

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

DIOCESE OF SOUROZH

CATHEDRAL OF THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

67 ENNISMORE GARDENS, LONDON SW7 1NH



# *Souroz h Messenger*

May 2017

## *Ascension of the Lord*

13/26 May 2017



### *Troparion*

Thou art ascended in glory, O Christ our God, having filled Thy disciples with joy by the promise of the Holy Spirit; for they were assured by Thy blessing that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

### *Kontakion*

When Thou hadst accomplished Thy dispensation towards us, and hadst united things on earth with those in heaven, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, in no way parted, but remaining continually with us. Thou didst cry to those who love Thee: I am with you and none shall be against you!

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*Dear Readers,*



*We are happy to inform you that the Media and Publishing Department of the Diocese of Sourozh now has an online store, Sourozh Publications, where you can obtain the publications of the diocese. You can subscribe to the English or Russian editions of Cathedral Newsletter, and purchase the diocesan journal ‘Sourozh’ and the Diocesan Calendar and Lectionary. For prices and full information please visit the store at <https://sourozh.myshopify.com>.*

*Cathedral Newsletter was prepared by:*

*Archpriest Joseph Skinner, Elena Kuzina, Anna Rynda, Yana Reznik,  
 John Newbery, Elena Creswell, Julia Pliauksta*

## *Greetings to Archbishop Anatoly*

*To His Eminence Archbishop Anatoly*

*Your Eminence, dear Vladyka,*

*Christ is Risen!*

*With deep respect I greet you cordially on your namesday! May the Risen Lord, through the prayers of your heavenly patron, the holy martyr Anatoly, strengthen you with spiritual energy and paschal joy. Permit me also to convey sincere greetings and warm good wishes from the clergy of the Sourozh diocese and from your spiritual children in the British Isles.*



*We thank the Lord that for several decades you carried out your episcopal service under the spiritual direction of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Anthony. The parishioners of the London Cathedral and the community of the Patriarchal Parish of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God in Manchester remember you in their prayers with special warmth and ask that you likewise keep them in your heart and continue your prayerful intercession for them before the Risen Christ. Your blessing is dear and precious to all of us.*

*Undoubtedly it was by the will of God that you made your significant spiritual contribution to the building up of the Church of Christ in Britain and now that same will is revealed through the decision of the Holy Synod to accept your humble petition to bless you for a time of rest and medical treatment so that, freed from diocesan concerns, you would be able in peace to lift up your prayers for all of us in the monastery of the Venerable Savva of Storozhi Hill.*

*Dear Vladyka, we all believe that you continue to be together with all of us regardless of any possible infirmities or the great distance between us. The faithful children of the Diocese of Sourozh remember you with gratitude in their prayers and your archpastoral love, humility, wisdom and spiritual concern is taken as an example for the new generation of pastors and archpastors.*

*May the merciful Lord by His paschal triumph of life make you to rejoice in the beauty of His Resurrection, as His disciple and spiritual artist, pouring out upon you His divine strength for many blessed years!*

*Christ is Risen indeed!*

*With respectful love in the Lord,  
+Elisey, Archbishop of Sourozh  
together with the clergy and laity*

## Diocesan News

### NEW ICON IN MANCHESTER

With the blessing of Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh, the Rector of the Stavropagic Patriarchal Parish of the Protection of the Mother of God in Manchester, a new icon of the Holy Mother of God was erected in the altar. The icon was painted by Russian icon painters and donated to the church by Vladyka on the occasion of the Holy Pascha.

### FIFTH ANNUAL PASCHAL FESTIVAL IN LEEDS

The 5th Annual Paschal Festival of the Deanery of Northern England and Wales took place on 13th May, the Feast day of the Apostle James, the son of Zebedee, after the Holy Liturgy at the Parish of St Xenia of St Petersburg in Leeds. The festival was dedicated to the Day of Slavic writing and culture. The opening speech was given by Fr Dmitry Nedostupenko, the Rector of the Leeds parish and Dean of Northern England and Wales.

Among the participants this year there were creative teams from the parishes of Manchester, York, Leeds and Bradford. The Manchester parish school, 'Pokrov', presented a play called 'How Saints Cyril and Methodius celebrated Pascha in Russia'. A group of children from the Baltica school in Leeds performed a play, 'The Magic

Seven-Petal Flower'.

Classical and Russian folk music, songs dedicated to the Victory Day as well as some popular songs were performed by the talented youngsters participating in the festival.

At the end all of the participants were awarded certificates. We would like wholeheartedly to thank those who helped organize the event, as well as all the participants and guests of the festival.



## PATRONAL FESTIVAL AT ST GEORGE'S CHURCH IN NEWCASTLE

On St George's Day, May 6th the congregation of St George's Church in Newcastle celebrated their patronal festival. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Priest Dmitry Nedostupenko, Dean of North England and Wales, assisted by Deacon Anatoly Vikhrov.

After the Divine Liturgy a Religious Procession took place. Fr Dimitry congratulated everybody with the feast in his address to the parishioners. Fr Anatoly was congratulated on his namesday. The fellowship of clergy and lay people continued over the common festive meal.



## Cathedral News

### BAKING WITH A PRAYER

Some young parishioners gathered before the start of Great Lent for a cooking class with Tatyana Andreevna Andreeva. All cooks know how difficult it is to bake bread and pies using yeast as the dough "feels" everything that happens around it. So our young bakers Marika, Sofia and Daria did what monks usually do at monasteries - they sang a prayer to the Mother of God "Богородице Дево" while making traditional Russian pies and pirozhki. It was not an easy job for them but they all were very pleased. Then they



shared some at lunch and took apple pies home! Everyone was rewarded for their hard work with a stem of white Lily - a symbolic reminder of purity.

*By Yana Reznik*

## YOUNG SINGERS AT THE SERVICE OF BRIGHT SATURDAY

For a second year in a row the children's choir of the Parish School of the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God sang during the Divine Liturgy on Bright Saturday. Directed by their regent Marina Bezmenova-Nicolaou the children performed the Easter Troparion, Angel Vopiyashe (The Angel cried out), the First Antiphon, and the Cherubic Hymn. It was especially significant that many young choristers, after singing, took Holy Communion. This children's choir performance on Easter

Saturday solemnly concluded with the procession and the distribution of the Artos (Holy Bread) and truly became a special event in the lives of the young choristers and that of the parish.

## VETERANS OF WWII VISIT THE DORMITION CATHEDRAL

On May 10th, 2017 a group of veterans from Moscow visited the Dormition Cathedral in London. Archpriest Joseph Skinner celebrated a memorial Litya in commemoration of all slain warriors. After the service the guests had a short tour of the church.



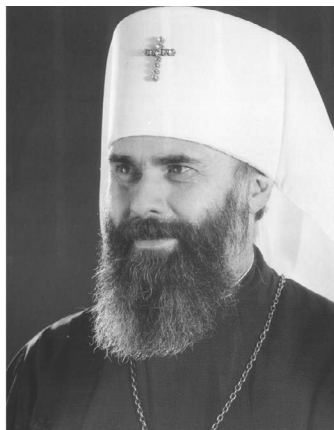
## *Legacy of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh*

### **SERMON ON THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION**

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The feast of the Ascension of the Lord is one of the decisive links in our eternal human destiny. This destiny begins on the day that God calls the world from non-being into being with his mighty creative word. This world is placed before the face of God and by the creative word is called not only to temporal life but to remain eternally in the joy and glory of its Lord. The destiny of the world and of man begins with God's loving offer of the bliss of friendship with Him till the end of time. And when man fell away from God, when through the treachery of man the whole world was given over to suffering, God did not withdraw his love and abandon us. Never, neither in the hours of paradise nor in the dark years and centuries of the fall, was God a stranger to the world. He was constantly acting within it, arousing in men's hearts all that was good and true, sending His guardian angels, His prophets and the messengers of His word, and when the time was ripe the Lord Himself entered the life of the world.

When God became incarnate He entered into the historical destiny of man so that there is no dividing line between this historical destiny and



*Metropolitan Anthony*

God's eternal life. But the Lord not only entered the historical destiny of man by His incarnation, He united with Himself, with His divine nature, all that He had created: our human flesh which He put on not for a time but forever; our earth; our sky, and demonstrated its wonderful quality and glory. All that He created is capable not only of meeting God, but of being spirit-bearing, God-bearing. The created world was not destroyed by its contact with the eternal, by the burning, divine union, but on the contrary was revived, transfigured and assumed the true rights of the created, entered the true destiny of creation. But even this was not enough. After Christ had defeated death by His death, He ascended into heaven, and, ascending into the depths of divine incomprehensibility, the Lord took our



*A painting of the Ascension at the Ubisi Monastery in Georgia  
(Source - [www.christiantoday.com](http://www.christiantoday.com))*

human nature, the flesh received from the Virgin, the material of the created world, with Him into the Mystery of the Trinity.

St. John Chrysostom trying to describe the greatness of man says: ‘If you want to know how great man is do not turn to royal palaces, but raise your eyes to the throne of God and you will see, on the right hand of God the Father, the Son of Man clothed with our flesh.’ Here is the deepest and most glorious manifestation of man’s greatness and of his glorious calling. Christ ascended into heaven on the day of a blessed and wonderful parting which turned out to be no separation, because by ascending into heaven He did not get farther away from us, for heaven is not the sky, not a certain distance, but the mystery of God’s omnipresence, the glory that He had even before the world was. And when Christ says: ‘Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me’, He is not only telling us that in our temporal existence we must tear ourselves away from all self-love, accept the whole weight of our earthly life and follow

Him, firstly among the people, thence to Gethsemane and the trial and thence to the cross. He does not even say that whosoever follows Him thus shall rise again on the last day. He opens to us even greater possibilities. We are called upon to follow Him and according to His own word, to be where He is, in the eternal glory of the divine life.

In another ten days it will be Pentecost. We expect that having through Baptism become, to some extent at least, the Body of Christ and having received Communion from Him over the years, we may now receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Through this gift our renewed humanity may be ignited with the fire of eternal life. Let us prepare ourselves reverently and attentively, so that the life-giving and transfiguring presence of the Holy Spirit may be renewed within us. Let us come to church on that day ready to begin a new life in Christ and in the Spirit and become truly, in reality, not just in our dreams, what St. Ignatius of Antioch calls the living body of Christ, the ‘total Christ’ in which the fullness of the Spirit resides. And by accepting this spirit of Christ and of Sonship, let us become - as with even greater daring St Ireneus of Lyons says - ‘the Only-begotten Son of God in the Only-begotten Son’. May the blessing and mercy of the Lord be with us all. Amen.





## *British and Irish Saints*

### **VENERABLE BEUNO, ABBOT OF CLYNNOG FAWR**

**Commemorated: 21st April/4th May**

Of the life of Venerable Beuno, the greatest saint in North Wales, we know little, but even the bloody Reformation could not erase the memory of this saint. Beuno was born in the second half of the sixth century in the Welsh kingdom of Powys (or in Herefordshire, which then was part of Wales) and was a grandson of a Welsh prince. As a young man, Beuno was taught in Herefordshire and learned the monastic life in the famous Bangor Monastery that had been founded by St Deiniol of Bangor.

In 616 Beuno founded his main monastery at Clynnog Fawr in Gwynedd in northwest Wales. Owing to the tireless labours of the monks of Clynnog Fawr, most of North Wales was enlightened with the Gospel. Beuno was ordained priest at Bangor and was invited to become its abbot. In all the venerable man established no fewer than nine monastic centres in Wales and all of them became famous.

Beuno was the uncle, spiritual father and patron of the holy martyr Winifred, whose veneration throughout the Middle Ages was great and to whose holy well pilgrimages are held to this day.

It was said of Beuno that he was stern



*A stained glass image of St Beuno*

with stubborn sinners but was full of mercy and compassion for penitents and those who suffered. Towards the end of his life, Beuno was rewarded by the Lord with the gift of discernment and was able to penetrate into the depths and mysteries of the spiritual world. Throughout his life, Beuno worked numerous miracles of healing. He was also a very active and successful missionary, his preaching of the Word of God reached many corners of Wales and south-west England. Among the contemporary theologians Beuno was famous for his knowledge



*St Beuno's Church in Culbone, Somerset  
(the smallest parish church in all England)*

of the Holy Scriptures.

The saint reposed a few days after Easter Sunday 640 (or 645) in Clynnog Fawr as a very old man. For most of his very long and fruitful life this holy man had wandered much, everywhere preaching the words of Eternal Life, founding monasteries, healing the sick and consoling the destitute and those who had been forsaken by others. Frequently he retired to very secluded places for solitary prayer. Beuno established monasteries in Llanveynoe in Herefordshire in England (the Welsh form: Llanfeuno, "Church of Beuno") and in Llanymynech. Beuno used to pay visits to the monastic islands in Wales at Bardsey and Anglesey. On Anglesey he may have founded a church, or a monastery, in a place called Aberffraw.

Beuno for some while led a solitary ascetic life in Somerset in southwest England where a tiny and lovely church in Culbone served him as a cell (hence its name: Killbeuno = Culbone). This is the smallest active parish church in all England. It is dedicated to St Beuno

who has been its patron for many centuries. This is a fine example of an early hidden Celtic shrine in England and indicates the uninterrupted tradition of holiness. It served Beuno as a cell and after his repose was converted into a chapel. Culbone church is located in a very quiet and remote place beside the Bristol Channel, surrounded by nature, forest, pastures and small farms. Nearby is the steep Porlock hill and other high hills. The views are breathtaking and as you walk it seems that the sea merges with the sky and civilization is far away. This is a typical setting for the ancient Celtic saints.

After his repose, Beuno was buried in Clynnog Fawr, and a chapel was erected above his grave. A great number of miracles occurred at his relics. Later the saint's remains were translated to a new church. The veneration for Beuno was so strong that it continued after the disastrous Reformation.

Until the early 19th century there was a custom among farmers in the vicinity of Clynnog Fawr to make donations to St Beuno's Church in the form of



*St Beuno's Holy Well in Clynnog Fawr,  
Gwynedd*

young lambs and calves on the feast of Whitsun, as well as to lead sick cattle to the neighbouring holy well dedicated to Beuno. There are records of countless cases of healing of sick domestic animals on that holy site. From the late medieval era, Clynnog Fawr church regularly celebrated a special service of intercession for the health of livestock. Children who suffered from many diseases – both before and after the Reformation – were brought and led to the holy well, bathed in it and left for a night inside the chapel on or near the grave of the holy man; and many were miraculously cured. Children and young people who had suffered from rickets and epilepsy left this place absolutely healthy.

Beuno is considered to be the patron of sick children and sick cattle in Wales to this day. Beuno's well at Clynnog Fawr still remains a destination for pilgrimages today. There is another holy well dedicated to Beuno in Holywell, Flintshire, situated close to the well of St Winifred. From this well there begins a heritage route devoted to St Beuno.

Many churches are dedicated to this saint. This demonstrates that Beuno and his disciples built a large number of churches and monasteries in various districts of Wales and in the border areas of England. The majority of these churches can be found in northern and northwestern Wales, including the Isle of Anglesey and in the Llyn Peninsula. Churches dedicated to the holy man can also be found in central,



*St Beuno's Church in Clynnog Fawr,  
Gwynedd*

eastern Wales and in the Clwyd region. The ancient church in the village Llanveynoe in Herefordshire is dedicated to Sts Beuno and Peter. It stands on the site of the monastery built by the saint. This site probably marks the saint's birthplace. The church boasts two early crosses from the ninth-tenth centuries.

The church in Clynnog Fawr is dedicated to Beuno. This village stands on the northern coast of the Llyn Peninsula. Numerous pilgrims gave this church generous donations. In the tenth century, Clynnog monastery was burned to the ground by the Vikings, and in the following century it was again demolished - by the Normans. The abbey church continued to exist throughout the centuries. Among the relics of this large church is the ancient stone of St Beuno with a cross containing marks that were left by the fingers of the saint himself! The sundials on the exterior side of the church may date to the tenth century.

The village of Culbone consists of a handful of cottages and is situated in an



The St Beuno's Stone at Clynnog Fawr -  
7th-9th Century

area of rare beauty. The cliffs near the village reach 1,200 feet; a spring flows down the cliff to the ocean forming a picturesque cascade. Culbone church is 35 feet long and 12 feet wide, and seats 16 people. This moving church consists of a sanctuary, a nave, and a porch, and has a small spire. Its present fabric dates from the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. Despite the fact that this place is difficult to access and there is no road nearby, services are celebrated in it regularly. Some of St Beuno's relics may rest under this church.

*Dmitry Lapa*

*Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.rulenglish/79097.htm>*



### *For reflection*

*The Lord greatly loves the repenting sinner and mercifully presses him to His bosom: "Where were you, My child? I was waiting a long time for you." The Lord calls all to Himself with the voice of the Gospel, and his voice is heard in all the world: "Come to me, my sheep. I created you, and I love you. My love for you brought Me to earth, and I suffered all things for the sake of your salvation, and I want you all to know my love, and to say, like the apostles on Tabor: Lord, it is good for us to be with You."*

*(St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, IX.27)*

## *Notes on the Church calendar*



### **ASCENSION OF OUR LORD**

Jesus did not live with His disciples after His resurrection as He had before His death. Filled with the glory of His divinity, He appeared at different times and places to His people, assuring them that it was He, truly alive in His risen and glorified body.

To them He presented Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God (*Acts 1.3*).

It should be noted that the time span of forty days is used many times in the Bible and signifies a temporal period of completeness and sufficiency (*Gen 7.17; Ex 16.35, 24.18; Judg 3.11; 1 Sam 17.16; 1 Kg 19.8; Jon 3.4; Mt 4.2*).

On the fortieth day after His passover,

Jesus ascended into heaven to be glorified on the right hand of God (*Acts 1.9–11; Mk 16.19; Lk 24.51*). The ascension of Christ is His final physical departure from this world after the resurrection. It is the formal completion of His mission in this world as the Messianic Saviour. It is His glorious return to the Father Who had sent Him into the world to accomplish the work that He had given him to do (*Jn 17.4–5*).

... and lifting His hands He blessed them. While blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy (*Lk 24.51–52*). The Church's celebration of the ascension, as all such festal celebrations, is not merely the remembrance of

an event in Christ's life. Indeed, the ascension itself is not to be understood as though it were simply the supernatural event of a man floating up and away into the skies. The holy scripture stresses Christ's physical departure and His glorification with God the Father, together with the great joy which His disciples had as they received the promise of the Holy Spirit Who was to come to assure the Lord's presence with them, enabling them to be His witnesses to the ends of earth (*Lk 24.48–53; Acts 1.8–11; Mt 28.20; Mk 16.16–14*).

In the Church the believers in Christ celebrate these very same realities with the conviction that it is for them and for all men that Christ's departure from this world has taken place. The Lord leaves in order to be glorified with God the Father and to glorify us with himself. He goes in order to "prepare a place" for and to take us also into the blessedness of God's presence. He goes to open the way for all flesh into the "heavenly sanctuary . . . the Holy Place not made by hands" (see Hebrews 8–10). He goes in order send the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father to bear witness to Him and

His gospel in the world, making Him powerfully present in the lives of disciples.

The liturgical hymns of the feast of the Ascension sing of all of these things. The antiphonal verses of the Divine Liturgy are taken from Psalms 47, 48, and 49. The troparion of the feast which is sung at the small entrance is also used as the post-communion hymn.

*Thou hast ascended in glory O Christ our God, granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing they were assured that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world! (Troparion).*

*When Thou didst fulfill the dispensation for our sake, and didst unite earth to heaven, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, not being parted from those who love Thee, but remaining with them and crying: I am with you and no one will be against you! (Kontakion).*

*Source: <https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-year/ascension1>*

### *For reflection*

*God will cleanse your sins if you yourself are dissatisfied with yourself and will keep on changing until you are perfect. (St. Augustine, Sermons on I John, 1.7)*

## Sacraments of the Church

We are printing a series of short texts about the Sacraments of the Church. They are copied from *An Orthodox Online Catechism*, which is based on the book *'The Mystery of Faith'* by Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev).

They are presented here by the kind permission and blessing of the author.

### PART 5. PENANCE

**'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt.3:2).** With these words, first uttered by St John the Baptist, Jesus Christ began His own mission (Matt.4:17). Christianity was from the very beginning a call to repentance, to conversion, to a 'change of mind' (metanoia). A radical transformation of one's entire way of life and thought, a renovation of the mind and senses, a rejection of sinful deeds and thoughts, a transfiguration of the human person: these are the main elements of Christ's message.

The pattern for repentance is set by Jesus Christ in his parable of the prodigal son (see Luke 15:11-24). Having lived a sinful life 'in a far country', that is, far away from God, the prodigal son, after many tribulations, comes to himself and decides to return to his Father. Repentance begins with his conversion ('came to himself'), which is then transformed into determination to return ('I will arise and go'), and finishes with his return to God ('he arose and came').



This is followed by confession ('*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you*'), which results in forgiveness ('*Bring quickly the best robe*'), adoption ('*this my son*'), and spiritual resurrection ('*was dead, and is alive again*'). Repentance is therefore a dynamic process, a way towards God, rather than a mere act of recognizing one's sins.

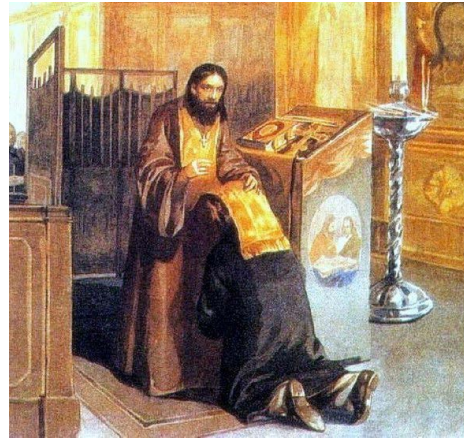
Every Christian has all of his sins forgiven in the sacrament of Baptism. However, 'there is no man who shall live and sin not'. Sins committed after Baptism deprive the human person of the fulness of life in God. Hence the necessity of the 'second Baptism', the expression used by the church Fathers for repentance, emphasizing its purifying, renovating and sanctifying energy.

The sacrament of Penance is spiritual healing for the soul. Every sin, depending on its gravity, is for the soul either a small injury, a deep wound, sometimes a serious disease, or perhaps even a fatal illness. In order

to be spiritually healthy, the human person must regularly visit his father-confessor, a spiritual doctor: ‘Have you sinned? Go to church and repent of your sin... Here is a physician, not a judge. Here nobody is condemned, but everybody receives forgiveness of sins’, says St John Chrysostom.

From the very beginning of Christianity, it was the duty of the apostles, and then of bishops and presbyters, to hear the confessions and to give absolution. Christ said to His apostles: *‘Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’* (Matt.18:18). The power of ‘binding and loosing’, which was given to the apostles and through them to bishops and priests, is manifested in the absolution which the priest gives to the one who repents on behalf of God.

But why is it necessary to confess sins to a priest, a fellow human being? Is it not enough to tell God everything and receive absolution from Him? In order to answer this question, one should be reminded that in the Christian Church a priest is only a ‘witness’ to God’s presence and action: it is not the priest who acts in liturgical celebrations and in the sacraments, but God Himself. The confession of sins is always addressed to God, and forgiveness is also received from Him. In promoting the idea of confession before a priest, the Church has always taken into account a psychological



factor: one might not feel quite as ashamed before God about one’s sins, but it is always embarrassing to reveal one’s sins before a fellow human being. Moreover, the priest is also a spiritual director, a counsellor who can offer advice on how to avoid particular sins in the future. The sacrament of Penance is not limited to a mere confession of sins. It also presupposes recommendations, or sometimes epitimia (penalties) on the part of the priest. It is primarily in the sacrament of Penance that the priest acts in his capacity of spiritual father.

If the penitent deliberately conceals any of his sins, whether out of shame or for any other reason, the sacrament would not be considered valid. Thus, before the beginning of the rite, the priest warns that the confession must be sincere and complete: *‘Be not ashamed, neither be afraid, and conceal thou nothing from me... But if thou shalt conceal anything from me, thou shalt have the greater sin’*. The forgiveness of sins that is



granted after confession is also full and all-inclusive. It is a mistake to believe that only the sins enumerated during confession are forgiven. There are sins which we do not see in ourselves, and there are some, or many, that we simply forget. All these sins are also cleansed by God so long as our confession is sincere. Otherwise total forgiveness would never be possible for anyone, as it is not possible for the human person to know all of his sins or to be a perfect judge of himself.

The importance of frequent confession might be illustrated by the fact that those who come for confession very rarely are usually unable to see their sins and transgressions clearly. Some who come to a priest would say things such as: ‘I live like everybody else’;

‘I haven’t done anything special’; ‘I did not kill anyone’; ‘There are those who are worse than I am’; and even ‘I have no sins’. On the contrary, those who come regularly for confession always find many faults in themselves. They recognize their sins and try to be liberated from them. There is a very simple explanation for this phenomenon. As dust and dirt are seen only where there is light but not in darkness, so someone perceives his sins only when he approaches God, the unapproachable Light. The closer one is to God, the clearer he sees his sins. As long as someone’s soul continues to be a camera obscura, his sins remain unrecognized and consequently unhealed.

*Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeev)*

## *In the Footsteps of the Pilgrims*

### **IMPRESSIONS OF THE DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND WITH THE RUSSIAN ECCLESIASTICAL MISSION**

**10th - 17th NOVEMBER 2016**

In the 19th century as successors to the Byzantine Empire and the true defenders of Christianity and the Holy Places, around 200,000 Russian pilgrims were visiting Jerusalem each year. The Russian government purchased land on a grand scale, notably on the Mount of Olives and just to the west of the Old City and

built a great cathedral, a consulate, a hospital and several hospices. These were all confiscated as “enemy institutions” when the British army captured Jerusalem at the end of World War I.

We met at Gatwick. Fr Nikolay Kobets, serving in the West of Ireland, rounded up the Sourozh pilgrims. We came from parishes across the Diocese: Brighton, Bristol, the Cathedral, Leeds, Portsmouth, and York. After an uneventful flight we arrived at Ben Gurion Airport Tel Aviv. I approached the passport officer. “You’re with the

Russian Orthodox group?” “Yes”. “But you’re not Russian!”.... I replied “It’s not compulsory...” She smiled and handed me a blue card...”Welcome to Israel”. Sr Mariam led us out to our second home for the coming week – a super Mercedes coach fully equipped with air-conditioning and WiFi. In no time we were in Bethlehem and checked into rooms at the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission Pilgrim Residence in preparation for the Pilgrimage.

**First Day:**

**Friday 11th November 2016**

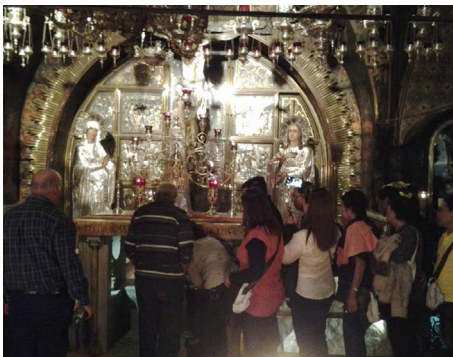
After breakfast at 7.30 we travelled to Jerusalem, passing along King David Street and noting that although the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission dates from 1847, there was evidence that Russian pilgrims were in the Holy Land from the 12th century. At the Russian Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, which was built and consecrated in 1864 and was one of the first settlements outside the Old City, Fr Nikolay



*On the Via Dolorosa  
(Photograph - John Newbery)*

conducted a short service of preparation for our pilgrimage. We then had an extensive tour of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with expert commentary at each point of special interest by our guide Sr Mariam.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is entered from a large courtyard and the first place seen is the Stone of Unction, covered by a marble slab, where Christ’s body was laid after the Crucifixion, anointed, and wrapped for burial. Nearby, two staircases lead up to the site of the Crucifixion, Golgotha, ‘the



*Inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre  
(Photograph - John Newbery)*

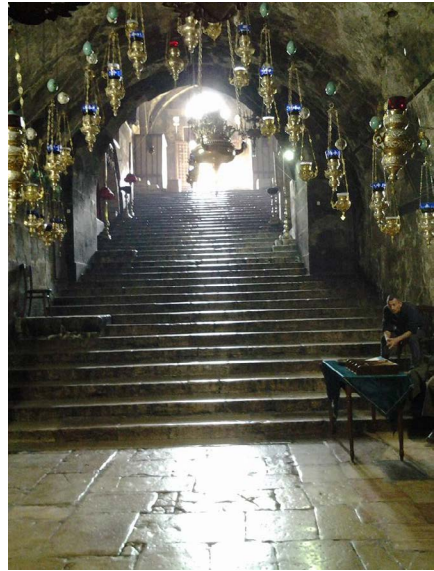


*The Pool of Bethesda  
(Photograph - John Newbery)*

place of the skull'. We were then able to venerate Christ's Tomb where the recent archaeological investigation has been conducted, and indeed is still very much in progress.

In the afternoon we visited the Alexander Nevsky podvorie founded by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Financed by Tsar Alexander III, extensive excavations here revealed the Threshold of the Judgement Gate. We visited St Anne's Church, near to the Pool of Bethesda. The Church was built by the Crusaders over what was traditionally believed to be site of the house where Anna and Joachim, the parents of the Mother of God, lived. The church and Pool are now under the care of the French White Fathers. Here, like the paralysed man, we are challenged by Christ: "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" (*John 5 v 6*).

We walked along the Via Dolorosa or "Way of Sorrows" marking the route taken by Christ from His trial before Pontius Pilate through to Calvary and the Tomb. There are fourteen Stations, five of which are contained within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The remainder are spread throughout the souk that surrounds the Church. Some are commemorated by clear wall plaques, while others are within buildings and can be hard to spot. At each Station we paused for Sr Mariam to explain its significance. We then found our way to the Jaffa Gate to pick up our coach and return to Bethlehem for supper.



*Steps leading into the Church of the Tomb of the Mother of God  
(Photograph - John Newbery )*

## **Second Day: Saturday 12th November 2016**

We left Bethlehem just after 8.30 and were driven to Jerusalem where we passed and noticed each gate to the Old City (Jaffa Gate, New Gate, Damascus Gate, Herod's Gate, Storks' Tower, Lions' Gate, Zion Gate, and Dung Gate). With just a few exceptions, there are no motor vehicles within the Old City as the streets are winding and narrow. Getting lost is almost inevitable. We then made our way to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. After walking around the hard landscaping of the Garden we crossed the road and descended all 47 steps into the Church of the Tomb of the Mother of God. This is another Crusader building and at the foot of the



*Monastery Church on  
the Mount of Olives  
(Photograph - John Newbery )*

steps there is a cruciform church where the Mother of God was laid to rest. This is a most atmospheric place and probably overlooked on most tourist venues. Then we went to the ROCOR monastery of St Mary Magdalene. This was built by Tsar Alexander III in memory of his mother Maria Alexandrovna. It also has the tomb of Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, murdered by revolutionaries. Prince



*ROCA monastery of St Mary Magdalene  
(Photograph - John Newbery )*

Charles visited here recently as his paternal grandmother, Princess Alice, had expressed a wish to lie near her aunt Elizabeth, the Grand Duchess.

Pausing for a few moments we took in the Place of the Ascension, which contains the image of Christ's right footprint, originally formed in dust, but set in stone by the Crusaders, and the Greek Orthodox monastery of the Ascension, before stopping at a viewing point on the Mount of Olives to take in the panorama of the Old City, including the sun picking out the Dome of the Rock. On reaching the Russian monastery of the Ascension we noted the prominent bell tower. This was erected to offer infirm pilgrims a view towards the River Jordan. The 8-tonne bell was hauled from Jaffa by Russian pilgrims. It also has a small chapel built over the site of where the head of St John the Baptist was found, marked by an iron cage and an indentation on the floor of a 5th century Armenian mosaic. That was the morning!

After lunch we found ourselves in the secluded Gornensky Convent. This is located a Sabbath day's journey from the Old City and is the site of the Visitation. After a visit to the shop, we were in time for the All-Night Vigil in preparation for the Liturgy that night in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We made our confessions and were anointed by Fr Nikolay.

***John Newbery, November 2016.***

***To be continued.***

## PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY RELIQS OF ST NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER IN BARI

It is never easy to share your personal pilgrimage experience with the others. How can you express your inner feelings and emotions with words, separate important moments from less significant, or clearly identify the turning point of your spiritual journey. Each of us is on a pilgrimage path already and the event itself awaits its place and time as we read in Ecclesiastes, chapter 2: “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens”.

Traditionally the pilgrimage to Bari, capital of the Apulia region of Italy, takes place twice a year: on the 19th of December – the day of St Nicholas of Myra, and the 22nd of May - the day when the relics of St Nicholas were carried to Bari. Both days are big holidays that bring thousands of pilgrims to Bari from all over the world. St Nicholas is the patron of the city, sailors and travellers. The first known pilgrimage to Bari dates from 1459, and was done by the monk Varlaam from Rostov Velikiy.

### **Basilica of St Nicholas of Myra**

On arrival to Bari we were warmly welcomed by the organisers of the pilgrimage, a married couple, Nikolay



and Anastasia from the Patriarchal Podvorie. Nikolay told us about the early Divine Liturgy that was going to be celebrated in the crypt of the Basilica on Saturday; it was not mentioned in our programme and we gladly accepted the invitation. The Divine Liturgy was very special to us all. The priests and the parishioners were not separated by an enclosed altar and together we shared and lived every moment of the Liturgy as perhaps it used to be in early Christian tradition. And this special unity of all under the invisible protection of St Nicholas was very precious. After the Holy Communion we wholeheartedly thanked St Nicholas. We were full of joy and silence.

We returned to the crypt later that evening for the Akathist. Our third return to the relics of St Nicholas was on St Nicholas’s Day, when the Divine Liturgy traditionally is celebrated in the Basilica - a solemn day full of grace and bliss.



*Basilica of St Nicholas of Myra in Bari*

During our short pilgrimage we also visited St Nicholas Church for an evening service, the Patriarchal Podvorie, the unique Italian town Alberobello with traditional trulli buildings which is recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. The Patron Saints of Alberobello are Saints Cosmas and Damian. Father Innokenty revealed that in the Orthodox tradition there are three different sets of Saints by the name of Cosmas and Damian, each with their own special feast day; these are: Saints Cosmas and Damian of Cilicia (Arabia), Saints Cosmas and Damian of Asia Minor, and Saints Cosmas and Damian of Rome. We visited the church of St Cosmas and Damian and the church of St Anthony the Great. Up to now the Church of St Anthony the Great is the largest trulli style building in the world; its altar is made out of limestone and you could see embedded pieces of shells from a distance.

Fascinating guided tours and waterfront strolls, open and warm-hearted conversations over dinner, an atmosphere of incredible trust and understanding, the joy of making new friends and a hint of sadness before departure united us all under the peaceful sky of sunny Italy.

I truly hope that everyone gets an opportunity to have his first pilgrimage in life one day and a pilgrimage to St Nicholas of Myra in Bari in particular. Pilgrimage is just a beginning... In one of his sermons during Great Lent Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh said - pilgrimage is a revelation, yes; pilgrimage is a grace - yes; but we are called to search for God outside space and time as God is omnipresent; God is in Eternity.

Thank you very much to all of you who made our pilgrimage to Bari happen.

### ***Yana Reznik***



*St. Nicholas' Tomb in the crypt,  
Basilica San Nicola di Bari  
(Photo: Centro Studi Nicolaiani)*

## *Holy places in London*

### **ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL IN LONDON**

St Paul's Cathedral has been one of the symbols of Britain's capital. The present structure was built by the celebrated architect Christopher Wren (1632-1723) between 1675 and 1710. Although there are no shrines of saints at the Cathedral any more, the saints who are closely associated with the historical Cathedral are commemorated here either in icons or monuments. Moreover, there are chapels at the cathedral dedicated to St Dunstan (used for quiet private prayer) and St Erconwald, the patron-saint of London, whose relics rested here until the Reformation.

Many prominent figures are buried or commemorated at the Cathedral, especially in the crypt. These include the architect Christopher Wren (a well-known inscription on his tomb reads: "Reader, if you seek a monument, look around you," because the present building is his masterpiece); Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805); the First Duke of Wellington (1769-1852—it was he who defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo and later became Prime Minister); the poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827—he introduced romanticism into English poetry); the preacher, poet and clergyman John Donne (1572-1631, dean of St Paul's from 1621—to him belongs the



*St Paul's Cathedral*

famous saying: "Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee"); the great painter William Turner (1775-1851); the composers Hubert Parry (1848-1918) and Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900); the famous nurse Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), and Alexander Fleming (1881-1955—a bacteriologist who first discovered the effect of penicillin on bacteria).

The current dome of the Cathedral is one of the highest and finest in the world. It was modelled on St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. The Cathedral together with its dome is now 111 metres (c.364 feet) high and until the 1960s it was the highest construction in London. The total length of the church is 158 metres (c. 518 feet). It is the second largest church structure in modern Britain after Liverpool Cathedral. The west front has a bas-relief depicting the conversion of St Paul crowned by the statues of Sts Peter, Paul and James.

The twin towers of this front house bells and the clock, including the largest and most famous bell, Great Paul, which weighs c.16.5 tons (it was the largest bell in England until 2012 when the Olympic Bell weighing 22.9 tons was cast). A statue of Queen Anne stands in front of the cathedral—she was the ruling monarch when this church was built. The Cathedral is cruciform, very broad and has a special atmosphere of holiness, strength and splendour inside. The sense of spaciousness is clearly felt in the nave, north and south transepts and north and south aisles. There are many mosaics, sculptures and stained glass in the Cathedral.

In the central dome there is the “whispering gallery” which is very popular with tourists. This gallery has acoustic properties such that any faint sound may be heard around its entire circumference. The frescoes inside the dome depicting the life of St Paul were heroically created by the great painter James Thornhill (1675-1734). There are many other treasures within the



*John Donne*

Cathedral, including the elegant choir stalls, the Lady Chapel, the chapel dedicated to all the Protestant martyrs and so on. The Cathedral crypt, the largest in Europe, is unique, as it is located beneath the whole building. It is very gracious and contains many treasures and memorials, along with the chapel of the order of the British Empire.

St Mellitus organised the building of the wooden cathedral of St Paul on this site in about 604. That was destroyed by fire in the tenth century and rebuilt before the Norman Conquest. The building of the first Norman cathedral of St Paul began in 1087, which developed into a huge Romanesque and Gothic piece of architecture by 1240. This cathedral stood until the time of Christopher Wren, and was the largest church building in the British Isles, the third largest in Europe and had the tallest spire in England. The church was enlarged in the late medieval era but started to decay after the Reformation. The Great Fire of London in 1666 put an end to the splendid edifice, and Wren rebuilt it in the English baroque style.

The Cathedral was built using the royal quarries of the Isle of Portland in Dorset (in fact a great number of London's famous buildings were built of this high-quality limestone). By a miracle of God the Cathedral was not at all damaged during the German bombing in the Second World War. Recently the Cathedral has undergone





William Blake  
(by Thomas Phillips)

some restoration work and it now has an appearance very similar to that of the time of Wren when he built it 300 years ago.

***Dmitry Lapa***

***Address:***

***St Paul's Cathedral, St Paul's Churchyard, London, EC4M 8AD***

*Daily services. Open for sight-seeing Monday to Saturday. Please note that the entrance is free only when attending Church services. At other times an entrance fee is applied.*  
<https://www.stpauls.co.uk/visit>

## EVERLASTING ART OF ICONOGRAPHY

*Interview with Dr Stephane Rene, a Coptic iconographer and researcher at the Royal College of Art (RCA, London, UK)*

**- Dr Rene, as an iconographer and tutor of Orthodox iconography at the Prince's School of Traditional Arts, you know about the Russian icon tradition much more than many Russian Orthodox believers know about the Coptic one, which you represent. Unfortunately, the Russian segment of the Internet doesn't provide much information about Coptic iconography. Could you please briefly tell us about the main features of Coptic iconography, i.g. techniques, figures,**

**materials, colours, etc?**

The Neo-Coptic style of iconography uses the same techniques and materials as Byzantine iconography, namely egg tempera on gesso on wood. The differences are mostly stylistic, but the content is similar. The figures should be designed according to a specific canon of proportion taught by the school's founder, Dr Isaac Fanous. The meaning of colours differs somewhat from Byzantine iconography; Christ's outer garment for instance is always red, symbolic of His blood, representing His human nature, the flesh and blood He took from the Theotokos. His inner garment is always white, representing His divine nature. One nature out of two, divinity and humanity (Coptic Theotokia). The colour green with the face depicted

in profile, is strictly reserved for those who have no relationship with God and have turned away from Him. This is the case of Judas in the icon of the Last Supper or that of the kiss at Gethsemane. Satan and all his associates, demons and dragons, are all represented in green. This rule applies to heretics, e.g. Arius, or evil rulers like Decius or Julian the Apostate. It should be noted however, that the vast majority of Coptic 'iconographers' do not subscribe to the Neo-Coptic canon established by Dr Fanous, but mostly follow their own whims, as can be seen on social media. This is a cause for concern for the future development of Coptic iconography. Unlike the Eastern Orthodox church, who fostered and preserved iconography throughout its history, the Oriental Orthodox churches didn't manage so well in this regard, apart from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that, although not as vibrantly alive as it was in the past, still has a distinctive living tradition. The Coptic Church contended with the relentless onslaught and persecutions from Islam since the year 642 AD. In spite of this, the Coptic iconographic tradition persisted, even as a thin thread at times, until the 19th century when Catholic and Protestant missionaries arrived in Egypt. This contributed to the disappearance of Coptic iconography during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when it was replaced by Italian realistic painting. The art and use of iconography was only

restored during the patriarchate of St Kyrillos VI by Isaac Fanous in the early 1960's. (For a much more detailed background, see *Coptic Civilization; Two Thousand Years Of Christianity in Egypt*, chapter on Contemporary Coptic Art by Monica René. Editor Gawdat Gabra, published by America University Press, Cairo 2013)

**- You are a director of the Sacred Space gallery under the patronage of the Anglican bishop of London. What kind of works of art do you represent in Sacred Space?**

Sacred Space was originally created as a platform for the contemporary sacred art of divers world traditions. Of late however, we concentrate mostly on Christian iconography from different Orthodox traditions.



*Dr Rene (left)  
and Dr Isaac Fanous (right)*  
Source-compticliterature.wordpress.com

**- What is the aim of your gallery? To promote Christian spiritual art among the British art lovers, to show the sophistication of different icon painting traditions or anything else?**

Sacred Space is not aimed at the general commercial art market, nor are we interested in showing art for art's sake. Whatever we exhibit must have a basis in a spiritual tradition and must, especially in the case of icons, be beautiful, authentic and a true representation of the tradition they express. For this reason, the gallery's motto is "Goodness, Truth and Beauty", because we live in a world much deprived of these three fundamental principles, a world that revolves mostly around money and materialism. We have had in the past some contemporary/modern artists who explored the sacred in their work but did not belong to any particular spiritual tradition.

**- In November 2015 the gallery was holding an icon exhibition of St. Elizabeth Convent from Belarus which has several icon making studios. Why and how did you choose their icons for your exhibition?**

People usually contact us with requests for exhibitions. We generally choose around twenty percent of applicants based on the work they submit, which we consider in line with our ethos. The Sisters of St Elisabeth's Convent fulfilled our



*Flight into Egypt by Dr Isaac Fanous  
Source - [copticiconography.org](http://copticiconography.org)*

criteria, with very traditional and beautifully executed icons in the Russo-Byzantine style. The background of the artist(s) is also important, and in this case, the charitable work done by the sisters make their icons an even more significant and powerful testimony.

**- What other iconographers of Russian-Byzantine school were represented in your gallery?**

In 2008, we exhibited Tatiana Kolibaba, an iconographer from St Petersburg, whose work in a classical Russian style. In 2007 and 2008, we had the honour of hosting two very successful exhibitions by Pater Iakobos, a Romanian monk iconographer from Mount Athos.



*Christ Pantocrator by Dr Rene, 2015*  
 Source - [firstimageicons.com](http://firstimageicons.com)

In 2009, Sacred Space exhibited Aleksandras Alekseyevs, a highly talented iconographer who specialises in bronze relief icons (Old Believer). Originally from Lithuania, he studied and worked in Russia for many years. After the exhibition he started a PhD under my supervision, at the Prince's School of Traditional Arts, London, and will graduate next year. We exhibited the Prosopon School of Iconology in 2011 (Moscow branch). All the contributors had studied in Russia and had specially gathered works for the exhibition. In 2012, Romanian iconographer Daniel Neculae brought his beautiful icons. In 2013, the young and very gifted Greek iconographer Fikos showed his

contemporary Byzantine icons. So we have had some excellent Byzantine iconography over the last few years and hope to have more in the future.

**- In 1987 you were the only student who studied Christian Art in the RCA, your research was dedicated to Coptic iconography. Dr Isaac Fanous was the only iconographer who could evaluate your work. Nowadays the number of the students interested in Christian sacred art has increased. Is it a result of a rising interest in Orthodox Christianity or only in Traditional art?**

Although an increasing number of people seem to be interested in iconography (especially Byzantine), interest in the proper study of it is quite marginal. As your readers will probably know, the use of icons died in the West with the advent of the Renaissance in the 15th century. The vast majority of Western Europeans consider iconography as a kind of hobby they pursue in their spare time and usually limited to the graphic and technical aspects. The iconology is generally not taken into account. That is not to say that there aren't any proficient and knowledgeable iconographers from a European background, but the serious ones are very few and most studied in Greece or Russia under masters.

**- You live and work in Great Britain where Christianity has very deep and profound roots. Can**

**you say that there is any specific and unique British and Irish iconography tradition? How can you characterise it?**

As already mentioned, the use of iconography stopped with the Renaissance and the West's iconographic tradition disappeared. The style of iconography in pre-Renaissance Europe was mainly Byzantine and Romanesque, as exemplified in the many surviving frescoes in Romanesque churches in France, Spain or England. Pockets of Celtic influence had been present in England and Ireland as long ago as the 8th century, with an artistic expression unlike any other, as in the book of Kells or Lindisfarne gospels. But these had long disappeared by the time of the Renaissance.

**- Do you or maybe your colleagues have students who are interested in particular British iconography?**

I do know people who are interested in reviving the English Romanesque style. But I don't think the mere copying of old works really constitutes a revival as such.

**- Why do we see so many Byzantine and Russian icons in Anglican churches? I always thought that British Christians perceive the Orthodox tradition as an exotic one.**

Icons are indeed making a slow come back to the Anglican and Catholic

churches in England. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, is a known iconophile and has written books on icons. The Prince of Wales is also very interested in iconography and all things Orthodox. In 2006 and 2007, he initiated a summer school in iconography at the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi in Mount Athos, which

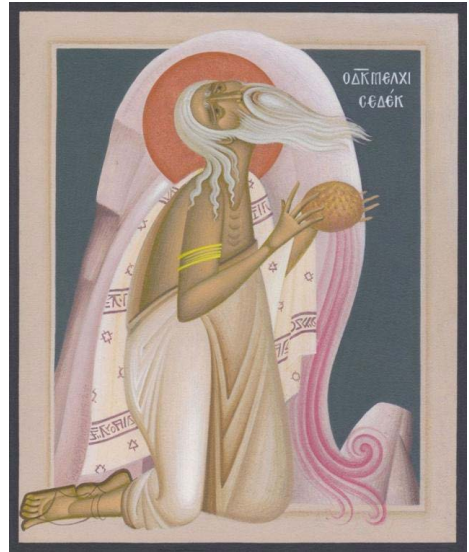


*Archangel Michael by Dr Rene, 2015  
Source - firstimageicons.com*

I had the privilege to attend on both occasions. The course tutor was a master from the nearby monastery of Xenophontos, with many years of experience and knowledge. It was a wonderful and invaluable experience for me to be in this very important centre of the Orthodox Byzantine tradition.

**- You are also a member of the British Association of Iconographers which holds a number of courses of icon painting in the UK. Are they popular? Who are the students and teachers?**

I was made a honorary patron of the British Association of



*Melchizedek by Fikos*  
Source - [sacredspacegallery.com](http://sacredspacegallery.com)



*Archangel's face. Detail from Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace. 2014*  
Source - [sacredspacegallery.com](http://sacredspacegallery.com)

Iconographers many years ago, but am not an active member. It was started by a few interested amateurs some years ago, but the standard is slowly rising, as more professional and competent people join the association.

**- Why do you think icons are still important for Christianity?**

Icons are at the centre of the Christian faith, because they reveal the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word. For this reason, Christianity's most sacred art is based on the human figure, as the face of God the Logos is the face of mankind. This is irrefutable and a timeless truth, hence iconography is the art of eternity.

***By Julia Pliauksta***

## *Cathedral Newsletter 30 years ago*

**No 196, April 1987**

### **METROPOLITAN ANTHONY HAS SENT THIS COMMUNICATION:**

Following a decision taken by the Parish Council after a substantial discussion of the question, Metropolitan Anthony has celebrated a Sunday Liturgy in February, and one in March, with an addition of English, thus making these Liturgies bilingual. This will continue once a month on the fourth Sunday (unless announced otherwise) on an experimental basis, in order to allow everyone to judge for themselves on the merits of the venture and its usefulness to the community. These Sundays will also be the time when instruction is given to the children after the Liturgy.

Some time also has to be given to careful consideration of the discussion on language which took place recently at the Annual General Meeting of the Parish.

The Newsletter will report on this important meeting in the next issue.

### **YOUTH DISCUSS FAITH**

Two groups have been formed - one in London and one in Bristol - including leaders in the Summer Camps and other interested young people, to search for the meaning of faith. A member of the Western group has sent us the following account which we publish below. We also hope to receive a report from the London circle; the latter meets at present with Metropolitan Anthony.

“The first West Country youth meeting took place under the guidance of Fr. Nicholas in St. George’s House in Bristol on Saturday, 7th February. There were about 15 young people from Bristol, Devon and South Wales.

“The meeting began at 10.30 and went on until lunchtime; the discussion then continued into the early afternoon, and most of those present stayed on until vespers in the evening.

“We began by saying a prayer. The discussion that followed Fr. Nicholas’s introduction soon became lively, revealing and stimulating. For the first part of the meeting we talked about those moments in our lives when we come face to face with what we really are. Such moments were compared to how we might feel at 3 in the morning, alone, in a dark bed-

room, for example, when one contemplates the vastness of space and is struck by one's apparent smallness and insignificance, or when faced with the beauty of nature, when we sense the ugly evil within us.

“The main part of the discussion centred on the points raised in the articles on doubts, sent in by young people to our Youth Journal (coming out shortly), in particular the question of life after death or rather, to what degree is our earthly life ‘life’ in the fullest meaning of that word. The answer arrived at, as I understood it, was that on this earth, it is only due to the fact that God is constantly saving us that we live at all, it is as if we were all given a spiritual life-jacket that keeps us from drowning. Also discussed was the inevitability of a measure of compromise between our Christian values and those of the world in which we live.

“When trying to remember what was said in detail at some meeting we usually forget. What does remain clearly - as on this occasion - is the atmosphere of the meeting; the feeling of joy, an increased thirst for more of the same, the feeling of having shared in some great mystery, of having glimpsed something very precious and real. And most importantly, when leaving, you take this feeling with you, as if it were a small bright flame which never diminishes and helps you to see more clearly in our dark world.

“It is important to continue such meetings, since it is then that these various flames are brought together, where they combine to produce a much brighter light, so together we can see, for a while at least, far more than if we were on our own.”

**Thomas Scorer**

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E-mail: [londonsobornylstok@gmail.com](mailto:londonsobornylstok@gmail.com)

We welcome your stories of finding faith, conversion, pilgrimages etc. If you would like to leave feedback or contribute content to the Newsletter, please contact us at the above address. We are always happy to hear from our readers.

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