



In the lofty preaching of the Church of God, let us hearken as she crieth; He that thirsteth, let him come and drink. The cup which I bear is the cup of wisdom. Its drink have I mixed with the word of truth. I pour forth the water, not of contention, but of confession. As Israel doth now drink thereof, it beholdeth God, Who saith: See, see, that I am He, and have not changed. I am God, I am first, and I am hereafter, and besides Me there is none other. Hence, they that partake shall be filled, and shall praise the great mystery of piety.

OIKOS FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS.



FROM THE FATHERS

“THE AIM of Divine providence is to unite by means of true faith and spiritual love those separated in various ways by vice. Indeed, the Saviour endured His sufferings so that *He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad* (Jn 11:52). Thus, he who does not resolutely bear trouble, endure affliction, and patiently sustain hardship, has strayed from the path of Divine love and from the purpose of providence. If love *suffereth long, and is kind* (1 Cor. 13:4), a man who is fainthearted in the face of his afflictions and who therefore behaves wickedly towards those who have offended him, and stops loving them, surely lapses from the purpose of Divine providence.”

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

“WITH REGARD to patience the Lord says: *In your patience possess ye your souls* (Luke 21:19). He did not say *through your fasting or through your vigils*. I refer to the patience bestowed by God, which is the queen of the virtues, the foundation of courageous actions. It is patience that is peace amid strife, serenity amid distress, and a steadfast base for those who acquire it. Once you have attained it with the help of Christ Jesus, no swords and spears, no attacking armies, nor even the ranks of demons, the dark phalanx of hostile powers, will be able to do you any harm.”

VEN. GREGORY OF SINAI, + 1346 A.D.

“TAKE away sin, and illnesses will cease; for they occur in us because of sin, as Saint Basil the Great affirms: Whence come infirmities? Whence come bodily injuries? The Lord created the body, but not infirmity; the soul, but not sin. And what is above all useful and necessary? Union with God and communion with Him by means of love. If we lose this love, we fall away from Him, and in falling away we become subject to various and diverse infirmities.”

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

“IT IS NOT RIGHT to say that our surroundings or the circumstances of our life do not allow us to save our souls. Of course, one cannot close one's eyes to the fact that today's life is quite different to what it was seventy or eighty years ago; it is more complex and it has also become more corrupt. But the Apostle says, *Where sin aboundeth, there doth grace much more abound* (cf. Rom. 5:20), i.e., if sin increases, the person desiring salvation experiences an increase in the help of the grace-filled power of the Lord that his soul might not be crushed by all that surrounds him, but that it remain faithful to God and be saved.”

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

“SCHISM” OR “WALLING-OFF”?

THE CALENDAR QUESTION AND THE HERESY OF ECUMENISM

BY METROPOLITAN CYPRIAN I
OF OROPOS AND FILI

*“For the name ‘Church’ signifies not
separation, but unity and concord.”*

St John Chrysostom

Beloved children in the Lord:

A. “I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance.”

By the Grace of our Lord, I am addressing this epistle to you, in order to remind you, in a simple way, of some basic truths concerning our ecclesiological identity, that is, the place within the Body of the Orthodox Church of those of us who follow the traditional Calendar of the Church Fathers.

I am taking this action, because an uproar has recently [1998, but much the same happens to this day -ed.] been raised in the [Greek] press, and an attempt has been made to present us as supposed schismatics, who ought to return to the innovation of the New Calendar, indeed to submit to the New Calendarist and ecumenist administration of the Church of Greece, and, if we wish - they make this allowance for us! - to retain the Old Calendar.

Our times are difficult and the confusion great, and we Shepherds of the Church must remind you, from time to time, of all that we have set forth in writing and orally, for a constant reminder of the Truth renews and maintains vigilance and eagerness, and at the same time protects one from the “cunningly devised fables” of innovators and heretics.

In so doing, we humbly follow the holy Apostle Peter: *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet... to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.*

Indeed, with this opportunity, I urge you to study, to listen to, and to watch with attention and diligence the various texts and tapes that we have published and circulated, so that - with the corresponding advice and guidance of your spiritual Shepherds - you may understand all the more profoundly the issue of the traditional Calendar and of ecumenism, and that you might thus be made steadfast in the Truth.

B. The Unity of the Church

During these days we chant the marvellous kontakion of Pentecost, which reminds us that the unity of the Church is a result of the visitation of the Holy Spirit: *Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-Holy Spirit.*

This God-given unity, unanimity, and the peace of the Church are preserved when there exists a unity of Faith and adherence to the Traditions of the Church; for only then does the Holy Spirit unite the faithful in the wondrous unity that was experienced by the Church of the first Christians: *The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.*

If we are to preserve the unity of the Church, we must, as children of obedience, *unwaveringly obey*, as the Fathers of the Seventh Holy Ecumenical Synod said, *the teachings of the Apostles and the Fathers and the Traditions of the Church.*

The Holy Apostle Paul exhorts Christians: *Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.*

He who violates these Traditions is anathematized by the Church: *If anyone violates any Tradition of the Church, written or unwritten, let him be anathema.*

We can fully understand this strictness when we take into account that the Holy Fathers regarded the fragmentation of ecclesiastical unity as a great sacrilege.

Here are some typical views of Saint John Chrysostom that will help us to realize the gravity of the matter:

- *"Nothing so provokes God to anger as the division of the Church."*
- *"The most pernicious of all things is to split the Church."*
- *"To cause a schism in the Church is not a lesser evil than to fall into heresy."*
- *"Not even the blood of martyrdom avails to wipe out this sin."*

C. The Old Calendar is a Tradition of the Church

Our Holy Church has used the Julian or Old Calendar from the beginning, and She has regulated Her Paschalion and Festal Calendar in accordance with it; that is, determining thereby when we will celebrate the movable and immovable Feasts of the entire year.

Thus, the Julian or Old Calendar is bound up with the life of our Orthodox Church: *It is interwoven with it and has become sanctified*, and for this reason we call it today, not the Julian or Old Calendar, but the Church Calendar.

Every change in the order of the Festal Calendar of our Church, which has been handed down from of old, inevitably causes confusion, disturbance, and an overturning of all that our Holy Fathers decreed on the basis of the Church Calendar, and this is why whenever any attempt was made in the past to bring about a change in this regard, it was rejected.

Indeed, when in the sixteenth century the heretical Papists endeavoured to persuade the Orthodox to accept their own New Gregorian, or Papal, Calendar, the most holy Primates of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchates rejected and synodally condemned the Western Calendar three times: in 1583, 1587, and 1593.

It should not be forgotten that our Lord Himself made manifest miracles which confirmed that the adherence of the Orthodox to the traditional Church Calendar was right and God-pleasing.

In connection with this, Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite says:

That God is more pleased with the order of the Paschalion and, to put it simply, our own Calendar, than with the accuracy of the Paschalion and Calendar of the Latins, is evident from the miracles which He has revealed and continues to reveal through it to this day.

D. The Heresy of Ecumenism and the Change in the Calendar

At the beginning of our century, there appeared the so-called ecumenical movement, which aims at the *rapprochement* and forthcoming union of all Christians throughout the world, but without Orthodox foundations, since it regards all heretics as members of the Church and the heterodox communities as Churches of Christ.

Thus it was that a new heresy, that of ecumenism, began to be propagated, and the great misfortune is that this heresy was officially proclaimed for the first time, in the domain of Orthodoxy, by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1920.

An initial practical step towards accomplishing the goals of the ecumenical movement was the acceptance of a "single calendar," so that all, Orthodox and heretics, could celebrate the great feasts together and so that the feeling of division might be lessened.

Thus, in 1924, the first agendum of the heresy of ecumenism was adopted, and a change was made in the traditional Church Calendar that sundered the unity of us Orthodox in our common Festal Calendar, and this with truly tragic consequences.

Thereafter, the lackeys of ecumenism, the pioneers of which were, unfortunately, the Patriarchs of Constantinople, by way of various ecumenist congresses and subsequently by their personal participation in the so-called World Council of Churches (1948 and following), have been entering into ever closer relations and communion with different kinds of heretics: they have been cooperating with them on all levels, praying with them, liturgizing with them, co-signing heretical texts, and preaching heretical ideas.

Indeed, the ecumenists have advanced so far in this venture of theirs, that they have also entered into cooperative relations and joint prayer even with people of non-Christian religions, with the result that, after the first stage, when the dividing line between Orthodoxy and heresy was lost, there is now a danger, at the second stage, that the dividing line between Christians and those of other religions will be lost.

A statement by the Patriarch of the ecumenists, Athenagoras (†1972), is indicative of this terrible fall:

We are deceived and we sin, if we think that the Orthodox Faith came down from Heaven and that all [other] creeds are unworthy. Three hundred million people have chosen Islam in order to reach their god, and other hundreds of millions are Protestants, Catholics, and Buddhists. The goal of every religion is to improve mankind [!].

E. Innovators and Modernists

Those who change, reform, and modernise the Traditions of the Church are called innovators and modernists; these people, motivated by pride, not only do not accept with faith and reverence all that our Holy Fathers have decreed, but also attempt to impose their innovations on all Orthodox, heedless of the consequences (upheavals, schisms, the banishment of love, separations among families, the break-ups of monastic brotherhoods, fanaticism, and antagonism...).

The wretched innovators and modernists do not prefer the "safeguard" of sacred Traditions, and for this reason they are unable to repeat the Divinely-inspired words of the Holy Fathers of the Seventh

Holy Œcumenical Synod: *Providing ourselves with a single safeguard: that there be no innovation by us in anything that pertains to right belief.*

Our Holy Fathers regard innovations as *a directive of the devil*, and this is why they are very strict in dealing with innovators, advising us to turn aside and distance ourselves from them, even if they be Angels from Heaven, since it is better for us to gather for prayer without them, than to go with them to the Gehenna of fire, to Hell.

The response of the Orthodox Patriarchs to Pope Pius IX in 1848 is very typical:

Therefore, all innovators, either by heresy or by schism, have wilfully clothed themselves in a 'curse like a garment,' as the Psalmist says, whether they be Popes, Patriarchs, clergy, or laity; 'if anyone, even an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be anathema.'

F. Anti-Innovationists and Walling-Off

The pious Orthodox Christians who have rejected the heresy of ecumenism and the innovation of the New Calendar and who have reverently maintained the Old Calendar are called anti-ecumenists and anti-innovationists; they do not follow the ecumenist and New Calendarist Shepherds in their catastrophic course and do not have any ecclesiastical relations with them; that is, they have *walled themselves off* from the modernists.

The anti-ecumenists have not provoked a schism in the Church by this stance of theirs, but have obeyed the Holy Fathers and the Sacred Canons, which praise and bless all those who are walled off, that is, separated from innovating Shepherds *for dogmatic reasons*, when the latter publicly preach false beliefs and heresies.

We have schism only in that case where a faction of the clergy and the laity break off relations and communion with the canonical Shepherds of the Church *"without due cause," "without good reason,"* on the pretext of *"issues that are capable of being resolved,"* or on the pretext of the personal sins of the Hierarchs.

The heresy of ecumenism, from which the calendar innovation of 1924 derived, cannot be considered an insignificant matter and an *"issue that is capable of being resolved,"* since it has been very aptly characterized as *"something much worse than a panheresy"* and as a *"sickness unto death,"* as *"the most hideous syncretism"* and *"worse than every [other] heresy,"* as well as *"an unprecedented betrayal."*

Consequently, all who follow the traditional Church Calendar and who are anti-ecumenists, not only are not schismatics, but constitute the anti-innovationist plenitude of the Orthodox Church, *which has walled itself off* from the modernists and *is in resistance*, that is, struggling for the peace and unity of the Church, regardless of the persecutions and slanders directed against it.

It should be fully understood that *schism*, which is not forgiven even by the blood of martyrdom, and *walling-off*, which is salvific and worthy of *"the honour due to those of right belief,"* are *completely different things*.

G. New Confessors of the Faith

All those who have kept the traditional Church Calendar have been pejoratively called "Old Calendarists" by the innovators, and since 1924 have undergone persecutions and torments, imprisonments and exiles, depositions and excommunications, defrockings and degradation, threats and intimidation, and even death!

Thus it was that our blessed Fatherland of Greece saw its streets and squares oozing with the blood of the faithful children of Orthodoxy; its prisons were filled with Old Calendarist clergy, and new Confessors of the Faith were sent into exile.

Unfortunately, the innovating New Calendarist ecumenists, in their attempt to unite with the heretics of the West, not only divided the unity of the most Holy Orthodox Church in the common celebration of Her Feasts, but also became persecutors of Her pious children, striving to impose the Western innovation on them *by force*, acting in opposition to Christ, Who does not compel anyone to follow Him, but proclaims: *"Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"; "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."*

These ecumenists and innovators, the enemies of the Traditions of the Fathers and the Church Calendar, while they accept that heretics have Grace and Mysteries and pray with heretics and the followers of other religions, to whom they are tolerant and courteous, do not cease, on the contrary, to slander us anti-ecumenist Old Calendarists as supposed schismatics, deposed and deprived of valid Mysteries.

Nonetheless, our Lord calls blessed those who are slandered for His Name's sake, and the Saints call blessed all who endure torments, persecutions, and false depositions for their adherence to our Holy Faith:

'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake'; 'Blessed are ye, when

men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company,... and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake'; 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven.'

The various depositions imposed by the innovating New Calendarist ecumenists are not true depositions, but false depositions, and our Old Calendarist clergy condemned by them *have never really been deposed, but persecuted*; and for this reason, not only have we not lost Divine Grace and the Sacred Mysteries, but we have received the blessing of God in greater abundance.

When the Faithful are persecuted for the Truth and their Faith, they become Confessors and Martyrs, receive much more Grace from the Holy Spirit, and are blessed, as Saint John Chrysostom says, who, although he was twice unjustly deposed and exiled by his enemies, continued to perform his Episcopal duties: "And he taught and ordained many Bishops, and even more presbyters and deacons. He wrought many miracles in exile, both when alive and after death."

H. The "Old Calendarist Unia"

Another method which the innovating ecumenists have devised in order to neutralize those who remain faithful to the traditional Church Calendar and who struggle against ecumenism is that of the "Old Calendarist Unia."

The underhanded and corrupt system of the Unia is an invention of the Vatican: in order to absorb the Orthodox of the East, the Pope permitted them to retain their Byzantine traditions (administration, typikon, vestments, icons, etc.), as long as they were in communion with the heretical Pontif of Rome and recognized his alleged supreme power and the supposed universal prerogatives of his authority.

The innovators of the ecumenist heresy are now, in their turn, proposing to the opponents of innovation that they retain the Old Calendar, but submit to them in ecclesiastical matters and commemorate the New Calendar Bishops as their authority, as is the case, for example, on the Holy Mountain: there the monasteries and sketes follow the order of the Calendar handed down by the Fathers, but unfortunately - except for the Zealot Fathers - commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople, who follows the New Calendar and is a pioneering and veteran ecumenist.

The Orthodox anti-ecumenists categorically reject the solution of the "Old Calendarist Unia," and it is impossible for them to accept similar proposals, for two main reasons.

a) Our adherence to the traditional Church Calendar is first and foremost bound up with the struggle against the heresy of ecumenism, which means that our walling-off from the ecumenists is essentially the result of the dogmatic deviations of the ecumenical movement; now, since these deviations continue, it would be for us truly an act of *proverbial ritualism* to overlook dogmatic exactitude and be united with the innovators, while maintaining the traditional Calendar. What would be the point?

Would our persistence not in fact be deprived of sobriety, if we kept the wall and the fortifications of our city intact, after we had allowed our enemies to enter it of cially through the gates?

b) Saint Mark Evgenikosexhorts us: "Avoid communing with those with whom you should not commune and commemorating those who should not be commemorated"; applying a further development of the Saint's thinking to the contemporary situation, we add:

- He who commemorates the ecumenists as Orthodox Hierarchs is obligated, henceforth, to carry out whatever they think and whatever course they follow, that is, *to take part* in the ecumenical movement and *to belong* to the World Council of Churches (albeit indirectly), *to pray with* heretics and people of other religions, *to regard* heretical communities as "Sister Churches," *to accept* the baptism of heretics, *to believe* that the One Church also includes heretics, and *to think* that it is imperative for Orthodoxy to serve the world jointly with heretics and people of other religions, etc.

I. For Peace and Unity

The Old Calendarist anti-ecumenists regard as inconceivable any solution whatsoever that would lead them into communion and union with innovators and modernists, without first having removed the causes of our present ecclesiastical division.

The easy acceptance of a solution like the "Old Calendarist Unia" would be *a great betrayal* for us, as well as *unforgivable shallowness*, since it would demonstrate that we have no awareness of our ecclesiological identity; that is to say, of *why we exist and what we are aiming at* as the anti-innovationist plenitude of the Church in resistance.

In essence, the solution must come from the innovators: any prospect for the peace and unity of the Church demands *the following three timely and courageous steps from those who are gravely and singularly responsible for the tragic division among the Orthodox*:

a) The Orthodox ecumenists *should withdraw* from the World Council of Churches and should cease taking part in the ecumenical movement, since the endeavour to unite the Christian world by means of ecumenism has gone astray, insofar as it is not based on strictly Orthodox presuppositions.

b) The Orthodox ecumenists *should condemn* all the anti-Orthodox theological views which inter-Christian and interfaith ecumenism has generated, *should proclaim* quite categorically the uniqueness of the Orthodox Church, and *should make it clear* that Orthodoxy is sufficient of itself for the salvation of the world and does not need to be "allied" with heretics and those of other religions.

c) The Orthodox ecumenists *should return* to the calendar situation that prevailed prior to 1924, in order to restore the unity of all Orthodox in the Festal Calendar and to put an end to the truly "*universal scandal*" and Babel of Festal Calendars, on account of which *some* Orthodox fast and repent, while *others* break the fast and celebrate; *some* celebrate Saint Spyridon, while *others* celebrate the Nativity; *some* celebrate together with the Holy Land of Jerusalem, while *others* celebrate with the heretics of the West!

If the innovating ecumenists do not take these courageous steps, then let them not hope for any concession at all from us, or for any acceptance whatsoever of compromises, even if they threaten us with depositions, excommunications, and persecutions; for, with the help of our *Panagia*, the Mother of God, we are prepared to sacrifice everything, in order to preserve the priceless treasure of Orthodoxy and the sacred "legacy" which Christ has entrusted to us through the Holy Apostles and the God-bearing Fathers.

J. "Keep that which is committed to thy trust"

Beloved children in the Lord:

"Let us stand aright; let us stand with fear!"

To the "Little Flock" of the Old Calendar our Lord has entrusted the precious treasure of Orthodox Truth, untainted by innovation.

Let us hold to this inheritance with humility and self-reproach, with obedience and trust in the Shepherds of our Holy Synod, with love and compassion, and with chaste disposition and purity of heart.

If we abide in the Orthodox dogmas, the Traditions of the Church, and the life of holiness, the Holy Spirit will rest in our hearts and His Grace will strengthen us, illumine us, and guide us to the path of saving Confession.

We are few in number - we are the "Little Flock"; but this should not alarm us, for it was our Lord's good pleasure to entrust us with His Truth, with His "Kingdom."

Let us not disdain this great blessing and let us not neglect it, because "the days are evil."

Let us glory in the afflictions that we face for our Confession, remaining faithful to our calling, since in this way we are counted worthy of "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," of hoping that we will enjoy God's glory.

The fidelity of the "Little Flock" to its Orthodox Confession is already yielding unexpectedly wonderful fruits: *the fame of anti-ecumenism has spread to all the Local Churches*; clergy and people are reacting vigorously against ecumenism: two Patriarchates (Georgia and Bulgaria) have withdrawn from the World Council of Churches [This was so at the time of writing - ed.], and others will follow shortly [Sadly this hope has not been fulfilled - ed.]; the ecumenists are in disarray and are asking themselves some difficult questions; all of the Orthodox are re-examining their attitude towards the ecumenical movement.

Let us persevere; let us be attentive; let us pray; let us hope!

"And hope maketh not ashamed."

† Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili

25th May o.s., 1998

Holy Pentecost



"FROM UNITY is the Trinity, and from Trinity again the unity; not as a source, a spring, a mighty river, sharing a single current, in three separate manners traverses the earth; not as a torch, taken from a pyre, converges again in one; not like a word, both going out from the mind and remaining in it; nor like some shimmering of dancing sunbeams of the waters, a restless gleaming, wavering on the walls, approaching, then fleeing, then drawing nigh. For God's nature is not restless, nor flowing, nor again coalescing, but what is God's is steadfast."

SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, + 389 A.D.

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.

Love

Continuation

IN HIS TEACHING, the holy Apostle (Paul), leading us to the very fountainhead of Christianity, emphatically confirms that the greatest good in the moral world, the most exalted single thing is love. This was not said lightly; in every one of thirteen chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle speaks of this, extolling love. His discourse ends with the decisive words: *Now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love] (13:13).* Love is supreme.

Love for God is inflamed in a person's heart in reflecting on God's benefactions, which are poured out on the race of man. How can we not love God when He made us innocent and blessed, when He signed upon us the image of His Divinity, when He breathed into us an immortal soul, adorned us with wisdom, holiness and righteousness, when He made man master of the whole earthly creation. And even when man, defiling himself with dishonour, on account of his disobedience subjugated himself and all his descendants to eternal judgment, the Lord delivered us, the fallen ones, from the abyss. He came down from Heaven, took upon Himself our nature, and poured out for us His most pure, most holy Blood. He not only delivered us from eternal condemnation, but made us children of the Divine, heirs of the endless heavenly Kingdom. How, after all this, can

we not love God? Truly, anyone who does not love such a Benefactor is worse than a pagan, for they, the pagans, love those who love them, and even among the irrational animals we see the same.

But what does it mean to love God with your whole heart and your whole soul, with all your mind and with all your strength? A person who loves God with his whole heart does not divide his heart between the world and God, between those worldly pleasures with which the rich man in the Gospel delighted himself and with God's service. For no man can serve two masters, God and mammon, as the Gospel says. The one who truly loves the Lord God with all his heart, preferring God to all that is in the world, from his love for Him abandons riches, glory, comfort, and all the allures of the world. Such a person will even withdraw from the people closest to his heart, if they in any way hinder the salvation of his soul. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, says the Lord, is not worthy of me* (Matt. 10: 37).

He who truly loves God with his whole soul, struggles to fulfil all that God wills. His whole life and activity are determined according to God's law. In everything and at all times he strives to emulate the holy example of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He attempts to liken himself to Him in his thoughts, desires and deeds, trying not to grieve the Lord not only by transgressive actions, but not even by sinful words or thoughts. Such a person, whenever his mind or heart through frailty inclines to evil, says to himself: *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* (Gen. 39: 9).

He who truly loves the Lord God in his every thought loves always to reflect upon God, ever places himself in His limitless presence, and instructs himself in the Divine teaching day and night. For him the words of the Lord are *sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, more to be desired than gold and much precious stone* (see Ps. 18: 10). Such a person loves to go to church frequently; he thirsts for communion with Him in prayer and in the sacred Mysteries. Though he lives on earth, such a person thinks more about Heaven, preferring the future life to all the good things of the present life.

He who loves the Lord God with all his strength is not captivated by the world's temptations, is not frightened by its

menaces, and does not pay homage to its deceits; for the glory of the name of God he is prepared to deprive himself of all temporary good things, to bear any abuse or persecution, and even to accept death itself. Who shall *separate us from the love of God*, says the holy Apostle, *shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* (Rom. 8: 35). Such is true, perfect love for God.

... to be continued with "Prayer"



THE COMING MONTH

IN MAY this year we celebrate two Great Feasts of the Church Year, the **Ascension of our Saviour** (Thursday, 15th / 28th May) and **Pentecost Sunday, the festival of the Holy Trinity** (25th May / 7th June), the *last and great day of the feast* (John 7:37) which was inaugurated on the Sunday of Pascha. Such is the importance of this last feast that, like the day of Pascha itself, it is followed by a fast-free week.

The Feast of the Ascension is one of the most ancient celebrations recorded in Church history. Saint Augustine mentions that it was observed from Apostolic times and Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived in the fourth century, mentions it. It is the festival which expresses the greatest hope of Christians, for in it, in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we see one of our own kind seated on the right hand of God the Father.

The last and great day of the feast, Holy Pentecost, is great because it continues to this day; still the gifts of the Holy Spirit are poured out upon believers. Without that grace, we would have no blessing, no sacramental life, no hope of becoming gods by grace.

These two Great Feasts conclude the circle of services which centre on Pascha, and which began with the start of the Lenten Triodion on the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, and from Pascha itself continued with the commemorations in the

Pentecostarion. However, one extra Sunday is added, that of **All Saints**, this year on 1st / 14th June. This celebration falls very appropriately here because, of course, the saints are the harvest reaped after the sowing of Pentecost itself.

There then follow synaxes of the Saints of various districts on the following Sundays. Originally these were local celebrations, so that the people of a town or county could celebrate their own saints together. One of the most pre-eminent of these and one which as monastics we specially observe is that of **All Saints of Athos**, on the second Sunday after Pentecost.

In 1918 a further development was made by the introduction within the Church of Russia of a feast of **All the Saints Who Shone Forth in the Land of Russia**. This was made with the blessing of **Saint Tikhon the New Confessor, the Patriarch of Moscow**, in view of the fact that, as was said then, "in our sorrowful times, ...a single Russia became fragmented when our sinful generation trampled down the fruit-bearing feats of Saints who had laboured in the caves of Kiev and in Moscow, and in the Thebaid of the North, and Western Russia, for the creation of a unified Orthodox Church of Russia." This was, therefore, no longer a local celebration, but a clearly national one, but it was for the strengthening of the people, their support and assurance, at a time when one of the most furious persecutions of the faithful was unleashed upon them by the Soviets. In recent times, the nationalistic element seems to have sprouted a host of other assemblies of saints of various countries, perhaps because their peoples are now scattered abroad, though the Orthodox should not be held together by some worldly and therefore necessarily impermanent, national identity, but because they belong to the One Nation Named after Christ, the Christian Church.

However, we have strayed into June! Among the Saints we commemorate in May, we have: -

The Righteous Monica (4th / 17th May), the mother of Saint Augustine of Hippo: she was born in A.D. 322 in Tagaste, North Africa. Her parents were Christians, but little is known of her

early life. She was given in marriage to a pagan of cial named Patritius, who had a short temper and lived an immoral life. Despite his having a short temper, she herself said of Patritius that he never raised his hand against her, and this was because she wisely always held her tongue, setting a guard over her mouth in his presence. They had three children: Augustine, Navigius and Perpetua. It was a source of great sorrow to her that Patritius would not permit them to be baptized. She particularly worried about Augustine, who lived with a young woman in Carthage and had an illegitimate son with her. Her constant prayers and tears for her son had the effect of converting her husband to Christ before his death. Augustine, however, strayed even further from Christ. While in Carthage, he fell under the influence of the heretical Manichean sect. His mother was horrified and tried to turn him away from his error. It was revealed to her that she should be patient and gentle with him. Augustine paid little attention to her admonitions, and remained in his delusion for nine years. Saint Monica, though disheartened and disappointed, never gave up trying to bring him into the Church. She enlisted the help of a bishop who had once been a Manichean himself, but he would not dispute with Augustine, saying he could not reason with the young man while he was still attracted by the novelty of his heresy. He did reassure her saying, "Go on your way, and God bless you, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should be lost." Keeping an eye on Augustine, in A.D. 383 Monica went to Rome with him when he lectured there. Later, he moved to Milan, where, providentially, he encountered Saint Ambrose and was greatly influenced by his preaching. One day Augustine was reading the New Testament in a garden, and came upon Romans 13:12-14. There and then Augustine decided to "cast off the works of darkness," and to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." He was baptised on the eve of Pascha, A.D. 387. After his baptism, Augustine and his mother planned to return to Africa. They stopped to rest in Ostia, the port of Rome, where St Monica fell asleep in the Lord at the age of fifty-six. She had mercifully been blessed to live to see her prayers for her errant son fulfilled. She

was buried in Ostia, and her sacred relics were translated to the crypt of a church in the sixth century. In the Middle Ages, they were taken to Rome and enshrined in a church dedicated to her renowned son. Saint Augustine, of course, did return to Africa, where subsequently he became Bishop of Hippo and a great teacher of the Church.

On the same day as we celebrate the holy **Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian** and the Desert Father, **the Venerable Arsenius the Great of Egypt** (8th / 21st May), we also celebrate the latter's namesake, the **New Hiero-confessor Metropolitan Arsenius of Novgorod**. He was born Auxentii Georgievich Stadnitsky in 1862 into the family of a priest in the Kishinev province. After following his theological studies in A.D. 1895, by then a master of theology, he was tonsured into the mantia. The next year he was ordained to the priesthood and became inspector, later rector, of the Novgorod theological seminary, and superior of the monastery of St. Anthony the Roman with the rank of Archimandrite. In 1899, he was consecrated bishop of Volokolamsk, and was later transferred to Pskov. It was in 1910 that he was appointed Archbishop of Novgorod. In 1917-18, he was a member of the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church and deputy president of the Council, being in fact the leader of almost all the Council's sessions. He was one of the three candidates to the patriarchal throne, and received the second highest number of votes after Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) on the first ballot. On 28th November / 11th December, 1917, Saint Tikhon raised him to the rank of Metropolitan. He was a close associate of the Patriarch, and a member of the Higher Church Council and the Holy Synod. In 1919 he was arrested, returning to his duties in 1921. In 1922 he was arrested again, put on trial together with Patriarch Tikhon and others, and served a term of exile in Central Asia. He spent eleven months in one of the GPU prisons and was then exiled to Turkestan. According to one source, in 1926 he was in Butyrki prison, from whence he was transferred to Tashkent in the same year. The Sergianists have always tried to claim Metropolitan Arsenius as one of their own because he was numbered among the members of Metropolitan Sergius' Synod in July, 1927, and

was appointed Metropolitan of Tashkent and Turkestan by him on 11th / 24th August, 1933. However, the truth is that, although he did not see through the deception presented by Metropolitan Sergius immediately, he ended his days as a confessing bishop. Thus one of his fellow prisoners, Father Michael Polsky, who subsequently served as a priest in London, wrote about him in his memoirs as follows: "The Apostle Peter had much love for the Saviour, but in the hour of temptation he fell heavily. I recall many new illustrations of this everlasting example. Who in spiritual circles does not know the now reposed Metropolitan Arsenius (Stadnitsky)? He had a broad mind, excellent education, a powerful will, and was honourable and upright. He had a very firm, decisive, unbending character, being strict both to his subordinates and to himself. And once when the Lord had united us for a short period in the Moscow Butyrki prison, this glorious and great man, the Metropolitan of Novgorod, a member of the Synod and of the State Duma [parliament] and Council, from a pure heart told me, a little, unknown priest, what feelings of pusillanimity and cowardice he had suddenly experienced in the inner prison of the GPU when he was awaiting execution by shooting. 'I am already an old man,' he said, 'I have nothing to look forward to. I have been a monk from my youth, finally I became a hierarch, an example and model of Christianity and Christian courage. And yet I was quite unable to conquer myself. I experienced such a thirst to live, such a lack of will to die, such despondency and struggle with myself and fear of death and pusillanimity - it was simply terrible. I fought, but could not conquer myself. Such is my bankruptness and such is the sorrow I feel for myself.' Later the great man fearlessly wrote from his Turkestan exile to Metropolitan Sergius, protesting against his agreement with the God-fighting authorities and rejecting any possibility of compromise with them. Metropolitan Arsenius experienced and overcame his human weakness in his Gethsemane struggle before death, and with complete strength of spirit rejected every temptation, dooming himself to long and harsh imprisonment." Metropolitan Arsenius died in Tashkent on 28th January / 10th February, 1936.

In May, we celebrate some of the greatest Saints of Pre-Conquest England: St John of Beverley, St Dunstan, St Aldhelm, St Augustine and St Bede. Among them we have a much lesser known saint, but one closely connected with our own Saint Edward, **Ælfgifu of Shaftesbury** (18th / 31st May). She was in fact Saint Edward's grandmother. King Alfred the Great founded the convent at Shaftesbury near the end of the ninth century, and his daughter Æthelgifu, who is also commemorated as a saint, was the first abbess. Our Saint Ælfgifu was the wife of Alfred's grandson, King Edmund, and thus the mother of his sons, Kings Edwig and Edgar the Peaceable, Saint Edward's father. Little is known of her early life, but it is recorded that she abounded in almsgiving, and having nothing but contempt for vain ornaments and dress, gave her rich clothing to the poor. It is also mentioned that such was her piety that she was granted spiritual gifts, including that of prophecy. Through her generosity the Convent at Shaftesbury was largely rebuilt, and she became revered as its second foundress. She reposed on 18th May, A.D. 944, when her sons were young, and was laid to rest in the Convent of which she had been such a great benefactress. The sick and suffering began immediately to resort to her tomb for healings. It is probable that it was because of her connection with Shaftesbury that her grandson's sacred relics were later taken and first buried and then enshrined there.



POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

TAKING a bit more care during the fast, I noticed that in the prayers there are often things that really I cannot honestly say apply to me. Take these thoughts from the Pre-Communion prayers for instance: "I have wholly subjected myself to sin" - this seems a bit of an exaggeration; as does "I have sinned more than the harlot." Or "Grant me, who am despairing to be a communicant." I am not despairing, just trying to prepare for Communion. It all seems rather over-dramatic. Any thoughts on how to deal with this? - E.M., Kettering.

I AM NOT sure that there is one simple answer to this, because each and every person is different and their reactions differ. A spiritual father, who knew you closely, could probably give a better answer. However, I think there are several thoughts that might help you. First of all, bear in mind that these prayers were written by holy people, and that their spiritual perception is sharper and clearer than that of me and you, because we are darkened by our sins. And so these "over-dramatic" sentiments are something that we should aspire to, and our feeling that they do not seem to apply is a measure of our own short-coming. So they should become an occasion for us to humble ourselves. Also notice in the prayers there are thoughts which probably very exactly express our situation: I "eat and drink judgment to myself, not discerning the Body and Blood of Thee" for instance. Or again: "It is not as one presumptuous that I draw nigh to Thee, but as one taking courage in Thine ineffable goodness;" "Do Thou now instruct me what I need to do and utter;" "I stand before the doors of Thy temple, yet I do not put away my grievous thoughts," and so on. And there are many more. Very often when we are tempted, the enemy only permits us to see those things which increase the temptation, and not those things which counter it; so search out those latter things. We should be aware of his tactics. We are engaged in battle with him, and would be foolish indeed to be unaware of what he might try on us. Thirdly, if we delve a little deeper we might also find that these expressions are not so far-fetched. A prostitute may have committed many more carnal sins in thought, word and deed than you or I have, but perhaps she was trapped by the necessity of earning her daily keep. We have not been; our indulgence in such things has been simply out of passion, curiosity, distraction and self-gratification. We are indeed much more sinful than her. Lastly, these are prayers that we say in private, and therefore I do not think it would be wrong, if when such thoughts occur, we added in a prayer of our own: "O Lord, this is way above me, but help me to understand and accept," or some such thought. Years ago I knew of a priest who used to cut out sections of these prayers that he thought were above his

parishioners, but this does not seem to be a godly or wise course. First of all, he was setting himself as a judge of the practices of the Church, and secondly he was establishing his own concepts as to the rule of faith for his followers, and in doing so cutting them off from gifts which have been handed down to us for our enlightenment. A better course is to follow what we are given, but strive to overcome our own failure to appreciate it and benefit from it. If we do that with prayer and hope, it will bring a blessing.



NEWS From the Richmond Diocese of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece

BISHOP AMBROSE

His Grace, Bishop Ambrose, being unable to be with his flock in this country for Pascha, was hoping to come to England for Pentecost. However, it appears it is unlikely that the lockdown will be wholly lifted by then, and so he is now planning to come in September, for Saint Edward's Day, and again at Christmas time. Please pray that his hopes will be fulfilled.

NEW ICON

ON the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel, Wednesday 26th March / 8th April, a newly painted icon of **Saint Symeon, the Kinsman of the Lord**, and of **Saint Evlogius the Hospitable**, arrived from the icon studio of the **Convent of Saint Philothei in Sweden**. The sisters there had painted the icon at our request, because it was on the feast day of the two saints that **Fathers Niphon, Sabbas and Thomas** were tonsured to the Great Schema by **His Grace, Bishop Ambrose**.

The sisters in Sweden very kindly also included three smaller mounted prints of the icon, so that each of the fathers could have one to remind them of their tonsure.

NEW BOOKLET ABOUT SAINT EDWARD

IN AMERICA, a new booklet about Saint Edward the Martyr has been published and the writer of the introduction, **Eric Sammons**, has sent us a complimentary copy. The booklet is illustrated with a number of depictions of the Saint's coronation and martyrdom, and includes a reproduction of the icon which we have in his shrine here at Brookwood. The main part of the work is a translation by **Ryan Grant** of ***The Passion of St Edward, King and Martyr***, written in the eleventh century by **Goscelin of Saint-Bertin**. It is apparently the first time that a translation of this work in English has appeared. We have a few reservations about the presentation of the history of the Saint's veneration in the introduction, but the whole work, which includes records of the miracles of the Saint, is a very valuable addition to the information about him and is to be heartily welcomed. The fact that the booklet reached us at all is perhaps a very minor miracle of the Saint's! We had been expecting it after some email correspondence with Eric, but nothing came. Then, in Holy Week, one of the cemetery workmen, working on the far side of the Brookwood cemetery, brought us the delivery package, correctly addressed and paid for, for but for some reason deposited in a flower bed over there and not in our letterbox!

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

DURING the period spanning the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Easters, Brookwood Cemetery appeared to come into its own. Of course, we were then all under lockdown, but we also had beautiful spring weather, and it seems that hosts of people, pairs and small family groups, used the cemetery for their daily walk. In the thirty-eight years we have been here we have never seen so many enjoying walks through the cemetery.

PRACTICAL TIP

WITH the present pandemic, several people have foolishly been sourcing various dubious websites and blogs, finding possible scientific or pseudo-scientific explanations and, even more foolishly, conspiracy theories regarding the cause and purpose of the outbreak and its spread, and this despite the wise counsels of our Bishops. The ideas gleaned on these sites tickle the fancy, and perhaps allow one to give the impression somehow of knowing more than others. But rather than being wiser than others such people are more foolish; they are looking in the wrong direction. We are not called to assess the rightly or wrongly perceived evils of others, to be judges of events and trends, and indeed of the universe, but to tend to ourselves, to repent of our sins, and when we do look out, we must look up not down to worldly concerns. Follow the beautiful admonition of the holy Apostle Paul: *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.* Be wise then, seek the peace of God rather than worry, torment and hysteria. Look to the Fountain of Life and His wonders, rather than wasting your time fruitlessly peeping into murky waters.



ABBA Mios was asked by a soldier: "Father, God then accepts the repentance of the sinner?" The Elder, after counselling him with many instructive words, suddenly asked him: "Tell me, my beloved, when you tear your uniform, do you throw it away?" "No," the soldier answered, "I sew it and use it anew." Then Abba Mios also thoughtfully told him: "If you take pity on your clothing, will not God take pity on His own creation?"

FROM THE EVERGETINOS