



# “Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 84 November 2015



## “A REAL MATUSHKA”

### ST JOHN OF KRONSTADT’S WIFE

*Glory to God, we all know and love the great Saint John of Kronstadt, but most of us either know nothing about his marriage and the wife he loved dearly, or we know only one thing – that the marriage was celibate. So this month, instead of more about the saint, whose feast is celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, we shall include something about his matushka, Elizabeth Constantinovna. The following is an abridged description of the couple’s life together by their niece Ruth, whom they adopted and brought up as their own child. In this moving account, we can see that their marriage and family life was very warm, loving and human:*

In 1872 my father died, leaving my mother without any financial means. My uncle, seeing our helplessness, said to his wife, "We have no children of our own. Let's take her and bring her up as a daughter." It was no sooner said than done. And so it happened that, by God's will, I came into the care of these infinitely dear to me uncle and aunt, who tirelessly looked after my welfare as the most loving parents would care for a favourite child.

Just as Fr. John never had a life of his own, giving himself to the service of his neighbour, so also E.C. never lived for herself; the circle of her activity was circumscribed by service to her relatives and close ones: she rejoiced at their joys and grieved over their sorrows. I remember her at the age of 45. She had kind, noble features, and was very active, forever rustling about. She liked to fuss over people, warm and feed them. I can see her now, in the kitchen, a white apron tied around her waist, making a sweet pie. She enjoyed cooking, going to market, looking over everyone and making sure that everything was clean and the food tasty. How many times did Uncle, tasting his favourite apple pie, remark, "You are my master pie baker!" Elizabeth Constantinovna was warm-hearted, always even-tempered, affectionate. She liked having people visit her; then she would provide an abundant spread, and Uncle, seeing her hospitality and sincerity, would say about the bustling mistress of the house: "She's a real matushka."

With all her housekeeping tasks, Aunt did not overlook me. She spent all her free time with me, slept in the same room with me, taught me to read in Russian and in French; later, when I entered school, she prepared my breakfast, daily accompanied me to school, picked me up and quizzed me on my lessons. I remember that before Aunt began teaching me, Uncle served a molieben in St. Andrew's cathedral, to Ss. Cosmas and Damian and Prophet Nahum. Uncle himself took me to the entrance examinations, paid for my education out of his own meagre salary, and followed my progress with unwaning interest, weekly looking over my notebook with my grades and signing it. Given such favourable conditions, it is hardly to be wondered that I became a top student. This brought great joy to my guardians, and Uncle hurried to inform many acquaintances of the good news: "Our niece and ward, Ruth, graduated with a gold medal."

From my earliest memory, I recall that Aunt always treated her husband with reverent love and respect. When he came home tired from making calls on parishioners or serving, she hurried to take off his boots and help him undress, insisting that he lie down to rest. Then, dead silence reigned in the apartment; Aunt jealously guarded the brief rest periods of her hard-working pastor. Uncle had a rather weak constitution and frequently fell ill. At those times Aunt turned into a tireless nurse: she spent whole nights at the patient's bedside. In 1879 Fr. John became dangerously ill with pneumonia. He lay for hours with closed eyes, in a state of semi-consciousness. When he came around, he would often say, "My head aches unbearably, as though someone is hitting it with a hammer." Once, Aunt was sitting near Uncle's bed weeping. Opening his eyes, Batiushka looked at her and said, "Don't cry, Liza. God willing, I shall recover, but if not, God and kind people will not abandon you." Several days passed and one morning Aunt rushed into my room, trembling with excitement: "Uncle is better; the crisis is over!" We looked at one another, hugged each other tightly and both burst out crying; they were tears of happiness...

When Batiushka undertook his frequent – and later, daily – trips to Petersburg, Aunt always waited up for him, even if this was very late, despite the fact that her health wasn't the best; she constantly suffered from headaches and for several years was troubled by insomnia. Uncle deeply appreciated this attentiveness on her part, and reciprocated in the same manner. When he was too ill to go to Petersburg, and later even around Kronstadt, he never sat down to eat without going into the sitting room or into Aunt's room, depending where she was, and calling her to the table. "When I eat alone," he said, "I have no appetite." Not an evening went by that Uncle didn't go to Aunt to say good night and bless her before going to bed: "I wish you good night," "Sleep peacefully," "God be with you," "God protect you" – he used to say to her before retiring to his study to sleep. Not long before Uncle died, Matushka came down with influenza, and at this time his care for her was especially evident. It was so moving to see how the dear sufferer, barely able to walk, would go in to bless her several times a day and in the evening before going to sleep, stroke her head and say, "Poor dear, poor dear, we are sufferers together.."

After Uncle's repose, Aunt's health began to deteriorate even more rapidly. She became very weak; her legs and hands barely functioned, her heart gradually began to fail. She sorely missed her ever-memorable husband and couldn't hear mention of his name without tears; she could not accept the thought that Uncle was no longer among the living and would tell people, "I keep thinking that Ivan Ilyitch has not died but has simply gone off on a trip somewhere, as he used to go to Moscow, and that he will return." Not long before she died, Matushka saw a sketch of Batiushka at the home of an acquaintance and burst into uncontrollable tears: "Ivan Ilyitch, Ivan Ilyitch," and when they tried to console her with the thought that he was now blessedly happy, she replied, "It's wonderful for him, but it's so hard for me; after all, we were together for 53 years." She often remembered and was consoled by the words of her ever-memorable Batiushka, our mutual intercessor before the Lord God, which he spoke when he was told that his sick matushka was sorely grieved that she could not come into his study and take care of him: "Tell my wife that she is always with me. And I am always with her." At night, Aunt would usually put on Uncle's under-cassock or she would cover herself with it. Every time I went to the St. John of Rila convent she would say to me, "Make a prostration for me before Uncle's tomb," and she would weep inconsolably. If her hands or legs began to ache badly, she would immediately ask to have the afflicted places anointed with oil from the vigil lamp burning over Batiushka's tomb.

Deeply religious, Matushka placed all her hope in God's mercy and devoted herself wholeheartedly towards the salvation of her soul. "Ivan Ilyitch, bless me, pray for me," she would repeat several times a day, sorrowful that she had outlived her great husband-pastor. After his repose, she would pray sincerely with tears, but in her great humility Aunt feared that her prayers would not soon be answered, and always asked others to pray for her. When I would go home for the night, after saying goodbye she would invariably say, "Pray for me." If I went to Vigil or Liturgy, I always heard this same request, coming from the depths of her heart: "Pray for me." I cannot neglect mentioning two of her most remarkable characteristics: a profound humility and meekness; in these two virtues all the greatness of her soul was expressed. She was never angry at anyone, she never held a grudge against anyone. If someone offended her or was unpleasant, she bore this uncomplainingly and forgave the person from the bottom of her heart. In answer to the question, "Have you any ill will towards anyone?" Matushka invariably answered, "No, not towards anyone." Being herself forgiving, she taught others to act likewise; she would say, "Don't be angry; God Himself will show who is right, who is at fault, while we should forgive." Aunt never allowed herself to interfere in Batiushka's affairs; she never tried to put herself forward or stand on a par with him; remaining always in the shadows, she shone with the reflection of his glory, his wondrous Christian deeds; like a tender sister and loving mother, she guarded the common treasure: sick, weak, virtually without the use of her legs, she pleaded with everyone: "Be quiet, Batiushka is sleeping," "Don't receive anyone for now, Batiushka is not well." Batiushka himself knew her soul, highly esteemed her purity, meekness and humility, and said about her: "My wife is an angel."

The Lord granted that she prepare long and fervently for her move into eternal life: in her latter years Matushka Elizabeth, following the counsels and instructions of her husband, that man of prayer, communed often either at the cathedral or at home when her legs were too weak to take her out of the house; in the last year she communed daily. On May 21, she communed as was her custom - for the last time, it turned out. At 6 o'clock in the evening her eyes closed and after 10 o'clock she gave no more signs of consciousness. Her last word was "I want," spoken in response to an offer to drink some holy water. But she was no longer able to swallow. She died peacefully the next morning as the canon for the soul's departure was being read. On St. Thomas Sunday she had received Unction at her request, and afterwards said several times. "How happy I am that I received Unction and prepared myself." She was buried on Sunday, May 24, in Kronstadt, on the left side of the cathedral yard.

Did many know that behind the great saint, Fr John, stood a protectress, ready to lay down her life for him? If people did not know it then, may they know it now and may they sincerely pray for this pure eldress, this meek eldress, the servant of God, Elizabeth! May a boundless gratitude to you - wonderful, self-sacrificing mother-educator - and memory eternal - dear virgin-wife, lamp of the Russian land - live in our hearts, and in those of our children and grandchildren!

From the reminiscences of R. G. Shemyakina, published in Orthodox America

<http://www.roca.org/OA/96/96g.htm>

## *Martyr Varus and Prayer for Those Who Have Reposed Outside the Church*

*In Western countries like this one, where Orthodox Christians are in the minority, there is often a special concern among the faithful for those who have reposed outside the Orthodox Church. This concern, however, is not unique to these countries, and has already been addressed in 17<sup>th</sup> century Russia. At this time, Patriarch Hermogenes gave the blessing for St Varus to be commemorated on behalf of born or unborn babies who died before they could be baptised. From there, the custom was broadened to include all those who had died without baptism. Following is an account of what happened after St Varus' martyrdom, to explain why St Varus has specially been chosen as intercessor for this group of people, and because it is an edifying tale:*

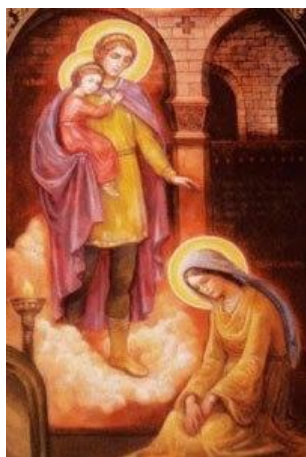
There was a widow living in that city named Cleopatra, who was born in Palestine. Her husband, an officer, had died in Egypt, and she had a son named John, who was still a little boy. When Saint Varus was tortured, she looked on from afar upon his sufferings, sighing and beating her breast, for she was a Christian. When the martyr's corpse was cast out of the city, she arose by night, took certain of her servants, and went to remove the long-suffering body of Saint Varus. She brought it to her home, where she dug a grave for it in her room.

Every day Cleopatra censed and lit candles before the grave of Saint Varus, whom she regarded as her great intercessor and mediator before God. When, after some years, the persecution died down, she began to consider how she might return to the land of her birth, and she wondered how it would be possible for her to take with her the relics of Saint Varus. She decided to send a gift to the Prince, which was taken to him by a messenger, who said to him on her behalf, "My husband was an officer and died here in the Emperor's service. He has still not received final burial, for it is not seemly that an officer and man of rank be buried in a foreign land. I, who am a widow and a stranger in this country, wish to return to my homeland to live with my kindred. Therefore, my lord, permit me to take the remains of my beloved husband to the land of my birth, that I may give them a fitting burial together with my forebears, for I wish to remain with my spouse even after I die." The woman sent this message that the Christians might not think that it was the relics of the holy martyr she was removing from the city, for she was afraid that they would prevent her from taking that sacred treasure. The Prince accepted her gift and granted her request, but she took the remains of Saint Varus rather than those of her husband. Like a vine she brought them out of Egypt (cf. Ps. 79:8) into Palestine to her village of Edras, which was near Tabor, and she buried them there with her fathers. Every day she went to his grave, censed it, and lit candles there. When the other Christians who lived there saw this, they began to go with her to where the saint lay. They brought with them their sick, who received healing at Saint Varus' grave through his prayers. Soon all the Christians in the parts that lay roundabout learned of Saint Varus, and they began to come with faith to his tomb.

When Cleopatra saw how the Christians gathered to pray at the grave of the saint, she determined to build a church dedicated to him. Soon its erection was begun. By that time her son had reached manhood, and Cleopatra desired that he receive a position in the imperial army. Through the intercession of certain mediators she requested that her son be commissioned an officer, and her entreaty was granted. Her son received from the Emperor his appointment to the army and the emblems of his rank while the church was being constructed, but Cleopatra said, "My son shall not begin to serve the Emperor in the army until the house of God is completed. It is my intention that he be here to help transfer the saint's relics to the church. After this is done, he may depart to serve the Emperor." When the church was completed, Cleopatra summoned bishops, priests, and monks, removed the precious relics of the holy martyr from their grave, and had them placed on a very costly bier. She laid her son's military belt and uniform upon the relics, that they might be sanctified by the saint's remains. She prayed to Saint Varus fervently that he be her son's protector, and all the bishops and priests present bestowed their blessing upon the young man. A multitude of Christian people without number had gathered there as well, and accompanied by them, Cleopatra and her son carried the bier and the relics to the church. The church was consecrated, and the remains of the saint were placed beneath the altar. Then the Divine Liturgy was served. Cleopatra fell down before the relics of Saint Varus and prayed thus: "I beseech thee, O passion-bearer of Christ: Ask God for that which is profitable for me and for mine only son. I do not dare ask for anything more than what the Lord Himself wisheth, for He knoweth what is needful for us. May His good and perfect will be done in us!"

After the service was completed, a great banquet was set before those present at which Cleopatra and her son served the guests. Cleopatra instructed her son to eat nothing until the evening, when the meal was finished and only then to partake of that which remained. As the youth was serving, he suddenly took ill, and he went to lie down upon his bed. When all the guests had arisen from the meal, Cleopatra called for her son, that he might share with her what food remained. But John was unable even to reply, for he was burning with a great fever. When Cleopatra saw how ill her son was, she said, "As the Lord lives, I will not put food into my mouth until I learn what is to become of my child!" She sat down beside him and sought

to cool the fire of his fever; but her own womb burned still more than did his body, and her heart ached for her only son. At midnight the youth died, leaving his mother to weep inconsolably. As she lamented bitterly, she hastened to the Church of Saint Varus, and she fell down before his sepulchre and cried out, "O servant of God! Is this how thou hast rewarded me for the great labors I endured on thy behalf? Is this the succour which thou providest me, who forsook my husband on thine account and have placed my hope in thee? Thou hast permitted mine only son to die; thou hast deprived me of mine only consolation and hast taken from me the light of mine eyes! Who shall now feed me in mine old age? Who shall close mine eyes when I die? Who shall commit my body to the grave? It had been better for me to die than to behold my beloved son perish in his youth like a flower before its time. Either give me back my son as once Elisha returned the son of the Shunamite woman (cf. IV Kings, ch. 4) or take me hence without delay, for I can endure this bitter sorrow no longer." Cleopatra remained weeping by the grave of the saint and then fell asleep for a short while from weariness and grief. As she slept, she beheld Saint Varus in a dream.



He held her son by the hand, and they both shone like the sun. Their vesture was whiter than snow, and they were girded with golden belts; upon their heads were crowns of unspeakable beauty. Seeing this, the blessed Cleopatra fell down before them, but Saint Varus lifted her up and said, "O woman, why do you cry unto me? Do you imagine that I have forgotten the good works you did on my behalf in Egypt and along the way to this place? Do you suppose that I felt nothing when you removed my body from amid the carcasses of beasts, placing it in a coffin? Have I not always hearkened to your prayers? I make entreaty for you at all times unto God. **I have prayed first of all for your relatives, with whom you buried me, that their sins be remitted them**, and now I have enrolled your son in the army of the King of Heaven. Did you not beseech me here at my grave that I ask God to grant you and your son whatever is in accordance with His will and is

to your benefit? Therefore, I have prayed unto the good God, and in His ineffable kindness He has deigned to number your son among the host of Heaven. Lo, you see that your son now stands near the Lord's throne. If you wish, take him and send him to serve a mortal and earthly king since you do not desire that he should serve the heavenly and eternal King."

The youth, who sat beside Varus and embraced him, exclaimed, "No, my lord! Pay no heed to my mother, neither permit me to be returned to the world, which is full of falsehood and every iniquity, and from which you delivered me when you came to me. Do not deprive me, O father, of a portion with the saints and a dwelling place among them." Then the youth turned to his mother and said, "Why do you lament for me thus, mother? I have been enrolled in the host of Christ the King and have been permitted to stand before Him with the angels. Why do you now ask that I be removed from the kingdom and brought to abasement?"

When the blessed Cleopatra saw that her son's appearance was like that of an angel, she said, "Take me with you that we may be together." Saint Varus said, "In this place you are with us. Go in peace, and after a time, when the Lord commands, we shall come and take you. After saying this, the saint became invisible. When Cleopatra awoke, her heart was filled with ineffable happiness and joy, and she related her dream to the priests. They buried her son beside the sepulchre of Saint Varus, and Cleopatra wept no more but rather rejoiced in the Lord. Later she distributed her possessions among the needy and renounced the world. She lived beside the Church of Saint Varus, serving God in prayer and fasting by day and night. Every Sunday as she prayed Saint Varus appeared to her in great glory with her son. After she had lived in this God-pleasing manner for seven years, the blessed Cleopatra reposed. Her body was placed in the Church of Saint Varus near her son John, and her holy soul took up its abode in the heavens, together with Saint Varus and John. There it now stands in the presence of God, to Whom be glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.



**IMAGES OF CHRIST AND THE SAINTS:  
ALTAR SCREENS AND ORTHODOX IKONS**  
*An Illustrated Study Day*

**The College of Our Lady of Mettingham  
The White House, Low Road, Mettingham, Suffolk NR35 1TP**

**Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
10:00am - 16:30pm**

**10:00-10:30 - Tea & coffee**

**10:30-10:45 – “A Short Introduction to the Orthodox Ikon”  
Revd Dr Liviu Barbu**

**10:45-11:45 “Points of Station and Passage: Screens and Veils in the Christian Tradition”  
Professor John Mitchell (University of East Anglia)**

*From the Jewish Temple and the Holy Sepulchre through to the Ikonostasis in the Orthodox tradition and the Roodscreen in the late medieval churches of East Anglia, screens have played a critical part in the furnishing and articulation of liturgical spaces. In this lecture we will consider some of the ways in which screens have been used, the shapes they have taken, and the roles they have played as barriers, as manifestation-planes and as interfaces between human and divine, between the material present and a transcendent world beyond.*

**12:15 – 13:15 Lunch**

**13:30-14:30 “Orthodox Christian Ikons: biography and materiality”  
Revd Gabriel Hanganu (DPhil Oxon)**

*Ikons are often discussed from a theological or art historical perspective, with the two approaches rarely sharing a common interpretative framework. Using evidence from recent anthropological fieldwork in Romania, this talk will argue that a more inclusive approach to the study of ikons is needed, that equally accounts for their biographical and material dimensions. In addition to expanding ikon scholarship, this perspective could also help us reflect on our destiny as connected human beings.*

**14:30-15.00 Tea & coffee**

**15:00-15:45 Film: A Short Film About Miraculous Ikons Followed by Discussion**

**15:45-16:30 Visit to the Joy of All Who Sorrow Orthodox Church in Mettingham and  
Thanksgiving prayer: seeing and praying with ikons first hand**

**The Study Day is Free of Charge!**

*Donations towards catering expenses would be welcome.*

For more information and to register your interest please contact:

[mettinghamcollege@aol.com](mailto:mettinghamcollege@aol.com)

or Fr Liviu Barbu on [fr.liviu.barbu@gmail.com](mailto:fr.liviu.barbu@gmail.com); 07766760171

# Notes & Jottings

## BEQUEST

Mary Angela McCabe, a close friend of the Foundress, has left 14,000 Euros (£10,074) to the Mettingham Orthodox Trust in her Will. This money will go towards the planned development of a Common Room for social purposes. Mary Angela – Memory Eternal.

## CHRISTMAS CARD

At the time of writing, the Christmas card is being printed in A5 size, which is larger than our previously printed cards. As mentioned in the October bulletin, this is the work of young children in our Sunday School. The cards retail at 25p each, complete with envelopes, and are sold in aid of church funds. You can see a picture of the card underneath the service list below.

## PATRONAL FEAST

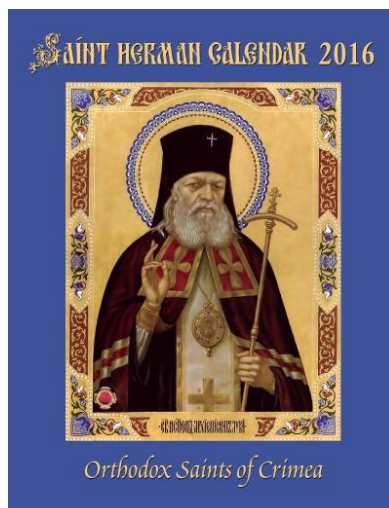
The Feast of the Ikon of the Mother of God 'Joy of All Who Sorrow' will be celebrated with a Festal Liturgy on Friday 6 November at 10.30am, followed by refreshments.

## FOUNDER'S DAY

There is a special programme for the Study Day on Saturday 14 November (see poster above). Then on Founder's Day, Sunday 15 November, there will be a Liturgy at 10.30am, followed by the memorial meal in the college dining room. This will be the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the repose of the Foundress.

## SAINT HERMAN CALENDARS

These have just arrived. They retail at £6.50 each. The theme this year is *Saints of the Crimea*. Please order your copy/copies ASAP to avoid disappointment.



## NAMEDAYS

We send our congratulations to all who are celebrating a nameday at this time and wish them:

**MANY YEARS!**

- 3 November – **St Hilarion the Great of Palestine** – Metropolitan Hilarion
- 8 November – **Great Martyr Demetrios of Thessalonica** – Demetrios Philpot
- 27 November – **Holy Apostle Philip** – Archpriest Philip Steer



**COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE IKON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD**  
***JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW***  
**NOVEMBER 2015**

**Saturday 31 October**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 1 November**

**10.10am ~ Hours & Divine Liturgy (St John of Kronstadt)**

**Thursday 5 November**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Friday 6 November**

*10.10am ~ Patronal Feast*

**Hours and Divine Liturgy (Joy of All Who Sorrow)**

**Saturday 7 November**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Requiem Liturgy**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 8 November**

**10.10am ~ Hours & Divine Liturgy (St Demetrius the Myrrh-gusher)**

**Saturday 14 November**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 15 November**

**10.10am ~ Founder's Day**

**Hours and Divine Liturgy (Martyr Acindynus and others of Persia)**

**Saturday 21 November**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 22 November**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Synaxis of the Archangels)**

**Saturday 28 November**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 19 October**

**10.10am ~ Hours & Divine Liturgy (Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew)**



**New Christmas Card Designed by the Sunday School of the Martyr Philothea and St Bede Parish and the Joy of All Who Sorrow Collegiate Church, Mettingham**





How fitting is the frequent prayer, "By whatever means, save me!"

St Theophan the Recluse

*Collegiate Church of the Ikon of the Mother of God: Joy of All Who Sorrow*

*The White House, Low Road, Mettingham, Suffolk, NR35 1TP*

*Tel: (01986) 895176*

*[www.mettingham.org.uk](http://www.mettingham.org.uk)*