



# *“Joy of All Who Sorrow”*

No 34 September 2011



## **ENCYCLICAL LETTER**

On 11 September 2011 the world remembers a very sad date – the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attack in New York, when a multitude of innocent people perished. This attack, together with the others that followed it, was a clear sign of the brazen presence of evil, iniquity and hatred among us. It also showed how defenceless we are in this world. It is also clear that a naked lust for power and cynical political calculation lurk behind contemporary terrorist attacks. The events in Beslan which brought the German Diocese into close contact with the victims of extremists once more showed us and the whole world the extent of human degradation when people become fanatical in the name of an ideology, whether religious, nationalist or political. Today, people often hide behind a faith in a god, but in reality they have lost all reverence for God and as a result they have no respect for humanity. Once deprived of communion with God, human beings degenerate into haters of humanity.

We belong to the only Church which was created by the Saviour. This means that we have no right to hate, to have an arrogant attitude to others or to despise their beliefs. To belong to the true, apostolic and catholic, Church of Christ obliges us to live according to the Gospel commandments with our whole heart and to set others examples of true Christian life. The living truth of Christ reveals our own sins and failings to us. We repent in purity of heart of the bad example of Gospel life that we give the world. We can draw others to the truth of Christ by sincere repentance, by transfiguring our hearts, but not at all by exalting ourselves or condemning others.

In the countries which make up our two dioceses, as also in Russia, a wave of militant Islam and other militant ideologies of all hues, from Fascist to pseudo-liberal, is unfurling. But in my view, indifference to our own faith and to the beliefs of others conceals a no lesser danger than the fanaticism, cynicism and depravity of others. We Orthodox Christians must be rooted in our own faith and traditions, be filled with Christ and His love, and not merely carry out some outward and even little understood rituals. We must all learn to heed our hearts, to heed God, to enter into the spirit of prayer as well as the words and thoughts of our neighbours. How often we walk past the sorrows and joys of our neighbours, without showing

any sympathy. In so doing, we forget that those who are incapable of heeding their neighbours cannot heed themselves either, they are unable to hear the call of their hearts and of God in their hearts, in their consciences. They do not understand what is going on in their own hearts. This is the first thing we have to learn. Only then will we be able to show love and respect towards others, entering into their lives, the lives of those who were created by God, and hope that the Lord will bring other people to such an understanding of life, which is His holy gift.

Although 11 September falls on a Sunday this year, it is nevertheless a fast day because St John the Baptist, who loved God so ardently, was unjustly executed then. The Saviour said that demons can only be driven out by prayer and fasting.

I am asking all the clergy of our Dioceses to insert special petitions into the litanies on this day and, wherever they are able, to address themselves to their flocks with words in the spirit of what has been written above.

With love in Christ, I remain your  
+ Archbishop Mark

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## THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

The main source for our traditions about the birth of the Virgin Mary is called the Protogospel of St James, as it is about events which took place before those recounted in the gospels. Though it is respected it is not part of Scripture, therefore we need not take everything in it as Gospel truth but, as Metropolitan Kallistos says, 'it is possible, then, to accept the spiritual truth which underlies the narrative, without necessarily attributing a literal and historical exactness to every detail.' With this in mind, out of interest and a desire to better understand the cosmic significance of the Feast, we can examine the text. St Joachim and St Anna were a righteous couple who had been granted no children. This was a great source of grief to them, particularly as the society in which they lived saw childlessness as a great misfortune, almost a curse. We are given a sense of how excluded they felt when Joachim looks in the record book to discover that all the righteous had offspring and they were the only ones who didn't. 'The Lord has greatly humbled me' says Anna, and sings a heart-rending song: 'Woe is me, who gave me life, What womb brought me forth? For I was born a curse before them all and before the children of Israel, And I was reproached, and they mocked me and thrust me out of the temple of the Lord. Woe is me, to what am I likened?... I am not likened to this earth; even this earth brings forth fruit in its season...' But as is so often the case with God, those who at first seem to be excluded from humanity are the recipients of the greatest gifts. When Anna's heartfelt and pleading prayers were finally answered by her falling pregnant with the Crown of Creation, the Mother of God, she joined a company of seemingly barren women who eventually gave birth, often in old age, to special children. 'The deeper meaning of the story' says Metropolitan Kallistos 'is not difficult to appreciate. It makes clear that, from the moment of her birth and even long before it, the Mother of God was specially consecrated to the Holy Trinity, elect and marked out by God.'

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## CHURCH NOTES & JOTTINGS

### BLESSING OF THE IKON

The blessing of the Ikon of St Wandregesilius and the subsequent tea party on Wednesday 3 August, the eve of his feastday, were well attended. It was good to see so many old friends and meet some new ones. Thanks are due to Laura Jordan-Tozeland for her sterling efforts to organise the catering and for her gift of an urn, which made the provision of endless cups of tea much easier than it would have been with kettles.

We were all delighted with the new ikon and appreciated the patience with which Efrem Carrasco answered numerous questions about ikonography. Efrem's next task is the Ikon of Our Lady of Mettingham. We have the core details of the ancient image from the Seal of Mettingham Chantry College, which Efrem will use as the basis of the ikon.

The Canon to St Wandregesilius will appear on our website. The text, in printed form, is available on request. Our good friend Subdeacon Claude Lopez, who lives in Switzerland, has already translated the Canon into French.

Our local newspaper, the *Beccles & Bungay Journal*, came and photographed the ikon after the Liturgy on Thursday morning and gave us front page coverage.

## **IKON OF ST JOHN THE WONDERWORKER**

The surface of the ikon of Vladika St John had begun to show signs of wear. Fearing that ignoring it might make the problem more serious, we asked Efreem Carrasco for his advice when he was here. He took the ikon to his studio and reports: "I have cleaned the ikon of St John and it looks very good, although some parts of the dark blue on his rason seem to have oxidized slightly over the years but this is hardly noticeable."

## **GIFTS RECENTLY RECEIVED**

Elizabeth (Sian) Williams, of Porthcawl, sent us fourteen Orthodox books for the library.

A packet was delivered one morning containing an ikon of St George, a smaller one of the Mother of God, a copy of Graham Speake's book *Mount Athos, Renewal in Paradise*. and a card on which was written "I would like to offer these small gifts to the Church in memory of my husband George Kourakos who died in 2007". Please pray for the repose of George's soul.

Also we have received from St Michael's Parish, Longton, via Winefrede Carson, the gift of an ikon of St Bertram (Bettelin), together with the text of the troparion and a copy of Medieval Rhyme extolling the virtues of the saint. St Bertram lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century and was a disciple of St Guthlac of Croyland. He is commemorated in the Church Calendar on 9 September. Interestingly, St Omer, Bishop of Therouanne, who ordained St Wandregesilius to the priesthood, is also commemorated on 9 September.

There were also anonymous donations in August, including a large carpet for the church and a quantity of items to increase the range of things for sale in the stock room. Thanks are also due to all those mentioned above and all who contribute to the Church in various ways, bringing food for the Sunday breakfast/lunch after the Liturgy, bringing flowers and oil for the church, cooking and cleaning. May God bless you all.

## **RENOVATIONS**

Work is continuing to transform the property. The shelving in the library was entirely inadequate and has now been vastly increased by the construction of a whole wall of bookcases to accommodate the ever growing college library. Also a large cupboard has been restored to facilitate the storage of church service books and the choir's files of sheet music.

## **VISITORS**

Fr Dn Michael Lomax and his wife, Irina, from Brussels, visited Mettingham last month. Fr Michael served with us at the Liturgy on Sunday 14 August and on the Feast of the Transfiguration.

In the afternoon of Sunday 21 August four members of SIFRE (Suffolk Inter Faith Resource) visited our church, at their request. The group, who were shown around by Fr Dn Andrew, asked numerous questions about our church life.

## **FACEBOOK**

We have now set up a page for the church which can be found by typing 'Joy of All Who Sorrow Church, Mettingham' into facebook. 'Like' the page to receive facebook updates on church news and relevant links.

## **NAMEDAYS**

We send congratulations to the following and wish them MANY YEARS.

8 September - St Adrian & St Natalia - Adrian Cosby

11 September - Beheading of St John the Baptist - John Barry

19 September - Miracle of the Archangel Michael - Subdeacon Michael Astley

*New style dates given for convenience.*

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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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