



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 29 April '11

LENTEN EPISTLE

In that Thou art compassionate, O Christ, I pray [Thee]: By true fasting and repentance bring to life a soul done to death by the fruit of transgression; and grant that I may always walk in the straight and good paths of Thine honoured commandments, that having obtained Thy divine glory, with all who love Thee I may glorify Thy goodness in all things, O Jesus.

-Sessional hymn after the Second Kathisma on Monday of the Second Week of Lent

Beloved in the Lord Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and Laity!

Once again we enter a special period in church life, Great Lent. All of us, burdened with life's struggles, in the rhythm of modern life, cannot help but “travel in the distant land,” and may God grant that we be as wise as the Prodigal Son who returned to his father, having understood his poverty and inability for an independent, cognizant life because of his sins. But we are often so burdened by temporal life with all of its bothers and complications that we forget our very purpose on earth.

The Lord, desiring the salvation of each person, having spent forty days in the desert in fasting and prayer, showed us the importance of these labours. Lent is a special time in the life of the Church and of every one of Her members, a time when we are called upon to concentrate on pondering our life, recognizing our faults and the feebleness of the human intellect which is not illuminated by the light of Divine Truth, and destined for death. During Great Lent, we must regain sobriety, directing our lives onto the track of God's commandments, and this is helped by the length of the services and their special repentant mood. Every Great-Lenten song is filled with humility and the recognition of the sinfulness of human nature, with prayer to God, the Mother of God and God's holy saints, prayer that we sinners will not die but, purified, obtain Eternal Life.

As we proceed through Great Lent, which is great not only in its length but in its austerity, we must not fall into despair, for as we pay heed to these same repentant Great-Lenten prayers, we also hear the firm voice of hope and reliance on the mercy of God. Indeed, this Lenten period is not a time when we must assume the likeness of a sufferer, or like the Pharisee, praise our own Lenten podvigi, for Lent is a tool and a means by which we once again regain clarity and boldness of mind, remembering that we Christians are only travellers on this earth and that we strive for our Heavenly Fatherland, strive towards our Father! We must pray to God, humbly beseech Him that we worthily pass through the period of Great Lent.

Every week of Great Lent provides us with an example of growth in spiritual life: the Week of the Triumph of Orthodoxy shows us the correctness of the chosen path, the victory of the Church of Christ over the devil; the second week is devoted to St Gregory Palamas, which shows us the path towards Light, and so to the true path; the Veneration of the Cross emboldens us in the middle of the difficult but salvific road; St John of the Ladder, remembered during the fourth week, presents us with the Ladder

upon which upon which, girded with purposeful desire, we will no doubt ascend on the path of our spiritual growth; St Mary of Egypt, as a bright lighthouse, shows us that even in the depths of dishonour, we can be elevated towards God even in our earthly life, so long as we have patience and genuine repentance for the sins we have committed.

The crown of Great Lent, the fore-image of future life, is the Greatest of Events in the whole world, the Bright Resurrection of Christ, the Pascha of the Lord! It is this great celebration of the spirit over flesh that we must behold over the course of this long but salvific Forty-day Fast, remembering that as we proceed properly along the path of Great Lent and preserve piety within our souls throughout our entire lives, we will be bestowed with undying life through the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

HILARION,

Metropolitan of New York and Eastern America,
First Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside Russia

NOTES ON THE TRIODION *continued*

Liturgical note: the first service of the day, be it a Sunday, a festival day or an ordinary weekday, is Vespers. Thus, liturgically every day begins in the evening. So, for example, on a Saturday evening we sing Sunday Vespers in preparation for Sunday. Thus on Sunday evening, Vespers will be the Vespers of Monday

The Fourth Sunday of Great Lent

The fourth Sunday in Great Lent (3 April this year) is dedicated to St John Climacus who was abbot of St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, for about four years. He was born in Palestine and, at the early age of 16, was tonsured in St Catherine's Monastery. He spent much of his life as a solitary in the Arabian Desert. At the age of 75, he was elected abbot of Sinai. He reposed in the year 649 and has his own feast day on 30 March but, because of the example of his ascetical life, he is also commemorated on the fourth Sunday of Great Lent. He is known to us mostly through his spiritual writings. St John was the author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.

The Fifth Week of Great Lent

The Thursday of the Great Canon, when the whole of the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete and the Life of St Mary of Egypt are read on Wednesday evening, occurs in this week. However, this year it clashes with the Annunciation. Thus, the Great Canon and the Life of St Mary of Egypt will be read on Monday evening. The Vigil for Annunciation will be on Wednesday evening. Please see the services schedule for details.

On Friday evening, we sing the Akathist to the Mother of God at Compline.

The Sunday of St Mary of Egypt

On the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent (10 April this year) we commemorate St Mary of Egypt. Having heard the Life of St Mary of Egypt, which was written by Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem, read in church in the previous week, we arrive at the Sunday dedicated to her memory. The Life does not tell us when Mary was baptised but, from the context, we can reasonably guess that she was brought up as a Christian despite the fact that she drifted into a wayward lifestyle as a young woman in Alexandria. Having arrived in Jerusalem for the purpose of venerating the Holy Cross, she understood that she needed to repent and reform her life. This she did in a very dramatic way by spending the remaining 47 years of her life in the strictest asceticism in the Jordanian Desert where she was discovered by St Zosimas.

Lazarus Saturday

Lazarus was the brother of Martha and Mary and is sometimes called *Lazarus, the Four Day Dead*. This refers to the story (John 11: 1-46) of his death at Bethany and Christ calling him forth from the grave and restoring him to life. The liturgical texts for the previous Wednesday refer to the death of Lazarus and the grief of Martha and Mary. In the Gospel account, we see the two natures of Christ in action. Christ also grieves for Lazarus demonstrating his humanity and He restores Lazarus to life showing forth His divine power. This is also a foreshadowing of Christ's own resurrection, preparing the people for the greater victory over death that is soon to become manifest. At evening service on Friday (6pm) we will read the Canon of the Raising of Lazarus.

Palm Sunday

Now we begin the most solemn week of the year. The dominant theme in the liturgical texts for every Sunday is the Resurrection of Christ, except on Palm Sunday. The story of the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem, with palm branches put down like a carpet for Christ to ride over, is well known. In memory of this, we bless "palms" during the Vigil service on Saturday evening. There is no special significance to the fact that the crowd used palm branches. They were convenient because they were the local trees. Thus we use the local trees, willow, box, yew or whatever.

Holy Week

On the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, Matins is commonly known as *The Bridegroom Service* because of the Troparion which begins "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.....". Of course, this is a reference to Christ. The liturgical texts for these three days draw on numerous symbols that represent, or in some way prefigure the sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ.

On Holy Thursday, the theme is the Last Supper and institution of the Eucharist. The liturgical texts refer to this crucial event, together with the betrayal by Judas and the confession of the good thief, known in Holy Tradition as Dismas. A reference to these things is made in a prayer always used before Communion:

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant, for I will not speak of the mystery to Thine enemies, nor will I give Thee a kiss like Judas, but like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.

In the evening, we anticipate Good Friday by singing Matins. This is commonly called *The Twelve Gospel Service* because there are twelve readings from the Gospels. The first is the longest (John 13:31 - 18:1) and in it St John sets out the whole theological basis of Christ's Incarnation. The remaining eleven Gospels are basically a narrative telling the story of the Passion of Christ. We continue to watch and pray on Good Friday morning with the Royal Hours which contain further biblical readings relating to Christ's sufferings. At Vespers in the afternoon, the Holy Shroud is brought out in procession and placed in the centre of the church. The shroud, which is venerated by the faithful, is a decorated cloth displaying a representation of Christ being placed in the tomb.

In the evening of Good Friday, we again sing Matins by anticipation. The Lamentations are interspersed between the verses of Psalm 118 (the longest psalm in the whole Psalter). This service is like the funeral of Christ and towards the end of Matins the Shroud is carried in procession around the outside of the church in the way that the body of a dead person is carried out for burial.

Saturday of Holy Week is sometimes called the Great Sabbath. This refers to the fact that Christ's body, after a rather hurried burial, remained in the tomb on the Sabbath day. Slightly before midnight, we read the Midnight Office and at midnight Paschal Matins begins with the church in darkness. We begin by

making a procession around the church and arriving in front of the main doors which have been closed. They represent the sealed tomb. The first proclamation "Christ is Risen" is made in front of the church doors and then the doors are thrown open and all the lights are on to represent the blaze of glory that is the Resurrection of Christ. The service then moves into a higher gear becoming joyful and triumphant. It concludes with the Paschal Liturgy.

On Easter Day we sing Paschal Vespers in the afternoon and then enjoy the party at which all kinds of Easter treats and specialities are served.

CHURCH NEWS

CHURCH PORCH

The drawing illustrates the type of porch we have in mind to protect the West Doors from the worst effects of wet weather. In addition, the question of building a vestry has been raised. This would be a useful addition to the church. Further consideration needs to be given to these proposals.

SCHOOL ROOM

The old school room, in the White House, has been cleared of furniture and cleaned. Oleg Myslov spent two full days washing down every surface (walls, ceiling, door, window frames, shutters) in preparation for painting. Colin Bryant has offered to build shelving to accommodate the SGOIS stock. In this way, all the books, cards and other items will be in one place and available for viewing by visitors.

WEBSITE

Our website is now fully functioning. It can be viewed by going to - www.joyofallwhosorrow.org.uk

SAINT WANDREGESILIUS

God willing, the ikon of St Wandregesilius will be ready for his feast day this summer. The ikon is a gift to the church from Mary McCabe in memory of the lady foundress. If the ikon is ready, it will be blessed before Vespers on Wednesday 3 August. Please make a note of this in your diary. Also the full Life of the saint is now being translated. This will provide the necessary information to enable a Canon to be written for use on the feast day. St Wandregesilius, who reposed in AD668, founded the great monastery at Fontenelle in Normandy. We have recently discovered that in about the year 673 Saint Condedus joined the monastic community at Fontenelle. St Condedus was an Englishman.

NAMEDAY

On 7 April, our friend Mary McCabe celebrates her nameday. We send her our congratulations and wish her Many Years.

IKONS

Our church has recently acquired an ikon of St Olga and one of Zacchaeus, who climbed the sycamore tree to see Christ. Tradition tells us that, after his conversion, he became a co-worker with St Peter the Apostle. Therefore he is regarded by the Church as a saint.

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God *Joy of All Who Sorrow*
The White House, Low Rd, Mettingham, Suffolk NR35 1TP
Telephone - 01986 896708

e-mail churchmettingham@aol.com Website www.joyofallwhosorrow.org.uk

Cheques for the church fund should be made payable to "*Joy of All Who Sorrow*" Church.

The account is in HSBC Bank, 3 New Market, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9HQ
Account No 71395912 Sort Code 40-09-24

