

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

DIOCESE OF SOUROZH

CATHEDRAL OF THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

67 ENNISMORE GARDENS, LONDON SW7 1NH



# *Souroz h Messenger*

August 2017, No 3

*The Dorminion of our Most Holy Lady,  
the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary*

15/28 August



## *Troparion*

In giving birth, O Mother of God, thou hast kept thy virginity, and in falling asleep thou hast not forsaken the world. Thou, O Mother of Life, hast passed over into life, and by thy prayers thou dost deliver our souls from death.

## *Kontakion*

Neither the tomb nor death had power over the Mother of God, who is ever watchful in her prayers and in whose intercessions lies unfailing hope. For as the Mother of Life, she has been transported into life by Him Who dwelt within her ever-virgin womb.

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*Dear Readers,*

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*Sourozh Messenger was prepared by:*

*Archpriest Joseph Skinner, Elena Kuzina, Anna Rynda, Yana Reznik, John Newbery, Elena Creswell, Maria Afitsinskaya-Lvova, Julia Pliauksta*

***Patriarchal Congratulations to Archbishop Elisey  
on his 55th Birthday***

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia congratulated Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh on the occasion of his 55th birthday.

***To His Eminence the Most Reverend ELISEY, Archbishop of Sourozh***

*Your Eminence!*

*Please accept my warm congratulations on this significant date in your life – your 55th birthday.*

*In the years that have passed the Lord has entrusted you with many responsible obediences. You have borne the burden of serving at the Russian Spiritual Mission in the Holy Land, as well as labouring in the Department for External Affairs. ‘Endeavouring to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed’, (2 Tim., 2, 15) in every place where you were sent by the all-wise Divine Providence, you obtained favour in the eyes of the Creator, Who entrusted you with the pastoral care of Christ’s rational flock in the Diocese of Sourozh.*

*In the course of your extensive and demanding episcopal service you strive to witness to the beauty and truth of Orthodoxy in the lands of Britain and Ireland, taking care that ‘the word of God should grow and multiply’ (Acts 12, 24).*

*I prayerfully wish you good health, peace and help from Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, in your continuing Episcopal service.*

*With love in the Lord,*

**+ KIRILL**

*Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia*



***Congratulations from the Head of the Department of  
External Church Relations to Archbishop Elisey  
on his Birthday***

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, sent a message of congratulations to Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh on the occasion of his birthday.

***To His Eminence the Most Reverend Elisey, Archbishop of Sourozh  
Your Eminence!***

*I warmly congratulate you on the occasion of your 55th birthday.*

*Having from your youth chosen the path of service in the Church, you obtained your theological education in the Leningrad Theological Schools and for nearly three decades now have been hard at work in the church field.*

*As the person responsible for external church relations, it is with special satisfaction that I note your many years of service in this area, which you began in our Department and are now successfully continuing abroad.*

*As the ruling bishop of the Diocese of Sourozh, by your diligent labours you are preserving and multiplying the precious legacy of your ever-memorable predecessor, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh. Having as the object of your care the Orthodox flock who are under the omophorion of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, you tirelessly call them to maintain the love and singleness of mind that are commanded by God.*

*You also do much to strengthen fraternal cooperation with the hierarchs and clergy of the other Orthodox Churches that are present in Britain, as well as to develop good relations with representatives of other Christian traditions in that country.*

*Greeting Your Eminence on this significant anniversary, I prayerfully wish you good health and length of days. May Christ the Chief Shepherd send down upon you His generous aid and may He bless with success your further service for the good of the Holy Church and the flock entrusted to your care.*

***With love in the Lord,***

***+ Hilarion,***

***Chairman of the Department of External  
Church Relations of the Moscow  
Patriarchate,***

***Metropolitan of Volokolamsk***



## Diocesan News

### ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD PRESENTED TO GLASGOW PARISH

On 13th August 2017, the Orthodox Parish of Saint Kentigern in Glasgow was presented with a copy of the wonder-working “Don” Icon of the Mother of God by Don Cossacks who had participated in the traditional Scottish Highland Games.

This year is the 55th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Sourozh of the Russian Orthodox Church. This symbolic gift was presented in order to mark the anniversary. The icon will be always kept in the church of Saint Kentigern and will act as a reminder of the spiritual bond between Orthodox Scotland and the Don. This great, one might say, historic event will forever remain in the chronicles of the Parish of Saint Kentigern and also in our minds and hearts.

We express our gratitude to Archpriest Georgiy Zavershinsky, Dean of the Russian Orthodox Parishes of Scotland and Northern Ireland and Rector of the church of Saint Kentigern of the Diocese of Sourozh of the Moscow Patriarchate in Glasgow, and all of the church parishioners for the welcome reception and cordial atmosphere. Christ is amongst us!

The mission was carried out within the framework of the project ‘Historical

Memory’ (regional editor Oleg Solovyev). Prior to this, our guests the Cossacks won three silver and two bronze medals in the Scottish Highland Games and were congratulated by the parishioners of Saint Kentigern’s church.

Following the Liturgy the Cossacks presented the “Don” Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God to the Russian Orthodox Parish in Glasgow.





## Cathedral News

### BIRTHDAY OF ARCHBISHOP ELISEY OF SOUROZH CELEBRATED ON ST SERAPHIM'S DAY

On 1st August, the Feast of St Seraphim of Sarov, His Eminence Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh was congratulated by the clergy and parishioners of the Dormition Cathedral on the occasion of his birthday. All present prayerfully shared in the joy of the feast and wished many happy returns to their beloved Vladyka.



### PANIKHIDA FOR METROPOLITAN ANTHONY OF SOUROZH

19.06.1914 - 4.08.2003

On a glorious Sunday evening on the 18th of June, clergy and parishioners of the Cathedral gathered at the grave of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh. The panikhida was headed by Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh and co-served by Archpriest Maxim Nikolsky and Archpriest Dmitry Karpenko. This day of Vladyka's birthday brought together representatives of all generations, both those who knew Vladyka personally and those who met him through his spiritual heritage. In his speech Archbishop Elisey referred to the Metropolitan as a Holy hierarch, wishing Vladyka's soul peace and the Kingdom of God, and to all who came to commemorate him - many years. The service was over but no-one



wanted to leave, their memories, as it were, ascending to the sky where the sun was shining remarkably through the evening clouds.

*Old Brompton Cemetery, Fulham Road, SW10 9UG*



*Our parishioner John Phillips died after a long and painful illness on 25 May 2017. He was in his 92nd year.*

*John was one of the first parishioners of the community of Saint Andrew the First-Called in Romford. He translated much Orthodox material from Russian into English and assisted the editor of the Cathedral Newsletter at the London Cathedral.*

*Although John travelled widely, spoke many languages fluently and had worked for the British Foreign Office, he remained a man of extraordinary humility.*

*His pure and childlike love for the Lord will always be an example for us and for all Christians.*

*His funeral was held on 29 June at St Andrew's Church in Romford.*

### *For reflection*

*Give your intentions in prayer to God, Who knows everyone, even before our birth. And do not ask that everything will be according to your will, because a man does not know what is profitable for him. But say to God: Let Thy will be done! For He does everything for our benefit.*

*(St. Gennadius of Constantinople, The Golden Chain, 47)*

## *Legacy of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh*

### **DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD**

**Sunday, 28th August, 1986**

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God - which combines two events: Her death and Her resurrection in the body on the third day - has been for centuries, indeed, from the very beginning of the existence of the Russian Orthodox Church its Feast, its joy, its glory.

The Mother of God has not been a passive instrument of the Incarnation; without Her 'Amen' the Incarnation would have been as impossible as without the will of God. She is the response of the whole creation to God's love and to God's gift of self not only to mankind but to the whole Cosmos He has created. And in that we rejoice, because Her word is our word. Her word was perfect, as Her trust was, Her faith was, Her gift of self was. Ours is imperfect, and yet our voices resound within Hers, weakly, hesitantly at times, but with faith and also with love.

She is the glory of all Creation; the Mother of God: one might have expected that death could not touch Her; but if death and a death so cruel could touch Her Divine Son, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, the Son of God and the Son of man - of course



*Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh*

She had to pay the tribute of all the earth to the sin of man and also die. But according to Orthodox Tradition, death could not keep Her prisoner. She had given Herself unreservedly and perfectly to God, and it was to God, no longer to the earth that She belonged. And on the third day, when the Apostles came and reopened Her grave for one of them to be able to venerate Her, who had not been present at Her burial, it was found empty: She had risen because the bonds of death could not hold Her, and corruption could not touch a body which had been the body of the Incarnation. What a wonderful joy to think that now, side by side with the risen and ascended Christ, one of us, of mankind, a woman of flesh and blood is enthroned and in Her we can



see the glory which will, we believe, be ours if we are faithful to God as She was.

So, let us rejoice, and not only here where our church has been dedicated since the early eighteenth century to the Assumption of the Mother of God, to Her Dormition, but with the whole

Russian Church, and with all those who belong to it and are scattered over the face of the world, one with the Mother Church, one with the Mother of God, worshipping the Lord with all there is in us and seeing in Her the image of the whole Creation in adoration before the Living God. Amen.

## *Notes on the Church calendar*

### **DORMITION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN**

The feast of the Dormition is the last great feast in the Church calendar year. It is preceded by a two-week fast.

The glorious lot of the ever-blessed Virgin in the work of God's salvation of the world made all Her life wonderful and exemplary. After the Crucifixion of Christ, the Mother of God was taken to live in the house of Her adopted son, the Apostle John. Tradition notes that even after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, the Mother of God remained in Jerusalem, visiting those places where the Saviour of the world preached, suffered and died. She did not want to leave the country that was dear and holy to Her. When king Herod Agrippa began to persecute the Church, both the pagans and the Jews, indignant of the respect that the Mother of God was receiving from the Christians, wanted to kill Her. It was during this time that She travelled

with Apostle John to Ephesus. Church tradition has this also as the time of Her visit to Cyprus to Bishop Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead after four days, and to Mount Athos. When the persecution ended, the Mother of God returned to Apostle John's house at Zion in Jerusalem.

Once, when She went to the Mount of Olives to pray, Archangel Gabriel appeared and spoke of Her approaching departure from this world. Upon returning home, She told Apostle John all that the Archangel had said to Her and started preparing Herself for Her final day on earth. Friends and relatives gathered, and eleven of the apostles were miraculously transported from various parts of the world to Her deathbed. They were all amazed to see each other there. When Apostle John explained that the Mother of God would soon be departing this world, they understood why God had brought them together and became sad. But She comforted them, saying:



*“Do not cry and darken My happiness with your sadness. I am going to My Son and your God, and you will bury My body and return each to your work.”* As the time of Her death neared, the room shone with a divine light, the roof disappeared, and a wondrous sight appeared before all: the Lord Jesus Christ descended from heaven surrounded by many angels. All looked upon this wondrous sight with awe and reverence, and when they approached Her bed, the holy body of the Mother of God shone radiantly, and a fragrance of incense pervaded the room.

The apostles carried the body of the Mother of God through the city to Gethsemane, to be buried at Her request in the tomb of Her family and Joseph. They buried Her body, closed the tomb with a stone and remained there at the site in prayer for three days. On the third day Apostle Thomas arrived and was very saddened that he did not find the Mother of God

alive. To make him feel better, the other apostles rolled away the stone to let him pay his respects to the body. But on entering the tomb, they found that the body was not there – only the winding sheet. They returned home to partake of a communal meal at which they always left a place for the Resurrected Lord. After the meal, they raised the bread left for Christ aloft and exclaimed: “Lord, Jesus Christ, help us.” And they heard a choir of angels, and when they looked up they saw the Holy Virgin surrounded by angels. She greeted them, saying: *“Rejoice, for I am with you through all the days.”* Then the apostles were filled with joy, and instead of using the usual words, they exclaimed: “Most holy Mother of God, help us.” And now they understood and believed that upon the third day after Her dormition, the Mother of God had been resurrected.

Thus, the dormition of the Mother of

God is not a sad event, but a joyous one. Her death is but a short sleep, after which follows Her resurrection and ascension to heaven. From the very beginning, the Church saw in the Mother of God the One who would pray for all of mankind. She is the haven of all the mothers in the world. She teaches us how to live in total faithfulness to the will of God. She, who kept in Her heart the divine words, is an example of faithfulness, love and service.

***Comforting truths inherent in the  
Feast of Dormition***

Blessed is God for having granted us this great day, in which from ancient times and with triumphant hymns the universal Church accompanies heavenward into supreme Zion the incorruptible body of the Mother of God together with Her soul, and allows us to take pleasure in the spiritual fragrance of Her indescribable holiness and in all the virtues with which She was endowed by the Holy Spirit and by the Son of God, Who had issued from Her by taking on human nature! With what tenderness, joy, and piety did the apostles and all the other elect enjoy the wondrous vision of the reposing Theotokos' visage, all shining with heavenly light, and the indescribable heavenly fragrance of Her God-bearing body, and the contemplation of the brightest visage of Her Son and God, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who had come to take His holy Mother's soul



*Tomb of the Virgin Mary*

into His hands! O, this was a celestial vision on earth, never seen before! Even the heavenly angels were visibly present here together with their King and Master.

Only three days did the Most-pure body of the Theotokos, buried by the apostles in Gethsemane, remain in the tomb, only three days did it stay there, and afterwards it was resurrected by the Lord and united with Her soul, and She was taken up together with Her body into heaven. For only three days was She fated to repose in the sleep of death, just as the Lord Himself remained in His tomb for three days and afterwards arose to confirm the universal resurrection of mankind. Death, having been vanquished by the resurrected Christ, became for the faithful a dormition, a passage, a step towards immortality and eternal life, provided we die in faith, repentance, and virtue.

Let us venerate the Most-glorious Mother of God, higher than the heavens and purer than sunlight, Who delivered mankind from its

curse, i.e. from God's damnation. But what exactly is God's curse? It is the consequence of God's righteous wrath upon criminal, sinful mankind, so ungrateful to its Creator and Benefactor, for which it had been deprived of God's mercy, eternally rejected from the face of God, condemned to the eternal torment of hell or to eternal death with the fallen angels, the evil spirits. Eve, our foremother, was responsible for this damnation together with Adam through the sin of disobedience – and even to this day its consequences continue to overshadow sinners who do not know God, their Saviour. But the Theotokos, through Her humility, obedience, meekness, God-like purity, acceptance of the Archangel's tidings, and above all through Her wondrous bearing of the Son of God in Her womb, attracted God's blessing upon the world by giving birth to the Saviour of the world and obtaining the benevolence of the Heavenly Father towards all the faithful. Another consequence of God's damnation of mankind was death, but Christ, the Son of God, Who was born of the Theotokos in flesh, Who suffered and died for the sins of mankind, took upon Himself our damnation, vanquished our death by His death, and removed the curse from us by crucifying our sins on the cross and granting us incorruptibility, resurrection, and immortality.

Such are the comforting truths which the feast of the Dormition of the

Theotokos brings us: it assures us that Christ the Saviour, born from the Most-pure Virgin Mary, removed from us the curse of our sins and granted to all of us resurrection from the dead on the last day of the world. Is this not comforting for every Christian believer?

And having such an expectation of a general resurrection from the dead, let us try throughout our entire life to become worthy of the glorious resurrection into eternal life by means of constant repentance, battle with our passions and the temptations of the flesh and the world, and strive for success in all virtues, in order to eternally enjoy the infinite, incorruptible, surpassing all understanding, all feeling and all expectation – the blessings of the Heavenly Kingdom, together with God, the Mother of God, the holy angels, and all the saints. Amen.

***St. John of Kronstadt***

***SOURCE: [http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library\\_en/moth\\_dormition.html](http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/moth_dormition.html)***



## *Holy places in London*

### **WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL**

Situated in the London borough of Westminster ten minutes walk from Westminster Abbey, the beautiful and magnificent Metropolitan Cathedral of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ is the mother Roman Catholic church of England and Wales and the largest Catholic church building in the UK. For 300 years after the Reformation the Catholic faith was prohibited and Catholic services banned. The Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1829 put an end to this oppression: building of Catholic churches in the country resumed and new dioceses were established. This cathedral was built between 1895 and 1903. The land for it was purchased in 1884. Earlier a prison was located here. The cathedral was built in the neo-Byzantine style and designed by the architect John Francis Bentley who was inspired by churches in Ravenna, Milan, Venice and Constantinople. The solemn consecration of the edifice took place in 1910. Red bricks, Portland stone and concrete were used in its construction, while 126 kinds of marble of many colours from twenty-four countries around the world along with gold, pearl and lapis lazuli were used to decorate it inside. Its bell tower is about eighty-seven metres high and has one bell named after King Edward the



*Westminster Cathedral*  
(source - [Openbuildings.com](http://Openbuildings.com))

Confessor – the gift of a Duchess of Norfolk. The cross at the top is said to contain a part of the True Cross.

The temple's huge total area is over 5,000 square metres, the main dome's inner height is thirty-four metres, while the total length is 110 metres. The spacious interior is filled with the atmosphere of holiness and splendour. The cathedral has an enormous nave along with transepts, apses, a sanctuary, numerous chapels, a baptistery, a sacristy and a crypt. All parts of the cathedral are adorned with countless wonderful mosaics created by prominent masters. The church has fourteen panels of the 'Stations of the Cross' (according



to the Catholic tradition) – a work by Eric Gill. Many mosaics at the cathedral were made by the Russian artist Boris Vasilyevich Anrep (1883-1969) who spent most of his life in England. Among his works are: ‘The miracle in Cana of Galilee’, ‘Abel’s sacrifice’, ‘Abraham’s hospitality’, ‘The manna in the desert’, and ‘Feeding the multitude’. In the final years of his life he created sketch designs for mosaics inside St Paul’s Chapel.

A thirty-foot wooden carved Byzantine-style crucifix, suspended between the nave and the chancel, dominates the former. A central feature is the giant Italian baldachin above the high altar. A prominent female artist, Gertrude Martin, worked on the mosaics of the Lady Chapel and the Holy Souls Chapel, while the mosaic of Christ in glory above the main entrance is a masterpiece of Robert Anning Bell. A large number of mosaics were produced by representatives of the Arts and Crafts Movement as well as modern artists.

One of the most precious holy objects in the cathedral is the alabaster fifteenth-century English statue of ‘Madonna of Westminster’ with the Christ Child which was bought at an exhibition in Paris in 1954! The nave has dark-green columns made of the same marble which was used in the building of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople!

The Lady Chapel is particularly splendid with its golden ceiling, a majestic

image of the Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus above the altar, the ‘Tree of Life’ with statues of the Mother of God, the Archangel Gabriel and some saints to the left and the Apostle Peter and the Archangel Michael to the right, with depictions of angels with rosaries, female martyrs and the prophets who predicted the coming of Christ.

Among other chapels of the cathedral let us mention the Chapels of the Holy Sacrament, of Sts Augustine of Canterbury and Gregory the Dialogist (dedicated to the evangelization of England, with scenes from the Life of St Augustine and images of early English saints on the ceiling – Bede, Cuthbert, Wilfrid, Benedict Biscop, Edmund), of the Holy Souls, of the Sacred Heart and St Michael, of St Thomas Becket (dedicated to the memory of the cathedral’s founder – Cardinal Herbert Vaughan), of the Apostle Paul, of the Righteous Joseph, of All Irish Saints, of the Great-martyr George and the English Martyrs (it



*Westminster Cathedral interior*  
(source - Commons.wikimedia.org)



*The statue of 'Westminster Madonna' at Westminster Cathedral (source - Wikipedia)*

houses the shrine of the Catholic martyr John Southworth, who was executed by Protestants in 1654), of St Andrew and the Saints of Scotland, which contains the most significant relic for Orthodox believers at this cathedral – a tiny portion of the Apostle Andrew's relics sealed into the base of a small cross above its altar. Inside this chapel in the very Byzantine style you can also find a wall mosaic of St Andrew, sculptures of Sts Ninian, Margaret, Columba and Brigid and images of the cities associated with St Andrew above the arches. In 1999 near the Chapel of the Irish Saints there appeared an amazing mosaic of St Patrick, the Orthodox patron of Ireland, and in 2001 elsewhere in the cathedral an exquisite early Byzantine-style mosaic of St Alban, the

Orthodox Protomartyr of Britain, by Christopher Hobbs, was added.

Notably, the last Ambassador of the Russian Empire to Britain, Count Alexander Konstantinovich Benkendorf (1849-1917), is buried in the crypt.

In 1977 Her Majesty the Queen visited Westminster Cathedral (the first monarch since the Reformation to do so) for a flower show and returned here for a service in 1995. Popes John Paul II and Francis I served Mass here in 1982 and 2010 respectively.

Westminster Cathedral is famous for its professional Catholic choir. It performs music of many composers of the Renaissance period along with contemporary ones, some of whom compose especially for this church. Remarkably, it was here that in 1903 the greatest English composer, Edward Elgar, first performed his fantastic *Dream of Gerontius* in London!

Every day the cathedral holds six Masses, a Vespers and many prayers. Organ concerts are arranged on Sundays (admission free). The temple can boast a small museum-treasury in which church vessels, vestments and other relics are exhibited.

Opening time: Mon-Fri 08.00 AM till 7.00 PM, Sat-Sun 10.00 AM till 1.00 PM.

*Official website: <http://www.westminstercathedral.org.uk/index.php>*

**Dmitry Lapa**

## *Sacraments of the Church*

*We are printing a series of short texts about the Sacraments of the Church. They are copied from 'An Orthodox Online Catechism', which is based on the book 'The Mystery of Faith' by Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev).*

*They are presented here by the kind permission and blessing of the author.*

### PART 7. MARRIAGE

The love that exists between a man and a woman is an important theme in many books of Scripture. The Book of Genesis, in particular, tells us of holy and pious couples, such as Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel. A special blessing, bestowed on these couples by the Lord, was made manifest in the multiplication of their descendants. Love is praised in the Song of Songs, a book which, in spite of all allegorical and mystical interpretations in patristic tradition, does not lose its literal meaning.

The very attitude of God to the people of Israel is compared in the Old Testament with that of a husband to his wife. This imagery is developed to such an extent that unfaithfulness to God and idolatry are paralleled with adultery and prostitution. When St Paul speaks about marital love as the reflection of the love which exists between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph.5:20-33), he develops the same imagery.

The mystery of marriage was



established by God in Paradise. Having created Adam and Eve, God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply' (Gen.1:28). This multiplication of the human race was to be achieved through marriage: 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh' (Gen.2:24). Marital union is therefore not a consequence of the Fall but something inherent to the primordial nature of human beings. The mystery of marriage was further blessed by the Incarnate Lord when He changed water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. 'We state', St Cyril of Alexandria writes, 'that He (Christ) blessed marriage in accordance with the economy (oikonomia) by which He became man and went... to the wedding in Cana of Galilee'.

There are two misunderstandings about marriage which should be rejected in Orthodox dogmatic theology. One is that marriage exists for the sole

purpose of procreation. What, then, is the meaning of marriage for those couples who have no children? Are they advised to divorce and remarry? Even in the case of those who have children: are they actually supposed to have relations once a year for the sole purpose of 'procreation'? This has never been a teaching of the Church. On the contrary, according to St John Chrysostom, among the two reasons for which marriage was instituted, namely 'to bring man to be content with one woman and to have children', it is the first reason which is the most important: 'as for procreation, it is not required absolutely by marriage...'. In fact, in Orthodox understanding, the goal of marriage is that man and woman should become one, in the image of the Holy Trinity, Whose three Persons are essentially united in love. To quote St John Chrysostom again, 'when husband and wife are united in marriage, they are no longer seen as something earthly, but as the image of God Himself'. The mutual love of the two partners in marriage becomes life-giving and creative when a child is born as its fruit. Every human being is therefore to be a fruit of love, and everyone's birth is a result of love between his parents.

Another misunderstanding about marriage is that it should be regarded as a 'concession' to human 'infirmity': it is better to be married than to commit adultery (this understanding is based on a wrong interpretation of 1 Cor.7:2-9). Some early Christian sectarian movements (such as Montanism

and Manicheanism) held the view that sexuality in general is something that is unclean and evil, while virginity is the only proper state for Christians. The Orthodox tradition opposed this distortion of Christian asceticism and morality very strongly.

In the Orthodox Church, there is no understanding of sexual union as something unclean or unholy. This becomes clear when one reads the following prayers from the Orthodox rite of Marriage: 'Bless their marriage, and vouchsafe unto these Thy servants... chastity, mutual love in the bond of peace... Preserve their bed unassailed... Cause their marriage to be honourable. Preserve their bed blameless. Mercifully grant that they may live together in purity...'. Sexual life is therefore considered compatible with 'purity' and 'chastity', the latter being, of course, not an abstinence from intercourse but rather a sexual life that is liberated from what became its characteristic after the fall of Adam. As Paul Evdokimov says, 'in harmonious unions... sexuality undergoes a progressive spiritualization in order to reach conjugal chastity'. The mutual love of



man and woman in marriage becomes less and less dependent on sexual life and develops into a deep unity and union which integrates the whole of the human person: the two must become not only 'one flesh', but also one soul and one spirit. In Christian marriage, it is not selfish 'pleasure' or search for 'fun' which is the main driving force: it is rather a quest for mutual sacrifice, for readiness to take the partner's cross as one's own, to share one's whole life with one's partner. The ultimate goal of marriage is the same as that of every other sacrament, deification of the human nature and union with Christ. This becomes possible only when marriage itself is transfigured and deified.

In marriage, the human person is transfigured; he overcomes his loneliness and egocentrism; his personality is completed and perfected. In this light Fr Alexander Elchaninov, a notable contemporary Orthodox priest and theologian, describes marriage in terms of 'initiation' and 'mystery', in which 'a full transformation of the human person' takes place, 'the enlargement of his personality, new eyes, new perception of life, birth into the world, by means of it, in new fullness'. In the marital union of two individuals there is both the completion of their personalities and the appearance of the fruit of their love, a child, who makes their dyad into a triad: '...An integral knowledge of another person is possible in marriage, a miracle of sensation, intimacy, of the vision of another person...



Before marriage, the human person glides above life, seeing it from outside. Only in marriage is he fully immersed into it, and enters it through another person. This enjoyment of true knowledge and true life gives us that feeling of complete fullness and satisfaction which renders us richer and wiser. And this fullness is even deepened when out of the two of us, united and reconciled, a third appears, our child'.

Christ is the One Who is present at every Christian marriage and Who conducts the marriage ceremony in the Church: the priest's role is not even to represent, but rather to present Christ and to reveal His presence, as it is also in other sacraments. The story of the wedding in Cana of Galilee is read at the Christian wedding ceremony in order to show that marriage is the miracle of the transformation of water into wine, that is, of daily routine into an unceasing and everyday feast, a perpetual celebration of the love of one person for the other.

***By Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeev).  
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the author.***



## TWO ENGLISH ORTHODOX NEW MARTYRS

### NICHOLAS JOHNSON

Since the end of the Second World War and all its ensuing pain and disruption, a small but not insignificant wave of some thousands of conversions, or rather returns, to Orthodox Christianity has occurred in the British Isles. The fruit of this is now before us - the growing up of a second and even third generation of Orthodox Christians of British blood and island ancestry. It would therefore seem not inappropriate to recall now our Orthodox forerunners and forebears. I speak not of those who in ancient times confessed the Orthodox Faith in these islands. Neither do I speak of those who were privileged before the war and even in previous centuries to embrace and confess the Orthodox Faith and drink of Her living waters, nor even of those who were counted worthy of the priesthood, like Fr. Stephen Hatherly (in the 1870's) or Fr. Nicolas Gibbes (in the 1920's). I speak above all of calling to heart and mind those who were worthy to share in the holy suffering and martyrdom of sister-peoples of the great Orthodox Commonwealth in most recent times. Among the countless host of Orthodox martyrs of this century, we should not forget an English Orthodox. His name is Nicolas Johnson (in the world Brian, which he had changed to Nicolas when becoming Orthodox). Nicolas Johnson

was born in Russia; he spoke English with a Russian accent, but he was of English origin through his father. Possibly his mother was Russian. He became private secretary to the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, together with whom he was martyred in Perm on Ascension Day (31 May/13 June 1918) one month before the Grand Duke's brother, Nicolas II, was martyred. The holy martyr Nicolas (Johnson) is mentioned in the stichira at Lauds in the Matins to the Royal Martyrs, together with the other martyred Grand Dukes and their faithful servants, who are all commemorated on 4/17 July. It seems fitting that the English Orthodox who are faithful to the memory of the New Martyrs should honour a compatriot who was deemed worthy of the martyr's crown together



*Martyr Nicolas Johnson*

with the Russian relatives of our own Royal Family. May our veneration for the New Martyr Nicolas, a servant of Orthodoxy faithful to the end, be seen as a small wreath laid by faithful Orthodox people of these islands at the feet of the many millions of Russian Orthodox martyrs. And may we, though unworthy, through the prayers of the holy martyr Nicolas and through naming our sons after him, be remembered in the Kingdom of Heaven, of which he was counted worthy.

Holy New Martyr Nicolas, Pray to God for us!

### SIR HENRY ABBOTT

On 30 April/13 May 1876, in another martyred part of the Orthodox world, there took place the holy and noble sacrifice of an earlier Englishman, Sir Henry Abbot.

He was a partner in the company of R. Abbot & Sons, which was a free landowner and had considerable influence in the northern Greek city of Salonica, then still part of the Ottoman Empire. Aged 34, he was married to one of the daughters of Constantine Karatheodori, personal physician to Sultans Mohammed II and Abdul Mehdjid in Constantinople. Apart from his business interests, Henry Abbot also represented the German Consulate in Salonica. Henry Abbot, an Orthodox Christian, was martyred in the following way.

In a Salonica street on that spring day in 1876, a group of Orthodox Christians,

helped by the American Consul, had just rescued a young Bulgarian Orthodox girl whom a Muslim mob had been trying forcibly to convert to Islam. The enraged Mohammedans demanded that the girl be handed over to them at once. According to some reports, they managed to snatch back the girl and the American, and then drag her into a mosque (which, in point of fact, had formerly been a church dedicated to the Mother of God, but then desecrated by the Turks). At that moment Henry Abbot, helped by the French Consul, entered the mosque to rescue both the girl and the American, which they succeeded in doing. In revenge the mob then seized Henry Abbot and the Frenchman and proceeded to beat them to death with iron bars, until their bodies were but mangled heaps of flesh, blood and broken bone. According to another version, the American Consul himself had already managed to retrieve the girl a second time, driving himself and her away in his carriage before the Muslims could get her inside the mosque. And it was then that the mob took their cruel vengeance on Henry Abbot and the Frenchman.

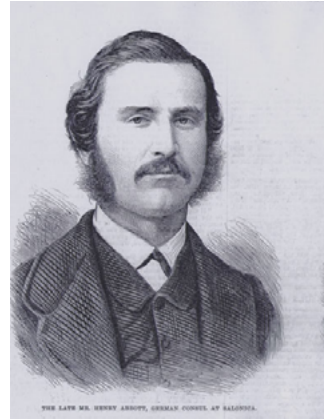
Unfortunately we do not know what saint's name Henry Abbot had taken when he was received into the Orthodox Church. But surely here is another case like those of the early Russian and Russo-Scandinavian saints who took saints' names on baptism but are known in Russian calendars by their pagan names, since it was considered

that they had hallowed their former names through their personal holiness. Examples include Sts. Boris (Roman), Gleb (David), Olga or Helga (Helen), Vladimir or Waldemar (Basil). Given that we are ignorant of Henry Abbot's Orthodox name, we are obliged to use his 'name in the world', which we may consider he hallowed by his sacrifice.

Our source for these notes is a book entitled 'Bulgaria - a French Chronicle 1876-1878', (Sofia, 1988, in Bulgarian). The author, Vasil Vasilev, writes the following: 'He looked like a saint.... In Nero's times the first tortured, dismembered Christians, beaten to death, were canonised because they refused to renounce their faith... This feat was no less worthy - at the cost of human life, a young Bulgarian girl escaped conversion to Mohammedism'.

Although Henry Abbot has never officially been canonised by the Church (like many others martyred directly or indirectly as a result of their Orthodox Faith), he is surely worthy of our prayers and veneration, as the many millions of Orthodox martyrs of all nationalities, persecuted 'at the hands of heathen nations, of apostates, and of heretics', as we say at morning prayers. The feat of Henry Abbot reminds us of Our Lord's words in St. John's Gospel: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'.

May his feat of self-sacrificing love and the feat of faithfulness to the end of the New Martyr Nicolas inspire in us the



Sir Henry Abbott

daily confession of the Orthodox Faith. 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith-follow, considering the end of their conversation', (Heb. 13, 7). And may their example inspire us also to meet with a martyr's faith all those sinister and insidious movements which today threaten the fullness and purity of the Orthodox Faith over the whole of the Orthodox world.

Holy New Martyrs, Pray to God for us!  
November 1991

*(We wish to thank the Most Rev. Archbishop Antony of Los Angeles for information regarding the New Martyr Nicolas. As concerns the New Martyr Henry Abbot, we wish to thank Fr. Christo Petkov, a Bulgarian priest, who first drew his martyrdom to our attention.)*

**Archpriest Andrew Phillips, from the book "Orthodox Christianity and English Tradition".**

## *British and Irish Saints*

### **OUR HOLY MOTHER EANSWYTHE OF FOLKESTONE**

Who was the first Englishwoman to devote herself to the holy life of the nun? Who thus became the spiritual mother of all the English? The answer is Eanswythe of Folkestone. Who was she?

The daughter of Eadbald of Kent and his wife Emma of Gaul, Eanswythe was in fact the grand-daughter of St Ethelbert (Albert), King of Kent, who had been converted by St Augustine himself. She would not, however, have known her grandfather, since Eanswythe was born in about 614. As a young girl, she clearly came under the influence of the English mission, St Laurence of Canterbury, St Mellitus of London and St Justus of Rochester, and no doubt her aunt St Ethelburgh. Her life records that she sought to serve God, 'treading underfoot the treasures of this world and, embracing holy teaching, she yearned with her whole heart for the life of the heavenly kingdom'. Indeed she refused to marry a pagan Northumbrian prince as was required of her by her father. Instead, it seems, she went to Gaul, perhaps to Faremoutiers in Brie, to receive monastic training. Then in 630, if this is so, she returned to her native land and on the cliffs of Folkestone founded a nunnery with the



*St Eanswythe of Folkestone*

blessing of St Honorius of Canterbury. Its church was dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, a typical early English dedication.

This convent was the first ever among the English, and Eanswythe became its first Abbess, possibly with the advice and help of nuns from Gaul. It is written that it was the particular devotion of the nuns to give unceasing thanks to God for the blessing of the Faith so recently brought to the English land by her Apostle Augustine. Eanswythe showed great motherly care for the nuns under her and is said to have worked several miracles. Among these was the striking of a rock and

finding a spring of water, also restoring the sight of a blind woman and the deliverance of one possessed by an unclean spirit. It was here that the so young Eanswythe lived in chastity, prayer and repentance, reposing on the last day of August, probably in 640.

Eanswythe's nunnery was later destroyed by Danish raiders, probably in 865, but in 927 its church was rebuilt by King Athelstan. This in turn was destroyed by Earl Godwin (of Goodwin Sands fame) who plundered Folkestone in 1052. In 1095 a Norman monastery was built on the same site but this in turn was lost when the cliff on which it stood was washed into the sea. However, in 1138 a little further inland a new church was built dedicated to St. Mary and Eanswythe. The relics of St. Eanswythe were translated here on 12 September of that year and this remains the date of the local feast to this day. Although greatly frequented by pilgrims in the Middle Ages, the shrine and relics of the saint, now Patroness of the town of Folkestone, were hidden and lost at the Reformation. These were recovered during restoration work on 17 June 1885, when a twelfth-century leaden casket was found in the north wall of the church with relics of the virgin. These holy relics remain here in their casket for the veneration of the faithful to this day.

Holy Mother Eanswythe, Who ceaselessly gave thanks for the coming of the Faith of Christ to this land, as

our Spiritual Mother, teach us now to do likewise and pray to God for the English land and all thy people!

**Source: *ORTHODOX ENGLAND VOL. 20 NO. 4 - [www.orthodox-england.org.uk](http://www.orthodox-england.org.uk)***



*St Mary and St Eanswythe Church in Folkestone*





## *Newsletter 30 years ago*

***Newsletter 30 Years Ago - Nº 199,  
July 1987***

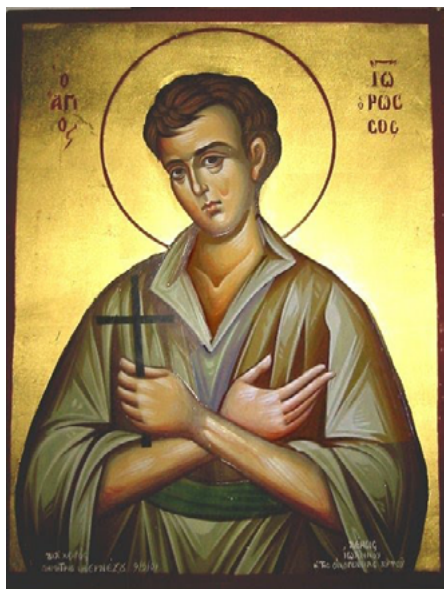
### **ST JOHN THE RUSSIAN**

Twenty-five years ago this year, the Russian Church canonised one of the most loved local saints that Russia has produced - a man who for two centuries was not known in his homeland, but only in distant Asia Minor where he spent half his short life in exile.

As a young soldier, St John the Russian took part in Peter the Great's abortive campaign against the Turkish-occupied territories in the Balkans. The campaign ended in defeat in 1711, and John, along with thousands of his fellow soldiers, was taken prisoner by the Tartars and sold into slavery. His new master was a Turkish officer, who took him home to Prokopi in Capadocia, where a substantial Greek Christian population lived under the Turkish yoke. Most of the Russian prisoners of war who suffered similar fates denied their faith and became Muslims in order to make their lives a little less harsh; but it seems that from the beginning John was gifted with a very deep faith, patience and endurance. So we see him in his Icon; a very young, beardless man holding a cross, his face filled with the humility and simplicity of one who would accept the prolonged martyrdom of

slavery or a violent death for Christ with the same tranquil and accepting love. When put under pressure to embrace Islam, he calmly and resolutely told his master that as a Christian he would serve him willingly and obey all his orders; but if forced to abandon his faith, he would choose death in preference.

Somehow the Turkish officer was moved, and he decided to let John be. In time, he offered him a room to live in instead of sleeping in the corner of the stable along with the animals. But John preferred his stable. It was his cell, where he prayed constantly, taking a minimum of food and sleep. At night he would sometimes slip out and keep vigil in the local church, where he went to Communion every Saturday. Even when he acted as his master's groom, he would follow behind the horse singing quietly to himself such Psalms as he knew by heart in Slavonic. It seems that the officer and his wife developed considerable love and respect for their slave and came to realise that their good fortune and prosperity were due in no small measure to his prayers. Nevertheless, these were difficult times even for the free Christian population, and so much more for the slave of a Turkish household. Even when John was dying, the local priest was afraid to bring Com-



*St John the Russian*

munion openly to the stable, until he had the inspiration of hiding it in a hollowed-out apple.

Thus John died peacefully on 27th May, 1730. His relics were soon discovered to be incorrupt, as they remain to this day, having resisted an attempt to burn them when Turkish troops ransacked the village church just two years after his death. John quickly became a much loved saint and trusted intercessor for the Christians of Prokopi, where his relics rested in the church of St Basil. His fame spread, and monks from the Russian monastery of St Panteleimon on Mount Athos came to acquire relics of him. But the Saint was not destined to rest even in his adopted homeland. In the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1924,

the people of Prokopi, along with most of their Christian compatriots, had to leave their ancestral homeland and make a new life in Greece. But they had no intention of leaving their own Saint in their desolated village. Along with such necessities of life as they could put together, from the centre of Asia Minor they carried St John's relics down to the coast and the ship waiting to take them to the island of Evia. There they settled in a village renamed after the Prokopi they had left - though it is often called simply 'St John'. His relics rest in the spacious church which dominates the village, drawing pilgrims from all over Greece and particularly people whose families came from Asia Minor, and many miracles continue to be worked through his prayers.





*Photo report from the St Seraphim Orthodox Youth Camp*



Blessing of the Camp



Preparing for the Liturgy



Campers are carrying the chariot



Preparing for a busy breakfast







## *For and about Children*



### DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

(28TH AUGUST)

Dear children, in our August issue we would like to tell you about the last earthly days of the Mother of God and her Dormition. Our London Cathedral of Dormition of the Mother of God and All Saints is consecrated in honour of this Great Feast. The Feast Day is on the 28th of August.

After the death of her only son Jesus Christ, His glorious Resurrection and Ascension to heaven, the Holy Mother of God lived for another

20 years. Every day she went to the Grave of the Lord to offer fervent prayer to her longed-for Son. She stayed at the house of the Apostle John the Theologian, who was looking after her as a loving and caring son. The Holy Mother of God had peace in her heart, in all her actions she was gentle and diligent, always talking with kindness and only about necessary things in life. All her words were blessed with graciousness, all her talks were meaningful and fulfilling. The Holy Mother of God was kind to everyone and harmed no one. The respect of ancient Christians for



the All-Pure Mother of God was so great that they tried to keep and pass on every detail about her life, her sayings and her deeds. Day and night she spent her time in prayer. She was asking her Son and Lord to take her soul to Him, to be reunited with Him. One day the Archangel Gabriel came to the Holy Mother of God and said that she would soon fall asleep forever and depart from this life to eternal life (dormition means 'falling asleep'). The Archangel gave her a palm branch. She was overwhelmed with spiritual joy and thanked her son Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, because He had heard her prayers and fulfilled her heart's desire.

When the day of the Dormition came the Holy Mother of God was prepared and stayed at her home. Suddenly she heard a noise and her house was all in clouds. The Apostles were on the clouds, by the command of God, they had come from all over the world to say goodbye to the Holy Mother of God.

Then came the third hour (9 am), when the Dormition of the Mother of God was to occur. The very bright Light of Divine Glory shone forth, Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, was descending from heaven surrounded by hosts of Angels, Archangels and other heavenly Powers and the souls of the Forefathers and the Prophets. Seeing her Son, the Mother of God exclaimed, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced

in God my Saviour, for He hath regarded the low estate of His Handmaiden' (Luke 1:46-48) and rising from her bed to meet the Lord, she bowed down to Him and the Lord bid her enter the into Life Eternal. In a happy sleep the Most Holy Virgin Mary gave her soul into the hands of her Son and God.

On the third day, the Mother of God was resurrected and her pure body was also taken to Heaven. The same day she came to the Apostles, surrounded by Angels, and said, 'Rejoice! I will be with you always'.

The Holy Mother of God left the earth but her mercy is always upon us. She is the Queen of Heaven and tenderly looks at us all from heaven with great love. She is always willing to offer her wonder-working help and protection to everyone who asks and prays to her sincerely and wholeheartedly.

Most Holy Mother of God, save us!



*Plaschanitsa of Mother of God*

Question 1: Four out of the 12 Great Feasts are dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, please name them. Ask your parents to help you.

Question 2: Do you remember when the Archangel Gabriel brought God's message to the Virgin Mary about her having a Son? What Feast was it? What did the Archangel Gabriel give to the Mother of God then?

Question 3: Why do you think the annual 12 Great Feasts start and finish with Feasts dedicated to the Mother of God?

[http://lissad.prihod.rultroickijj\\_listo-chek](http://lissad.prihod.rultroickijj_listo-chek)

### EXPLANATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY - PART 3

The third antiphon, called the **Beatitudes**, is taken from the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:3-12). The Beatitudes indicate the spiritual qualities necessary for a Christian: humility of spirit (spiritual poverty) and contrition concerning our sins, meekness when drawing near the righteousness of God, purity of heart, compassion for our neighbour, seeking peace in all situations, patience amid every temptation, and a readiness to endure dishonour, persecution, and death for Christ; trusting that, as a confessor for Him, and through such ascetic struggles, we can expect a great reward in Heaven. During the chanting of the Beatitudes, the



*Small Entrance with the Gospel*

Royal Doors are opened for the Small Entrance. As the Beatitudes are ending, the priest comes out with the deacon, who carries the sacred Gospel through the north door onto the ambo. The priest prays that He, Who in heaven appointed the armies of angels and the heavenly hosts to minister His glory, may now order these same celestial powers to serve with us in this entry into the holy altar. This entrance with the Holy Gospel reminds us of the first appearance of Jesus Christ to the world, when He came to begin His universal preaching. The candle which the altar boy carries at this time in front of the Gospel signifies John the Forerunner who, prepared the people to receive the Messiah. The deacon standing by the Royal Doors, raises the sacred Gospel aloft and proclaims: 'Wisdom, stand aright! This exclamation reminds the faithful that they must stand

upright (in the literal meaning of the Greek word *orthi*, which means correctly or straight) and be attentive, keeping their thoughts concentrated. They should look upon the Holy Gospel as upon Jesus Christ Himself, Who has come to preach, and they should faithfully sing, “O come, let us worship...” In Hebrew the word “Alleluia” means “Praise the Lord.”



*Reading of the Epistle*

The troparia and kontakia (short commemorative hymns for Sunday or the feast) are then chanted, while the priest prays that the Heavenly Father who is hymned by the Cherubim, and glorified by the Seraphim, might receive from us the angelic hymn (the Trisagion), forgive us our sins, and sanctify and grant us the power rightly to serve Him. The conclusion of this prayer is uttered aloud: With this hymn the worshipers glorify the Holy Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The hymn originates from the ecstasy of Isaiah in which he witnesses the angelic order of Seraphim crying “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts” and from

the vision of the Apostle John in which he saw worshipers in Heaven exclaiming: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, and is, and is to come!” (Is. 6:3, Rev. 4:8). Through the singing of this prayer, the Church raises the hearts of the believers to contemplation of the Lord’s glory and, together with the heavenly powers, to extol and worship Him. Following the Trisagion, the Epistle for the day is read. The faithful are prepared for the attentive hearing of the Epistle by the exclamations, “Let us attend!” “Peace be unto all!” “Wisdom!” and the chanting of the prokeimenon, which is a special short verse which changes with the day. During the reading of the Epistle, a censuring is performed as a symbol of the Grace of the Holy Spirit by which the Apostles proclaimed to the entire world the teachings of Jesus Christ. We should respond both to the censuring and to the exclamation of the priest, “Peace be unto all!” with a simple bow, without making the sign of the Cross. “Alleluia” is sung three times with the intoning of special verses, and the Gospel of the day is read. The priest precedes this reading with the prayer: “Illumine our hearts with the incorruptible light of Thy knowledge, O Master, Lover of mankind, and open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Thy Gospel teachings. Implant in us also the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that, trampling down all lusts of the flesh, we may

pursue a spiritual way of life, being mindful of and doing all that is well-pleasing unto Thee...”.

The candle held at this time by the altar boy signifies the all-illuminating Light of Christ, Who taught us how to believe and how to live in order to achieve the Kingdom of eternal light. It is usual at this point to have a sermon in which the meaning of the Epistle and Gospel readings are explained. Sometimes the sermon is put at the end of the service. The Gospel is followed by the Litany of Fervent Supplication, in which the faithful are invited to pray to the Lord God with a pure heart and all the powers of their soul. The petitions of this litany are similar to those of the Great Litany, but the augmented repetition of the words “Lord, have mercy” makes its petitions more fervent. Here we pray that the Lord

will be compassionate toward us, for life, peace, health, salvation and the forgiveness of the sins of the “brethren of this holy and all-venerable temple” (the parishioners).

*Adapted from [www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/liturgy\\_e.htm](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/liturgy_e.htm)*



*Altar boy with candle*

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