Prophet Elias News

News and Views for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
February 2024

For service times see Noticeboard on P6

Sermon on the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple

by Archbishop Dmitri Royster

On February 2nd the Church celebrates the great feast of The Meeting of our Lord in the Temple. The Gospel lesson for that day relates how the mother of Jesus brought Him to the temple, as was the custom and requirement under the God-given Law of Moses, of Israel (Exodus 13:2, 12; Leviticus 12:2-8). When the righteous Simeon, who received Christ in his arms at the temple, saw the child, he knew immediately that this was the Redeemer promised by all of Israel's prophecies, for the elder was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Luke 2:26-27).

This particular feast is part of the great celebration that began forty days prior, with the Nativity of Christ (December 25). Eight days later (January 1) we remembered the Circumcision of Christ and then His Baptism (January 6). The commemoration of these events in our Lord's earthly life basically form one feast, the feast of the Incarnation of God the Word. God literally entered the world, into time and history. He was physically present in the midst of His people, His creatures whom He loves. Our Lord took on human nature in order to reconcile unto Himself, man who had strayed far from the Source of his life.

In taking on the "form of a servant" God, at the same time, in the Person of Christ, fulfilled every requirement of the Law that He Himself had given to His people through Moses. He demonstrated, thereby, that everything that had happened in Israel's history could not be described merely as a succession of unrelated events. Rather this was a history with a definite goal: the salvation of mankind. When the righteous Simeon took the child into His arms and declared that this indeed was Salvation Incarnate, the "Light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of Israel," a new era began; the era of God's presence among His children.

To this day, all of the Church's celebrations are celebrations of the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of Christ's presence. He initiated this Kingdom and promised its ultimate realization. And now, just as the Old Israel had awaited the beginning of God's Kingdom, the New Israel (the Church) awaits the Second and Glorious Coming of Christ and the fullness of His Kingdom, revealed.

Although all of our celebrations are intimately rooted in the knowledge that we have been called for complete communion with Christ, we still live in a world that has for the most part rejected what Christ gave it, that is, authentic life "in abundance," life with real purpose and meaning. We Christians, in spite of having accepted what God's intervention in human affairs gave us, slip repeatedly and fall into the great temptation to convert the things of this world into gods. We are constantly attracted by ways of seeking happiness and fulfilment that exclude God. This, of course, always proves to be vain and futile. So our lives vacillate, back and forth, between the assurance of salvation and indifference, between moments of real joy because we know that God is with us, and moments of boredom because we cannot give ourselves totally over to Him.

Every Christian celebration reaches its climax in the Divine Liturgy for the feast. In this sacred work, when God's people assemble in His name, we actually become participants in the Heavenly

Kingdom to come. We are as literally present with Christ in His future Kingdom as the Apostles were with Him at the Last Supper. So the Kingdom is initiated among us and we enjoy it before our time, by anticipation. This is what every Eucharist is; this is what our feasts and celebrations are all about, and that is why the Eucharist is the very centre of all of them.

I will emphasize again, however, that we continually orient our lives towards everyday pursuits, often living as though we had never experienced this divine reality. That is why repentance and penitential seasons are in order. That is why in approximately one month we will enter the Great Fast or Lent during which time we are exhorted to repent of our sins.

What is important for us Christians is that we have really "seen the True Light, received the Heavenly Spirit, found the true faith" in this experience of the Kingdom of God. The question we must all ask ourselves sincerely, however, is "what are we like when we return into this world after this Heavenly experience?"

Archbishop **Dmitri (Royster) of Dallas and the South** (1923-2011) was the ruling bishop of the OCA's Diocese of the South (1978-2009). He is one of the first American converts to Orthodoxy to be made an Orthodox Bishop. He is lovingly remembered by many as "Apostle to the South." Source: Wikipedia

First published in *The Dawn* Publication of the Diocese of the South Orthodox Church in America January 1999

Candlemas weather

Many old British verses and proverbs attested that fair weather on Candlemas indicates that at least half of winter remains, whereas foul weather means that winter is over. According to Sir Thomas Browne: "Si sol splendescat Maria purificante, Major erit glacies post festum quam fuit ante." (If the sun shines at Mary's Purification *[Feast of the Meeting of the Lord – Candlemas]*, there will be more ice after the Feast than before.) The Scots version runs: "If Candlemas day be dry and fair, The half o' winter's to come and mair; If Candlemas day be wet and foul, The half o' winter gane at Yule."

Unfortunately, things aren't that simple. Sir Thomas Browne wrote in the 17thC, before England adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, and the Scots verse is older still. When the calendar changed to the New Style, eleven days 'disappeared' - so Candlemas in 1752 fell on what would have been 13th February on the old calendar. So which date should the weather prediction apply to?

A lot of traditional weather lore relates to the dates of religious feast days, which everybody knew. Whether Saint Swithin's day in July brought rain or sunshine supposedly predicted the weather for the next 40 days. But in this case the situation is even more complicated, since in the Middle Ages some places kept the day of his repose (July 2nd), while others kept the date of the translation of his relics in 971 (July 15th). Add to this the change of calendar, and the 'real' date for this weather prediction could be anywhere between 2nd and 26th July.

There is some meteorological evidence that at certain times of year the behaviour of the atmospheric jet stream over Britain stabilises, causing a period of sustained weather, whether fine or wet. Historically, this seems to have applied particularly in late January/early February and from late June into July, so there seems to have been some basis for the predictions around Candlemas and Saint Swithin's. More recently, of course, global climate change has led to much more chaotic weather, so that any sort of long-term forecasting has become problematic to say the least.

Martin Olsson

Blessing of Candles

"Let us celebrate the feast in a solemn way, illuminating the mystery of the day with lights."
St. Cyril of Alexandria

On the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord we bring candles to church to be blessed for us to bring the light of Christ into our homes.

"O Almighty God, Pre-Eternal God, Who didst command Thy servant Moses to make ready a preparation of purest oil to be a light before Thy presence: Do Thou mercifully pour out the grace of Thy blessing upon these candles, that they might bring brightness to the people outwardly, as by Thy gift the brightness of the Holy Spirit shines inwardly in our thoughts, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom is due all glory, honour, and worship, together with Thee, O Father without beginning, and Thy Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen." Prayer for the Blessing of Candles

Ministry of the Laity

by Fr N. Afanassieff

Part 2: It Is Not the Priest Alone

After this brief introduction of general premises, [*see Part 1*] I can tackle the question of the ministry of the laity in the Church. At present, in accordance with the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, ministry in the Church is expressed in three domains; the liturgy, church-government and teaching. Catholic theology resolutely excludes the laity from all these activities in the Church, considering that they belong solely to the competence of the clergy. Only recently a few timid attempts have been made to reconsider this question. The Orthodox Church is far less categorical in this domain, and in fact the actual life of the church is to a large extent a contradiction of its "manual theology." According to this theology, the laity "undergo" the sacramental acts (so to speak), but do not accomplish them; the laity do not participate in the fulfillment of the sacraments. On the other hand the laity have recently been admitted to an important share in the government of the church, and even to some extent in its teaching. It is one of the paradoxes of our contemporary life that the laity are excluded from the priesthood, although they are called to it as members of God's people in the Church.

On entering the Church each member is installed in the Church for the ministry of the general priesthood. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9; cf. Rev. 1:6; Rev. 5:10). From the time of Tertullian a vast number of misconceptions accumulated around the doctrine of the royal priesthood. On the one hand there was a tendency to minimize this doctrine to such an extent that it became nothing but a meaningless formula. On the other hand we find erroneous conceptions of this doctrine which consider any member of the Church as a priest entitled to accomplish any of the acts of the Liturgy. Under the influence of the individualism that has penetrated into church life, we are inclined to consider the pronoun "you" (in the biblical texts quoted above) as being addressed to isolated members of the Church. But in actual fact the pronoun "you" in the New Testament writings does not indicate several persons together, but refers to a whole body - in this case to all the Christians gathered in a church assembly, in other words the Church as God's people. Every member is really installed with a view to the royal priesthood, but he does not fulfill it for himself or for others; he only fulfills it when liturgical acts are fulfilled by the Church as a whole, i.e. when God's people is gathered with its head (Greek: proistamenos) in the church assembly.

It Is Not the Priest Alone

Among the many examples of this in the writings of the early fathers, I will merely quote that of Saint John Chrysostom, speaking of the Euchasrist: "It is not the priest alone who renders thanks; it is the whole people." (John Chrysostom. In II Cor. XVIII, 3.) The Eucharist is celebrated by the whole people, but only when its chief is at its head, for without him there is no people; in the same way, there is no head unless the people are present also.

According to the expression of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the bishop is "the mouth-piece of the Church", for it is through him and in him that the ministry of the priesthood accomplished by God's people is manifested. This means that every Christian present, as a member of God's people, is cooperating with the bishop whenever he accomplishes a Liturgical act.

This con-celebration by the laity is effective and real, not ceremonial. In the Liturgy the laity are not passive - for those whom God has appointed to the ministry of the royal priesthood cannot be passive. On the contrary, they participate actively; the liturgical acts are performed by the head of the Church with the con-celebration of the laity. The feeling is deeply rooted in the Orthodox Church (though it is not always translated in actual life) that the bishop or priest cannot celebrate the Eucharist without the people, and the people cannot celebrate the Eucharist without the bishop. The people is appointed for the service of the royal priesthood, and the bishop is appointed to preside over the people. “Thou has made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on earth" (Rev. 5:10.) This refers to all, and not to some. It means that Christ has made all His followers into God's people, so that they may serve their God and their Father (Rev. 1:6) in the Church and through the Church, to serve Him when God's people is gathered under the leadership of their head whom God has appointed to this ministry.

[To be continued in March issue.]

Abridged from Fr N Assanieff *Ministry of the Laity* Posted 18-1-2011 at All Saints of Alaska Orthodox Church
For the full text go to https://www.pravmir.com/ministry-of-the-laity/

Memory Eternal – Ancel Newton

Ancel died peacefully at his home on the morning of 12 January, just short of his 97th birthday. He had been a member of our parish for many decades.

Ancel's funeral will be at St. Mary's Church, Stockleigh Pomeroy, Crediton EX17 4AU on Tuesday 30th Jan at 2pm.

Health Updates

Father John

Dawn writes: We thank everyone for thoughts and enquiries about John. Following two hip fractures, caused by falls, and several infections, John is still very immobile, and unable to get downstairs. Music and memories are a help, and we think of times spent with everyone.

Sophia Roberts

Thank you so much for your kind thoughts, dear friends. Whilst my pulmonary fibrosis is stable at the moment, my general health is not so good. Accordingly, I will be undergoing surgery and ongoing treatment in February. Please remember me in your prayers at this time. Sophia x

Veronica Dawson

Following a couple of scans in November, the surgeon told me that the tumour has changed and it is no longer feasible to remove the kidney. So I was referred to Oncology for a nine-week course of chemotherapy instead to control the tumour.

I had my first chemotherapy session on Monday 8th Jan – all went well and I don't seem to have had much in the way of side effects so far. The hope is that the chemo will slow things down a bit and perhaps help with the pain too. Unfortunately, it is not a cure but improves the prognosis from 1 year to 2. I very much appreciate all your prayers.

Contemplate War and Peace with Mars at Exeter Cathedral *1-28 February 2024*

Experience artist Luke Jerram's famous installation, *Mars: War and Peace* in the stunning nave of Exeter Cathedral, with sound composition by award-winning composer, Dan Jones.

Following *Museum of the Moon* and *Gaia*, we are excited to be hosting Luke Jerram's next artwork, *Mars: War & Peace*, throughout February 2024. Measuring seven metres in diameter, the artwork features detailed NASA imagery of the Martian surface. At an approximate scale of 1:1 million, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 10 kilometres of the surface of Mars.

Mars was named by the ancient Romans for their god of war because its reddish colour was reminiscent of blood. Accompanying the Mars sculpture is a newly created sound composition by BAFTA and Ivor Novello award winning composer Dan Jones. Featuring the sounds of seas, deserts and clips from NASA missions to Mars, it also incorporates the sounds of distant bombing and people marching, as if to war.

Tickets £6

Free admission for children (under 18) within a family group Book your ticket here >

Visit Luke Jerram's 'Mars' website >

Cathedral Life

This Month We Celebrate

On Thursday February 1st: **Holy Martyr Tryphon** of Campsada in Syria (250)
We wish **Father Trayan** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
Saint Bridget of Kildare (c525)
We wish **Poppy O** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Friday 2nd: **THE MEETING OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE**

On Saturday 3rd: **Righteous Symeon the God-Receiver** and **Prophetess Anna**
We wish **Father John and Dawn and all parish members in North Devon,**
Symeon L , Anya K and **Felicia F** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
Saint Nicholas Archbishop of Japan (1912). First Saint of the Japanese Orthodox Church

On Wednesday 7th: **Saints Emmelia, Nona** and **Anthousa**, Mothers of the three Great Hierarchs (4thC)

On Thursday 8th: **Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates** ('The General') (319)

On Friday 9th: New Martyrs **Fr Dimitri Klepinin** (1944), **Elias Fondaminsky** (1942) and **George (Yuri) Skobtsov** (1944)
Co-workers with **Saint Maria of Paris**

On Saturday 10th: **Hieromartyr Haralambos**, Bishop of Magnesia (202)

On Sunday 11th: Hieromartyr Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste (c316)
Empress Theodora, Restorer of the Icons (c867)
Saint Caedmon of Whitby, Monk poet. (c680)
New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia

On Wednesday 14th: Repose of **Saint Cyril,** Equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of the Slavs (869)

On Thursday 15th**: Apostle Onesimos** of the Seventy
Saint Anthimos of Chios (1960)

On Saturday 17th: **Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit** (c306)
We wish **Bojidar P** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Sunday 18th: **Saint Colman**, Bishop of Lindisfarne (676)

On Friday 23rd: **Saint Polycarp** of Smyrna (167)

On Saturday 24th: 1st and 2nd Findings of the Honourable Head of the **Holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John.**

On Monday 26th: **Holy Martyr and Equal-to-the-Apostles Photini**, the Samaritan Woman

On Tuesday 27: **Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny)** Bishop of Brooklyn (1915) First Bishop to be canonised in America.

On Thursday 29th: **Saint John Cassian the Roman** (435)

A Story of St. John Cassian and St. Nicholas

There is an old Russian story that St. John Cassian and St. Nicholas were sent by God to survey the Christian lands, to see what condition the Church was in. As they completed their mission and were preparing to return to heaven, St. Nicholas spotted a farmer whose wagon had got stuck in the mud. "Come on!" said St. Nicholas. "Let's give this poor man a hand." St. John surveyed the scene. The wagon was in the muck up to its axles. The farmer and at least a half a dozen people had waded into the mud, pushing and pulling. "We can't do that," he said. "Our robes will get filthy. We'll be unfit to enter the Kingdom."

But while he was still speaking, St. Nicholas had waded in. He first calmed the horses, then, putting his shoulder to the wagon with the men, he pushed. The wagon at first held firm, then, little by little, it moved out of the muck.
St. Nicholas walked over to St. John, who took a quick step away from him. "Well, that's done," he said. "Let's head home."
When they got to Heaven, God saw St. John's sparkling white robe, and he saw St. Nicholas so covered in mud that it was impossible to tell what colour his robe had once been. "Tell me what happened," He said.

"Well, there was this farmer," St. Nicholas said, "and his cart and his horses were stuck in the mud. I just took a few minutes to help them out before we came back." God turned to St. John. "And how did you manage to help this man without getting your robes soiled?" "I didn't, of course. You have clothed us in garments for the heavenly banquet, and I couldn't possibly let them be soiled with earthly cares."

God looked at both of his saints, and his love flowed over them. "John Cassian, my beloved, you have indeed kept your heart in heaven, and your hands are clean of all things of the earth. And the heart of my beloved Nicholas is turned toward the people, however earthly their cares might be, and his hands are quick to help them when they call on him. And this is why the people celebrate Nicholas, my beloved, in both summer and winter, and why he's honoured every Thursday besides. And this is why you, my beloved John Cassian, have but one feast day every four years."

Charlotte Riggle

The complete article at https://charlotteriggle.com/st-john-cassian-st-nicholas/ also features a Greek version of the tale

Saint John Cassian – February 29th

John Cassian (c. AD 360 – c. 435) was a Christian monk and theologian celebrated in both the Western and Eastern churches for his mystical writings. Noted for his role in bringing the ideas and practices of early Christian monasticism to the medieval West, Cassian wrote two major spiritual works, the *De institutis coenobiorum* (*Institutes of the Coenobia*) and the *Collationes patrum in scetica eremo* (*Conferences of the Desert Fathers*). The *Institutes* deal with the external organization of monastic communities, while the *Conferences*, in which he codified and transmitted the wisdom of the Desert Fathers of Egypt, deal with "the training of the inner man and the perfection of the heart".

Wikipedia

The thief on the cross certainly did not receive the Kingdom of Heaven as a reward for his virtues, but as a grace and a mercy from God. He can serve as an authentic witness that our salvation is given to us only by God's mercy and grace. All the holy masters knew this and all taught that perfection in holiness can be achieved only through humility.

Saint John Cassian

Noticeboard

Friday February 2nd: **FEAST OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD IN THE TEMPLE (CANDLEMAS)**
Orthros and Divine Liturgy 9am Torquay

Saturday 3rd: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 4th: **Celebration of the Meeting of the Lord**
Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Candles 10.30am

Friday 9th:: Vespers 6pm
Saturday 10th: Divine Liturgy 10.30 am
Sunday 11th: 36th after Pentecost No Service in Exeter

Friday 16th: Vespers 6pm
Saturday 17th: Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Sunday 18th: 37th after Pentecost **SUNDAY OF THE CANAANITE WOMAN**
No service in Exeter

Saturday 24th: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 25th: **SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE** **Beginning of the Triodion**. Gospel - Luke 18:9-14
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

The week following Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is Fast-free.

Saturday March 2nd: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 3rd: **SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON** Gospel – Mark 16: 1-8
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

All services in Saint Anne's unless stated otherwise

*For services in the Romanian parish (Exeter and Newton Abbot) consult https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064673836911 or telephone Fr Julian on **07469 262827**.*
*Similarly for the Torquay parish either visit https://www.facebook.com/standrewtorquay/?locale=en_GB or telephone Robert Skrivanos on **07971 316416**. For services in Plymouth go to plymchurch.com*

Exeter Foodbank

From Mark Richardson, Director:

I am looking for as many churches as possible to have a 'Foodbank Ambassador'. This would be a link person from any church who is interested, who could share information about our work, talk to their church about it, come to see what we do etc.

Please email Mark at info@exeterfoodbank.org.uk to find out how you can help.

From *CTaX News*

Lent Talks at Exeter Cathedral

Tuesday 6th February 6.30 to 8pm
Canon Prof. Morwenna Ludlow on **Saint Macrina**

Thursday 15th February 2.30 to 4pm
Canon Sue Wallace on **Hildegard of Bingen**

Tuesday 20th February 6.30 to 8pm
Canon Prof. Morwenna Ludlow on **Saint Perpetua**

More info and booking: https://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/lent-talks-2024/

From *CTaX News*

Deanery Conference & Festival 24th to 27th May

at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hertfordshire

One in Jesus Christ: Faithfulness in a World of Conflicting Identities.

There is an impact being felt - in the workplace, at schools/colleges, as well as in the home - from some contemporary developments (e.g. issues to do with artificial intelligence, sexuality and gender) that appear to pose a challenge to the way that we think about both our identity and the identity of others: our speakers (these will include Fr Christopher Knight, Fr Boniface Carroll and Dr Romina Istratii) will be addressing some of these various challenges.

In addition to the talks and workshops, there will be a Children's Programme as well as free time to rest, socialize and visit our bookshop - courtesy of the Clapham Parish - and there will be a party/get-together on the Sunday evening. Our daily services of prayer and worship will focus on the Liturgy on Sunday morning.

The costs this year are: adults, £275; children under 16 years, £50; and children under 6 years, free. **Please do book now online**

A flyer/poster is available on the website to be downloaded - should you wish to do so - as is a hard copy application form. Further details about the Conference & Festival will be circulated by Newsletter, as and when these come to hand.

Online Application Form **PDF Application Form**

Conference Web Page **Poster**

Don't forget that generous bursaries may be available. If you would like to attend all or part of the Conference but can't afford the full cost, you can request a bursary on the application form or by contacting the Conference organisers at https://thyateira-deanery.uk/contact/Deanery-Conference or by phone on 01223 234248 Your request will need to be approved by Fr Patrick: his email is hodson44@btinternet.com

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Prophet Elias News *is the newsletter of the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias, Devon, Deanery of Great Britain and Ireland, Archdiocese of Thyateira (Ecumenical Patriarchate) Archbishop: His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas (Lioulias)*

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*Contributions for the March issue should reach the Editors at martinolsson827@btinternet.com or by post at Little Linhay, Bondleigh, EX20 2AJ by **Monday 19th February**, please.*

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are entirely those of the named authors or identified sources and should not be taken as representing the views of the parish as a whole.