



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 40 March 2012



The Triumph of Orthodoxy

In the second decade of the 8th Century, Patriarch Germanos of Constantinople was obliged to defend the veneration of the ikons in churches against the criticisms of a few individual provincial bishops. However, as it is not for the temporal authorities to determine the doctrines, disciplines and customs of the Church, the patriarch was taken by surprise when, in 730 the Byzantine Emperor Leo III, having heard of this controversy, published a decree supporting ikonoclasm. Events moved quickly; Germanos was forced from office and replaced by Anastasios who was more compliant. When Leo’s son, Constantine Copronymus, became emperor, he was even more vigorous in promoting ikonoclasm and in 754 caused a “Council” to be convened at which ikons were condemned. Having managed to browbeat the bishops who actually attended, Constantine set about using the spurious authority of his false council to enforce ikonoclasm by violence.

After the death of Leo IV in 780, his widow, the Orthodox Empress Irene, acting as regent for her young son, Constantine VI, determined to bring an end to ikonoclasm. Success was only assured in 787 when the 7th Oecumenical Council, which was held at Nicea under guidance of Patriarch St Tarasios, condemned ikonoclasm and ordered the restoration and veneration of the ikons in all the churches. Sadly, on Irene’s death in 802, the enemies of the Church re-emerged. In 815, they found a new champion in the person of Emperor Leo V, the Armenian, who launched a new attack on the ikons. Successive emperors continued their ikonoclast persecution. The last ikonoclast emperor, Theophilos, was the worst of all. His campaign intensified after 834. However, the victory of Orthodoxy came through the actions of another woman. Theophilos’ widow, the

Empress St Theodora (commemorated in the Church Calendar on 11 February), immediately ordered the end of the persecution. A new patriarch, Methodios, who had previously suffered for Orthodoxy at the hands of the Church's enemies, was installed. On the first Sunday of Great Lent 843 the restoration of ikons was proclaimed in the Hagia Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople. The event, known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy, is commemorated by the Church every year on the first Sunday of Great Lent.

Preaching on this day in 1954, St John the Wonderworker tells us that all of the services in Great Lent are united by the idea of preparing for Pascha, the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Day. He continues;

What is Pascha? Pascha is a taste of the joy of paradise! What is this joy? It is that we see God and His glory! The Church loves the glory of the Lord! When She celebrates the Feast of Orthodoxy, She keeps the festival of the day of the re-establishment of the veneration of ikons. An ikon is simply a reminder of Christ the God-Man on earth. Ikons of the saints are reminders of all those who followed Christ, who are faithful and devoted to Him, who burned with love for Him. Veneration of the holy ikons is veneration of the glory of the Lord. He who rejoices in the glory of God and of everything that reminds us of it in this life will also rejoice in the age to come. He who in this life strove toward God will rush to Him joyfully when, at the Dread Judgement, he hears the words, "Come unto Me, ye blessed...". All those who do not know how to rejoice in the glory of God, in whom the divine realm and its laws call forth a state of unhappiness, who love gloom or semi-gloom, who do not love the light, will not answer to the call of "Come unto Me...". They will shrink back in indignation, unhappiness, in jealousy and anger, from the humble and the meek who will go forward to the light, from God Himself, Whom they will begin to blame for their being in such a state. They will even shrink from themselves, though they will not want to admit their guilt. Such a state is true suffering. Hades is not a place, no, but a state of soul. It begins already here on earth. Just so, paradise too begins in the soul of man already in the earthly life.



**St John the Wonderworker in
Marseille**

Troparion for the Triumph of Orthodoxy

We worship Thy immaculate Image, O Good One, and ask forgiveness of our sins, O Christ God; for of Thine own will Thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh, to deliver from slavery to the enemy those whom Thou hadst created. Therefore we thankfully cry to Thee: Thou hast filled all things with joy, O our Saviour, by coming to save the world.



CHURCH NOTES AND JOTTINGS

WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH

The following day is the Thursday of the Great Canon. Thus at evening service on Wednesday, because liturgically the day always begins in the evening, we read, not only the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete but the Life of St Mary of Egypt. This is quite long and it is necessary to hear or read the full text. No summary could do justice to it. (We can supply a photocopy of the text on request). The reason for including it in our Lenten customs is that it teaches us two important lessons. Despite being brought up as a Christian, Mary strayed from the path of virtue. Following her repentance she became a great ascetic. In her story we read of her encounter with St Zosima, a priest-monk. He was not a bad

man but had, unwittingly, fallen into spiritual pride. He had spent his life in monastic obedience and assumed that he must be very advanced along the spiritual road. His encounter with Mary, a true penitent and ascetic, taught him otherwise. Thus the example of St Mary of Egypt is that we should never despair and that of St Zosima is that we should not think too highly of ourselves because we still have a lot to learn.

DAILY INTERCESSIONS

St John of Kronstadt gives us the following guidance:

When you pray for others, for instance for the members of your household, or for strangers even though they may not have asked you to do so, pray for them with the same ardour and zeal as you would pray for yourself. Remember the commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".

In church, every evening, we pray for our friends, relations and neighbours. Also we pray for all who have asked for prayers for themselves or those who are sick, suffering or in any distress. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like any names included in the daily intercessions.

METTINGHAM ORTHODOX TRUST

Mettingham Orthodox Trust has received formal approval and registration by the Charity Commissioners. This means that donations can now be made under the Gift Aid scheme, enabling the Trust to recover the Income Tax that has been paid on the money. A Gift Aid Declaration is now available and is attached to the end of this bulletin.

CHURCH PORCH

Work has begun on the porch and should be completed before Easter. The car parking

space has been concreted, ready for the ramp to be installed to enable wheelchair users to enter the church by the north door.

EASTER CARDS

An ikon card, *the Descent into Hades*, (the Easter Ikon) is available from the bookstall at 20p each. These are in full colour and complete with an envelope.

NAMEDAY

We send our congratulations to Archbishop Mark and wish him Many Years on the occasion of his name day (18 March - St Mark the Faster of Egypt).



Vladyka Mark preaching at the blessing and inaugural Liturgy at our church, July 2009

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God *Joy of All Who Sorrow*
The White House, Low Rd, Mettingham, Suffolk NR35 1TP - 01986 895176
e-mail churchmettingham@aol.com Website www.joyofallwhosorrow.org.uk

Cheques should be made payable to "*Joy of All Who Sorrow*" Church.

The account is in HSBC Bank, 3 New Market, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9HQ
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