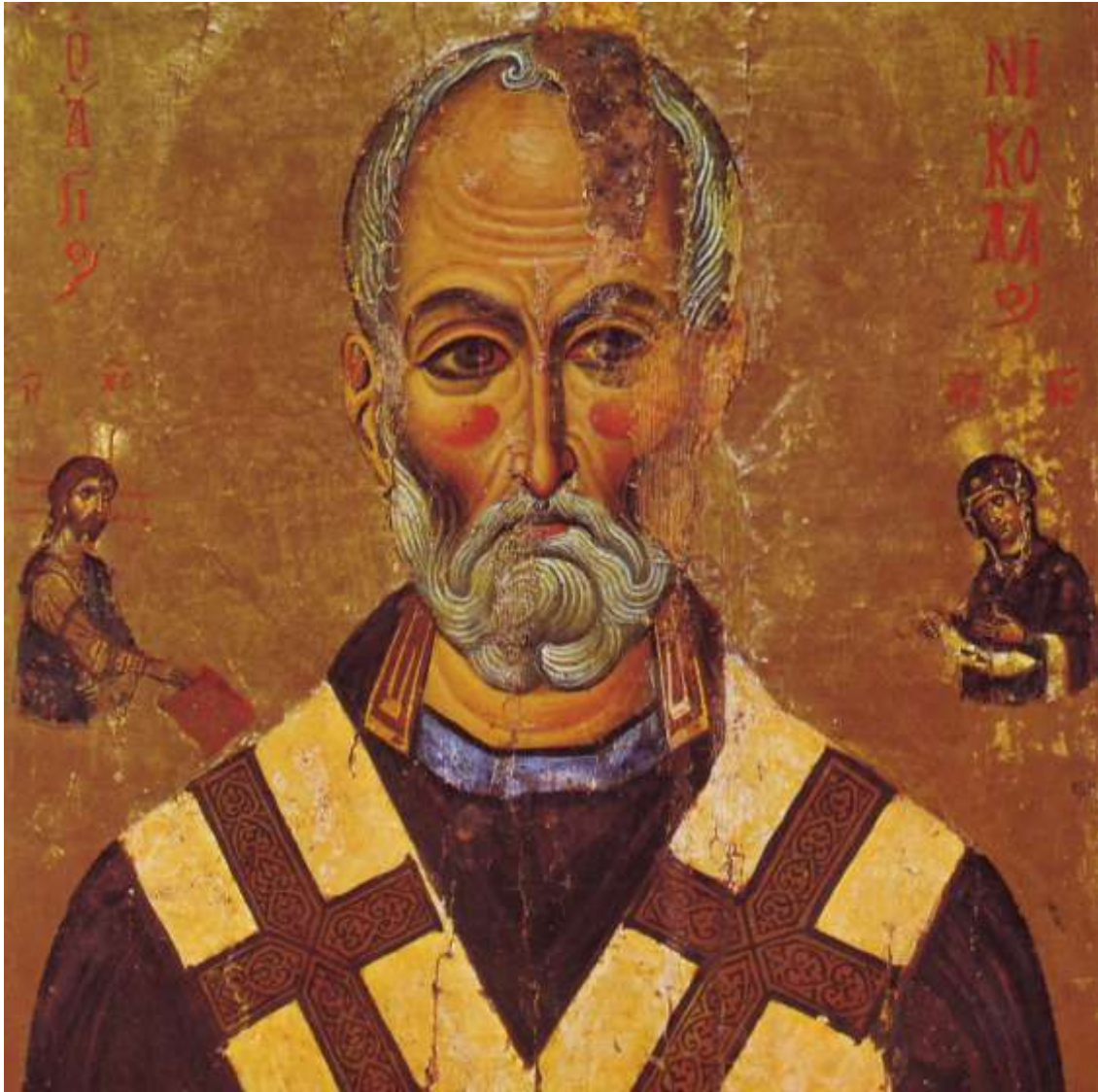




“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 37 December 2011



SAINT NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER **Archbishop of Myra in Lycia**

This glorious saint, celebrated even today throughout the entire world, was the only son of his eminent and wealthy parents, Theophanes and Nona, citizens of the city of Patara in Lycia. Since he was the only son bestowed on them by God, the parents returned the gift to God by dedicating their son to Him. St. Nicholas learned of the spiritual life from his uncle Nicholas, Bishop of Patara, and was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of New Zion founded by his uncle. Following the death of his parents, Nicholas distributed all his inherited goods to the poor, not keeping anything for himself. As a priest in Patara, he was known for his charity, even though he

carefully concealed his charitable works, fulfilling the words of the Lord: Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth (Matthew 6:3).

When he gave himself over to solitude and silence, thinking to live that way until his death, a voice from on high came to him: "Nicholas, for your ascetic labor, work among the people, if thou desirest to be crowned by Me." Immediately after that, by God's wondrous providence, he was chosen archbishop of the city of Myra in Lycia. Merciful, wise and fearless, Nicholas was a true shepherd to his flock. During the persecution of Christians under Diocletian and Maximian, he was cast into prison, but even there he instructed the people in the Law of God.

He was present at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea [325] and, out of great zeal for the truth, struck the heretic Arius with his hand. For this act he was removed from the Council and from his archiepiscopal duties, until the Lord Christ Himself and the Most-holy Theotokos appeared to several of the chief hierarchs and revealed their approval of Nicholas. A defender of God's truth, this wonderful saint was ever bold as a defender of justice among the people. On two occasions, he saved three men from an undeserved sentence of death. Merciful, truthful, and a lover of justice, he walked among the people as an angel of God. Even during his lifetime, the people considered him a saint and invoked his aid in difficulties and in distress. He appeared both in dreams and in person to those who called upon him, and he helped them easily and speedily, whether close at hand or far away. A light shone from his face as it did from the face of Moses, and he, by his presence alone, brought comfort, peace and good will among men. In old age he became ill for a short time and entered into the rest of the Lord, after a life full of labour and very fruitful toil, to rejoice eternally in the Kingdom of Heaven, continuing to help the faithful on earth by his miracles and to glorify his God. He entered into rest in AD343.

This article was taken from "The Prologue from Ochrid"

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY APPROACHES

On 17 November our archpastor, Archbishop Mark, was in Moscow participating in the conference arranged to discuss plans for the 5th anniversary of rapprochement between the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church. In his opening remarks, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk said:

"...Still, we should not bask in triumph: a great deal more must be done, and much can be done better, and with these points in mind we must prepare for the coming 5th anniversary of the re-establishment of unity, not only by evaluating our achievements, but by exposing weaknesses, and pointing the way for the future, which is the goal set before us with the blessing of His Holiness".

During the meeting that followed, the participants discussed bringing to life ecclesiastical decisions connected with the re-establishment of canonical communion between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in May, 2007, and subsequent Councils of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, and discussed a possible program for celebrating the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion, as well as questions of ongoing co-operation at a local level.

Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple

When the righteous Joachim and Anna brought the Holy Virgin to the temple, they offered to the Lord a gift that was most pure. So should we, in order to enter the Heavenly Realm, be absolutely pure, because the Lord Himself said that nothing unclean can enter the Kingdom of God. But we can cleanse ourselves of our sins and all manner of spiritual impurity only through the sacrament of penitence, through confession and communion.

As the righteous parents of the Holy Virgin prepared to take her to the temple, they first dressed her in royal garments, adorned her, and provided her with an escort of maidens carrying lighted candles. So should we, in order to enter the Heavenly Realm, first clothe our souls in the garment of obedience to the Lord's commandments, adorn our souls with virtues, and accompany them with the lighted candles of prayer and charity.

Upon arriving at the temple, the 3-year-old Infant Mary had to make an effort to ascend 15 high steps in order to enter the temple. So should we, in order to enter the Heavenly Realm, make the effort to ascend the ladder of virtues, to labour at fasting and prayer. The Holy Virgin went up the steps by herself, without any help from others, but with the miraculous help of God. So should we, in our attempt to attain the Heavenly Realm, make the effort ourselves, but constantly asking God for help along the way.

Such is the lesson we receive from this wondrous holiday! The Holy Mother of God, by entering the temple, clearly shows us the Way, and through the earthly temple lies the way into the heavenly temple, the Kingdom of God.

Protopriest Alexander Shargunov



CHURCH NOTES AND JOTTINGS



“SURETY OF SINNERS” IKON IN ENGLAND

Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk brought the wonderworking Ikon of the Mother of God “Surety of Sinners” to England from 23 - 28 November. On Saturday 26 November, Archbishop Elisey celebrated the 5th anniversary of his consecration as a bishop and beginning of his service in Great Britain. To Vladika Elisey we send our congratulations and wish him Many Years.

Left: Photograph of Vladika Elisey with the “Surety of Sinners” Ikon in the Russian Orthodox Church of St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Oxford.

The ikon is known by this name because of the inscription on the ikon: "I am the Surety of sinners for my Son Who has entrusted me to bear them, and those who bring me the joy of hearing them will receive eternal joy through Me." The ikon was first glorified by miracles at the St Nicholas Odrino Monastery in the Orlov province of Russia in the mid-nineteenth century. It was in an old chapel beyond the monastery gates, and stood between two other ancient ikons. Because it was so faded and covered with dust, it was impossible to read the inscription. In 1843, it was revealed in peoples' dreams that the ikon was endowed with miraculous powers. These same townspeople solemnly brought the ikon into the church. Believers began to flock to the church to pray for the healing of their sorrows and sicknesses. The first one to receive healing was a crippled child, whose mother prayed fervently before the ikon in 1844. The ikon was glorified during a cholera epidemic, when many fell deathly ill, and were restored to health after praying before the ikon. In 1848, through the zeal of Demetrius Boncheskul, a copy of the wonderworking image was made and placed in his home. Soon it began to exude a healing myrrh, which healed many after grievous illnesses. This wonderworking copy was brought to the church of St Nicholas at Khamovniki in Moscow, where a chapel was built in honour of the ikon.

PROGRESS REPORT

Renovations are continuing. The builders are now attempting to solve the problem of damp in the dining room prior to the laying of new carpeting. They have taken up floorboards and made a thorough inspection. Lack of under-floor ventilation seems to have been a factor but this is being improved. Nick Clarke has now delivered both the college dining table and the foundress's memorial cabinet, which he has made. The cabinet has been installed in the large alcove in the entrance hall and will contain personal articles and pictures to provide a permanent exhibition in honour of the foundress. Also two of the guestrooms are being re-decorated.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Friday 6 January

9.30am: Royal Hours

6pm: Prayers before the Ikon

7.30pm: Vigil Service

Saturday 7 January

10.10am: Hours

10.30am: Divine Liturgy followed by Christmas lunch in the House. **ALL ARE WELCOME!**

NAMEDAYS

To all who will celebrate a nameday this month, we send congratulations and wish you Many Years.

7 December - **St Catherine the Great Martyr** - Catherine Meyer

17 December - **St Barbara the Great Martyr** - Matushka Barbara Jones

19 December - **St Nicholas the Wonderworker of Myra** - Nicholas Meade

28 December - **Sts Eleutherios and Anthea** - Anthea Barry

Date given according to the regular civil calendar for convenience.

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Cheques for the church fund should be made payable to "Joy of All Who Sorrow" Church.

The account is in HSBC Bank, 3 New Market, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9HQ

Account No 71395912 Sort Code 40-09-24