



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 88 March 2016

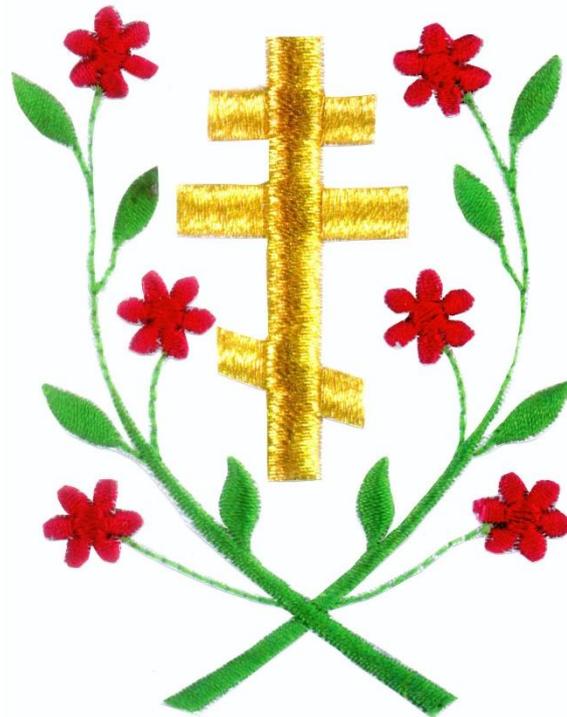


We Grieve for our Sins, and this is Why We Fast.

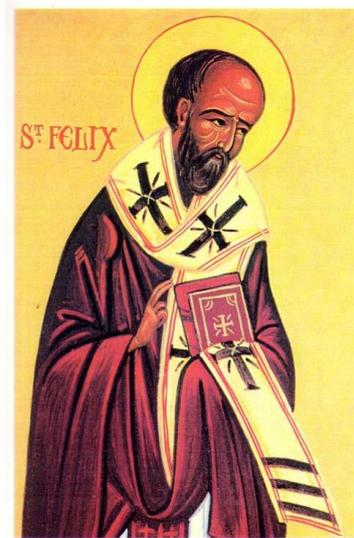
This month we begin the forty day fast of Great Lent. To help us enter to into the season in the right spirit, there follows an excerpt from Homily III (*Against the Jews*) of St John Chrysostom:

Why, then, do we fast for forty days? In the past, and especially at the time when Christ entrusted to us these sacred Mysteries, many a man approached the sacrificial Banquet without thought or preparation. Since the Fathers realized that it was harmful for a person to approach the Mysteries in this heedless fashion, they came together and marked out forty days for people to fast, pray, and gather together to hear the word of God. Their purpose was that we might all scrupulously purify ourselves during this time by our prayers, almsgiving, fasting, vigils, tears, confessions, and all the other pious practices, so that we might approach the Mysteries with our consciences made as clean as we could make them. Even though a man is not observing the Lenten fast, he does celebrate the Pascha as long as he comes to the altar with a clean conscience and shares in the Sacrifice—whether it be today, tomorrow, or any day whatsoever. The best time to approach the Mysteries is determined by the purity of a man's conscience and not by his observance of suitable seasons. Yet we do just the opposite. We fail to cleanse our conscience and, even though we are burdened with ten thousand sins, we consider that we have celebrated the Pascha as long as we approach the Mysteries on that feast day. But this is certainly not the case. If you approach the altar on the very day of the Sabbath and your conscience be bad, you fail to share in the Mysteries and you leave without celebrating the Pascha. But if you wash away your sins and share in the Mysteries today, you do celebrate the Pascha in precisely the proper way. Therefore, you must safeguard this exactness and vigour of spirit, not in the observance of the proper times but in your approach to the altar.

If a Jew or pagan ask you why you are fasting, do not tell him that it is because of the Pascha, or because of the mystery of the Cross. If you tell him that, you give him an ample grip upon you. Tell him we fast because of our sins and because we are going to approach the Mysteries. The Pascha is not a reason for fasting or grief; it is a reason for cheerfulness and joy. The Cross has taken away sin; it was an expiation for the world, a reconciliation for the ancient enmity. It opened the gates of heaven, changed those who hated into friends; it took our human nature, led it up to heaven, and seated it at the right hand of God's throne. And it brought to us ten thousand other blessings. There is no need, then, to grieve or be downcast: we must rejoice and glory in all these things. This is why Paul said: "But God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again: "But God commends his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us." John put it like this: "God so loved the world..." Tell me, how did God love the world? John passed over all the other signs of God's love and put the Cross in first place. For after he said: "God so loved the world," he said: "That He gave His only-begotten Son," that He be crucified, "that those who believe in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting." If, then, the Cross is the basis and boast of love, let us not say that it is a cause for grief. Heaven forbid that we grieve because of the Cross. We grieve for our sins, and this is why we fast.



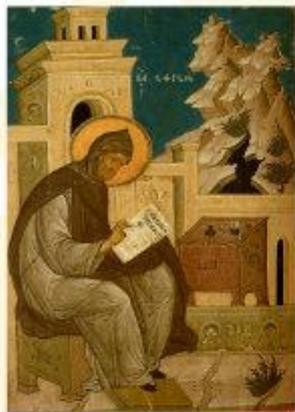
St Felix of Dunwich



In the first several hundred years following the Resurrection, Christianity had spread from North Africa to Ireland, from Palestine to Armenia and many other places. This spreading of the Faith was often accomplished through networks of relationships: from parent to child, from master to slave (or the other way around), from ruler to subject, and frequently from teacher to pupil. Christian missionaries formed their own networks for the spreading of the Gospel. St. Felix, Apostle to East Anglia, was part of such a network.

Most of what we know of St. Felix is from the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by St. Bede the Venerable, completed in 731. Bede tells us that Felix was a native of Burgundy, part of the kingdom of the Franks. The Irish monk Columbanus had come to this area with twelve other monks around 590 and had founded several monasteries where his evangelistic efforts took root. It is thought that Felix was a priest/monk in one of Columbanus' monasteries. Meanwhile, the kingdom of the East Anglians in Britain was in need of help. Early in the seventh century, the then ruler of this kingdom, Raedwald, had been converted to Christianity, but (as Bede tells us) his wife was not so sure about this and convinced her husband to keep the old gods as well as the new. The king's son, Earpwald, was at first a pagan but then converted to Christianity and was killed soon after. His brother, Sigebert, became the new king. As it happens, Sigebert had been living in exile in Francia and had been converted to Christianity and baptized by Felix. Now he and his priest left the kingdom of the Franks for Britain. Felix first went to Canterbury to meet with Archbishop Honorius. The archbishop was the fourth in line from St. Augustine, who had travelled from Rome to this land in 597 at the direction of St. Gregory the Great to preach the Gospel. Archbishop Honorius consecrated Felix in 631 to be the first Bishop of East Anglia. This kingdom included Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire. With the support and encouragement of the new king, Bishop Felix established his see at Dummoc (or Dummoc-ceastre) which most historians identify as Dunwich. This seacoast city had been the site of a Roman station, so still had its strong stone walls for protection, and there were good ancient roads leading to other cities. The cathedral for the diocese was built here and the king and the bishop, working together, also established a school for boys. (Cambridge University claims this as its foundation.) Unfortunately, Dunwich is no longer in existence. Fr. Alban Butler, in his *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Saints* tells us that it had been a large city containing 52 religious houses, but that erosion of the shore had allowed the sea to swallow it almost entirely up by the mid-18th Century. He relates that at that time the steeples of churches could still be seen about five miles from the shore.

God worked through Bishop Felix to re-establish Christianity as the True Faith in this formerly pagan land. Felix founded the famous monastery of Bury St. Edmunds and another at Soham. When it was evident that his kingdom was securely in the fold of Christianity due to the tireless efforts of Bishop Felix, King Sigebert left his throne to his cousin Egric and retired to a monastery. St Felix reposed on March 8, 648 after seventeen years of missionary work in this land. He was buried in his cathedral in Dunwich, but his relics were removed and taken to Soham because of the destruction of Viking invaders. For the same reason, the saint's relics were later again removed and buried at Ramsey Abbey. St. Bede gives great tribute to St. Felix when he says that "like a good farmer [he] reaped a rich harvest of believers. He delivered the entire province from its age-old wickedness and infelicity and brought it to the Christian Faith and works of righteousness, and in full accord with the significance of his own name, guided it towards eternal felicity." May we, through the networks that are available to us, help to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, and bring our ever increasingly pagan world to the Christian Faith. Holy Felix, pray for us.



“O Lord and Master
of my life,
Take from me the spirit
of sloth, despair,
lust of power
and idle talk;

But give rather the spirit of chastity,
humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King,
grant me to see my own transgressions
and not to judge my brother, for blessed
art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.”

Notes & Jottings

REPOSE OF PRESBYTERA BARBARA

On Tuesday 16 February Presbytera Barbara Jones reposed in the Lord, at 7 o'clock in the morning, in the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. She had been struggling with cancer for the last two years and had suffered greatly. Barbara is survived by her husband, Fr Elias, and by a daughter and two sons.

Presbyter Barbara's mortal remains were brought to church on Tuesday 23 February. The Vigil for the departed was sung in the evening, in the Collegiate Church. The following morning, the Requiem Liturgy was served at 10 o'clock. The five concelebrating priests were Fr Elias Jones, Fr Antony Bardsley, Fr Liviu Barbu, Archpriest Philip Steer (Walsingham) and Archpriest Raphael Armour (Cambridge). The funeral service followed the Liturgy and Presbytera Barbara was laid to rest here in our churchyard, in a grave parallel to that of the Foundress. May God grant her Memory Eternal.

PORCH DOORS

On Friday 26 February, the builders (R J Hood), started work on installing glazed storm doors to enclose the porch, making it more like a vestibule. This is a vast improvement and will be a great asset to the church.

PILGRIMAGE TO IKEN

The annual pilgrimage to St Botolph at Iken will take place on Saturday 25 June. In previous years we have been invited to lunch at the home of one or other of the churchwardens. This year, however, both will be away from home at the end of June. The alternative is to take our own picnic lunch. Suggested venues are either the churchyard or Iken cliff. A slightly earlier time for the service in church has been suggested. Maybe 11.30am but all these details will be confirmed in the April issue of this bulletin.

BOOKS IN STOCK

Copies of the 2016 Directory of Parishes are now available from stock, 60pp £4.00 each.

SGOIS has received a further supply of two other titles that were temporarily out of stock. These are *Everyday Saints and other Stories* and *The Blessed Surgeon*. These can be ordered through the website.

NAMEDAY

On Friday 18 March (St Mark the Faster), Archbishop Mark celebrates his nameday. We send him our congratulations and wish him:

MANY YEARS!



**COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW**

MARCH 2016

Saturday 5 March

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Commemoration of the Dead)

Saturday 5 March

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 6 March

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Meat-fare Sunday)

Saturday 12 March

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 13 March

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Forgiveness Sunday)

**Monday 14 March ~ Thursday 17 March
8pm ~ Great Compline with the Great Canon**

Saturday 19 March

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 20 March

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Sunday of Orthodoxy)

Saturday 26 March

7.30am ~ Vigil

Sunday 27 March

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (St Gregory Palamas)



In reality, the cross is a stairway to Heaven. If we realise what treasure we are gaining from the pain of ordeals, we will not groan but praise God.

Saint Paisios.

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