

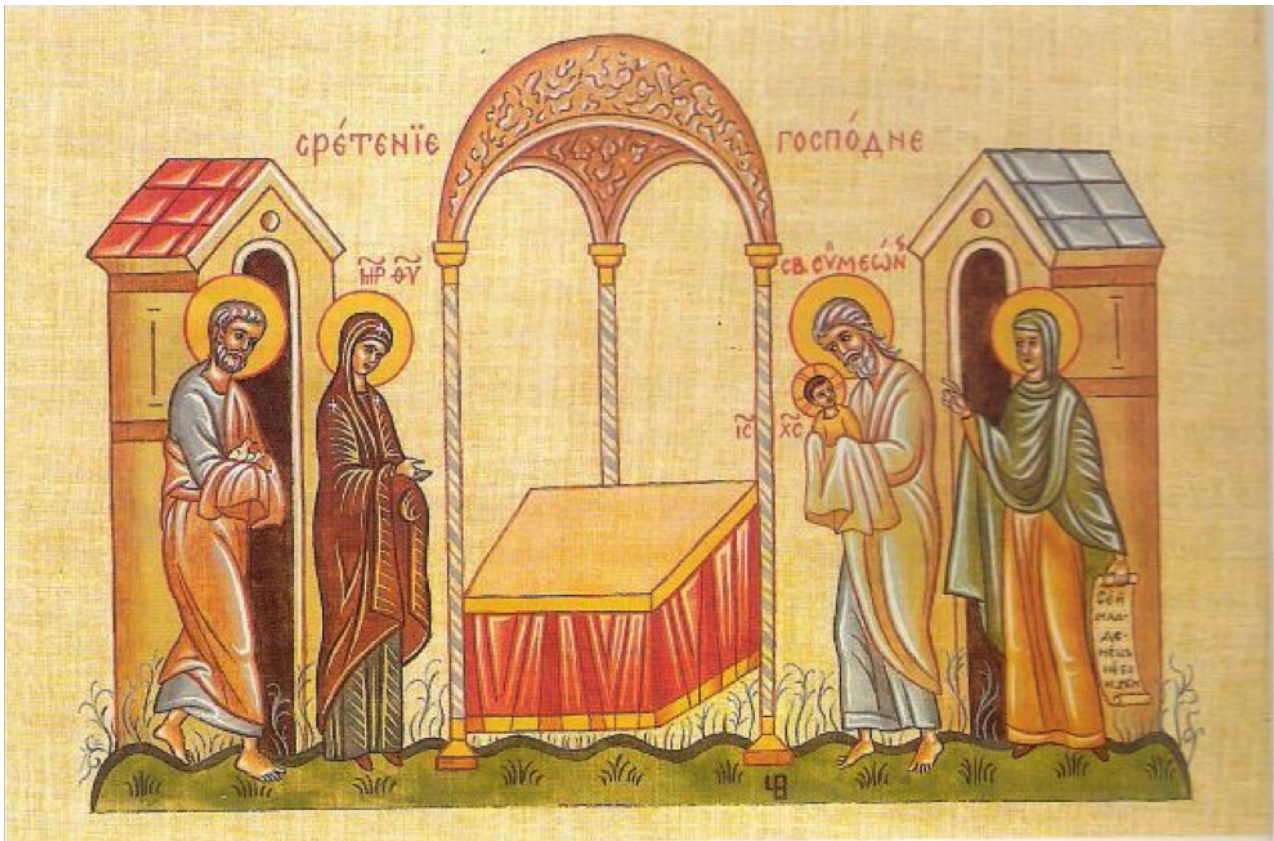
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
DIOCESE OF SOUROZH

# CATHEDRAL OF THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

67 ENNISMORE GARDENS, LONDON SW7 1NH



## CATHEDRAL NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2016



### THE MEETING OF THE LORD IN THE TEMPLE

2 / 15 FEBRUARY

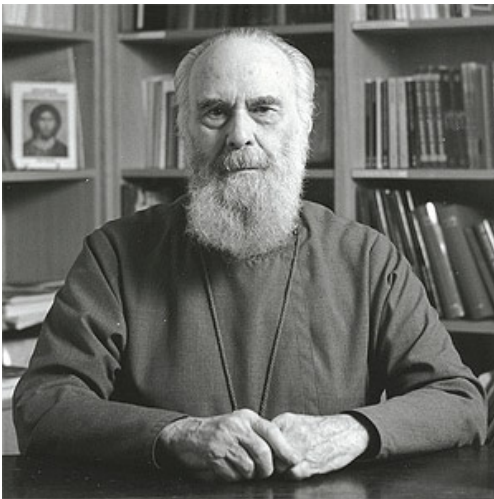
#### Troparion, Tone 1

Hail, O Mother of God, Virgin full of grace! For from thee has shone forth the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, giving light to those who sat in darkness. Be glad also, thou righteous elder, for thou hast received in thine arms the Deliverer of our souls, Who bestows upon us resurrection.

#### Kontakion, Tone 1

Thou Who hast sanctified by Thy birth a virgin womb and fittingly blessed the hands of Simeon, Thou art come, O Christ our God, and on this day hast saved us. Give peace to Thy commonwealth in time of battle and strengthen the Orthodox people whom Thou hast loved, O Thou Who alone lovest mankind.

## SERMON ON THE PARABLE OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE



Metropolitan Anthony  
of Sourozh

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. How short, and how well known today's parable, and yet, how intense its message, how challenging...

Intense it is in its very words: two men come into the church of God, into a sacred realm which in a world that is lost to Him, belongs to Him unreservedly: into His Divine Realm. And one of the men walks boldly into it, takes a stand before God; the other one comes, and doesn't even dare cross the threshold: he is a sinner, and the Realm is holy, like the space around the Burning Bush in the desert which Moses could not enter without having unshod his feet, otherwise than in adoration and the fear of God.

And how different the words spoken! Apparently the Pharisee praises God, he gives Him glory - but for what? Because He has made a man like him, a man so holy, so worthy of Him, of God; a man who not only keeps all the commandments of the Law, but goes beyond of what God Himself has commanded, and can expect of man. Indeed, he stands before God praising Him, that he, the Pharisee, is so wonderful that he is God's own glory, the shining, the revelation of God's holiness...

The Publican does not dare enter into the holy Realm of God.

And the parable is clear: the man who came and stood broken-hearted, ashamed of himself, knowing that he is unworthy of entering this sacred space, goes back home forgiven, loved, indeed: accompanied by God Himself Who came into the world to save sinners and Who stands by everyone who needs Him, who recognises his need, or not, unto salvation.

The Pharisee goes home, but he goes home less forgiven; his relationship with God is not the same; he is at the centre, God is peripheral to him; he is at the heart of things, God is subservient to him. It does not mean that what he did was worthless; it simply means that as far as he is concerned, it has born no fruit of holiness in himself. The deeds were good, but they were spoiled, poisoned by pride, by self-assertion; the beauty of what he did was totally marred because it was addressed neither to God nor to his neighbour; it was turned in on himself. And we are told that this pride has despoiled this man, has taken away from him the fruits of his good works, the fruit of his outward faithfulness to the law of God; that only humility could have given him and his action full meaning; that only humility could have made his actions into life, into the waters of life gushing into eternity.

But then, the question stands before us: how can we learn anything about humility if that is the absolute condition to be not like the barren fig tree, but fruitful, to be a rich harvest from which people can be fed.

I do not know that we can move from pride and vanity into humility in a single step

unless something so tragic happens to us that we see ourselves, we discover ourselves completely bereft of everything that supported our sinful, destructive, barren condition. But there is one thing which we can do: however much we think that we are possessed of all sorts gifts of heart and mind, of body and soul, however fruitful our action may be, we can remember the words of Saint Paul: 'O, man! What have you got which was not given you?' (1 Cor. 4:7). And indeed, he echoes at this point what Christ said in the first Beatitude, the Beatitude that opens the door to all the other Beatitudes, the Beatitude which is the beginning of understanding: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit...' - blessed are those who know, not only with their intellect - but at least with their intellect! - that they are nothing, and they possess nothing which is not a gift of God.

We were called into being out of naught, without our participation: our very existence is a gift! We were given life which we could not create, called out of ourselves. We have been given the knowledge of the existence of God, and indeed, a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God - all that is gift! And then, all that we are is a gift of God: our body, our heart, our mind, our soul - what power have we got over them when God does no longer sustain them? The greatest intelligence can of a sudden be swallowed into darkness by a stroke; there are moments when we are confronted with a need that requires all our sympathy, all our love - and we discover that our hearts are of stone and of ice. We want to do good - and we cannot; and Saint Paul knew it already when he said: 'The good which I love, I don't do, and the wrong which I hate I do continuously' (Rom. 7:15) ... And our body depends on so many things!

And what of our relationships, of the friendship which is given us, the love which sustains us, the comradeship - everything that we are and which we possess is a gift: what is the next move: isn't it gratitude? Can't we turn to God not as a Pharisee, priding ourselves of what we are and forgetting that all that is his, but turning to God and saying: 'O, God! All that is a gift from You! All that beauty, intelligence, a sensitive heart, all the circumstances of life are a gift!' Indeed, all those circumstances, even those which frighten us, are a gift because God says to us: 'I trust you enough to send you into the darkness to bring light! I send you into corruption to be the salt that stops corruption! I send you where there is no hope to bring hope, where there is no joy to bring joy, no love to bring love...', and one could go on, on, on, seeing that when we are sent into the darkness it is to be God's presence and God's life, and that means that He trusts us - He trusts us, He believes in us, He hopes for us everything: isn't that enough to be grateful?

But gratitude is not just a cold word of thanks; gratitude means that we wish to make Him see that all that was not given in vain, that He did not become man, live, die in vain; gratitude means a life that could give joy to God: this is a challenge of this particular parable.

Yes, the ideal would be for us to be humble - but what is humility? Who of us knows, and if someone knows, who can communicate it to everyone who doesn't know? But gratitude we all know; we know small ways, and small aspects of it! Let us reflect on it, and let us in an act of gratitude recognise that we have no right to be in God's own realm - and He lets us in! We have no right to commune to Him either in prayer, or in

sacrament - and He calls us to commune with Him! We have no right to be His children, to be brothers and sisters of Christ, to be the dwelling place of the Spirit - and He grants it all in an act of love!

Let each of us reflect and ask himself: in what way can he or she be so grateful in such a way that God could rejoice that He has not given in vain, been in vain, lived and died in vain, that we have received the message. And if we grow in true depth of gratitude, at the depth of gratitude we will fall down, adore the Lord, and learn what humility is - not abasement, but adoration, the awareness that He is all we possess, all that we are, and that we are open to Him like the earth, the rich earth that is open to the plough, to the sowing, to the seed, to the sunshine, to the rain, to everything in order to bring fruit. Amen!

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## ❖ NOTES ON THE CHURCH CALENDAR ❖ FOR FEBRUARY

### THE MEETING OF THE LORD IN THE TEMPLE



On Monday, 15th February we celebrate **the Great Feast of the Meeting of the Lord**. This commemorates the visit of the 40 day old Christ-child to the Temple in Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord and, in accordance with the stipulation of the Law that every first-born male child belongs to God, to be 'redeemed' by the offering of a sacrifice, "*a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons*" (Lev. 12:8). We read in the Gospel (Lk 2: 22- 40) how the Child with His mother and St Joseph were met in the Temple by the elder Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. Taking the child in his arms, he said, "*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes*

*have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.*" This Song of Simeon is read or sung every day at Vespers. Simeon also spoke to the Mother of God about the 'sword that would pierce her heart', foretelling the sacrifice of her Son on the Cross. In general, this feast, which completes the 40 day festive period that follows Christmas, speaks of the fulfilling of the Law of the Old Testament and the beginning of the time of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

Sunday, February 21st is **the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee**. It marks the time of preparation for the Great Fast (Lent) which will continue over the next three weeks until Forgiveness Sunday (March 13th). Fr Alexander Schmemmann in his classic book 'Great Lent' writes: 'On the eve of this day, on Saturday at Vespers, the liturgical book of the Lenten season-- the Triodion-- makes its first appearance and texts from it are added to the usual hymns and prayers of the weekly resurrection service. They develop the next major aspect of repentance: humility.

The Gospel lesson (Lk. 18:10-14) pictures a man who is always pleased with himself



and who thinks that he complies with all the requirements of religion. He is self-assured and proud of himself. In reality, however, he has falsified the meaning of religion. He has reduced it to external observations and he measures his piety by the amount of money he contributes to the temple. As for the Publican, he humbles himself and his humility justifies him before God. If there is a moral quality almost completely disregarded and even denied today, it is indeed humility. The culture in which we live constantly instils in us the sense of pride, of self-glorification, and of self-righteousness. It is built on the assumption that man can achieve anything by himself and it even pictures God

as the one who all the time “gives credit” for man’s achievements and good deeds. Humility-- be it individual or corporate, ethnic or national-- is viewed as a sign of weakness, as something unbecoming a real man. Even our churches-- are they not imbued with that same spirit as the Pharisee? Do we not want our every contribution, every “good deed,” all that we do “for the Church” to be acknowledged, praised, publicized?

The Lenten season begins then by a quest, a prayer for humility which is the beginning of true repentance. For repentance, above everything else, is a return to the genuine order of things, the restoration of the right vision. It is, therefore, rooted in humility, and humility-- the divine and beautiful humility-- is its fruit and end. “Let us avoid the high-flown speech of the Pharisee,” says the Kontakion of this day, “and learn the majesty of the Publican’s humble words...” We are at the gates of repentance and at the most solemn moment of the Sunday vigil; After the Resurrection and the appearance of Christ have been announced-- “having beheld the Resurrection....”-- we sing for the first time the troparia which will accompany us throughout the entire Lent:

*Open to me the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life,  
For my spirit rises early to pray towards Thy holy temple.  
Bearing the temple of my body all defiled;  
But in Thy compassion, cleanse me by Thy merciful loving kindness.  
Lead me on the paths of salvation, O Mother of God,  
For I have defiled my soul with shameful sins,  
and have wasted my life in sloth.  
But by thine intercessions, deliver me from all impurity.  
When I think of the many evil things I have done, wretch that I am,  
I tremble at the fearful day of judgement.  
But trusting in Thy loving kindness, like David I cry to Thee:  
Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.'*

**CONGRATULATIONS TO A NEWLY ORDAINED DEACON!**



On January 3rd, 2016, at the Divine Liturgy Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh ordained to the diaconate Anatoly Vikhrov from the Parish of the Meeting of the Lord in Bradford. Following the Liturgy Vladyka addressed the newly-ordained deacon, wishing God's blessing on his future service in the bosom of Mother Church. Deacon Anatoly will be serving in the Church of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary in Manchester and in other parishes in the North of England.

**THE CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP VISITED THE PARISH OF ALL SAINTS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND IN BIRMINGHAM**



Following the Nativity service the Church of All Saints of Britain and Ireland in Birmingham was visited by Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham who congratulated the parish on the Nativity of Christ. As an expression of gratitude, the parish presented Archbishop Bernard with an Icon of All Saints of Britain and Ireland and thanked the Brethren of the Birmingham Oratory for their hospitality and support. Fathers Anton and Andrew of the Oratory were present together with Archbishop Bernard.

❖ **NEWS OF THE CATHEDRAL** ❖

**MARIA VERETENINA PERFORMS AT THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT IN THE DORMITION CATHEDRAL**

Following the Great Vespers on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ the parishioners and guests of the Dormition Cathedral were invited to the concert given by Maria Veretenina, the international award winner opera singer (soprano).

The concert took place with the blessing of Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh. It became a wonderful present of the Diocese to those who admire music and marked the beginning of the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Britain and Ireland that will continue during the whole of 2016.

The concert programme was very varied and included pieces by Russian and international composers such as Mozart, Handel, Pavel Chesnokov, Tchaikovsky, and even of Hier-



omonk Roman, whose songs are admired by many believers. It is not an overstatement to say that the audience was amazed by the singer's voice and musical skill. We would like to express our gratitude to the hosts of the event, to Maria Veretenina, and to the accompanist Larisa Sharapova and to wish them more encounters with the parishioners of the Dormition Cathedral.

### **30TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARCHBISHOP ELISEY'S PRIESTLY ORDINATION**

On Jan. 18th, 2016, after the Divine Liturgy of the Eve of Theophany the clergy and parishioners of the Cathedral congratulated Archbishop Elisey on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, addressing him with warm and sincere good wishes and thanks for his labours for the good of the Diocese of Sourozh. Vladyka thanked everyone for their greetings and asked the parishioners to pray for him.

### **CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCE**



On the 10th of January 2016, with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh, a children's Christmas celebration took place in the Cathedral of the Dormition. Pupils of the parish school performed a stage play 'Scarlet Flower' based on the story by Sergey Aksakov.

In the course of the play the characters went through trials and tribulations of wealth

and envy. The most important Christian values that we should learn in the family such as love for parents and one's neighbours, sincere penitence and ability to forgive with the whole heart and soul helped the characters to overcome the challenges. The young artists managed to demonstrate it really well and the play was warmly received by the audience.

Following the performance, Archbishop Elisey congratulated everybody on the occasion of Christmas and gave his archpastoral blessing for the further development of the London parish school's creative activities. And, of course it would be quite difficult to imagine a childrens' feast without sweets! Vladyka personally presented each child who came to celebrate the Nativity of Christ with a gift.

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### **A PILGRIMAGE TO BARI TO THE RELICS OF ST NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER**

From time immemorial Orthodox believers from Russia have aspired to make the pilgrimage to Bari in order to pay homage to the holy relics of St Nicholas the Wonderworker. In response to this, in the early 20th century Emperor Nicholas II ordered the acquisition of a plot of land in Bari where he commissioned an Orthodox church and a pilgrims' hostel to be built. This architectural ensemble and its magnificent gar-

dens were designed by the renowned architect A. Schusev, (who also designed the Martha and Mary Convent in Moscow). The property (a “metochion”) now belongs to the Moscow Patriarchate and it has a rather unusual history. After 1917 the flow of pilgrims from Soviet Russia came to an end and ownership of the site subsequently passed into the hands of the Italian authorities. In the 1930’s the city was controlled by Mussolini and the fascists, then came the war. But the metochion, with its Church of St Nicholas, remained unharmed and some years ago resumed its original function and again started serving Orthodox pilgrims. Clearly, this only came about following a lot of effort and the active involvement of a great many people, as well as their devout supplications to St Nicholas the Wonderworker. The website bargrad.com gives a good impression of the metochion and the magnificent Basilica of St Nicholas, where his holy relics are kept, as well as of the city of Bari, which is, of course, worth visiting to strengthen one’s faith.



A pilgrimage to the holy relics of St Nicholas the Wonderworker in Bari on the occasion of his feast day took place from 17th -19th December, 2015. The main group of 10 pilgrims, led by Archpriest Joseph Skinner, was made up of parishioners of our cathedral who serve the church community in various ways according to their abilities, devoting much time and effort to their work.



After being accommodated in the hotel our group was served a dinner that consisted of seafood due to the ongoing Nativity fast. The pilgrims from London were greeted with true Italian hospitality. To our surprise, Italy gets quite frosty at night, but during the day it is sparkling with the southern sun, therefore you might find it useful to have both sunglasses and gloves with you. You might need some spare money in case you would like to purchase some icons and myrrh (‘manna’) from the relics of St Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Early the next morning there was an opportunity to visit the basilica, to pray quietly in the crypt and venerate the tomb of the saint before the crowds arrived. This was followed by an excursion to the town of Alberobello, where the pilgrims were able to venerate relics of Ss Cosmas and Damian. Fr Joseph celebrated a moleben to the saints in which a large number of clergy and pilgrims from the main pilgrimage from Russia also participated. They were happy to meet the representatives of the Sourozh diocese and to join in prayer with us. Some of the pilgrims seemed to be surprised that a priest who is not ethnically Russian was celebrating a moleben for Russian believers, and we were proud of our Fr Joseph.

In the evening, the Vigil was served in chapel of St Spiridon at the Russian podvo-rye and on the day of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Basilica of



St Nicholas. The services were headed by His Eminence, Metropolitan Mefodiy of Perm and Kungursk, who, by the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch, was leading the official pilgrimage from Russia. The Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by the Honoured Artist of Russia, Alexei Puzakov, sang the services splendidly. After the Liturgy a short moleben was celebrated and all who wished were able to descend in small groups to the crypt where the tomb is located and venerate the relics of the saint. Altogether there were about 400 Orthodox pilgrims who had travelled from different cities and countries. Everything was very smoothly organised.

The pilgrimage ended with a festive lunch at the hotel. The distinguished guests included the head of the provincial administration and former Mayor of Bari and the prior of the monastery which serves the basilica, Father Ciro Capotosto. The good relations between the local Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church were very evident. Father Joseph noted: 'Nobody comes back the same from this pilgrimage' and it was truly a very useful experience for all of us. Also, we are hoping that our prayers were heard by St Nicholas the Wonderworker.

*By Archpriest Joseph Skinner, Anastasia Zagudalova, Ekaterina Smith*

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## ❖ THE RUSSIAN CHURCH IN LONDON ❖

### A Brief History

#### Part I



The southern entrance to Exchange Court is through the arch at 419A Strand

In a few years' time the parish of the Russian Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God in London will celebrate its 300th anniversary. Since 1716 without interruption the Bloodless Sacrifice has been offered in the capital of Britain - a country where the spreading of the Gospel was begun by Apostle Aristobulos, one of the seventy, and where in a thousand years - before the falling away of the West in the 11th century - the Church of Christ has glorified the lives and struggles of over two hundred holy martyrs, bishops, venerable monks, right-believing kings and passion-bearers. Russians began to arrive in England at the start of the 18th century. Tsar Peter the Great, who has spent three and a half months in London in the beginning of 1698 perfecting his shipbuilding skills, began to send young noblemen and commoners to England to study seamanship. By the middle of 1710s there were dozens of Russian naval officers and sailors studying in England. They went without Holy Communion for several years, as there was no Orthodox church in Britain at the time.

In 1712 Metropolitan Arsenius of Thebais with a group of Greek clerics from the Patriarchate of Alexandria came to London seeking help for his struggling Church. Among them was deputy abbot of the Monastery of St Sabbas in Alexandria, Archimandrite Gennadius (Cypriot by birth), and his nephew, reader Bartholomew Cassano. Metropolitan Arsenius rented a house in London and set up a chapel, where he

celebrated regularly. So the Russian Orthodox faithful were able to go for Confession (through an interpreter) and receive Holy Communion. The congregation was mostly Greeks living in London or visitors; the English, interested in Orthodoxy, came too. After three years the representatives of the Patriarch of Alexandria set sail for Holland.

At that time there was already a permanent Russian Mission (embassy) in London. The duties of the secretary to the Mission Yakov Sinyavich included the welfare of young Russians studying in England. In October 1716 Sinyavich sent a plea to Metropolitan Arsenius to send Archimandrite Gennadius back to London to set up an Orthodox church attached to the Russian Mission. Shortly afterwards Fr Gennadius arrived with his nephew. Sinyavich rented a house in Exchange Court, an alley off Strand. The



Exchange Court looking North



The oldest building in Exchange Court

Russian Embassy Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God was created out of the large drawing-room. Archimandrite Gennadius and Bartholomew Cassano settled the upper floors.

A meeting with John Robinson, the Bishop of London, was arranged to introduce Archimandrite Gennadius as Rector of the Russian Embassy church. Sinyavich explained that the spiritual needs of the Russian subjects, serving on British ships on Tsar Peter's orders, required care. Having stated that 'the Russian Tsar has graciously consented that the English Protestants keep their church in his Realm', he received from Bishop Robinson a permission to celebrate Orthodox services in London, provided that 'services are held in private'. Robinson required that 'the

English people should not be allowed in church', and the singing should be quiet 'lest common crowds cause any harm'.

*By Michael Sarni*

## A RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHAPLAIN IN AN ENGLISH PRISON

*'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world...for I was in prison and you came to visit me.'* (Matthew 25:34-36)

Amongst our diocesan clergy, there are people who bring the Word of God to those who broke the law and were imprisoned. Father Maxim Nikolsky shares with us his experiences of being a prison chaplain, and gives us an account of his meetings with prisoners, among whom there was a man who was sentenced to 15 years in prison and yet was too initially too busy to talk with him. Fr Maxim also talked to Cathedral Newsletter about how prisoners can serve as missionaries to their fellow inmates.

*- Father Maxim, what exactly does a prison chaplain do?*

- As an Orthodox chaplain, I tend to visit the Orthodox prisoners in a particular prison every week. Initially, it was actually the prisoners who invited me, or rather one of them, to be precise. That was over ten years ago. I was invited to visit a young man who was imprisoned in HMP Wormwood Scrubs in London and had requested a priest. He was very lonely so we had a conversation and I do hope that it helped him a bit.

Here in Britain, the law requires the prison authorities to invite a clergyman of any religious faith if a prisoner asks for it, and so due to this young man's request I started to visit the prison.

Initially, there were quite a few Russian-speaking inmates, about thirty. There was a constant stream of people: sometimes inmates were transferred to other prisons, and sometimes new Russian-speaking prisoners were admitted, but the overall number has always been around thirty. The majority of the prisoners never went to church, some of them had occasionally visited church, perhaps whilst accompanying their grandmothers in Russia, Ukraine or Romania, but they certainly hadn't attended church services here in England.

*-Please tell us more about your meetings with the inmates.*

- Apart from celebrating the divine services, I also serve molebens and, of course, converse with the inmates. I visit each of them individually. I started to organise group meetings for the inmates which I found very helpful, and so now I ensure these meetings occur more frequently. During the meetings we pray together, many of the inmates are willing to confess, and then we talk. To begin with, we discuss a certain topic and then I endeavour to answer their questions.

The prisoners are from different backgrounds: there are not that many Russian-speakers in Wormwood. There are many more of them in other prisons but here the majority of the Orthodox prisoners are Romanians. I must admit that all of them are decent young people. Unfortunately, sometimes they are mindless; many are under the influence of some wretched people. Some are sentenced for robbery, some for immigration breaches, and others for drunken fights. These are the prevailing offences. Sadly, some of them have committed major crimes, even murders. It is necessary to dedicate some time to all of them.

*- Do the inmates communicate with the chaplain with ease?*

- I must say that during all these years I have had only one case when a person who had been sentenced for fifteen years initially refused to talk to me. I came to visit him and he said that he had no time to speak with me today. When I asked how someone who has to spend so many years in a prison cell can have no time, his reply was that he had to perform physical exercises right now. He was doing push-ups in his cell. I left him, but returned another day, and eventually we became friends.

The topics of our conversations are various. Some of the prisoners regret committing



Archpriest  
Maxim Nikolsky

a crime; others do not feel guilty. Sometimes it happens that people get sentenced because the court made a mistake, especially if they have no knowledge of the English language. They did not understand what they were doing, or they were misunderstood. Now, they realise that they have breached the law and are paying for the consequences, but of course they want to get released.

*- Have there been any cases when a person has turned to God and their life was transformed?*

-Yes, there are some cases like that. There was a case in a prison that is far away from London involving a young Russian man, in his thirties or forties. I visited him a couple of times, and then he asked me if I could visit his fellow inmate, an Englishman, who wanted to meet me. It turned out that the Russian prisoner had been talking to him, discussing faith, the Church and Orthodoxy; and the Englishman had decided that this was exactly what he was looking for. I came and talked to him, and he said 'I want to get baptised'. Then I visited once again to baptise him. It was the first time in my experience when someone non-Orthodox found out about the Orthodox faith from somebody else and converted to Orthodoxy himself. This new convert had not spoken to his wife for a couple of years, however, the day after he got baptised she phoned him, willing to talk. They met very soon afterwards.

*-So it was a miracle?*

-Yes, this was a true miracle. Also, I remember another young man in Wormwood. He was all covered in tattoos, which he also did for his fellow inmates. This is prohibited by the prison rules. Once, an officer told him that if he stopped tattooing other prisoners, he would be awarded certain privileges. However, the guy honestly replied that this was something that he couldn't promise. Hence, he wasn't granted any privileges. Later on, he decided to be baptised.

*- Is it easy to be baptised while being imprisoned?*

- In order to be baptised, you need special permission from the prison authorities. Some of the inmates want to get a church marriage in prison, and this is more difficult since the majority of Orthodox prisoners do not possess British nationality and need special documents to allow them to get married. Some of them receive visits from their girlfriends and fiancées. So, despite some attempts to hold a church marriage within the prison, I haven't yet had a chance to perform this ceremony.

*- As Orthodox Christians, what can we do in order to help the prisoners?*

- One can become a volunteer, visit a prison and talk with the inmates – there is a real need for that. It is a curious thing that a chaplain gets issued with keys. I hold them, opening and closing many doors. During each visit I tend to walk several kilometres. However, volunteers are not allowed to walk by themselves; they need to be accompanied. I have one volunteer who accompanies me; he is from Moldova and speaks Romanian. Occasionally, he helps me by interpreting my words into Romanian. So yes, volunteers are much needed.

- Thank you very much for taking the time to explain such interesting and important insights.

*Interviewed by Julia Pliauksta*

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## ❖ THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD ❖

### THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days thou shalt labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God”*

Here the Lord God directs us to labour during six days according to our vocation and the seventh day of the week to dedicate to Him, either in rest or in good activities. Activities that are pleasing to Him include concern about saving one’s soul, prayer in church and at home, study of the word of God, enlightenment of mind and heart with meditation on spiritual subjects, religious discussions, helping the needy, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, giving succour to the grieving and other similar acts of mercy.

During Old Testament times the Sabbath (“Shabbash” in ancient Hebrew means “rest”) was celebrated in remembrance of God’s completion of the world in six “days,” after which God “rested,” blessing and sanctifying the seventh day (Genesis 2:3). Following the captivity in Babylon after 400 B.C., the Jewish scribes reinterpreted the commandment regarding the Sabbath in an overly rigorous way and forbade on that day any activity. The Gospels relate that the scribes accused even the Saviour of transgressing the Sabbath when on that day He cured someone. Correcting their misinterpretation on the fourth commandment, the Lord explained to them that “the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27) i.e., the Sabbath rest was established for the benefit of man and not for his subjugation or deprivation of good works. The weekly estrangement from the usual routines affords man the possibility to gather his thoughts, renew his physical and spiritual strength, and reevaluate his activities in the light of eternity. Labours are necessary for our temporary life, but we should not lose sight of the main goal of our existence - the salvation of our soul. The Christian observation of the seventh day helps us to correct our life journey.

Prior to and during apostolic times, the Sabbath was commemorated by the Jews only. Pagans never heard of it. Many Jews, after becoming Christians, continued to observe their Sabbath day. However, they also started to observe the day after the Sabbath, which then was christened the “Lord’s day” in commemoration of Christ’s resurrection. In practice it turned out that most of the early Christian Jews celebrated two days of the week - the Sabbath as the day of rest, and the Lord’s day (Sunday) - as the day of communal prayer and Communion. In converting pagans to Christianity, the Apostles did not demand from them the observance of the Sabbath (or any other Jewish holiday) but taught them to gather for communal prayer and communion on the Lord’s day. Gradually, as the number of Christians converted from paganism

increased relative to the Christian Jews, the old Sabbath was forgotten, and Sunday became the new Christian Sabbath. Thus the Apostles gave to the fourth commandment a new Christian meaning.

The fourth commandment can be broken in several ways, when, for example, someone works on the day that should be dedicated to God or when one remains idle during the week days, bowing out of his duties. Indeed, the fourth commandment specifically says: "Six days thou shalt labour." This commandment is also broken by those who skip church services and pass the Lord's day in amusement, in carousing and in all kinds of useless undertakings. By doing this, they "rob" their Lord of what belongs to Him.

**By Bishop Alexander (Mileant)**

*This is a shortened version of the article. The full article can be found here: [http://fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/command.htm#\\_Toc513258224](http://fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/command.htm#_Toc513258224) . We will continue discussing the Ten Commandments in future editions of the Cathedral Newsletter.*

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## HOW I BECAME ORTHODOX



I was born and brought up in a working class family in the east end of London. My father and mother had lost their faith due to the First World War when millions of young men were slaughtered. So I was never taken to church. All the same I became curious about religion and obtained a copy of the Bible. I used to read this and pray.

Then when I reached the age of fourteen, I of my own accord went into a local church. There I was treated as an intruder and thrown out. I made further attempts as I grew older, but was always shown the door. It was probably due to the fact that I was not smartly dressed and had a working-class accent.

One day it had been raining and my boots had become wet. When I approached the church a man who was standing at the door said: "You cannot go in the church with those boots on. Go home and clean them. Then you can come to church." I went home and cleaned my boots as requested, but by that time I had decided not to go back.

Time passed and I became a soldier in the Second World War. As a soldier I attended compulsory church parades, but like so many other young men in the armed forces, I resented being made to go to church, especially as no distinction was made between Christians and atheists - all had to go.

My war service brought me in contact with a foreign country and a foreign language. In the course of the war British and American forces invaded Italy. My unit landed in Salerno and I clearly remember hearing for the first time the sound of the Italian language. What a beautiful language, I said, and resolved to try and learn it as best I could.

When the war was over I somehow managed to join the Diplomatic Service and trav-

elled widely, picking up a knowledge of some foreign languages. I was a humble Second Secretary, and was able to make contact with ordinary people. The first language I encountered was German, when I was posted to Berlin. At that time Berlin was divided into east and west sectors. There was however freedom of movement. I became interested in Esperanto and through the use of that language very soon got to know people in the Russian Sector of Berlin and for the first time encountered the Russian language and learned some.

Afterwards I became interested in yoga and went to Calcutta in India and stayed at the Institute of Culture there. A Russian lady named Olga was also staying there. She met an Indian monk and tried to ask him a few questions, but her English was so poor that he did not understand her. He knew me as a friend and came to me with Olga for me to help him understand what she wanted. I did my best to interpret for them and then he said goodbye, leaving Olga alone with me. I told Olga of my interest in languages and my desire to visit Russia. She said: "Come to Moscow and I will show you around."

I went to Moscow and Olga took me to a church. There I was immediately impressed by the beautiful singing of the choir and the piety and fervour of the congregation. I was particularly impressed by a woman who knelt down in front of the icon of the Most Pure Virgin Mary and said her prayers. I did the same and murmured by own prayer. After the service Olga introduced me to the priest, who smiled and talked to me in a very friendly manner. I thought to myself: "This is the kind of church I wish I had found years ago."

Olga took me to other Russian Orthodox churches and I received the same impression. Finally I asked Olga: "If I want to become an Orthodox Christian, could you arrange for my baptism?" Olga's reply was: "I have been hoping you would ask me that question, but I would never have asked you myself". Olga soon arranged with the priest and I was baptised into the Orthodox Church. I returned to England and went to the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Kensington. I showed my baptismal certificate to Metropolitan Anthony, who welcomed me warmly. Since then I have never had any regrets and am still keeping in touch with my Godmother Olga.

*By John Phillips*

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## THE CHRISTIAN UPBRINGING OF A CHILD - A DISCUSSION WITH ARCHPRIEST VADIM ZAKREVSKY (PART 3)

*- Very often Christian parents face a question which comes from parents who do not practice the faith, "Why do you take your child to church? I will not impose on my child in any way, when he grows up, he can decide for himself". What answer can be given to this question? What is your opinion on such a view - when a child grows up, then he can choose.*

- It is a good decision! There are no arguments against that. (Fr Vadim pauses). But what kind of person will he be? What will he grow up to be? Those are the questions.

Let him choose, God be with him. But you are to give him a spiritual start! It is natural that we do not start teaching Buddhism, Judaism or Islam because we are Orthodox and belong to the Orthodox Church. Why should we? Of course, there can be instances when the child grows up and changes his mind. It is sad and it is a problem. I am talking from a priest's point of view. But in fact, it is his choice. I am referring to the case when parents wish their child to become Orthodox. But when a child is not baptised, not raised in the Orthodox faith, if he is not taught the religion, if he does not participate in the Orthodox Mysteries, then he does not have a Guardian Angel, a Patron Saint, he has no prayers for him or prayers of his own. This kind of situation is bad for the child as well as for his parents. Are the hearts of the parents so stone-like, hard and lifeless as to leave the child with nothing of what we have mentioned above? It is terrible and I think that if people pose such questions then no discussion is possible. Of course, it is their choice. We cannot stop them from living that way. We can only show them the right way and explain why it is right. I would like to stress that we need to explain the consequences of their choice: we can be so bold as to say that they are setting up their child to fail.

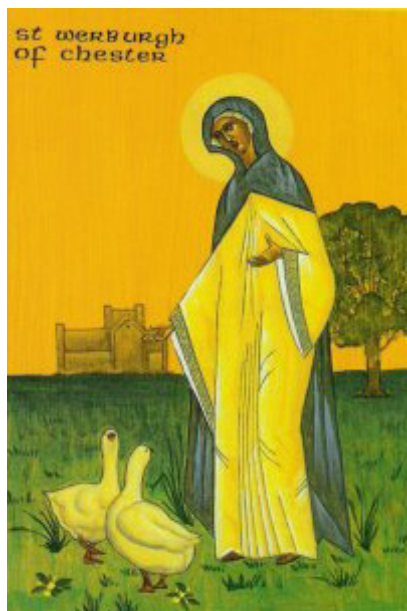
*Prepared by Julia Pliauksta*

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## ❖ BRITISH AND IRISH SAINTS ❖

### VENERABLE WERBURGH OF MERCIA

*Commemorated: 3/16 February*



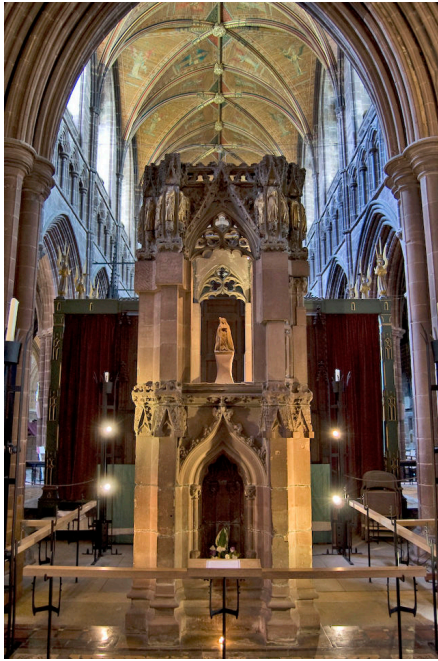
The future saint was born in the mid-seventh century. Her mother was the holy Kentish princess Ermenhild. Ermenhild married the future King Wulfhere of Mercia, who at first was a pagan, but under his wife's influence converted to Christianity. Mercia was the largest early English kingdom and was situated mostly in the central part of England. The birthplace of Werburgh may have been the town of Stone in Staffordshire.

The queen raised her children in piety but Werburgh surpassed them from her childhood. As a child she received instruction from St Chad, the enlightener of Mercia. According to her Life, Werburgh was humble, obedient and meek. Every day she helped her mother in domestic work, spent most of her time in church, and knelt in secret prayer for hours. With great joy she listened to sermons on spiritual life, refused the riches of this world, with all her heart wishing to devote her life to the service of God.

King Wulfhere died in 675 when Werburgh was very young. She was entrusted to the care of her aunt, St Etheldreda, abbess of Ely in Cambridgeshire. Later she moved to the convent of Minster-in-Sheppey in Kent, where she lived with her mother. In these convents Werburgh absorbed the traditions of family and monastic piety and



holiness, and in the future she was destined to return and spread all these practices to Mercia.



St Werburgh's relics are kept in Chester Cathedral

She took the veil and became Abbess of Minster-in-Sheppey and Ely. Werburgh successfully ruled both convents despite her youth. As she was very experienced, her uncle, King Ethelred of Mercia, asked her to take over three convents in Mercia and improve discipline there. These were the communities in Weedon in Northamptonshire, Hanbury in Staffordshire and Threekingham in Lincolnshire. Werburgh was a very able and wise abbess. Her abacy over the sisters was not mere governance, but rather a ministry based on love. Werburgh handed over the souls of nuns to Christ by her word and deed alike.

She attended church services every day, read the Psalter while kneeling for hours and shedding tears; often she stayed in the church long after Matins, praying on her knees or in prostration. The saint never ate more than once a day and used to read the lives of the desert fathers. She was always quick to cure sick children, to give advice

to their parents, to console those suffering, to find necessary words to the young for spiritual life.

Stories of the life of Werburgh abound with examples of her close communication with nature. Since time immemorial Werburgh has been venerated as patroness of geese. Many wild geese spoiled crops in the fields around Weedon. The abbess taught the birds not to do it, and they obeyed her. To this day geese do not damage corn in the fields near Weedon Bec! Once the local steward complained to her about the geese and the abbess told him to lock them in a farmhouse. But the man yielded to a temptation: he caught and ate one goose. The next morning Werburgh called her geese but they did not move. She realized what had happened. Werburgh ordered the steward to bring her the bones of the eaten goose. The saint made a sign with her hand, and miraculously the bones were covered with flesh, skin, feathers and the whole bird was restored to life.

The goose has become the St. Werburgh's emblem. Geese inside a basket were depicted on pilgrims' badges of St. Werburgh that were once distributed at her shrine.

Werburgh worked many miracles. She reposed in Threekingham in c.700, after many years of labours. She predicted the day of her repose beforehand. The uncovering of her relics, which turned out to be incorrupt, occurred with the participation of her brother, King Coenred. Her relics were transferred to Hanbury where they were visited by thousands of pilgrims. When there was danger of conquest by the Danes, they were translated to Chester — the county town of Cheshire. The church where her relics rested in Chester was at first dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, but with time it was rededicated to St Werburgh. Werburgh has been venerated as the patroness of this picturesque former Roman town for 1000 years, and the saint is often called "St

Werburch of Chester". In 975 a monastery in honour of Sts Werburgh and Oswald appeared in Chester.

In 1095, her relics were translated into a new splendid shrine. Werburgh was among several English saints whose relics remained absolutely intact. She healed many sick people, rescued the city from fires and destruction by invaders. She remained one of the most venerated female saints of England. In 1540, Henry VIII dissolved Chester monastery, the relics of Werburgh were destroyed and her shrine desecrated. The former monastery church was rededicated as a cathedral in honour of Christ and the Mother of God.

Late in the nineteenth century, the pieces of the ancient shrine of Werburgh were reassembled and the shrine was restored. Today it is displayed in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral. The street leading to the cathedral is called "St Werburgh's Street," and there is also a Catholic church of St Werburgh in Chester. Today children and young women especially ask for St Werburgh's intercession. At least twelve historic churches are dedicated to her. The places where she laboured bear the memory of her.

**Staffordshire:** The ancient church in Hanbury, which preserves two early crosses, is dedicated to her, as well as the church in Kingsley nearby.

**Derbyshire:** churches in the city of Derby, and in the settlements of Spondon and Blackwell are dedicated to her; Spondon also has a ninth-century cross and a holy well; Blackwell has an early cross as well.

**Northamptonshire:** the village Weedon Bec boasts an ancient church of Sts Peter and Paul: it has a beautiful stained glass retelling Werburgh's life.

**Greater Manchester:** the village Warburton is named after Werburgh; it has two Anglican churches dedicated to Werburgh: the charming "old church" which stands on the site of a priory and the "new church".

**Lincolnshire:** the site of the abbey of Werburgh in Threkingham is marked by an ancient church of St Peter.

**Kent:** there is a peninsula called Hoo, which has the village Hoo St Werburgh. An ancient church there is dedicated to her. In early times there was a monastery there.

**Bristol:** a district of this port city is called St Werburghs.

**West Country:** there are several churches dedicated to Werburgh in this region- her relics once travelled here for the veneration of the faithful. Churches in the villages of Wembury in Devon and Warbstow in Cornwall are dedicated to her.

**Ireland:** an ancient church in Dublin standing in St Werburgh's Street is dedicated to her. There is the holy well of St Werburgh in Swords, county Fingal.

*By Dmitry Lapa*

*The text is mainly based on the article: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/77344.htm>*

## ❖ HOLY PLACES IN LONDON ❖

### ST ALPHEGE CHURCH, GREENWICH

This historic church stands in the centre of Greenwich – a London borough on the bank of the river Thames in the capital’s south-east. The Prime Meridian runs through Greenwich (the Saxon name means “green village”), and Greenwich Mean Time is chosen as the world’s time standard. Greenwich was known as “a sea gate of London”. Greenwich has great spiritual significance: it was here that St Alphege, an Orthodox Archbishop of Canterbury, was martyred on Easter, 19th April, 1012.

Alphege was born in 953. As a young man he joined the monastery in Deerhurst (Gloucestershire) and later lived as a hermit in Somerset. He served as Abbot of Bath and Bishop of Winchester, gaining the love of all for his ascetic life and charity. In 1011, Alphege, who by that time had become Archbishop of Canterbury, was captured by the Danes that laid siege to Canterbury. The pirates demanded a huge ransom for the release of Alphege, but the saint refused to pay any money and forbade others to do it. Alphege preached the Gospel to the Danes for six months, but the furious pagans murdered the Archbishop in Greenwich. He was buried at St Paul’s Cathedral and 11 years later the incorrupt relics were translated to Canterbury. English people loved and venerated Alphege as a martyr and national hero.

The first church on the site of Alphege’s martyrdom appeared soon after his death. The church was rebuilt in the 13th century: it was one of the most beautiful and important churches in the whole of England and Europe. In 1710 the church was damaged during a severe storm, and in the following year a commission for building 50



new churches in and near London was set up – and St Alphege’s was the first. It was rebuilt in 1712-14 to the design of Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736), a pupil of Christopher Wren. For some time St Alphege’s had the largest unsupported ceiling in Europe. Members of the Royal Family regularly attended this church. In 1941 the church was heavily damaged during the Nazi bombing but was completely restored by 1953.

There is a stone slab in front of the sanctuary marking the symbolic grave of Alphege. It has an inscription made by Archbishop Anselm which reads: “He who dies for justice dies for God”. A stained glass image of Alphege can be seen in the church. In 1491 the future King Henry VIII was baptized in this church. Many famous people are buried within St Alphege’s, for example: the great composer of church music Thomas Tallis (1505-85), General James Wolfe (1727-59), architects, writers and actors. The church is usually open during the week between 11 am and 4 pm and on weekends after morning services, but it is recommended to call before making a visit.

*St Alphege Church, Greenwich Church Street, London SE10 9BJ*

*You can reach the church by train (five minutes’ walk from Greenwich mainline station); by Docklands Light Railway (two minutes’ walk from Cutty Sark station); and by buses 129, 177, 180, 188, 199, 286 and 386.*

*By Dmitry Lapa*



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Fr Joseph Skinner will conduct **talks in English on Feb. 9th & 23rd, at 7.30pm** in the Library.

On **Feb. 14th at 2pm** there will be an artistic **meeting with the well-known poet, essayist and photographic artist, Lidia Grorieva**, who has been a parishioner of our cathedral for many years. The programme will include a presentation of her new books and the première of her film 'Jerusalem, my Garden'. Please note that there will be no tea in the Library after the Liturgy, as the room will be being prepared for the meeting.

On **February, 18th** after the evening service **Archpriest George Zavershinky will give a talk "Volunteer service in the church"**. He also will present his new book "The privilege of Solitude. Ageing. Illness. Death. Orthodox point of view".

On **February, 27th** there will be a **bus pilgrimage to Kent "St Augustine the Baptiser of England and the early Saints of the Canterbury area"**. For booking a place and getting information **please contact 0207 5840 096 or e-mail sourozhdiocese@me.com**

The 2016 Calendar and Lectionary of the Diocese of Sourozh is available in the bookshop, price £5.

### **CATHEDRAL NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED WITH THE BLESSING OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP ELISEY OF SOUROZH**

Online-version is available via the diocesan website: [www.sourozh.org](http://www.sourozh.org)

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

As you will be aware, the restoration and refurbishment of the Cathedral continues. Any donation, however small, is welcome and will help to maintain and beautify the Cathedral, which is our common spiritual home. You can donate by:

- Cash to the church collection boxes
- Online via the diocesan website [www.sourozh.org](http://www.sourozh.org) (click «Donate»)
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