



DIOCESE OF SOUROZH
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

CATHEDRAL OF THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
AND ALL SAINTS
67 ENNISMORE GARDENS, LONDON SW7 1NH

CATHEDRAL NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2016



**THE NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD,
GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST
DECEMBER 25 / JANUARY 7**

Troparion, Tone 4

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has arisen upon the world as the light of knowledge; therein those who served the stars were taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee!

Kontakion, Tone 3

Today the Virgin gives birth to Him Who is above all being, and the earth offers a cave to Him Whom no man can approach. Angels with shepherds give glory, and magi journey with a star. For unto us is born a young Child, God before the ages.

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF E L I S E Y
ARCHBISHOP OF SOUROZH
TO THE PASTORS AND ALL FAITHFUL CHILDREN
OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUROZH
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**



Dearly beloved in the Lord, honourable pastors
and God-loving laypeople,
dear brothers and sisters!

I warmly greet you with the great feast of the
birth in the flesh of the Son of God, Who has
revealed to the world His mercy and salvation!

The invisible and Almighty God has not only
revealed Himself to the world but has been born
into it as a human being, in all respects like us,
except without sin. Heaven has come down to
earth, and the heavenly world on high has found
a refuge in our earthly world. The good will of
the Creator has found its accord in the free will of
the human being.

Now we are setting out on the path that leads to
the great mystery of creation. A star of hope, similar to that which showed the way to
Bethlehem, where the Saviour of the world was born, accompanies us on our
laborious earthly journey.

The mystery of the reality of the world is opened to us in the recognition of the secret
desire which is the foundation of life. Coming into contact with the reality of the
spiritual world, we discover with joyful amazement that since birth we have always
had an inner striving towards God, as the source of the light of life. Happy is he who
has seen that the value of life is not limited by the shaky values of temporary earthly
prosperity. God gives us His inexhaustible and life-creating energy - the power of
His divine love.

Born in a poor cave, the Son of God became infinitely near to us. He can always
reveal Himself to us in the depths of our heart. Any human soul, even the weakest,
can become a refuge for the God-Child. God is born in the human heart; He warms it
with His divine love and illumines it with His divine significance.

In His humility the Lord does not force anyone to serve Him, but gives us the possibility of exercising our free will. We ourselves have to choose whether we shall open the doors of our heart to Christ, or whether we shall be occupied with ourselves without God.

May the joy of meeting the God-child Jesus bring us nearer to the truth that has arisen upon the world as the light of knowledge, and that warms our hearts with the heat of divine love. May this joy draw us closer one to another and establish among us a mystical unity in the striving to live according to the life of God Who is born in our hearts.

I most sincerely greet all the children of the Russian Orthodox Church living in the British Isles on the occasion of the Nativity of Christ, this great and glorious celebration of the appearance of God to the world of men. In our prayers we wish one another that the New Year that has begun will be blessed for all of us and filled with peace and joy!

This year marks the 300th anniversary of the consecration of the first church of the Russian Orthodox Church in London, which was the beginning of the spreading in Britain and Ireland of Orthodox Christianity according to the Russian tradition. I call upon our compatriots and all whose church life has its origin in the Russian Church to mark this significant date by the strengthening of our unity. With deep gratitude I greet all those who endeavour to preserve the Orthodox traditions which we have inherited from our predecessors and spiritual teachers.

May Our Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ strengthen each of us in all the ways of our life! May the glory of God illumine our spiritual journey to the manger of the Christ-Child Who is born and may it enrich us with divine gifts!

+ *ELISEY*
ARCHISHOP OF SOUROZH

The Nativity of Christ 2015/16
London

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS IN ENGLAND

England suffered the 11th century Papal reform of the Western Churches, following, as it did, the Norman Invasion of 1066. England suffered another blow in the Reformation instigated by Henry VIII. All this represented a loss of spiritual culture, the denial of the saints, the deformation of tradition. Since the 11th century, England has experienced high and low points in her spiritual and cultural life. In England the



Julian calendar was changed for the Gregorian in 1752, when 2nd September was followed by 14th September. The Julian or Old calendar was until recently known as 'English style' and the Gregorian or New calendar as 'Roman style'.

Ancient traditions are particularly associated with the Nativity of Christ. The Birth of Christ was an invitation to the whole of the cosmos to

celebrate. At the moment of the anniversary of the Nativity it was believed that all Creation stood still - rivers ceased to flow, birds stopped in their flight. Bells rang, even from churches that had disappeared under the waves, as at Dunwich in Suffolk, or from St. Wilfrid's Cathedral at Selsey in Sussex. And then dogs barked, birds sang, bees buzzed, cocks crowed. All Creation united in praise of the Creator. A child born on Christmas Day would never be drowned.

Everything had to be prepared before Christmas. Any work done on the day itself would turn out badly. On Christmas Eve, it is still the custom to set up window-lights, that is to put candles in the windows, to guide the Mother of God and St Joseph, for whom there was no room at the inn. Holly is used as a decoration in homes and churches; the green is to remind us of the everlasting life brought to us in the Birth of Christ, the red (berries) remind us of the blood on Christ's brow from the crown of thorns at the Crucifixion. Mistletoe is hung at home, but never at church. A tradition says that this was because mistletoe was formerly a tree used in making the Cross. Because of this shameful use, it was then reduced to a parasite.

The Christmas tree originates from the event when the Apostle of Germany, St. Boniface, cut down an oak used for pagan worship. The oak fell in the form of a cross and a fir tree sprang up from among the roots. When Christ is born, the oxen and the cattle on farms kneel down in worship and weep. When in the 19th century a learned scholar mocked this belief, affirming that he had never seen it, he was informed by farm-labourers that this was because the scholar had been watching on 25th December, and not on the true date according to the Julian calendar. To this day the Glastonbury thorn and thorns taken from its cuttings flower around the 7th of January.



Similarly, at the real Christmas, rosemary, the rose of Mary, would blossom. The ash is also associated with the Nativity, for ash-logs are said to have been used to warm the Mother of God at the birth of Christ.



The food associated with Christmas was also symbolic. Christmas pudding has thirteen ingredients, one for Christ and one for each of the Apostles. The mince-pie, which has been round in shape since Cromwell, was originally oval. This was to remind us of the shape of the manger and also the tomb of Christ. The exotic ingredients, formerly with meat and spices, represented qualities which the Birth of Christ had introduced into the world. This 'sacred' food was to be eaten in silence, while reflecting on the meaning of Christ's Birth. Today this has degenerated into pausing and making a wish before eating the first mince-pie. It was said that every mince-pie eaten ensured a happy month in the coming year. Associated with this is the still existent custom of keeping a piece of Christmas cake all year. Christmas carols were once more various and theologically profound, like the Russian 'koliady' of Orthodox Tradition. The Church year was formerly celebrated by all sorts of carols for every feast; today Christmas carols are virtually all that remain, and these mainly in Victorian guise, though some of the melodies are ancient.

By Archpriest Andrew Phillips (extract from the book, Orthodox Christianity and English Tradition). Prepared by Dmitry Lapa

THE TRADITION OF CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS IN RUSSIA BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

The Nativity of Jesus Christ is one of the main Orthodox celebrations and the arrangements for the feast are usually started in advance. The feast is preceded by a 40-day fast, prayers and special preparations. At the time before the revolution there were vivid and interesting traditions of celebrating the feast in Russia, which were carefully preserved by every family.

For Orthodox believers, Christmas is a church feast first of all and it would be wrong to reach the day without fasting and praying. At that time, the entire house was tidied up, cleaned and decorated just before the feast day. Women prepared special dishes which were only cooked for Christmas. Special attention was paid to the

cleanliness of the body - the whole family used the banya (sauna) and dressed themselves in new clothes straight after. Also a new tablecloth was used to cover the dinner table.



In the Russian Empire, Christmas Eve - December 24th, was a fasting day even for non-religious families - no food was consumed till the appearance of the first star in the sky, which was a symbol of the star of Bethlehem that had revealed the birth of the Saviour into the world to the wise men. When the first star was noticed, all family members sat down at the table, and exchanged congratulations on the birth of Christ and wished prosperity and happiness to each other.

Christmas Eve, or Sochelnik, was quiet and devout time. The word "Sochelnik" came from the name of the main dish - sochivo, which was usually offered on that day. Sochivo was a type of porridge - a mixture of wheat, barley, rye, buckwheat, honey, almond and poppy seeds. Sochivo was prepared as a reminder of the fast which had been kept by the prophet Daniel and the three children to avoid being desecrated with pagan foods, feeding themselves with fruits of the earth (Dan. 1:8). It also symbolised germination - the beginning of a new life. Another Sochelnik dish that had to be on the table was uzvar - kompot (a fruit drink) or light kisel (a jelly drink) made of dry fruits. Ripe fruits were used to prepare uzvar; they symbolised ageing - the end of earthly life. Peasant families were known to put hay under the festive tablecloth as the image of the manger that received Christ our Saviour after His birth.

In the Orthodox Church, the All-Night Vigil, including Great Compline, is served on Christmas Eve. During the service, prophecies from the Old Testament that found fulfilment in the birth of Christ, the Saviour of the world, are read. Festal Matins is started around midnight. It incorporates one of the most beautiful Canons in Orthodox worship - "Christ is born". Then the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom is celebrated. In Russia, before the revolution, most of the people celebrated Christmas in church. Sometimes it was difficult to attend the Service of Christmas in big cities because churches were full and to control that, special invitations had to be issued for those wanting to attend house churches of different organisations.

With the beginning of Christmas day the Nativity fast ended and the festive time - Svyatki - began. It was a period of joy and glorification of Christ's Incarnation when people used to visit each other. The doors of houses were kept open. Everyone was invited to the table. That was a challenging time for people's stomachs. A suckling pig with stuffing, a pig's head, meat-jelly made with pork and beef legs, pancakes, a

roast goose with apples, cheese buns, plait buns, home-made sausages, mushroom dishes, meat and vegetable pasties, baked fish and many other tasty dishes were offered.

Koliady (carols), the special Christmas songs we know from classic literature, were songs praising the Birth of Christ, filled with wishes of happiness and prosperity. The Moscovites never used the word "kolyadovat" (to sing carols), but the verb "slavit" (to praise). Every family waited for the people who were praising Christ. They baked special biscuits -



spice-cakes in the form of a goat's or cow's head. They were called "kozulyas" and were reminders of the animals in the shelter where Christ had been born. During the time of Svyatki, people dressed themselves in animal costumes (those people were called "ryazheny"), they played games outside, rode horses, kept sleeping people awake, visited houses, congratulating everyone on the way on passing the December solstice, sleighed down the hills and played snowballs. December 25th and 26th, January 1st and 6th were holidays, therefore people did not work on those days.

The tradition of decorating a Christmas tree appeared during the reign of Emperor Nicholas the First around the 1830s. It was usually decorated with biscuits, sweets, gifts, ribbons, and candles. Children were allowed to take gifts and treats from the tree. In noble families the second and the third days after Christmas were devoted to children's parties with a lot of guests. During the reign of Emperor Alexander the Third the tradition of visits to multiple Christmas tree parties by members of the Imperial family was formed. The tradition of the Emperor giving his personal seasonal greetings to soldiers, Cossacks, lower-ranking officers of the personal guard and the palace police officers was also established. The practice of sending seasonal greetings in writing on Christmas postcards appeared as late as the 1890s.

At the end of the 16th century, Russia was introduced to the Nativity scene or Vertep (grotto), mainly through Poland. Vertep was a type of puppet theatre that performed the mystery of the Nativity of Christ. Vertep was called "batleyka" or "shopka" in Ukraine and Belarussia. The puppets were simple in style and made of wood. The

Verteps were even affordable to peasants, consequently they were presented in villages at first and then adapted in cities mainly by merchants' families. The rich families hosted the verteps in the backyard of the house as they were considered to be an entertainment for ordinary people.

And what about the New Year? How was it celebrated? As the matter of fact, the New Year was used as a mark to measure time and not as a day for celebration with food on the table. The celebration activities were usually limited - people went to church for a moleben to thank God for all the good things that had happened in the year that had passed and to pray for a good new year ahead. Gifts were normally presented at Christmas, which preceded New Year's day. In Russia, the Novoletie (the New Year) was officially celebrated even before Tsar Peter the First, but the dates varied - September 1st and March 1st. In the end, Peter the Great, Tsar of all Russia, ordered in His decree of December 15th, 1699, the following: "Because in Russia the new year is found to begin on different dates in different places, from this date on, in order to stop fooling people around, the first day of the new year is everywhere to be January 1st. As a sign of joy and a good beginning, New Year's greetings are to be exchanged, wishing prosperity in business and family life. Fir tree decorations are to be used in honour of the New Year, children are to be entertained and taken to sledge down the hills. Adults are to stay away from drinking and fighting - there are enough other days for that." The day was chosen arbitrarily as it had been already established in Western Europe. As we can see, the celebration was not easily accepted - the pine trees would be decorated 130 years after, good wishes were exchanged at Christmas, children were entertained and taken to sledge down the hills during the whole time of Svyatki. The perception in the consciousness of Russian people of the New Year's celebration as an important event was finally established only when the atheistic Soviet regime came to power. The New Year became the main holiday during Soviet times. That was when the gifts were presented and families were gathered together at the table. In essence, it replaced Christmas, which was celebrated only in the families of believers.

By Julia Pliauksta

Translated by Ekaterina Kartasheva

SERMON OF HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL ON THE FEAST OF THE LORD'S THEOPHANY

The follow sermon was delivered by His Holiness during the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Theophany, 2011, in the Theophany Cathedral in Elohovo, Moscow.

Your Beatitude, Your Eminences, and Your Graces! Dear Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters! I offer my heartfelt congratulations to you all on this Great Feast of the Theophany and on the parish feast day of the cathedral church of the city of Moscow.



The Lord today has addressed wondrous words to us through the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Titus: *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world* (Titus 2:11-12). It is no coincidence that we read these words in church on the day that water is blessed through the power, action, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Through the *podvig* of Christ the Saviour's entire life, and especially through His suffering, death, and glorious resurrection, the Lord forgives the entire human race of Adam's sin, granting them His grace and power. The Lord restores to them those relationships that they had in paradise, and each one of us is again placed in Adam's position – to fulfil or not fulfil God's will.

Everyone knows through life experience that he has many and countless times repeated and compounded the sin of Adam. However, the power of the death on the Cross and of the *podvig* of the God-Man is such that none of our sins can block God's good will for mankind, for through Christ's suffering on the Cross we have received the grace of God. The Apostle tells us that this grace teaches us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts. But how can grace teach? Man is taught by words, both spoken and written; he is taught by life experience. So how can God's grace teach man? The Apostle's words help us to understand that any problem that man is capable of solving through his own reason can be solved with sufficient education, knowledge, and skill. It is only the most vital task, the task of man's salvation, that he cannot solve through the power of his own reason, because an enormous number of various kinds of influences act on our nature – and on our very mind, will, and feelings. Without God's help and grace we cannot reject ungodliness and worldly lusts – but we are capable of doing this through God's grace.

Grace also teaches us in the sense that, regardless of all the intellectual and behavioural temptations that have fallen upon man over the course of these 2,000 years of Christian history, the truth about salvation has been soundly preserved in God's Church.

This sound preservation of truth is inaccessible to even the most powerful human intellect – the truth about salvation is preserved only through the power of God. Today, when we bless the waters, we are performing an action that would have been impossible if Christ had not suffered, risen, and revealed the grace of the Holy Spirit to us. The blessing of the waters, the calling down of Divine grace upon physical

nature, is a symbol and sign of that liberation from sin that God revealed to mankind in Christ. Every one of us who touches the blessed water, who tastes it, receives this Divine energy and grace that teach us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts, helping us to preserve ourselves for the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, when drawing the blessed water, we should remember that we are touching something holy. The very drawing of water in church is a sacred rite. Sometimes we bring elements of this world into church: we need to hurry somewhere after the service, so we want to draw the water earlier, and we shove or harm the person standing next to us. Do not do this! Draw the holy water quietly and prayerfully. Just as Communion can be for judgment and condemnation, rather than for the salvation of soul and healing of the body, so too can taking holy water be for judgment and condemnation. For those who draw the water without piety and fear of God, this water ceases to be water gushing forth into eternal life.

Having come to church today, do not hurry to leave. Stand near the vessel with the holy water and, while you await your turn, pray fervently to the Lord for yourself, your family, your children and grandchildren, for health of soul and body, for our country, our nation, and our Church – that the Lord, through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, would grant us all the opportunity to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts for life in this present world. Amen.

THE REFURBISHMENT OF THE CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral was built in the mid-nineteenth century as the Anglican church of All Saints to serve the developing area of Knightsbridge. Unusually for the period, the architectural style is neo-Romanesque. It calls to mind the great basilica churches of Italy, in particular the church of San Zeno in Verona. Initially rather plain inside, it gradually became more ornate as the tastes of the clergy and congregation became more Catholic. A defining moment in the history of the church came at the end of the 19th century when the high-level sgraffito decoration was carried out by the artist Heywood Sumner, a founding member of the Arts and Crafts movement. The series of images depicting the Creation, scenes from the Old and New Testaments, various saints (all but two of whom are Orthodox) and the magnificent Crucifixion are the best surviving example of his work. They largely account for the Grade II star listed status of the building and its protection by English Heritage.

In 1955, the church, being no longer required for Anglican worship, was leased to the Russian Orthodox parish of the Dormition. The rent was only £1 per annum, but the small parish had to undertake responsibility for the upkeep of the building. It proved impossible to re-erect the historic stone iconostasis that had been built for the Embassy chapel and subsequently used in the church of St Philip, Buckingham Palace Road, where the parish had been worshipping since the 1030s. A ‘temporary’

wooden iconostasis was built to accommodate the old icons from the Embassy chapel. When the lease ran out in 1979, the parish was faced with the choice of moving out or buying the building, which at the time seemed too large for the small and largely elderly congregation. Thanks to the bold vision of Metropolitan Anthony and the fundraising efforts of the parishioners, the church was bought and saved for future generations.

Eventually it became apparent that major refurbishment was needed, both internally and externally. Smoke from hundreds of thousands of candles had darkened the walls to the point where the sgraffito was almost invisible. The roof leaked. The stonework was suffering from atmospheric pollution. The first stage of the refurbishment took place in 2005/2006. Cleaning of the sgraffito revealed its original beauty as the vivid colours and strong designs became apparent.

Likewise the semidome in the apse changed from nearly black to shining gold. A bold decision was taken by the Parish Council to reinstate the historic porphyry marbling decoration of the columns. Chandeliers, elegantly crafted in bronze and copper, were installed. All this was accomplished just in time for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Sourozh diocese in October 2006.

After some years of careful planning, the second stage of the refurbishment began in January 2014. The main task was to create an altar space suitable for the liturgy of a Cathedral. This involved replacing the temporary wooden iconostasis with a marble one in early Byzantine style, a new matching altar and offertory table, and removing a low stone wall in order to make the space more usable for the clergy. The ambo was extended with new steps in green marble and a permanent stone cathedra was installed. Another major improvement was the building of a full immersion font at the back of the church, which is already in use for the baptism of adults and older children.

At the same time it was necessary to deal with some other issues. The old wooden floor was in a poor condition and needed complete replacement. A new lighting and



Left: 2004 - before refurbishment

Right: Nativity 2014/2015

sound system was installed. The historic system of ventilation through grilles in the ceiling was reinstated.

While all this was going on, careful inspection of the exterior of the Cathedral revealed that much more needed to be done than had been expected. The roof of the bell tower was in a dangerous condition and there was serious water penetration. The main roof was also in need of replacement and inadequate repairs in the distant past needed to be corrected to avoid further problems in the future. The gutters and downpipes had to be replaced. The stained glass windows were found to be in a bad state due to the corrosion of the lead framework. Now they are being taken out, repaired and reassembled piece by piece. In effect, we have moved seamlessly into the third phase of the planned refurbishment, the restoration of the exterior of the building. We are now in the final phase of that process - the cleaning and repair of the stone facade. Soon the scaffolding will be coming down and we shall see the results. In 2016 we shall be marking the 300th anniversary of the Russian Orthodox presence in this country. The main celebrations and the final consecration of the Cathedral are planned to take place in October. Clearly, everything must be finished by then, and with God's help, it will be.

By Archpriest Joseph Skinner

A SIX-DAY LONG RELIGIOUS PROCESSION - ON THE WAY TO MEET ST SERAPHIM OF SAROV



On January 2nd/15th the Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of St Seraphim of Sarov. Marina Dvoynikova shares her experience of taking part in a religious procession to St Seraphim from Pavlovo to Diveevo in summer 2015.

Before the event. I have always wanted to take part in a religious procession. When watching the procession with its banners and icons, you realise that sadly you are not at the heart of the event, and you want to be there - with the priests, the choir and the icons. In the end, my desire forced me to make a decision to take part in a long distance procession. One of my Russian friends, a devout Christian, suggested we join the pilgrimage from Pavlovo to Diveevo to visit the relics of St Seraphim of Sarov. A six-day long procession! With our decision made, we bought mats, rucksacks, camping clothes, but realised we didn't have the most important thing - the blessing!

However, fate was on our side – we had a call from a priest we know and shared our plans with him. He gave us his blessing and we were set to leave.

Arrival. The journey to Pavlovo was from Moscow with a change in Nizhniy Novgorod, where we had to catch a bus at 6.00 am to our destination. In the station shop we wanted to buy some food and sweets but the queue was slow moving and we didn't want to miss our bus that was about to depart. So we left the shop empty handed. There were many other pilgrims on the bus – some of them diligently prayed out loud all the way to the destination. On the way to the church we met a woman; she asked us where we were going and offered us a paper bag with sweets, biscuits and a loaf of bread – everything we wanted to buy at the station shop. As if she knew! She had tears in her eyes when she asked us to give her love to St Seraphim; she said she couldn't go this year due to her illness but she would be thinking of us. We realised then that St Seraphim is a beloved and very dear saint to the local citizens. They talk about him as if he is still alive. From that moment on, we felt safe and protected by him.

Daily life on the procession, and prayer. We were amazed at how some elderly ladies managed to deal with practical issues of daily life, write lists of names for molebens, and still stay focused in the whirlpool of events.

We felt dizzy from everything - from God's grace that made us feel as if we were not walking, but floating in the stream of the procession, and from the constant presence of holy relics among us. There were the relics of St. Elizabeth and St. Barbara - the two saints who are dear to me personally, as well. We felt blessed with the presence of the nuns who were there to accompany the pilgrims; with the pure children's voices amongst the adults, singing "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us"; with the Divine Liturgy that was celebrated every day; with the wonderful life stories written on the pilgrims' faces; with the sound of bells ringing for us, sinners, at every church we passed by; with the people on the street who stopped and devoutly asked for a blessing; with the elderly ladies who gave us cucumber, tomatoes, and homemade food because it made them feel a part of the pilgrimage, and the large number of holy springs we dipped into in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Even the police car in the front of the procession, clearing the way for us with its flashing lights and siren, notifying everyone of the importance of that which followed behind, something that had to be kept safe and protected, felt like a blessing too.

Lessons. A religious procession is a litmus test that shows up all spiritual flaws immediately. If you judge someone you almost instantly get judged for the same reason; you behave with lack of humility and a 'teacher' appears to point it out. The lessons are clear, deep and memorable, and at times are followed by bitter tears. By God's mercy, the spiritual vision becomes more sensitive, and it becomes clearer on what aspects of your character you need to work.

Hieromonk Pavel, our group's leader, was our spiritual guide for the first few days. He was strict, and we were grateful to him for that. We had a glimpse of what spiritual feats and sacrifice really are. When we were with him it was clear that we would have to deal with all our worldly cares later. Later we would wash, eat until full, have lie-ins, talk; for now our concern was to pray and preserve the grace of God which was bestowed upon the pilgrims.

Meeting the Venerable One. I can now confidently say that I came back a different person. How could it be different? On the last day of the procession, after all the events and the prolonged prayer, the Venerable Seraphim of Sarov comes out to meet you in Diveevo. The sense of grace increased when we were taken to the relics of St



Seraphim, bypassing the queue. It was God's mercy as we realised that we had somehow managed to commit sins every step of the way during the last six days. In Diveevo, everyone feels love radiating from the venerable Seraphim and hears his greeting "Hello, my joy!". We heard it so clearly that it made us want to walk the same way, test ourselves and meet the great Russian Saint again.

By Marina Dvoynikova

Translated by Ekaterina Kartasheva, Lisa Cosham and Marina Korsounskaja

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

From the 3rd to 10th of November, 2015 a group of parishioners from the Diocese of Sourozh went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The group leader was Archpriest Maxim Nikolsky. In Israel, the group was accompanied by Mother Mariam, a nun of the Gornensky convent. The pilgrims took part in the celebration of the feast of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God with a procession at the Gornensky convent, followed the Way of the Cross of Jesus Christ, and prayed at the night Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The pilgrims visited Lydda, Jaffa, Jericho, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, and of course, Jerusalem. They also visited several monasteries, including the Lavra of St Savva the Sanctified in the Judean desert, the convent of Saint Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem and the Monastery of Saint

Gerasimus in Jordan. Unfortunately, it was not possible to complete the entire plan of the pilgrimage. The pilgrims did not manage to visit the monastery of Elisha the Prophet in Jericho or the Metochion of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Hebron due to the intifada recommenced by the Islamic extremists. However, this could not lower the spirit of our pilgrims - with God's help, everything that was organised was on the highest level. All the pilgrims returned to London filled with God's grace and certainly they will keep good memories of the time they spent praying in the Holy Land.

By Alexey Ratsevits

Translated by Elena Kuzina

A more detailed account of the trip, photos and videos can be found here

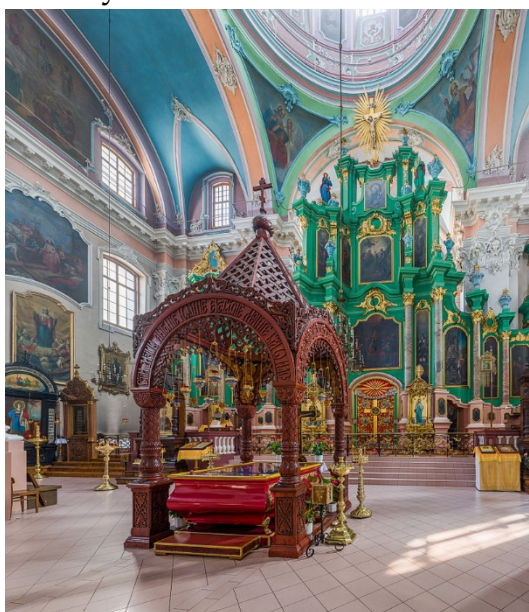
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VISITING THE FIRST LITHUANIAN SAINTS ST ANTHONY, ST EUSTATIUS AND ST JOHN IN VILNIUS

Many years ago I had the privilege to visit Pühtitsa Convent in Estonia, there I met an amazing nun who had once lived in the Holy Spirit Monastery in Lithuania, she told me the amazing life stories of St Anthony, St Eustatius and St John and suggested that I should visit them especially as they help people with mobility problems. As with so many things in life I put off my visit to Lithuania but finally in 2015 I made the journey and what an amazing place it is.

The Baltic North-East was the last part of Europe to reject paganism. Indeed, in history Lithuania is often cited as the last pagan country in Europe but thankfully



Church of the Holy Spirit. Reliquary, in front of the Iconostasis and nave



A view of the relics of the martyrs (Ss Anthony, Eustatius & John)

this is no longer the case. Although predominately a Catholic country you still strongly feel the Orthodox spirit in its monasteries and churches. When I arrived in Vilnius, a beautiful city full of charm and wonderful architecture, I felt in many ways that I had been transported back in time and was in a film set representing an old medieval town.

My first 'port of call' was the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. Built at the junction of the 15th and 16th centuries, it became the main monastery of Lithuania. Walking into the monastery I was amazed at the beautiful baroque style, which in many ways reminded me of our own church in Knightsbridge. The unusual vibrant green colours of the church create a great sense of warmth. But beyond the physical you could really feel the air of spirituality and as I walked through the church it reminded me of the connections with our own church. It has at various times been home to Archbishop Anatoly of Kerch, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, and it is the current home of Archbishop Innokenty of Vilnius. All of them have had a major positive impact on the Diocese of Sourozh.



Icon of Ss Anthony, Eustatius & John with their relics in the Cathedral of the Mother of God and All Saints in London

Within the church are the incorrupt relics of St Anthony, St Eustatius and St John. These three brave martyrs were arrested for preaching in public and were ordered by the pagan Prince Algirdas to consume meat in his presence during an Orthodox fasting period. When they refused, they were tortured and executed. The bodies are covered by a cloth but you can touch the feet. Venerating these relics I was amazed at how warm they were, I felt a strong inner peace and my few problems in life seemed to disappear; at that moment I knew that they were with me.

Walking out of the monastery placed high above the streets you can see a most beautiful icon of the Mother of God, which was taken from Crimea in approximately 1363 by Grand Prince Olgerd Gediminovich (Algirdas, son of Gediminas) of Lithuania and presented to his wife, Uliana. The Grand Princess installed the holy image in the newly built Monastery of the Holy Trinity. In the late 15th century, a stone wall was built round the city of Vilnius with the main gate at the "Russian" end of the city, also known as the "Ostry" (Sharp) End. A chapel was built over the gate and the icon was placed in it. Both Catholics and Orthodox venerate the icon; coming close to the Icon you really feel the silence of prayer. Around Vilnius there are a number of other beautiful Russian churches including St Nicholas, which is a small church built in a beautiful Neo-Byzantine style and the Orthodox Church of

St Michael and St Constantine with its four big green domes. This church was built in 1913 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty and was visited by St Elizabeth - a saint very close to my heart. As with every journey to Orthodox places you learn more about yourself and hopefully a bit more light comes into your heart. This was certainly the case with my journey to Lithuania and I look forward to visiting next year.

By Steven Lacey

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD: THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"

This commandment forbids the impious and disrespectful use of the name of God as, for example, in meaningless conversations or jokes. Sins against the third commandment include swearing (thoughtless, habitual oaths in casual conversations), blasphemy (audacious words against God), (*"If he has blasphemed God and the king, take him out and stone him that he may die"* (1 Kings 21:10)), sacrilege (when people scoff or jest at sacred things), perjury (oath breaking), calling upon God as a witness in meaningless worldly affairs, and breaking promises given to God. Also, joking and laughing in church are sins against this commandment. Because the name of God designates the Supreme and Almighty Being, it carries a great and miraculous power. As we know from the Bible, nature instantly submits to God's name when people invoke it with faith and reverence. For example, by invoking God in his prayer, Moses divided the waters of the Red Sea so that the Israelites could cross it. The prophet Elijah prayed that it would not rain and it did not rain for more than three years; and when he prayed again, the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. The book of the Acts of the Apostles narrates many miraculous healings and exorcism of evil spirits accomplished by invocation of the name of the Incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, one should use the name of God with awe and reverence as, for example, in pious prayer, in preaching, in serious religious conversations, and in similar well-intended activities. Using God's name in an oath is permitted only in special circumstances such as judicial proceedings (Hebrews 6:16-17). The name of God invoked attentively and piously always draws to man Divine Grace. It brings to him enlightenment of mind and gladness of heart.

By Bishop Alexander (Mileant)

This is a shortened version of the article. The full article can be found here: http://fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/command.htm#_Toc513258224 . We will continue discussing the Ten Commandments in future editions of the Cathedral Newsletter.

BRITISH AND IRISH SAINTS
HOLY HIERARCH EGWIN, BISHOP OF WORCESTER
COMMEMORATED 30th DECEMBER / 12th JANUARY

The future saint was born in the 7th century in the Kingdom of Mercia. His parents were pious Christians and raised their son in the faith. Egwin devoted himself to the service to God from his childhood and later was ordained priest. After several years of illustrious ministry, in 692 Egwin was against his will elected Bishop of Worcester in Western England. At that time Worcester was the main city of Hwicce - a province of Mercia. Hwicce was still pagan. The episcopacy of Egwin coincided with the reign of King Ethelred of Mercia who founded monasteries in his kingdom.

The hierarch fully devoted himself to the service of people. He preached the Word of God with zeal. The people came to love him for his prudence, fairness and honesty. Egwin was affable and meek, but he could be strict and unshakeable – when the Truth was to be defended. Once some wicked people slandered the saint. He took this with humility but, caring for his flock, decided to prove his innocence. He travelled to Rome, having put himself into irons and thrown the key into the River Avon. Arriving at Rome, he hastened to the shrines of the Apostles to pray. On the way he asked his assistants to catch some fish in the Tiber for dinner. When he left the church, one of his companions said that they had caught a large fish and had found in its stomach the key of the irons! The innocence of Egwin was confirmed. Acquitted, he returned to Worcester.



King Ethelred became so attached to the bishop that he entrusted the education of his sons to him. Egwin, whom the people referred to as their "father", confirmed his preaching with the example of his life. He began to retreat for quiet prayer to a wild, wooded place on the bank of the River Avon, called Hethom. The saint asked Ethelred to grant him this land and the latter agreed. Egwin felt this place was chosen by God, and indeed, the Monastery of Evesham, which afterwards was considered among the largest and most important in England and all Western Europe, was founded there. This happened in 702 or 709.

Once a herdsman named Ioves was searching for a stray pig. He walked deep into the forest and saw the Mother of God with two angels. The Holy Virgin was holding an open book and a cross, and wonderful singing could be heard around. Amazed, the herdsman told Bishop Egwin about it. The saint decided to go to that place

himself and had exactly the same vision. The Mother of God ordered Egwin to found a monastery on the site. This event is considered to be the first recorded appearance of the Mother of God in England! Egwin with joy fulfilled the order of the Most Pure Virgin and founded Evesham Monastery ('Evesham' means 'loves' home). The town in Worcestershire where this monastery was founded bears this name to this day. Soon Ethelred abdicated the throne in favour of his nephew Coenred and became a monk at Bardney. Coenred too was a devout Christian and supported Egwin. In 709 St Wilfrid of York consecrated the monastery church in Evesham to the Mother of God, Sts Peter and Paul and All Saints (later it was dedicated to the Mother of God and St Egwin).

In 710 Egwin became the first Abbot of Evesham and continued his service as Bishop of Worcester. Monastic life in Evesham flourished. Egwin's sanctity was particularly revealed during these years of his life: miracles happened through his prayers, visions of the heavenly world appeared to him. The bishop especially loved the Mother of God - Her name was on his lips and prayer to Her was in his heart. At the same time, he did not stop looking after his brethren and flock. The monks dedicated most of their time to prayer, study of the Scriptures and different crafts.

Before his death Egwin was stricken by a long illness, which he endured with great patience. He reposed on 30th December, 717. Since then he has become the patron saint of Evesham and its monastery. After Egwin's repose his incorrupt relics were discovered and laid in a richly decorated shrine. St Egwin was loved and venerated in Evesham by its monks and citizens; he was also venerated in other English monasteries. Two ancient Anglican churches in the Worcestershire villages of Norton and Honeybourne are dedicated to St Egwin.

Over the centuries there have been constant miracles from St Egwin's relics and through his intercessions: the blind, deaf, dumb, and lame were healed, the saint put out fires and appeared to people in visions. There were several more miraculous apparitions of the Mother of God in Evesham during the Middle Ages. Besides the relics of St Egwin, Evesham possessed relics of other saints: St Credan, Abbot of Evesham; Martyr Wistan of Mercia; and St Odulf, a missionary in Utrecht.

The monastery at Evesham was dissolved and destroyed in the 1530s during the Reformation. Almost nothing survived of a once huge and famous monastery, and the relics of all its saints disappeared. But the memory of St Egwin lives in Evesham to this day; pilgrims come here. This small, pretty town preserves a specific atmosphere of holiness, peace and tranquility. This spirit can best be felt on the site of the former monastery.

Pilgrims here can visit two churches of the 13th century (dedicated to St Laurence and All Saints), which were built by the monastery for the citizens. Near them there are the ruins of Evesham Abbey and the fine abbey bell-tower (built 500 years ago, it is a

tower with a clock and contains a set of eight bells). There are also the Almonry Heritage Centre and Museum (which contains, among other things, artefacts from the monastery), the Abbey Park and the Catholic church of the Holy Virgin and St Egwin. We hope and pray that one day an Orthodox church will appear here, on a site chosen by the Mother of God.

By Dmitry Lapa. The text is mainly based on the article:
<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/67444.htm>

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

On Jan, 10th at 15.00 there will be the Christmas performance *'The Scarlet Flower'* prepared by Church Children's School. The story is based on a well-known Russian fairy tale. All are welcome.

Maria Veretenina (soprano) invites everybody to her Christmas concert on **Jan, 7th at 19.00**. (Piano Larisa Sharapova).

Father Joseph Skinner will continue the Bible Studies on **Jan. 12th and Feb. 9th at 19.30**. All are welcome.

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We welcome your stories of finding faith, conversion, pilgrimages etc. If you would like to leave feedback or contribute content to the Newsletter, please contact us at the above address. We are always happy to hear from our readers.

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