



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 93 August 2016



The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus

During the reign of Emperor Decius and upon his visit to Ephesus an order went out for all its citizens to offer sacrifice to the gods on penalty of death for anyone that refused. Having been accused for their Christian faith, the seven youths, Maximilian, Iamblicus, Martinian, John, Dionysius, Exacustodianus (Constantine) and Antoninus, fled from the city and hid in a cave on Mount Ochlon, where they passed their time in prayer, preparing for martyrdom. Learning where the young men were hidden, the emperor ordered that the entrance of the cave be sealed with stones so that the saints would perish from hunger and thirst. By the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Younger nearly two centuries later, all persecutions against Christians had ceased and in fact Christianity now was the official Faith of the Empire. It is said that a dispute concerning the resurrection of the dead arose in the city at that time. Meanwhile the owner of the land on which Mount Ochlon was situated, discovered the stone construction, and his workers opened up the entrance to the cave. It was discovered then that the Lord had kept the youths alive, and they awoke from their sleep, unaware that almost two hundred years had passed. Their bodies and clothing were completely undecayed. They discovered they were preserved when Iamblicus went into the city to buy bread and heard the name of Jesus spoken about freely and presented an outdated coin with the image of Decius to buy bread. Bewildered, he was taken to the Bishop of Ephesus who eventually spoke to all seven youths and discovered that God allowed this miracle to end the dispute concerning the resurrection of the dead. The Emperor also went to Ephesus to examine this miracle and after speaking with them they were allowed to go back into their cave without the royal honours the Emperor wanted to lavish on them, and there they fell asleep permanently. It has been determined that the holy youths fell asleep in the cave in 250 and awoke in 434, which means that they slept for 184 years. The miracle was timely because it answered a dispute going on at the time concerning the resurrection of the dead.

The Origenist controversy began in the late fourth century and by 434 had spread into Asia Minor from Egypt. Origenists denied the resurrection of the flesh, and Bishop Stephen records that the bishop of the time regarded this miracle of the Seven Sleepers as an answer to the controversy - it seems to have prevented Origenism from being established in Ephesus.

Though the story reads like a myth or some fanciful tale for someone who does not accept miracles, what is fascinating about it is the historical context it is set in. It mentions specific historical emperors and a historical controversy taking place in a historical city (which had gained even greater fame three years earlier in 431 during the Third Ecumenical Council which took place in Ephesus) during two historical epochs: one of persecution under Decius and the other of peace under Theodosius. It even tells us the specific place these saints died. The Orthodox Church commemorates these Saints twice a year, on 4 August and 22 October (the former being the date of their first sleep and the latter the date of their death), and has never doubted the veracity of this tale. If the story of the Seven Sleepers has a firm basis in fact, we would expect that such a marvellous revelation would have been disseminated throughout the world in a relatively brief time, and historical facts clearly demonstrate that this indeed is precisely what happened. By the close of the sixth century the tradition can be demonstrated to have been known from Ireland to Persia, from Ethiopia to the Scandinavian countries. Because of all these early widespread beliefs in the tradition, scholars concede that the first written version of the tradition must have been composed within a single generation of the event itself, to explain its early widespread circulation. The miracle of the Seven Sleepers was apparently first described by Bishop Stephen of Ephesus. It seems the miracle occurred during the bishopric of Basil (+ 443), who was preceded by Memnon and succeeded by Bassian, though it may have occurred during the bishopric of Memnon who also was bishop of Ephesus during the Third Ecumenical Council. Bishop Zachariah of Mitylene was a Monophysite who, sometime between 491 and 518, wrote his Ecclesiastical History in Syriac while residing in Constantinople, and mentions the Seven Sleepers. It seems that there were many written records of the Seven Sleepers before him that no longer exist. Bishop John of Ephesus (c. 507 c. 586) recorded the tale of the Seven Sleepers in his Ecclesiastical History as a historical fact that happened in his own city a century earlier. He wrote his history in Syriac, having been born in Amid north of Mesopotamia, and is considered to be very accurate in his historical approach as well as attention to details. The earliest extant version in the Latin West dates from about 525 by a deacon named Theodosius. St. Gregory of Tours gave a complete Latin account in his *Gloria Martyrum* a few years later.

A brick church was built above the seven original tombs, with mosaic floors and marble revetments by Emperor Theodosius. A large, domed mausoleum was added to the cave in the 6th Century. Frescoes on the walls and vaults are mainly botanical decorations. As we might expect, pilgrimages to the site of the cave were extremely popular through the end of the 15th Century, as is evidenced from the graffiti on the walls in both Latin and Greek. It also became a favoured spot of burial in Late Antiquity. Theodosius on his pilgrimage in the sixth century saw the tombs of the Seven Sleepers, and according to a 9th Century writer, visitors to the cave were shown seven incorrupt bodies. The 12th Century Russian pilgrim Daniel saw the same. Daniel also says that many were buried there. Although pilgrimages can be shown to have taken place throughout the medieval centuries, the most famous was probably one sponsored by the last Anglo-Saxon king of England, Edward the Confessor, in response to a vision. The story of this particular pilgrimage to Ephesus was to be forever immortalized in a stone frieze in the chapel dedicated to Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey.

At the archaeological site of Ephesus, a well-paved road heading east of the Vadius Gymnasium leads to the Cave of the Seven Sleepers, about 0.8km (1/2 mile) away. The grotto associated with the Seven Sleepers, is located on the eastern slope of Panayirdag hill. In 1926, research by the Austrian Archaeological Institute uncovered the ruins of the Basilica of the Seven Sleepers (built above the cave) which permitted them to specify the date. It dates back to the middle of the 5th Century. Archaeology was able to confirm implicitly the literary date for this event. The main part of the complex is the cave church in which the Seven Sleepers slept and were buried. The large cave, with a ceiling as high as many regular churches, has been lined with brick masonry to form a church. There are arch niches on the sides and a rounded apse in the back. The burial places of the sleepers in the floor are now open, empty holes. Though archaeology and textual criticism cannot in themselves verify the miracle, they do verify that there was an actual historical event of seven young men appearing in the midst of the Ephesians, which was believed to be a great miracle that confirmed for all the resurrection of the dead. Thus, for Orthodox Christians who accept this miracle by faith, it is supported and confirmed by the scholarly evidence.



COLLEGE DAY

SATURDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

3pm Akathist & Great Procession

*followed by refreshments &
a talk by Fr Liviu Barbu ~*

***The Sacrament of Confession:
A forgotten remedy for modern man***



For more information & to RVSP ~

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Notes & Jottings

COLLEGE DAY

College Day this year is Saturday 3 September. Full details are included with this issue of the bulletin.

CYCLE DAY

Suffolk Historic Church Trust hold their annual sponsored Cycle Day on Saturday 10 September. As always, the church will be open, so that the cyclists, taking part in the event, can see inside and get their sponsorship forms signed. If anyone wants to take part in this event, which is not a race, sponsorship forms are available in the narthex.

GRAVE CROSS

A three-barred Russian style wooden cross has been made for the grave of Fr Elias by Fr Stephen Weston of St Fursey's, Sutton. This will be installed before College Day.

SUFFOLK CHURCHES WEBSITE

On Saturday 23 July our church was visited by Simon Knott, owner and webmaster of the Suffolk Churches Website and the Norfolk Churches Website which are the most respected and comprehensive sites that exist to document historic churches. The Mettingham entry had been deleted for some considerable time pending a complete revision of the information. We look forward to seeing the new Mettingham entry relating to our collegiate church.

IKON GIFT

An ikon of St Elizabeth the New Martyr was been donated to the church by Seraphim Collins. May God bless him for his gift.

BOOKS IN STOCK

EVERYDAY SAINTS AND OTHER STORIES – Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov) Pb 490pp £19.00

FATHER SERAPHIM ROSE His Life & Works – Hieromonk Damascene, Pb 1094pp £20

BRITAIN'S HOLIEST PLACES – Nick Mayhew-Smith, Pb 537pp illustrated £17.99

CRUCIFIED AGAIN Exposing Islam's New War on Christians – Raymond Ibrahim, Hb illustrated 303pp £15.75

2016 DIRECTORY OF ORTHODOX PARISHES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, Pb 60pp £4.00

THE ORTHODOX VENERATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD – St John Maximovitch, Pb 82pp £5.95

A LIFETIME IN PILGRIMAGE: Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) 1902 -1992 by Father Andrew Midgley, Pb 36pp illustrated £2.95

MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY according to St John Chrysostom – Archpriest Josiah Trenham Pb 298pp £12.50

OUR THOUGHTS DETERMINE OUR LIVES The life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica, Pb 212pp £11.50

This is a selection of the titles in stock that can be ordered through the website or by contacting us directly.

NAMEDAYS

We send congratulations to everyone who is celebrating a nameday at this time and wish them

MANY YEARS!

1 Aug – **St Seraphim of Sarov** – Serafima Hopper, Serphima Dembri, Seraphim Collins

4 Aug – **St Mary Magdalene** – Mary Tattum-Smith, Miriam Dembri

6 Aug – **Sts Boris & Gleb** – Boris Jermy, Gleb Jermy

10 Aug – **St Irene Chrysovolantou** – Irina Dembri

14 Aug – **St Cennydd of Langennith** – Kenneth Lock

21 Aug – **St Gregory of Sinai** – Priest Gregory Butler



COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW
AUGUST 2016

Saturday 6 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 7 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Dormition of St Anna)

Saturday 13 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 14 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Procession of the Precious Wood of the Life-giving Cross)

Thursday 18 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Friday 19 July

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ)

Saturday 20 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 21 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (St Emilian the Confessor)

Saturday 27 August

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 28 August

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary)



Meekness is a rock looking out over the sea of anger, which breaks the waves which come crashing on it, and stays entirely unmoved.

St John Climacus

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