Prophet Elias News

News and Views for the Orthodox Church
of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
June 2024 – Ascension and Pentecost

For service times see Noticeboard on P2

Excerpt from The Ascension and the Glorification of Man

by Fr John Farley

We Orthodox Christians today easily remember that Jesus is divine. We remember less easily that He is also completely human. It is as if Christ assumed our humanity at Bethlehem, and then left it behind like a used suit of clothes at His Ascension. It is not so: the humanity which He assumed for our sake at His Nativity, He keeps forever.



It is especially important to remember this at the Feast of the Ascension, for the Ascension is not only the triumph of God, but even more the triumph of Man. We do not glorify God by belittling man and denying humanity its proper glory. Man is glorious, and splendid, and worthy of praise. He has debased himself through sin and selfishness, but the glory remains, like gold that is covered over with a layer of dirt. This is the point of the psalmist in Psalm 8: "What is man, that You remember him, and the son of man, that You care for him? You have made him a little lower than the angels, and crown him with glory and majesty". Man retains his kingly position in earth, and stands just slightly lower than those in heaven, because God "has put all things under his feet".

The Church has always proclaimed that Man's ultimate glory and destiny find fulfilment in Jesus. He is the Son of Man to whom God subjects all things, putting them under His feet. He is the One whom God crowned with glory and honour (see Heb. 2:6-9), the true and representative Man ruling over all creation. And the moment of this crowning, this final and supreme exaltation, was the Ascension.

That is the true meaning of the Ascension, and why the Ascension represents the triumph of man. In Jesus, Man assumes the throne God prepared for him, reigning finally and truly as king over the rest of creation. In the ascended Christ, sitting at God's right hand to rule the cosmos with Him, Mankind finds its true destiny and glory and goal.

The Ascension however also reveals that this true glory comes from submitting to God's will. Man finds his true dignity while kneeling before God; his true calling in gratefully adoring Him. The life of Jesus reveals this also. Christ the Man always did the will of His Father, even though it cost Him His sweat and blood in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross. In obedience "He offered up both prayers and supplications to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His piety" (Heb. 5:7). It was because of this obedience and humility before the

divine will, this saving self-emptying, that "God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:8-9). First came the Cross, and only then, the Crown; first the kneeling tears in the Garden, and only after that, the sitting at the Right Hand. Christ's glory was the fruit of His humility, and of His obedience to the Father's will. He proved Himself true Man when He knelt and prayed; He proved Himself true Man when He turned from His own will to the Father's. And because of this human obedience, God exalted Him, raising Him from the dead and bringing Him to His right hand in glory.

Christ's ascended glory therefore points the way home for us as well. The glory that Christ was given by the throne of His Father is the same glory that He will share with us (see Rev. 3:21). But we must follow in the footsteps of His humility if we would arrive finally at His glorious goal. The Ascension calls us to be authentically human, to fulfill our destiny by serving and loving God. The Man Christ Jesus has not only revealed the glory of the Father. He also revealed the true glory of humanity as well.

Fr. Lawrence Farley, formerly an Anglican priest and graduate of Wycliffe College in Toronto, Canada, converted to Orthodoxy in 1985 and then studied at St. Tikhon's Seminary in South Canaan, Pa. After ordination he travelled to Surrey, British Columbia to begin a new mission under the OCA, St. Herman of Alaska Church. The full text can be found at:
https://www.oca.org/reflections/fr.-lawrence-farley/the-ascension-and-the-glorification-of-man 5/22/2012

Noticeboard

Saturday June 1st: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 2nd: 5th Sunday of Pascha - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
Typika 10.30am

Saturday 8th: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 9th: 6th Sunday of Pascha – Sunday of the Blind Man
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Wednesday 12th: **Leavetaking of Pascha – Forefeast of the Ascension**
Vespers 6pm
Thursday 13th: **FEAST OF THE ASCENSION**
Orthros and Divine Liturgy 9am Torquay

Saturday 15th: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 16th: 7th Sunday of Pascha – Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Saturday 22nd: **Saturday of Souls** *Memorial Service for the Departed 10.30am Torquay*
Vespers 6pm
Sunday 23rd: **FEAST OF PENTECOST**
Divine Liturgy 10.30am followed by Vespers with Kneeling Prayers

Saturday 29th: **Saint Peter and Saint Paul** Vespers 6pm
Sunday 30th: 1st Sunday after Pentecost – Sunday of All Saints
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

The Book Market by **Exeter City of Literature**
Sunday 9 June 2024, 11am-4pm on Cathedral Green

The Book Market by Exeter City of Literature will return to Cathedral Green on Sunday 9 June. Discover a variety of independent bookshops from across Devon and explore crafts and book-themed merchandise.
For this year's Book Market, Exeter City of Literature will be playing host to several authors with local literary ties for a series of live talks, panels, and discussions, taking place in a dedicated author tent.

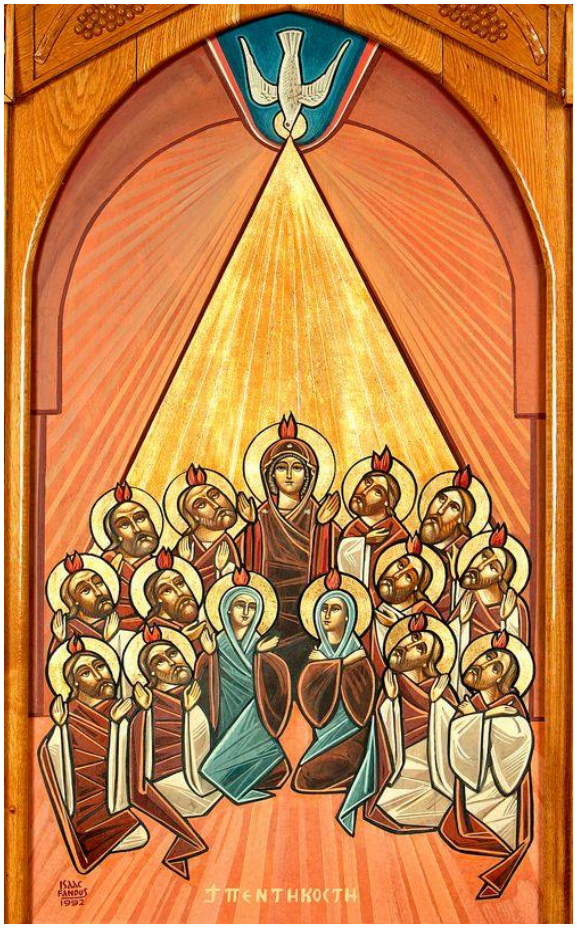
Find out more on the Exeter City of Literature website >

The Book Market is free to attend. *Cathedral Life*

The Feast of Pentecost

by Fr. Alexander Schmemann

In the Church's annual liturgical cycle, Pentecost is "the last and great day." It is the celebration by the Church of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the end - the achievement and fulfilment - of the entire history of salvation. For the same reason , however, it is also the celebration of the beginning: it is the "birthday" of the Church as the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, of the new life in Christ, of grace, knowledge, adoption to God and holiness.



This double meaning and double joy is revealed to us, first of all, in the very name of the feast. Pentecost in Greek means fifty, and in the sacred biblical symbolism of numbers, the number fifty symbolizes both the fulness of time and that which is beyond time: the Kingdom of God itself. It symbolizes the fulness of time by its first component: 49, which is the fulness of seven (7 x 7): the number of time. And, it symbolizes that which is beyond time by its second component: 49 + 1, this one being the new day, the "day without evening" of God's eternal Kingdom. With the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's disciples, the time of salvation, the Divine work of redemption has been completed, the fulness revealed, all gifts bestowed: it belongs to us now to "appropriate" these gifts, to be that which we have become in Christ: participants and citizens of His Kingdom.

The all-night Vigil service begins with a solemn invitation: "Let us celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, The appointed day of promise, and the fulfillment of hope, The mystery which is as great as it is precious." In the coming of the Spirit, the very essence of the Church is revealed:

"The Holy Spirit provides all,
Overflows with prophecy, fulfils the priesthood,
Has taught wisdom to illiterates,
has revealed fishermen as theologians,
He brings together the whole council of the Church."

In the three readings of the Old Testament (Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezekiel 36:24-28) we hear the prophecies concerning the Holy Spirit. We are taught that the entire history of mankind was directed towards the day on which God "would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh." This day has come! All hope, all promises, all expectations have been fulfilled. At the end of the Aposticha hymns, for the first time since Easter, we sing the hymn: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth…," the one with which we inaugurate all our services, all prayers, which is, as it were, the life-breath of the Church, and whose coming to us, whose "descent" upon us in this festal Vigil, is indeed the very experience of the Holy Spirit "coming and abiding in us." Having reached its climax, the Vigil continues as an explosion of joy and light for "verily the light of the Comforter has come and illumined the world." In the Gospel reading (John 20:19-23) the feast is interpreted to us as the feast of the Church, of her divine nature, power and authority. The Lord sends His disciples into the world, as He Himself was sent by His Father. Later, in the antiphons of the Liturgy, we proclaim the universality of the apostles' preaching, the cosmical significance of the feast, the sanctification of the whole world, the true manifestation of God's Kingdom.

The liturgical peculiarity of Pentecost is a very special Vespers of the day itself. Usually this service follows immediately the Divine Liturgy, is "added" to it as its own fulfilment. The service begins as a solemn "summing up" of the entire celebration, as its liturgical synthesis. We hold flowers in our hands symbolizing the joy of the eternal spring, inaugurated by the coming of the

Holy Spirit. After the festal Entrance, this joy reaches its climax in the singing of the Great Prokeimenon: "Who is so great a God as our God?"

Then, having reached this climax, we are invited to kneel. This is our first kneeling since Easter. It signifies that after these fifty days of Paschal joy and fulness, of experiencing the Kingdom of God, the Church now is about to begin her pilgrimage through time and history. It is evening again, and the night approaches, during which temptations and failures await us, when, more than anything else, we need Divine help, that presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who has already revealed to us the joyful End, who now will help us in our effort towards fulfilment and salvation. All this is revealed in the three prayers which the celebrant reads now as we all kneel and listen to him. In the first prayer, we bring to God our repentance, our increased appeal for forgiveness of sins, the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God. In the second prayer, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to teach us to pray and to follow the true path in the dark and difficult night of our earthly existence. Finally, in the third prayer, we remember all those who have achieved their earthly journey, but who are united with us in the eternal God of Love.

The joy of Easter has been completed and we again have to wait for the dawn of the Eternal Day. Yet, knowing our weakness, humbling ourselves by kneeling, we also know the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit who has come. We know that God is with us, that in Him is our victory. Thus is completed the feast of Pentecost and we enter "the ordinary time" of the year. Yet, every Sunday now will be called "after Pentecost" - and this means that it is from the power and light of these fifty days that we shall receive our own power, the Divine help in our daily struggle. At Pentecost we decorate our churches with flowers and green branches - for the Church "never grows old, but is always young." It is an evergreen, ever-living Tree of grace and life, of joy and comfort. For the Holy Spirit - "the Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life - comes and abides in us, and cleanses us from all impurity," and fills our life with meaning, love, faith and hope.

Sermon preached by Fr Alexander Schmemann at Pentecost, 1974.
Posted on https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2017/06/04/45-holy-pentecost

Words That Strike Home

Orthodoxy is so rich in prayers and in liturgical texts that we can sometimes take those riches for granted. Certainly we can't fully appreciate every nuance of language every time we hear it. But we all have particular prayers, or phrases from the service books, that seem to have a special resonance for us, that – in the Quaker phrase -'speak to our condition'. We would very much appreciate our readers telling us about any prayer, verse or phrase that particularly strikes home to them that we could share through Prophet Elias News.

You, O Lord, have aroused me from my bed and from sleep. **Enlighten my understanding and my heart,** and open my lips that I may sing of You, O Holy Trinity: Holy, holy, holy are You, O God: through the prayers of the Mother of God, have mercy on us.

Morning Prayers – Short Hymns to the Trinity A Manual of Eastern Orthodox Prayers SPCK 1943

Those of us who have grown up in the intellectual tradition of Western Europe are used to the idea of enlightenment as having to do solely with reason, or – in the words of this prayer – with understanding. But if enlightenment is really the process of bringing light into dark places, how much more important it is, surely, for it to take place in our hearts, shining into corners we would prefer not to have to look into. M. O.

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

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This Month We Celebrate

On Saturday June 1st: **Nun-Martyr Wite (Witta)** of Whitchurch Canonicorum in Dorset (?7th C)

On Sunday 2nd: 5th Sunday of Pascha – **Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, the Martyr Photini**

On Monday 3rd: **Martyr Lucillian** and **Virgin Martyr Paula** (c270)
We remember **Paula M – May her Memory be Eternal!**
Saint Kevin, Abbot of Glendalough (618)

On Tuesday 4th: **Saints Martha and Mary** of Bethany
We wish **Bethany S** and **Daphne L** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
We remember **Jenny Mary O – May her Memory be Eternal!**
Saint Petroc of Padstow, Master Builder of the Faith in the West (6th C)
Saint Sophia of Ainos (2ndC)
We wish **Sophie G** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Wednesday 5th: **Saint John of New Valamo** (1958)
Author of *Christ is in Our Midst: Letters from a Russian Monk.* (Darton, Longman and Todd 1979)
Saint Boniface (Wynfrith) of Crediton , Apostle to the Germans (754)

On Friday 7th: **Holy Martyr Priscilla** of Rome (c305)
We wish **Scilla W** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
Holy Martyr Valeria of Caesarea (c300)
We wish **Matoushka Val** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Sunday 9th: 6th Sunday of Pascha – **Sunday of the Blind Man**
Saint Cyril of Alexandria (444)
Saint Columba of Iona, Enlightener of the Scots (597)

On Monday 10th: **Martyrs Alexander** and **Antonina** at Constantinople (c313)

On Tuesday 11th: **Holy Apostles Bartholomew** and **Barnabas**
Saint Luke of Simferopol (1961)

On Wednesday 12th: LEAVETAKING OF PASCHA

On Thursday 13th: **THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**

On Sunday 16th: 7th Sunday of Pascha – **Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council** (325)

On Monday 17th: **Saint Nectan** of Hartland, North Devon (6thC)

On Wednesday 19th: **Holy Apostle Jude, the Lord's Brother**

On Thursday 20th: **Saint Nicholas Kavasilas** (1391)
Author of The Life in Christ *and* A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy

On Saturday 22nd: **Saint Alban,** First martyr of Britain (c209)

On Sunday 23rd: **FEAST OF HOLY PENTECOST**
Saint Mark of Ephesus 'Pillar of Orthodoxy' (1445)

On Monday 24th: **The Nativity of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John**

On Tuesday 25th: **Saint Brannoc** of Braunton (6thC)

On Thursday 27th: **Holy Myrrh-Bearer Joanna**
Saint Austell, Hermit in Cornwall (6thC)

On Saturday 29th: **Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles, Peter** and **Paul**
We wish **Pavlik F** and **Salem Murjaneh** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
We remember **Father Peter** and **Peter F – May their Memory be Eternal!**

On Sunday 30th: 1st Sunday after Pascha **– Sunday of All Saints**
Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles

We must wash, bandage, and heal our brothers' nasty smelly festering wounds without any disgust. Also, with great humility and love, we must heal the spiritual wounds of our brothers, bear the burdens of the weak, as Paul commands; serve them, and not tyrannize over them; command no one, but be servants to all.

Saint Luke of Simferopol

50th Anniversary of Fr John's Ordination

On Saturday May 11th, the Eve of Thomas Sunday, Fr Trayan led us in celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the chapel of Saint Symeon and Saint Anna at Fr John's home in Combe Martin, to mark the 50th anniversary of Fr John's ordination to the priesthood on Thomas Sunday 1974. At the end of the service we sang Many Years to Fr John, and our church warden Philip read out this letter of commendation from Archbishop Nikitas.

Axios indeed! M.O.

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA AND GREAT BRITAIN

Sunday of Thomas, May 12, 2024

The Revd Archpriest John Marks
Touchstone
Shute Lane
Combe Martin
North Devon
EX34 0EU

Dear Fr. John,

Christ is risen!

As the body of faithful exults in the unfading light of Christ's Resurrection and celebrates our Lord's victory over death and corruption, our Holy Archdiocese is also blessed to mark the joyous occasion of the 50th anniversary of your ordination to the priesthood.

In a spirit of thanksgiving and doxology, I glorify God for the five decades of priestly ministry that he has blessed you with. It is indeed a sublime mystery for mortal man to don the priestly stole and thereby participate in the sacred work of reconciling humanity to our Creator. You have been a tireless minister of the Holy Sacraments and have been a steadfast witness to the peace, healing, joy, strength, inspiration, encouragement, and sanctification that the Holy Spirit imbues into the life of the Church. On behalf of the faithful of this Holy Archdiocese, I thank you for the dedication and sacrifice that you have offered before the Holy Altar of God these many years as a diligent labourer in His vineyard.

I join my voice with those of your fellow clergymen who served with you during your time leading the Deanery of the Holy Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, along with the parishioners you have lovingly cared for at the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon, and proclaim "Axios!"—just as it was proclaimed fifty years ago on the happy day of your ordination.

Expressing to you once more my sentiments of deep appreciation for your faithful priestly service to this Holy Archdiocese, I pray that the Lord may continue to bless you with spiritual strength, health, wisdom, and peace for many years to come.

With paternal blessings in the Risen Lord.

✠ Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain

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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.

Who Guards the Guardians? Who Speaks for the Church?

by Very Rev. Dr. John Behr
Regius Professor of Humanity at the University of Aberdeen

This important article was written by Fr John Behr in response to the controversy sparked by the 'Order of the XXV World Russian People's Council - "Present and Future of the Russian World".' Much of the questioning has centred on the characterisation of the conflict in Ukraine as a 'Holy War' in "Item 1. Special Military Operation". We have appended this item at the end of Fr John's article. The whole document can be seen at: https://risu.ua/en/order-of-the-xxv-world-russian-peoples-council-present-and-future-of-the-russian-world_n147334

Ed.

In recent days several articles have appeared raising profound, difficult, and unsettling questions. Sr. Vassa bravely asked whether "heresy" is a charge that can be applied to the "Edict" of the XXV "All-World Council of the Russian People," approved under the chairmanship of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow on March 27, 2024, concluding, rightly, that it does indeed express, in the words of St. Basil about heresy, "a clear difference in the very faith of God" (see also this analysis by Serhii Shumylo). Moreover, Sr. Vassa pointed to the provision of the 15th Canon of the Protodevtera Council of Constantinople of 861, that "those who separate themselves from communion with their primate because of some heresy condemned by the holy Councils or Fathers when he preaches heresy publicly and teaches it openly in the Church…are not only not subject to the penalties prescribed by the rules, but are also worthy of the honour befitting the Orthodox, for they condemn not bishops but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers, and did not by schism cut off the unity of the Church, but attempted to preserve the Church from schisms and divisions."

Archdeacon John Chryssavgis, accepting the basic soundness of the arguments of those who recognize the heresy of *Russkii mir [Russian World]*, points to the problem of other Orthodox Bishops doing little to nothing to address this issue adequately. "It would be commendable," he says, "if Orthodox Bishops were to condemn the Patriarch of Moscow with forceful conciliar consensus, just as it would be admirable if Orthodox Christians were to set in motion a chain reaction of standing up to or protecting themselves against a despotic pastor who himself has strayed." But rather than a charge of heresy, Chryssavgis suggests that it would be more effective to censure Patriarch Kirill for being "a political bully and a war criminal." There are, however, no laws, secular or ecclesial, against being "a political bully," although there are of course laws regarding war crimes. And, in fact, on April 17, 2024, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Resolution 2540, paragraph 13) has done just that, condemning the rhetoric of Patriarch Kirill and the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate for its "abuse of religion and the distortion of the Christian Orthodox tradition," emphasizing that "incitement to commit the crime of aggression, genocide and war crimes is a crime in itself."

War crimes may not be within the sphere of the canonical obligations of the hierarchy, but calling out heresy certainly is. So, why are Orthodox Bishops apparently incapable of doing even this? According to Archdeacon John, Orthodox Churches (by which he seems to mean Patriarchs) are reluctant because of "an agonizing, albeit unavowed acknowledgement that they too are fundamentally plagued by the very same vulnerabilities and flaws. They, too, could be branded as heretics." As he asks in his essay: 'How many Orthodox Churches tend toward glorification of nation and state? How many majority-Orthodox nations confound worship of God and salute to the flag? Could it be that most, if not all Orthodox Churches are in fact much closer than they might concede to the perverted Russian ideology?" Finally, to believe otherwise, to hold that Kirill is "a bad apple in a predominantly wholesome batch," is, in Chryssavgis' words, "to be locked up in a bubble of self-complacency and self-conceitedness."

In this dire situation, perhaps the most pressing question to be asked is that of the satirist Juvenal: "Who guards the guardians?" This is indeed a question that we must allow to pierce the bubble of any form of ecclesiology that idealizes or idolizes any position or privilege, that treats the (current) structure as if it is the eternal reality of the Kingdom of God rather than being there to serve the function of, and to be subservient to, proclaiming the Word of God. And this is no mere theoretical questioning; when real human beings are being sent to give their lives in killing others, all in the name of a "holy war," the distortion of truth—calling black white—is, quite literally, devastating, both for the lives that are at stake and for that which we call, and which is, holy, a true abomination of desolation set up in the temple.

The episcopate—"rightly discerning the word of your truth," as we pray in the liturgy, so that they might fulfil this role, rather than because they necessarily do so—has come to hold a privileged place

as the guardians of the truth and spokesmen for the Church, indeed, often identified with the Church: "Where the bishop is, there is the Church." I have frequently heard those words quoted to me, too often by bishops, and attributed to St. Ignatius of Antioch. But this is not what St Ignatius says; he says, rather, "Where the bishop is, let the people be present, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic/universal Church" (*Smyrneans* 8). It is, by any standard, a mistake to omit Jesus Christ and the people from the equation! Moreover, when St. Ignatius wrote this, the bishop was not in the position we think of the episcopate today: he was the bishop/overseer of a particular household community (as the parish priest is today), not the overseer of a diocese. In due time, of course, as the number of particular communities in a geographical region increased, it was necessary to coordinate their activity, first in larger cities then in ever greater geographical areas. One of the leaders of these communities was entrusted with the task, as "the first among equals" (never "the first without equals"), of calling together the other leaders of the communities to ensure the peaceful and coordinated activity of the churches in the area. As this activity grew, during the third century, councils began to be held, covering ever larger regions and developing a body of canonical legislation to regulate the well-functioning of these structures, and then, with the conversion of Constantine and then the empire (whatever that in fact meant), these structures grew on a scale never even imagined before, opening up the possibility of ecumenical (and, let us not forget, imperial) councils and financial support from the state. All these structures developed for the *bene esse*, the well-being, of the Church, but as such it must also be remembered that they are not of the *esse*, the being, of the Church. Even now, when we pray in the liturgy for the bishop, it is so that "he may serve your holy churches in peace"; the diocese is not a "church," nor is any larger structure, whether or not we have come to customarily speak of a patriarchate or synod as a "church," a phenomenon exacerbated by the rise of nation states and the corollary "national churches."

During the early twentieth century, Orthodox Christians, in exile—the proper state of Christian existence in this world—and estranged, in one way or another, from the ecclesial structures of their former homelands came to focus their experience of the Church on the act of coming together to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, in parallel with similar developments in Roman Catholicism: "Where the Eucharist is celebrated, there is the Church." The fruit of this "eucharistic ecclesiology" was tremendous; indeed, in many ways, it is because of this new sense of the Church that we are able to see, and critique, the problems stated above. However, construing the Church in terms of the eucharistic community (especially when located in the diocese, as with Metropolitan John Zizioulas, rather than the parish, as with Fr. Nicholas Afanasiev) ends up by placing the emphasis on territory, and, subsequently, hierarchy, and so it is perhaps not surprising that eucharistic ecclesiology seems to have morphed, in more recent decades, into an "episcopal ecclesiology": "Where the bishop is, there is the church!" It is, thus, not surprising that when "ecclesiology" is discussed today it almost invariably focusses on questions of hierarch and territory. Indeed, with the increasing tides of migration, it becomes an existential (and financial) question to identify who "belongs" (by virtue of ethnicity) to whom, to identify "the Russian world" or "the Greek omogeneia," or whatever else, turning our hierarchs into ethnarchs, leading flag-waving processions of ethnic groups or sending others to their deaths in the name of a "holy war."

If the episcopal structures, as they have developed throughout history and as we have inherited them, are not of the being of the Church, but evolved for the well-being of the Church, as indeed they were (something I can't emphasize too greatly), the question we must ask in the light of the problems outlined at the beginning of this essay is: what happens when such structures and positions no longer act for the well-being of the Church?

We are clearly in a time of transition, every bit as momentous as the conversion of Constantine and the empire, although in a reverse direction: we no longer live in Christendom, and are learning, once again, what it is to be in exile in this world. As such, it would not be surprising to find that the forms and structures developed within prior epochs must also evolve, as they did back then, to ensure that structure, once again, serves the purpose of its function. And to do this, it is helpful to go back to the period before such structures were developed, and then identified with the Church, to the period of figures such as Sts. Ignatius and Irenaeus, and behind them the New Testament, where we find other ways of speaking about the Church, not in terms of structures and offices, but as Mother, Bride, and Body. She is our heavenly Mother, the New Jerusalem, in whose womb we are born into life as we enter into the Paschal mystery of Christ, becoming the body of Christ; and as instantiated in the local community coming together as the body of Christ, in this world and for the life of this world, she is the

Bride, united as body to her head, the one Lord Jesus. But, it is vital to note, when we speak of the Church in such ways, we are *not* speaking of those structures and bodies that we have become accustomed to calling "church"; we must be extremely careful in our usage of words, lest we end up transferring to one thing what really belongs to another, and in so doing abdicate our own responsibility.

If we can learn to be precise in our words, however, a vision of the Church opens up in which the answer to the question "Who speaks for the Church?" is broader than we might have initially supposed. When we look back to the last century to consider those who spoke for the Church, our minds turn to those who had something to say, inspiring others by their words and lives, women and men, lay and ordained (and, lest we remain in our "bubble of self-conceitedness," Orthodox and non-Orthodox)—those whose words and lives continue to inspire us even today, in a way that what are thought of as "official statements of the Church" no longer do, if indeed they ever did. And we will, at the same time, be able to find rest and peace in the hands of God, who draws all to himself in ways we can't yet see, but also speak out, on behalf of the Church, ourselves discerning the word of truth, both for those who have yet to hear and to those who claim the position of guards but fail in their guardianship.

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Appendix:

"Order of the XXV World Russian People's Council "Present and Future of the Russian World"

This document, summarizing the most significant proposals put forward within the framework of the work of the expert platforms and during the Plenary Session, is a program document of the XXV World Russian People's Council, as well as an order addressed to the legislative and executive authorities of Russia.

"1. Special military operation

The Special Military Operation is a new stage of the national liberation struggle of the Russian people against the criminal Kiev regime and the collective West behind it, conducted in the lands of South-Western Rus' since 2014. During the SMO, the Russian people with arms in their hands defends its life, freedom, statehood, civilizational, religious, national, and cultural identity, as well as the right to live on their own land within the borders of the united Russian state. From a spiritual and moral point of view, the special military operation is a Holy War, in which Russia and its people, defending the unified spiritual space of the Holy Rus', fulfils the mission of the "Holder", protecting the world from the onslaught of globalism and the victory of the West that has fallen into Satanism.

After the end of SMO all territory of modern Ukraine should enter into a zone of exclusive influence of Russia. The possibility of the existence on this territory of a Russophobic political regime hostile to Russia and its people, as well as a political regime governed from an external centre hostile to Russia, must be completely ruled out.

"2. Russian World

Russia is the creator, and protector of the Russian World. The borders of the Russian World as a spiritual and cultural-civilizational phenomenon are significantly wider than the state borders of both the present Russian Federation and the greater historical Russia. Along with the representatives of the Russian oikumene scattered all over the world, the Russian World includes all those for whom the Russian tradition, the shrines of the Russian civilization and the great Russian culture are the highest value and meaning of life.

The highest meaning of existence of Russia and the Russian World created by it — their spiritual mission — is to be the world's "Restrainer", protecting the world from evil. The historical mission is to permanently destroy attempts to establish universal hegemony in the world, attempts to subordinate humanity to a single evil principle**."**