



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 38 - January 2012



CHRIST IS BORN!

The Nativity Epistle of Archbishop Mark

*Thou hast shone forth, O Christ, the Sun of Righteousness;
and a star has revealed Thee in a cave which contains the Uncontainable,
Thou hast taught the Magi to worship Thee...*

When Christ the Infant God was born in Bethlehem of Judea, among the first who came to worship Him were not Jews, who had received clear prophecies of his coming and prided themselves on being the chosen people, but pagans, the astrologer Magi, who had journeyed from a far land. Their pure hearts accepted the divine revelation - a star directed by God had prompted them to set out on a long and perilous journey, and piety had told them to bring precious gifts to the Unknown King. Not frightened of the earthly king and fearlessly confessing their Faith before the dread Herod, they reached the cave in Bethlehem and worshipped the King of kings. The Magi, made wise by God, did not fall into temptation on seeing the humble, unkingly Infant, but returning home, began to preach Christ-God as their Lord and Master.

Holy Church magnifies and hymns the Magi for this feat of faith and confession, calling them ‘preachers bearing God’ (the Akathist to the Most Holy Mother of God) and ‘the first-fruits of the

Church' (St John Chrysostom). Their active faith can be a model for us too, their love and virtue can become an example in our lives.

But do we today have such faith and hope, dear brothers and sisters? Alas, we do not, if at times it seems hard to cover (in all comfort, by train or by car) the relatively short distance to church. But even if we had to travel hundreds of miles by camel through a waterless desert in order to do this, this could still not be compared with what the Magi managed to do. A single star led them into the unknown, but a countless number of stars lead us to Christ – prophets, apostles, martyrs and all the holy ones of God. We have the Holy Scriptures, we have the Tradition of the Church and the Fathers and a rich heritage of popular custom. What more do we need to believe with our whole heart, soul and mind in the Saviour of the world Who came to us, and to confess our faith in our deeds? All we need is the firm determination to reject all that stopped the Jews from worshipping the Infant God: the impiety and cunning of Herod, the pride of the pharisees, the sterile speculations of the scribes, sinful habits and passionate inclinations.

Like the Magi we do not belong to the people among whom Christ was born. But today, like the Magi in times of old, we can testify that He was born for everyone, for the New Israel, where there is neither Greek nor Jew (Gal. 3, 11), where in Christ all differences of tribe, nation and race are abolished, Let us not be like those unfortunates who had all they needed for the genuine worship of the Truth, those who had sacred promises, but neglected them and did not emulate the pagan Magi who hastened to the manger in Bethlehem and sang the praises of the Saviour of the world.

The Church calls us into her embrace at every feast. Let us hurry so that we do not miss this opportunity to take part in the saving Providence of Christ God. God was born as a man in order to draw us to Himself. Like the holy Magi, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs and the saints, let us bring Him the gift of all our love and all our hope. Only the foolish can assert that the saints of God were mistaken and that there exists some other purpose of human love and hope. No, they beheld the Truth, accepted it, and were ready for torture and death at the hands of atheists and the godless for the sake of the Son of God from before all the Ages Who was born in Bethlehem. Today no herods persecute us, no hitlers and stalins menace us. Let us make use of this God-given opportunity, like the saints who are the brightest stars of the Church of Christ, to worship the Sun of Righteousness, Christ the Infant God, to worship in the Church of God and in the lowly caves of our hearts.

Christ is born, glorify Him! Christ is born, give glory!

+ Mark, Archbishop of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain

December 2011

THEOPHANY

Theophany commemorates the Baptism of Christ. The words of God the Father and the appearance of the Holy Spirit establish the truth of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Then arises the obvious question that, since Christ is God, why does He need baptism? We ordinary mortals need it because of our fallen human nature but why was Christ baptised? It shows us that Christ, being God Incarnate, did indeed become fully and truly human. There is a reference to this in the Christmas services which speak of Christ becoming Adam, that is man, and taking to Himself our human nature. The Theophany services refer to the reason for Christ's baptism by saying, *Though as God He needs no cleansing, yet for the sake of fallen man He is cleansed in the Jordan.* In another place it says, *As man He is cleansed that I may be made clean.* It is not Christ that is made holy by the water, but vice versa. As St Nikolai Velimirovich puts it, *in this way* [i.e. through His baptism] *Christ sanctifies the water.* By thus sanctifying the water, Christ's baptism makes possible our baptism.

Central to the customs of Theophany is the Blessing of Holy Water. Often this is done just once but the Service Books provide for the blessing of water to take place twice. The first blessing is in church on the Eve

of Theophany. This holy water is then used for the annual blessing of people's houses. The second blessing is done on the day of Theophany itself and is outdoors. The custom in Orthodox countries is to bless the local river or, if the church is at the coast, the sea is blessed. If you would like your house blessed with Holy Water at Theophany, please let us know and we will arrange a suitable time.

SAINT PHILIP, Metropolitan of Moscow

It is popularly imagined that the sufferings of the Russian Orthodox Church, at the hands of the state, were exclusively confined to the 20th Century and that, before this, the Church enjoyed great privileges. This is very far from the truth. From the time of the Baptism of ancient Rus' in AD988 to the time of the establishment of the Patriarchate in 1587, the first hierarch of the Church was a metropolitan. There were 45 metropolitans and St Philip was the 42nd. There were 10 patriarchs between 1587 and 1700. Tsar Peter 1 enslaved the Church on the death of Patriarch Adrian. Yet this was not the first time that the Church suffered at the hands of the secular power as the life of St Philip illustrates.

Philip was born into the noble Kolychev family on 11 February 1507. Once, while standing in church as a boy, he heard the priest read from the Gospel: "*No one can serve two masters*" (Matt 6: 24). He became very frightened by these words, as though these words were exclusively spoken to him and at that same time, became enlightened by them. As soon as he was old enough, he entered the Solovetsk Monastery where he was tonsured as a monk. In time, Philip became the abbot and served in that office for eighteen years. He was not only a man of prayer and spiritual father, but was also a very practical man. As a skilled engineer, he devised a system of land drainage and irrigation that turned the marshy monastery land into good grazing fields. This enabled the monks to develop a dairy industry for the support of the community. At this time Russia was ruled by Tsar Ivan the Terrible.

Ivan was only four years old when his father, Basil III died in 1533. He and his younger brother were neglected by their mother and had an unhappy childhood. Ivan was angry and resentful. This manifested itself in cruelty to both people and animals. In 1547 two pivotal events happened. Ivan was crowned as Tsar and there was a serious fire in Moscow, causing both the destruction of property and many deaths. Ivan took this to be a sign from God and resolved to reform his life. The next thirteen years were blessed with many successes but in 1560 Ivan's beloved wife Anastasia Romanova died and, in his grief, Ivan became very bitter and vicious. He surrounded himself with a group favourites known as Oprichniki. They were basically a dissolute group, a sort of Mafia, who feared neither man or God.

Ivan was a man of contradictions. There were time-serving bishops who were prepared to ignore the bad behaviour of Ivan and his henchmen but they failed to flatter their way into Ivan's favour. The Abbot of Solovetsk, Fr Philip, had become well known and much loved throughout the country. Thus, Ivan summoned Philip to fill the vacant Metropolitan See of Moscow in the year 1566 A.D. However, this holy man could not ignore the awful atrocities of the terrible tsar and knew that the call to leave his monastic cell was a call to martyrdom. In his sermon on the day of his consecration to the episcopate the new archpastor expressed his concerns because he said that silence "lays sin upon the soul and brings death to the whole people". Ivan listened and, for a short time, the terror and executions ceased.

One Sunday, Metropolitan Philip was serving the Liturgy in Dormition Cathedral when Ivan and a gang of his cronies, wearing garish costumes, entered, disrupting the worship. The hierarch refused to recognise or bless them, indeed he rebuked them without fear. From then on Ivan sought to destroy the saint. He sent the ambitious Bishop Paphnutii of Souzdal to Solovetsk to find evidence against Philip. Only one monk, Fr Paisii, was induced by flattery and threats to give false testimony against his former superior. Ousted from his position as metropolitan, the saint laid aside the symbols of his office. Yet Ivan was not satisfied. He had been publicly rebuked and wanted public revenge. He ordered Philip to serve a last Liturgy. After the service had begun, a gang of the tsar's thugs burst in and stripped the metropolitan of his vestments, leaving him in just a shirt, as they dragged him away. At the doors of the cathedral he exclaimed "I rejoice that I have received all this for the sake of the Church". It was ordered that he be dressed in a simple and tattered monastic cassock and imprisoned in St Nicholas' Monastery. Whilst there the saint received a gift from Ivan;

the severed head of his nephew. Philip blessed it and returned it to the sender. A week later he was taken under guard to the Otroch Monastery, Tver. It was there that Maluta Skuratov, one of the tsar's confidants, came to Philip's cell and suffocated him with a pillow on 9 January 1569. After several years, the body of the saint, discovered whole, incorrupt, and fragrant, was translated to the Monastery of Solovetsk.

HOLY HIEROMARTYR PHILIP PRAY TO GOD FOR US.

CHURCH NOTES AND JOTTINGS

Dates for your 2012 diary

Sunday 5 February - SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE

Note: In the week following the Sunday of the Publican the Pharisee, we do not fast on Wednesday or Friday.

Sunday 19 February - MEATFARE SUNDAY

This is the last day of eating meat until Easter

Monday 20 February - FIRST DAY OF CHEESEFARE WEEK

This is like "Shrove Tuesday" but for the whole week.

Sunday 26 February - CHEESEFARE SUNDAY

This is the last day of eating Dairy products until Easter

Monday 27 February - FIRST DAY OF GREAT LENT

Sunday 15 April - PASCCHA - EASTER DAY

Thursday 24 May - ASCENSION DAY

Sunday 3 June - PENTECOST/TRINITY SUNDAY

Saturday 30 June - SAINT BOTOLPH'S DAY

Pilgrimage to Iken - 12noon Service in honour of St Botolph in the ancient church at Iken followed by picnic lunch.

2012 CHURCH CALENDARS

SAINT HERMAN CALENDAR - This is in book form and is a Lectionary giving details of the saints who are commemorated each day together with the daily Bible readings for the church services. The theme of the editorial content is the 30th anniversary of the death of Fr Seraphim (Rose) of Platina. £6.50

WALL CALENDAR published by the Russian Orthodox Youth Committee

These have illustrations for every month of the year with a spiral binding. £10.00

Renovations - progress report

The dining room has been re-carpeted and the large oak refectory-style dining table has been installed. It was made (maybe built would be a better word) by Nick Clarke, who made most of the church furniture, and is immensely heavy. Also a heavy panelled wooden door has been made for the side entrance to the house to replace a hideous glass one that was put in by the previous owners of the property some years ago.

Namedays

To all, especially the following, who are celebrating a nameday we send congratulations and wish them Many Years!

Sunday after Christmas, St Joseph the Betrothed - Joseph Meyer

9 January - St Stephen the Proto-martyr - Stephen Masterson

15 January - St Seraphim of Sarov - Serafima Hopper

27 January - St Nina, Enlightener of Georgia - Nina Vinogradova

30 January - St Anthony the Great - Fr Antony Bardsley

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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

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