



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 96 November 2016



St John Chrysostom

‘Golden Mouth’

We all know of St John as the composer of the Divine Liturgy that we celebrate most Sundays, and the magnificent sermon that we hear each year at Pascha, but he also wrote and preached many more wonderful words, hence the surname given to him by the Church. The saint himself was unsure of whether his interpretation of St Paul was correct, and prayed to God to reassure him. One evening, as he was sitting at his desk writing his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, the priest Proclus was sent to summon him to receive a visitor, but each time he approached, there was always a bald-headed man looking over his shoulder, so he didn't interrupt. When he was finally able to speak to St John, and mentioned the man, St John was confused, as he had been alone the whole time. At first, Proclus was unable to say who the man was, but when he saw an ikon of St Paul, he recognised him, and St John realised that this was the response to his prayer – it proved that St Paul himself was guiding him in his interpretation of the Epistles.

To go back a little, John was born at Antioch in about the year 347 into the family of a military commander. His father, Secundus, died soon after the birth of his son. His mother, Anthusa, widowed at twenty years of age, did not seek to remarry but rather devoted all her efforts to the raising of her son in Christian piety. The youth studied under the finest philosophers and rhetoricians. But, scorning the vain disciplines of pagan knowledge, the future hierarch turned himself to the profound study of Holy Scripture and prayerful contemplation. When John's mother died, he embraced monasticism, which he called the “true philosophy.” He gives us a lively description of the bright side of this monastic life. The monks lived in separate cells or huts, but according to a common rule and under the authority of an abbot. They wore coarse garments of camel's hair or goat's hair over their linen tunics. They rose before sunrise, and began the day by singing a hymn of praise and common prayer under the leadership of the abbot. Then they went to their allotted task, some to read, others to write, others to manual labour for the support of the poor. Four hours in each day were devoted to prayer and singing. Their only food was bread and water, except in case of sickness. They slept on straw couches, free from care and anxiety. They held all things in common, and the

words of "mine and thine," which cause innumerable strife in the world, were unknown among the brethren. If one died, he caused no lamentation, but thanksgiving, and was carried to the grave amidst hymns of praise; for he was not dead, but "perfected," and permitted to behold the face of Christ. For them to live was Christ, and to die was gain.

After the death of Nectarius towards the end of the year 397, Chrysostom was chosen, entirely without his own agency and even against his will, to be the archbishop of Constantinople. Chrysostom soon gained by his eloquent sermons the admiration of the people, of the weak Emperor Arcadius, and, at first, even of his wife Eudoxia, with whom he afterwards waged a deadly war. He extended his pastoral care to the Goths who were becoming numerous in Constantinople, had a part of the Bible translated for them, often preached to them himself through an interpreter, and sent missionaries to the Gothic and Scythian tribes on the Danube. He continued to direct by correspondence those missionary operations even during his exile. For a short time he enjoyed the height of power and popularity. But he also made enemies by his denunciations of the vices and follies of the clergy and aristocracy. He emptied the Episcopal palace of its costly plate and furniture and sold it for the benefit of the poor and the hospitals. He introduced his strict ascetic habits and reduced the luxurious household of his predecessors to the strictest simplicity. He devoted his large income to benevolence. He refused invitations to banquets, gave no dinner parties, and ate the simplest fare in his solitary chamber. He denounced unsparingly luxurious habits in eating and dressing, and enjoined upon the rich the duty of almsgiving. Although of a slight build and only five feet tall, he was an outspoken and fearless opponent of injustice. When the empress Eudoxia connived to confiscate the last properties of the widow and children of a disgraced dignitary, the saint rose to their defence. The arrogant empress would not relent, and nursed a grudge against the archpastor. Eudoxia's hatred of the saint blazed forth anew when malefactors told her that the saint apparently had her in mind during his sermon on vain women. A court was convened composed of hierarchs who had been justly condemned by Chrysostom: Theophilus of Alexandria, Bishop Severian of Gabala, who had been banished from the capital because of improprieties, and others. This court of judgment declared St John deposed, and that he be executed for his insult to the empress. The emperor decided on exile instead of execution. An angry crowd gathered at the church, resolved to defend their pastor. In order to avoid a riot, St John submitted to the authorities. That very night there was an earthquake at Constantinople. The terrified Eudoxia urgently requested the emperor to bring the saint back, and promptly sent a letter to the banished pastor, beseeching him to return. But after only two months a new denunciation provoked the wrath of Eudoxia. In March 404, an unjust council was convened, decreeing the exile of St John. Upon his removal from the capital, a fire reduced the church of Hagia Sophia and also the Senate building to ashes. Devastating barbarian incursions soon followed, and Eudoxia died in October 404. Even pagans regarded these events as God's punishment for the unjust judgment against the saint.

In exile, the saint strove all the more to encourage his spiritual children. In numerous letters (245 are preserved) to bishops in Asia, Africa, Europe and particularly to his friends in Constantinople, St John consoled the suffering, guiding and giving support to his followers. In the winter of 406, St John was confined to his bed with sickness, but his enemies were not to be appeased. From the capital came orders to transfer St John to desolate Pityus in Abkhazia on the Black Sea. Worn out by sickness, the saint began his final journey under military escort, travelling for three months in the rain and frost. He never arrived at his place of exile, for his strength failed him at Comana. At the crypt of St Basiliscus (May 22), St John was comforted by a vision of the martyr, who said, "Despair not, brother John! Tomorrow we shall be together." After receiving the Holy Mysteries, the hierarch fell asleep in the Lord on September 14, 407. His last words were, "Glory to God for all things!"

A testimony to the true greatness of this saint is from his disciple, Adelphius, who was taken to heaven in a vision. When his angelic guide showed him the place where the teachers of the Church praise God, Adelphius became sad, explaining that he didn't understand why his own teacher was not there. He was informed that, while still in the body, he could not see St John, because he stands before God's Throne with the Cherubim and Seraphim.

Deliverance Through the Kazan Ikon



On 4 November, Orthodox believers commemorate the Kazan Ikon of the Most Holy Mother of God, one of the most venerated ikons in Russia. The ikon was discovered in the town of Kazan 25 years after Tsar Ivan the Terrible conquered the hostile Tartar state of Kazan. Christianity was gradually taking root in the Islamic town of Kazan and, probably to consolidate the Orthodox faith, God revealed there a miracle-working ikon of the Mother of God. Prior to 1612, the Kazan Ikon was a locally venerated ikon, and a feast in its honour was established on the day it revealed itself, 21 July. In the early 17th Century, Russia went through the *Smuta*, the Time of Troubles. Secular state power was very weak. As a result, Polish invaders seized Moscow. St Germogen, the Patriarch of Moscow and all the Russias, who was then in prison, appealed to the nation. He called for unity in the struggle against the invaders. He also gave instructions that people should bring the Kazan Ikon to Moscow. On the eve of the decisive battle, the clergy served a molieben before the wonder-working ikon. After fierce battles, the Russian militia drove the Polish invaders out of the capital. To mark the event, Tsar Mikhail Romanov established a second holiday in the honour of the Kazan Ikon on 4 November. Later, the Kazan Cathedral was built on Red Square to house the ikon. Destroyed in Soviet times, the cathedral was rebuilt in the 1990s. From that time on, the Kazan Ikon saved Russia more than once. For instance, in 1941, during the Second World War against Nazi Germany, the Virgin appeared to Metropolitan Ilya of the Antiochian Church, who prayed wholeheartedly for Russia. She instructed him to tell the Russians that they should carry the Kazan Ikon in a religious procession around the besieged city of Leningrad (now St Petersburg). Then, the Virgin said, they should serve a molieben before the ikon in Moscow. The Virgin said that the ikon should stay with the Russian troops in Stalingrad, and later move with them to the Russian border. Leningrad didn't surrender. Miraculously, Moscow was also saved. During the Battle of Stalingrad, the ikon was with the Russian army on the right bank of the Volga, and the Nazi troops couldn't cross the river. The Battle of Stalingrad began with a molieben before the Kazan Ikon. It was like in the old times, when in response to earnest prayers, the Virgin instilled fear in enemies and drove them away. Even atheists told stories of the Virgin's help to the Russian troops. During the assault on Königsberg in 1945, the Soviet troops were in a critical situation. Suddenly, the soldiers saw their commander arrive with priests and an ikon. Many made jokes, "Just wait, that'll help us!" The commander silenced the jokers. He ordered everybody to line up and to take off their caps. When the priests finished the molieben, they moved to the frontline carrying the ikon. The amazed soldiers watched them going straight forward, under intense Nazi fire. Suddenly, the Nazis stopped shooting. Then, the Russian troops received orders to attack on the ground and from the sea. Nazis died in the thousands. Nazi prisoners told the Russians that they saw the Virgin in the sky before the Russians began to attack, the whole of the Nazi army saw her, and their weapons wouldn't fire. Today, the Orthodox Church also turns to the Virgin in any difficulty. We say, "Our Lady and intercessor, pray to God for us!"

Original Burial-Stone of Christ Exposed

The following is taken from a report on the recent operation to open and reseal the tomb of Christ in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem:

'Since at least 1555, and most likely centuries earlier, the burial bed has been covered in marble cladding, allegedly to prevent eager pilgrims from removing bits of the original rock as souvenirs. When the marble cladding was first removed on the night of 26 October, an initial inspection by the conservation team from the National Technical University of Athens showed only a layer of fill material underneath. However, as researchers continued their nonstop work over the course of 60 hours, another marble slab with a cross carved into its surface was exposed. By the night of 28 October, just hours before the tomb was to be resealed, the original limestone burial bed was revealed intact. "I'm absolutely amazed. My knees are shaking a little bit because I wasn't expecting this," said Fredrik Hiebert, National Geographic's archaeologist-in-residence. "We can't say 100 percent, but it appears to be visible proof that the location of the tomb has not shifted through time, something that scientists and historians have wondered for decades." In addition, researchers confirmed the existence of the original limestone cave walls within the 18th-century Edicule, or shrine, which encloses the tomb. A window has been cut into the southern interior wall of the shrine to expose one of the cave walls. "This is the Holy Rock that has been revered for centuries, but only now can actually be seen," said Chief Scientific Supervisor Professor Antonia Moropoulou, who is directing the conservation and restoration of the Edicule.'

Notes & Jottings

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Having a large stock of Christmas cards already, we have not printed a new design this year. The existing stock will be advertised through a Christmas flyer with is now being printed. However, the text of this flyer will also be available on our website, through which orders can be placed.

CALENDARS, CANDLES etc

The ever worsening exchange rate is making imports more expensive. The St Herman Calendar for 2017, which costs \$10, actually works out at £8.25

We should also mention that SGOIS has not increased the cost of candles since June 2014 but a small increase is now necessary. As from 15 November, the prices will be:

100 Large Votive Candles (10" x ½") £16.00 per packet

100 Medium Votive Candles £14.00 per packet

200 Tapers £17.95 per packet

Delivery on candle orders is charged at cost and churches placing a large order (minimum value £100) qualify for the 20% trade discount.

PATRIARCH'S VISIT TO BRITAIN

In October Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow and All Russia visited Britain. On Sunday 16 October he consecrated the Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints in Ennismore Gardens. Mettingham was represented on this occasion by both Fr Anthony Bardsley and Fr Liviu Barbu.

Next year will be a significant year for the Russian Orthodox Church since it will be the centenary of the restoration of Patriarchate in 1917 when St Tikhon was elected as Patriarch. Sadly, our church does not yet have an ikon of Patriarch St Tikhon and this is something that must be remedied before next year's anniversary.

CHURCH RENOVATIONS

The maintenance and renovation works carried out on the church cost £1,980 and this reminds us the more regular attention to clearing gutters and checking for blockages in drainpipes will be beneficial, preventing a build-up of problems.

GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

Our thanks are due to Irina Dembri for the gifts that she brought back for us from Russia, including incense, ikons, crosses and copies a monthly newspaper *Pilgrim on the Earth*, which has both a Russian and an English edition. We are also grateful to all our friends who have brought back various varieties of incense from their travels this summer. Thanks are also due to all who have donated books for both the college library and the shop.

NAMEDAYS

We send congratulations to everyone who is celebrating a nameday at this time and wish them

MANY YEARS!

3 November – **St Hilarion the Great** – Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral)

27 November – **Holy Apostle Philp** – Archpriest Philip Steer



COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW

NOVEMBER 2016

Saturday 5 November

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 6 November

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Patronal Feast of the Ikon of the Theotokos
'Joy of All Who Sorrow')**

Saturday 12 November

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 13 November

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Apostle Aristobulus of the Seventy, First
Bishop of Britain)**

Monday 14 November

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Tuesday 15 November

10.10am ~ Hours and Requiem Liturgy for the Foundress

Saturday 19 November

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 20 November

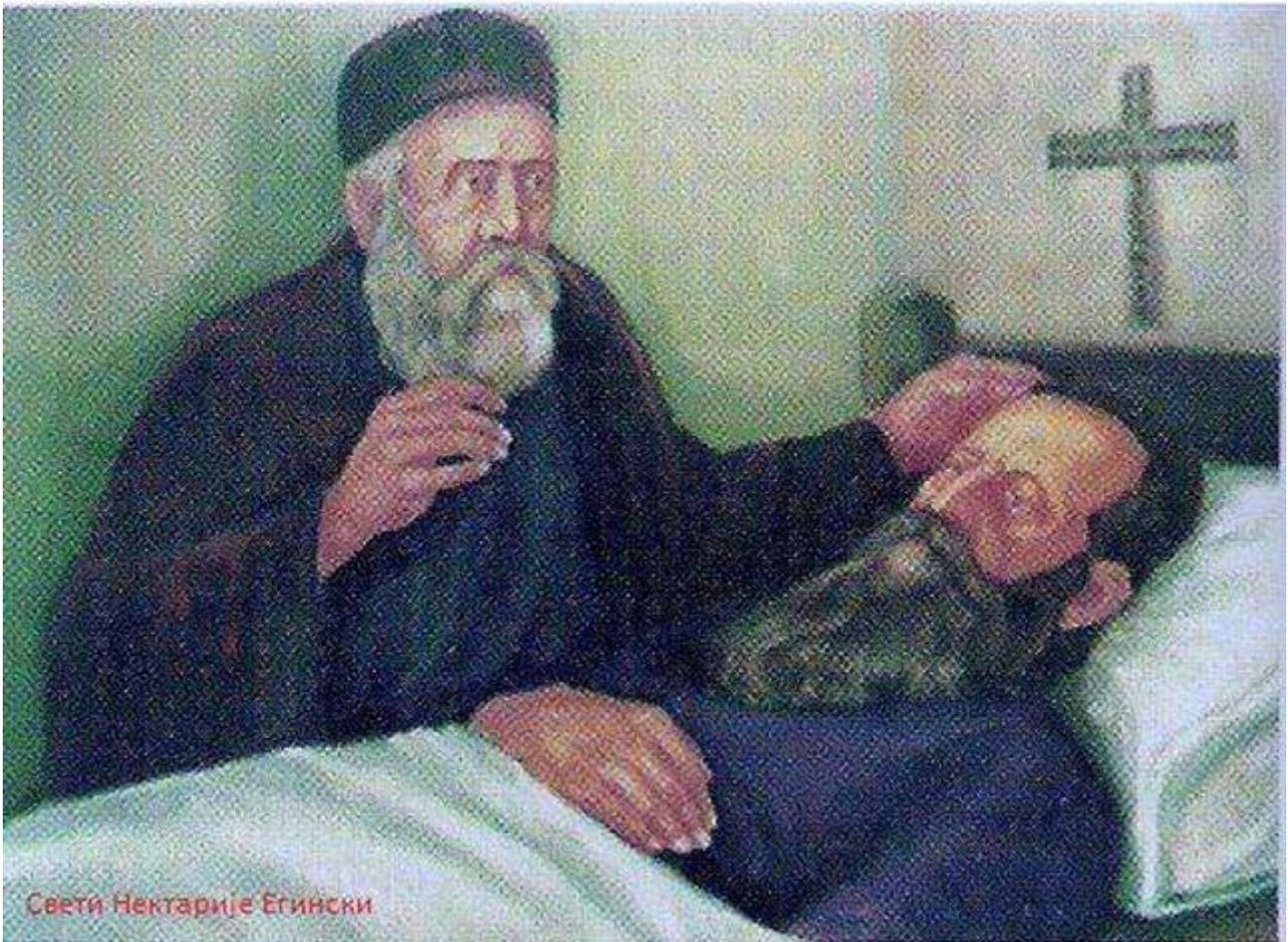
10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Synaxis of the Unmercenary Healers)

Saturday 26 November

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 27 November

10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Holy and All-Praised Apostle Philip)



For the true Christian there is no death. Death was conquered by Christ on the Cross.

St John of Kronstadt

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