LIGGY CAMP

THIS YEAR many more people attended the **Liggy Camp** which was held between Friday, 2nd August until Monday, 12th August, and, as mentioned above, it was briefly visited by **Metropolitan Ambrose**. The pastor who directed it this year was **Father Alexander Hahr** from Sweden. Thanks be unto God, all those who attended came back with enthusiastic and uplifting reports.

GIFT TO THE CHURCH

METROPOLITAN AMBROSE has kindly given us an icon of the newly glorified Saints within the Genuine Orthodox Tradition, including Saints Philaret of New York, Glicherie of Romania, John of Shanghai and Seraphim of Boguchar.

VISITORS

ON Sunday, 28th July, **Hieromonk Symeon** (Romanian Patriarchate) of Albac, Alba, Romania, visited our church accom-

panied by Constantin and Elena Puscasu.

On 10th August, **Kim Lowe** of the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** brought a group of four women to see the church.

On Tuesday, 20th August, **Father Gherasim**, a monk of the **Monastery of All Celtic Saints** on the Island of Iona visited Saint Edward's accompanied by two pilgrims from Bucharest.



Practical Tip

OFTEN people write asking prayers for the newly departed and mention they were baptised Orthodox, which is not really relevant. The question is: Did they end their earthly course as Orthodox Christians? Throughout history, thousands, probably millions, of people have been baptised Orthodox, but have died outside the Church. Perhaps in recent times the most notable of those, if that is the right expression, is Stalin. Sadly for many who were baptised Orthodox and then lapsed or apostatised, the fact that they wasted such a great treasure may be to their greater punishment at the Judgment. And this, of course, is sadly where so many contemporary parents and godparents fail their children miserably. They go through various ritual customs, but do not take time to pray with their children teaching them to pray, and do not school them in what it means to be Orthodox, which is so vitally important when everything around us is so opposed to our Faith and way of life, and so sadly they more or less head their children towards lapsing.



A Wise Word from Someone Outside the Church:-

“Do you wish to find out the really sublime?
Repeat the Lord's Prayer.”

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE