



# “Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 42

May 2012



## Saint George the Great Martyr & Patron of England

*The sermon below on the life of St George is from a collection of homilies on the lives of the saints written by Aelfric Abbot of Eynsham, near Oxford in the late 10<sup>th</sup> Century, at a time when England was still in full communion with the rest of the Orthodox World. This unity with the “One, Holy Catholic Church” is demonstrated through the sheer variety of saints that he includes, both those traditionally considered “Eastern” as well as “Western”. Thus Aelfric’s hagiography contains both the lives of Sts Aetheldreda of Ely, Alban and Edmund as well as those of Sts Basil the Great, Mary of Egypt and the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. Our text is taken from Aelfric’s Lives of the Saints translated from the original Anglo-Saxon by the Revd. Walter Skeat (London: 1881)*

**H**eretics have written falsehoods in their books about the holy man who is called George. Now will we tell you that which is true about him, that their error may not secretly harm any one. The holy George was in heathen days a rich noble under the cruel emperor, who was called Diocletian, in the province Cappadocia. Then Diocletian bade men gather the heathen to his devil-worship, as an insult to his Lord, and, with many threats, frightened the people so that they offered their sacrifices to the false gods with him.

When the holy man saw the error of the heathen, how they sacrificed to the devils, and dishonoured their Lord, then he distributed his property fearlessly in alms to poor men, to the Saviour's praise, and became emboldened through Christ, and said to the emperor, 'All the gods of the heathen are cruel devils, and our Lord verily wrought the Heavens' [Ps. 96:5]. Thy gods, Emperor, are golden and silver, stone and wooden, the handiwork of unbelieving men, and ye set guards over them to watch them against thieves.' So then Diocletian became fiendishly angered against the holy man, and bade him say of what city he was, and what was his name. Then George answered that impious man, and said, 'I am verily a Christian, and I serve Christ, "George" I am called, and I hold authority in my country, which is called Cappadocia, and it liketh me better to forego now this transitory honour, and to minister to the kingdom of the glorious God in holy service,' Then said Diocletian, 'Thou erreth, George, Approach now first [of all], and offer thy sacrifice to the unconquered Apollo, he who may verily have pity on thy ignorance, and turn thee to his homage.'

George then interrogated the fiendlike emperor; 'Which is to be loved, or to whom is sacrifice to be offered, to Jesus Christ, the redeemer of all worlds, or to Apollo, chief of all devils.' Thereupon Diocletian, with devilish anger, commanded the holy man to be hung up on a gibbet, and his limbs to be torn with iron claws, and torches to be kindled on both sides of him; after that, he commanded him to be led out of the city, and to be tortured with scourges, and rubbed with salt; but the holy man remained unhurt.

Then the emperor ordered him to be put in prison, and bade enquire everywhere for some noted sorcerer. Then Athanasius the sorcerer heard of the matter, and came to the emperor, and asked him boldly, 'Why badest thou fetch me thus suddenly to thee?' Diocletian answered Athanasius thus, 'Canst thou extinguish the Christian's sorcery?' Then the sorcerer answered Diocletian thus. 'Bid the Christian man come to me, and may I be guilty if I cannot totally extinguish his magic by my sorcery.'

Then rejoiced Diocletian that he had found such a sorcerer, and bade bring God's champion out of prison, and said to the saint, with fierce anger, 'For thee, George, I have procured this magician; overcome his magic, or let him overcome thee, either let him undo thee, or do thou undo him.' George then looked upon the heathen magician, and said that he perceived Christ's grace in him. Athanasius then speedily took a great bowl, filled with a noxious draught, and dedicated all that drink to the devils, and gave it him to drink, but it hurt him not. Then said again the magician, 'Yet one thing will I do, and if that hurt him not, I will submit to Christ.' He took then a cup, with a death-bearing drink, and cried aloud to the black devils, and to the foremost devils, and to the most powerful, and in their names enchanted the fearful drink, and gave it to the Lord's saint to drink; but the fiendish liquor harmed him not a whit. Then the sorcerer saw that he could not hurt him, and fell at his feet, praying for baptism; and the holy George straightway baptised him. Then Diocletian became fiendishly angry, and bade seize on the sorcerer, who had there believed in God, and bring him out of the city, and instantly behead him.

Again on the second day the wicked emperor commanded George to be bound on a broad wheel, and two sharp swords to be set against him, and so to be drawn up, and shoved backwards. Then George commended himself boldly to God; 'Give heed, O God, to deliver me, make haste now to help me, Lord' [Ps. 70:1] and he was then brought with this prayer to the wheel. Then the heathen men turned the wheel savagely, but it instantly burst asunder, and bent to the earth, and the holy man remained uninjured. Diocletian then became sad in his mind, and swore by the sun, and by all his gods, that he would destroy him by divers torments. Then said the blessed George to him, 'Thy tortures are transitory, but I fear not for thy threatening; thou hast my body in thy power, but nevertheless not thou hast, but God (has) my soul.' Then the emperor bade his torturers fetch a brazen caldron, and fill it full with boiling lead, and lay George within the caldron, when it was hottest. Then the saint raised his eyes to heaven, praying to his Lord, and saying boldly, 'I go into thee in my Lord's name, and I hope in the Lord that He will now deliver me unhurt out of this boiling caldron, to whom is praise and glory throughout all the world.' And he made the sign of the cross over the caldron, and laid himself upon it, and the lead was cooled by God's might, and George sat sound in the caldron. Then said the emperor to Christ's servant, 'Knowest thou not, George, that our gods are striving with thee, and even yet they are patient, that they may pity thee; now I exhort thee, as a beloved son, that thou altogether quit the Christians' doctrine, and quickly incline to my counsel, so that thou sacrifice to the venerable Apollo, and thou mayest so obtain great honour.' Then the holy martyr, filled with the Holy Ghost, smiled with his mouth, and said to the wicked man, 'It befitteth us to sacrifice to the immortal God.'

After this the blinded Diocletian commanded to adorn his dead gods magnificently, and the devil's temple with precious silver; and bade bring thither the faithful martyr, thinking that he would worship his gods, and offer his sacrifice to the lifeless gods. Then George bowed down to the earth, thus praying his Lord with bended knees, 'Hear now, God Almighty, thy servant's prayer, and utterly destroy these miserable images, even as wax melteth at a hot fire, that men may know Thee, and believe in Thee, that Thou only art God, Almighty Creator.' After this prayer, a very

sudden fire burst out from Heaven, and burned up the temple, and all the gods sunk utterly into the earth, and never appeared afterward. Likewise, the priests sunk down with them, and some of the heathen who stood there at hand; and George asked the wicked emperor, 'On what sort of gods persuadest thou us to believe? How can they deliver thee from perils, when they cannot deliver themselves?'

Thereupon, Diocletian ended this decree, and bade thus to kill the champion of God; 'Take this guilty one, who, by magic, hath turned our venerable gods altogether to dust, and drag him prone with his face to the earth through all the streets and stony ways, and slay him afterward with the edge of the sword.' Then the heathen dragged the holy man, as Diocletian had directed them, until they came to the place of execution, and the martyr asked leave that he might pray to Almighty God, and commend his spirit. Then he thanked God for all His mercies, that He had shielded him against the deceitful devil, and had given him victory through the true faith. He prayed likewise for all Christian folk, and that God would give rain to the earth, because the heat was then wasting the land. After this prayer he crossed himself, and bade his slayer to kill him.

When he was slain, there came straightway thither the people of his own country, believers in God, who took his body, and brought it to the city, wherein he had suffered, and there buried him with great honour, to the praise of the Almighty. Then the Lord sent rain-showers, and watered the earth, which before was burned up, even as George had prayed, before he bowed to the death. Lo, then, Diocletian was suddenly slain by fire from heaven, and his companions together, as he was going homeward with his high thanes, and he went to hell before he reached his house; and the holy George journeyed to Christ, with whom he ever dwelleth in glory. Amen.

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## CHURCH NOTES AND JOTTINGS

### ASCENSION DAY

Ascension Day this year is on Thursday 24 May and will be the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rapprochement between the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church; the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russian. Metropolitan Hilarion will be in Moscow from 16 - 25 May leading the ROCOR delegation at the celebrations.

### CHURCH WALL

As mentioned in last month's bulletin, the area around the grave of our foundress is slowly being improved. The plan is to build steps up to the higher level of the churchyard and to build a retaining wall. The concrete footing for the wall have been installed but work has come to a standstill because of the recent prolonged spell of very wet weather. God willing, the builders will soon be able to begin work again.

### BOOKSHOP

The bookshop at 22 Upper Olland Street, Bungay, opened for business on Saturday 21 April. The opening hours are 10am - 3pm, Monday to Saturday. Already, people are beginning to use the shop which aims to serve the local community. Do come in and browse when you are in the area. If you have any unwanted books, on any subject, and are willing to donate them, please contact us. Proceeds from the sale of secondhand books will help to support Mettingham Orthodox Trust. Thanks are due to all who have already donated books. We appreciate your support.

### SAINT BOTOLPH - reminder

On Saturday 30 June, St Botolph's Day, we are making a pilgrimage to Iken, the place on the Suffolk coast where the saint established his monastery in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. The service in the ancient church begins at 12noon. Afterwards we hope to enjoy a picnic, if it is a dry day. Please make a note in your diary and join us if you can.

### NAMEDAYS

We send congratulations to all who are celebrating a nameday at this time and wish them *Many Years*.

4 May - **St Philippa, mother of St Theodore of Perge** - Matushka Philippa Steer

6 May - **Great Martyr St George** - George Tattum-Smith

8 May - **Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark** - Reader Mark Tattum-Smith

15 May - **Martyrs Boris & Gleb** - Boris Jermy, Gleb Jermy

21 May - **Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian** - John Andrews

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# ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM STOCK

**LAPEL CROSSES** - "Silver" & blue lapel crosses - Russian style - £2.00 each

**INCENSE** - in addition to the small boxes of incense at £2.75 each, we now stock both Rose and Byzantine Incense in kilo boxes £42.50 per kilo

## BOOKS

**ORTHODOX STUDY BIBLE** - Hb illustrated 1795pp + indices £25.00

**BRITAIN'S HOLIEST PLACES - The all-new guide to 500 sacred sites** by Nick Mayhew Smith, Pb illustrated 537pp £17.99

**HANDMAIDS OF THE LORD Holy Women in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages** - Selected and translated by Joan M Petersen, Pb 434pp £29.99

**NIL SORSKY The Authentic Writings** - Edited and translated with an introduction by David M Goldfrank, Pb 276pp + 93pp of bibliography, index etc. £29.99

**THE EXPLANATION OF THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL TO THE GALATIANS** by Blessed Theophylact, Pb 86pp £10.50

**ENCOMIUM TO MONK CONSTANTINE (CAVARNOS) (1918 - 2011)** by Father Asterios Gerostergios, Pb 51pp £4.50

**2012 WALL CALENDAR** published by the Russian Orthodox Youth Committee - we have a few remaining copies (£10.00) NOW £3.00

**2012 DIRECTORY OF ORTHODOX PARISHES & CLERGY IN BRITAIN & IRELAND** published by the Orthodox Fellowship of Saint John the Baptist, Pb 60pp £4.00

## PRAYER BOOK

This is a facsimile of the original 1960 version of the Jordanville Prayer Book - translated by Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore), Hb 378pp £14.50

**THE WAY OF A PILGRIM & THE PILGRIM CONTINUES HIS WAY** -translated by R M French, Pb pp (both parts in one volume) £10.99  
Newly reprinted by SPCK

**THE GREAT COLLECTION OF THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS by St Demetrius of Rostov - Hb**  
per volume £25.00

SEPTEMBER	500pp	OCTOBER	470pp
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MARCH	500pp		
APRIL	- this volume should be published later this year.		

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