



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 19 July '10

LAST LETTER OF ST ELIZABETH THE NEW MARTYR

Abbess Elizabeth was arrested on the third day of Easter 1918 and taken from her Convent in Moscow into exile, confinement and death. Writing from the train which was taking her to Alapayevsk and martyrdom, she sent two letters in Russian to comfort her orphaned nuns. The second of these letters is translated below from the original printed in 'Materials for the Life of the Holy Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth' (Moscow, 1996).

My dear little children. Glory to God that you have all taken communion: you have all stood before the Saviour like one soul. I believe that the Saviour has been with you all on this earth and that at the Last Judgement this prayer will rise again before the face of God, as mercy for one another and for me.

I cannot express how I have been touched and overjoyed to the depths of my soul by your letters. You all without exception wrote to me that you will strive to live as I often spoke to you. Oh, how you will now perfect yourselves for salvation, I can already see good beginning, only do not be downcast and do not weaken in your good intentions, and the Lord, Who has separated us for a time, will strengthen you spiritually. Pray for me, a sinner, that I may be worthy to return to my little children and be perfected for you and that we may all think how to prepare ourselves for eternal life. You remember that I often feared that you might find too much strength for life in my support, and I used to say to you: 'You must hold on more to God'. The Lord says: 'My Son, give Me your heart and your eyes that they may regard My ways'. Then you can be sure that if you give God your heart, that is, yourself, you give Him everything.

Now we are suffering the same thing, involuntarily, but only with Him do we find the consolation to bear our common cross of separation.

The Lord found that it was time for us to carry His cross, let us strive to be worthy of that joy. I thought that, being so weak, we had not grown up enough to carry a heavy cross.

'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, as it was pleasing to the Lord, so it hath been'. What an example St Job gives us with his humble submission and patience in his sorrows. It was for this that the Lord afterwards gave him joy.

How many examples of such sorrow there are among the holy fathers and in holy convents. Prepare for the joy of being together again, we will be patient, humble. Let us not murmur, let us be thankful for everything.

At the moment I am reading the wonderful book of St John of Tobolsk. Here is what he writes: 'The Merciful God preserves and gives wisdom and peace to each of those who surrenders his heart to His Holy Will, and with the same words He supports and strengthens the heart so that we do not transgress the Will of God, inspiring us secretly: you are always with Me, you are in My mind and memory, you will

obey My will without hesitation. I am always with you, I watch over you with love and keep you, so that you will not lose My grace, mercy and gifts of grace. All that is Mine - is yours: My heaven, the Angels, and even more My Only-Begotten Son'.

I am Thine, I Myself am Thine, and will be Thine, as I promised to faithful Abraham: 'I am thy shield; My reward is eternally great unto the ages of ages' (Genesis 1:15).

'My Lord, Thou art mine, truly mine...I hear Thee and I will obey Thy words with all my heart'. Say these words every day, and you will feel light, light in your hearts.

'But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint' (Prophet Isaiah).

'O Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief'.

'My little children, let us love not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth' (Epistles).

May the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ be with you and my love in Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.
Your elder intercessor to God and loving mother in Christ,
Mother Elizabeth.

[Note: St John of Tobolsk was the name-saint and ancestor of Vladika St John the Wonderworker]

VLADIKA ST JOHN IN ENGLAND

For twelve years, from 1950 to 1962, St John was Archbishop of Western Europe, with his see first in Paris, and then in Brussels. As such he was also responsible for the British Isles and, in particular, England. During this time he made several visits to London. The following has been recorded of those visits:

Whenever he visited England, Vladika John always stayed with us at the convent. He never lay down to sleep, but rather rested, sitting in an armchair in the office next to the church. At night we heard how he often used to go into the church.

Knowing that the sisters had all been pupils at the Bethany School in the Holy Land, Vladika gave us his blessing to work with children, teaching catechism, Russian language and singing. Once Vladika was at our convent when lessons were underway. Among our pupils were some of their English friends. We introduced the children and they came up for a blessing. Surrounding Vladika, they did not want to leave. Vladika John was not very attractive outwardly, but even Non-Orthodox felt his spiritual grace, and, on leaving, the English children said: 'You're so lucky to have such an Archbishop!' By Vladika's prayers we worked with children for over thirty-six years.

After visiting the churchwarden, Count Vladimir Kleinmichel, Vladika declined to take a taxi, preferring to return to town by tube. The warden accompanied Vladika to the station. As he was leaving, the ticket agent asked him whom he was seeing off. 'That was our Orthodox Archbishop', replied the churchwarden. 'I'm a Baptist', said the ticket agent, 'but I can see that your Archbishop is a saint'.

During one of Vladika's visits to our community, there was a phone call from France, telling us that Archimandrite Serge had died. Vladika asked that the funeral be postponed and said that he would return to France at once. Early in the morning we saw Vladika off to the station by taxi. The young English

cabbie asked if he could have a blessing. Vladika turned around and blessed him. He then said to us: 'What a wonderful, extraordinary Archbishop, he has a rare inner strength'.

At one time a Russian family from China were living in London. One night, the husband called me, frantic with anxiety. 'For God's sake, tell Vladika John that my wife Olga is in hospital, critically ill. Her blood pressure has shot up very high, the doctors fear for her life as well as the life of our unborn child'. I called Versailles, hoping to find Vladika there. He answered the phone, found out all the details, and then said not to worry, that all would be well. Afterwards, he thanked me for calling him. Through his holy prayers everything turned out fine, and a healthy girl, Katherine, was born.

A friend of our community, Paraskeva Dimitriu, lay ill in a coma. At our request, Vladika John went to see her; he prayed and blessed her. That same day she got up, healthy, and with tears related how she had suddenly felt her illness leave her. Others told me that whenever Vladika put his hand on their heads, they had felt the power of grace and felt light in their souls. Vladika carried out the Lord's commandments with self-sacrificing love and the Lord answered his holy prayers.

When Vladika John left us to go to America, he gave us the impression that we would never see him again. He told us: 'I am leaving you now. I entrust you to the First Martyr of England, St Alban'.

Mother Elizabeth (Ampenov) (+ 1999)

Editorial note:

Vladika is a Russian word used when addressing, or speaking of, a bishop. It is sometimes translated in the service books as *Master* but this sounds like a rather servile way of addressing the boss. Whilst the word *Vladika* implies deep respect, it also has a warm and loving connotation in the way that is implied by using the word *Father*.

SAINT WANDREGISILIUS

Just as there are various forms of the name John - Ivan, Evan, Ian etc, so there are various forms of Wandregisilius. In France he is known as St Wandrille. Whilst researching the ecclesiastical history of Mettingham, we discovered that there was a particular devotion, at Mettingham College, to Saint Wandered (the local version of the saint's name). It is interesting to note that the only church dedicated to Saint Wandregisilius in England is at Bixley, just south of Norwich, only about 15 miles from Mettingham. In that church there was a shrine to St Wandregisilius. Sadly the shrine and its contents, whatever they were, disappeared in the general destruction of shrines and relics that took place in the 16th Century. To add insult to injury, the church itself was destroyed by fire (a suspected arson attack) in 2004.

So, who was this saint who is commemorated in the Church's calendar on 22 July? He was born in about AD600 in Verdun. His father, Waltchis, was a kinsman of Pepin of Landin. As a nobleman he was obliged to be married. However both he and his wife chose to embrace the monastic life. Wandregisilius was trained by St Baudry in the monastery at Montfaucon. He also spent some time at Bobbio and adopted the strict lifestyle established there by St Columbanus. He was eventually ordained as a priest by St Ouen, Bishop of Rouen and founded the abbey at Fontenelle in Normandy, which became a centre famed for its asceticism and high educational standards. (The latter may be the reason for the devotion to St Wandregisilius in Mettingham College). The monastery church was consecrated in the year 657. The place came to be called Saint-Wandrille.

David Hugh Farmer, in his Oxford Dictionary of Saints (published in 1978) adds:

“His relics were removed during the Viking invasions to Etaples, Chartres, Boulogne and Mont-Blandin (Ghent). Through the latter centre his feast became known and was celebrated in southern England before the Norman Conquest. His abbey had at least three cells in England, the most important being Ecclesfield (South Yorkshire) and Uphaven (Wilts). His feast spread to other English centres, including York and Hereford. A fine illustrated Life of St Wandrille (11th Century) survives at Saint-Omer; at least some of his relics were recovered by his abbey, which flourishes today.”

A century earlier (1874), writing in his Lives of the Saints, Rev S Baring-Gould says:

“...finally he built and established, in 648, the great monastery of Fontanelle in Normandy, which has since borne its name, as S. Vandville. There he died having collected about him a large assembly of monks. Of his relics only two arms remain, one at Fontanelle, the other at Bron. Of the noble abbey, the cloisters exist, and part of the abbey turned into a factory. Of the four churches, one the great abbey church, a magnificent specimen of architecture of the 13th century, nothing remains. In 1828 much of this great church existed. Since then the proprietor, M. Cyprien Lenoir - let his name go down gibbeted to posterity - has blown it up with gunpowder.”

There seems to be some conflict between the two quotations above, which appear rather contradictory. We are trying to check these details. If more information comes to hand, we will publish it in the next issue. We know that the skull of St Wandregisilius was returned to Fountenelle in the 1960s but we do not know from where, and by whom.

On the subject of relics, we are trying to discover what might have been kept in the shrine at Bixley. In his book *Shrines of British Saints*, J Charles Wall records that among the relics at Canterbury Cathedral was a bone of St Wandregisilius, abbot and confessor. Unhappily the author's subject was basically the shrines in cathedrals and abbeys. He says very little about shrines in parish churches and, consequently, does not mention Bixley.

In his *Antiquities of the County of Suffolk* Alfred Suckling, who was writing in the 19th Century, says “The fame of St Wandered, whose image was also here (Mettingham College), attracted an annual peregrination to his shrine”. The source for this statement is given as *MS. pen. Epis. Norwic*. Maybe contacting Norwich Cathedral Library would be helpful. Clearly more research into this facet of local history is needed. Searching the Internet, we have found a very good ikon of St Wandregisilius, but as yet do not know where it is located. Also we are trying to find out what hymns, if any, have been written in his honour.

CHURCH NEWS

VISIT OF THE KURSK IKON

After all the changes of dates for the visit of the Kursk Ikon of the Mother of God to Britain we had supposed, as we reported in the June issue of this bulletin, that it would be impossible for us to arrange for Mettingham to be included in the itinerary. Yet, almost miraculously it happened. At 6pm on Monday 21 June, Fr Nikolai Savchenko arrived carrying the ikon. We had very little notice of this and did our utmost to let people know. Please forgive us if you were not notified in time, or at all. Having read the reports of the visit to Kursk, where thousands, including even members of the Russian government, turned out to greet the ancient wonder-working ikon, we felt very blessed. In Kursk, the crowds were so great that people queued for hours to venerate the ikon and then were only allowed about two seconds per person. In this unbelieving country of ours, we did not need the police and the army to control crowds. The faithful few, who do love and honour the Mother of God, were able to spend much more time with the ikon, to their very great joy. At 6.30pm we sang Compline with the Akathist in honour of the Kursk Ikon. Taking part in the services were Fr Elias Jones, together with visiting priests, Fr Nikolai Savchenko

(London), Fr Philip Steer (Walsingham), Fr Alexander Haig (Colchester) and Fr Raphael Armour (Cambridge).

Fr PHILIP STEER

Fr Philip's next visit to us will be on Sunday 25 July. He will serve the Liturgy in our church at 10.30am

IKON LAMPS

Our church is open every day and we keep at least two ikon lamps burning in honour of the Mother of God. We estimate that the cost of the oil, per lamp, is about £1 per week (£52 per annum). Would anyone like to endow an ikon lamp in memory of a loved one?

SPONSORED CYCLE RIDE

The sponsored cycle ride, organised by Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, will take place between 9am and 5pm on Saturday 11 September. Sponsorship forms for both riders and recorders are on the table in the narthex. Cyclists visit as many churches as possible on that day and are sponsored at so much per church. The recorders sit in church and sign the forms of visiting cyclists to verify that they have indeed visited the church. Half the sponsorship money goes to SHCT and the other half is for the church designated by the participants. Please take part on behalf of our church if you possibly can or sponsor somebody who is doing so.

SGOIS 40th ANNIVERSARY

As we mentioned in the June bulletin we have to postpone this celebration, planned for 24 July, for the time being, because of illness. Knowing that many friends would come from a distance, we realise some would need overnight accommodation. Obviously we planned to entertain everyone at a reception in the house, after the Liturgy and this is really not possible in the present circumstances. May God grant that a revised plan will be possible later in the year. We are naturally disappointed about this but feel that we are left with little choice.

NEW TITLES ON THE CHURCH BOOKSTALL

THE MOUNTAIN OF SILENCE - A Search for Orthodox Spirituality - Kyriacos C. Markides, Pb 243pp £10.50

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY edited by Mary B Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff, Pb 289pp £17.99

NAMEDAYS IN JULY

Congratulations and MANY YEARS

12 July, Holy Apostles Peter & Paul - **Fr Paul Elliott, Peter Smith, Peter Jermy**

18 July, St Athanasius of Mount Athos - **Hieromonk Athanasius**

18 July, New Martyr Elizabeth at Alapayevsk (1918) - **Elizabeth Tattum-Smith**

24 July, Saint Olga - **Olga Jermy**

30 July, Great Martyr Marina - **Marina Jermy**

We are beginning to compile a list of the name days of all our friends. If we do not yet have the details of your name-saint/nameday, please let us know so that we may congratulate you in an appropriate manner.
(note - dates given according to the regular civil calendar)

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REGULAR SERVICES: Every Sunday 10.30am - Every evening 6pm
Extra services for festivals and saints days will be announced in the bulletin.

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