

April 2007



The Orthodox parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross, Lancaster

Meeting at the Chaplaincy Centre of Lancaster University

Newsletter



*Ἐθρονισι, Χριστοῦ Ζωοδότου.
(Φ. Κωνσταντίνου, 1962)*

*The parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
belongs to the Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the United Kingdom and Ireland,
which is part of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Western and Central Europe.*

*Our Metropolitan is His Eminence Archbishop Gabriel.
The Patriarchate of Antioch is third senior of the Orthodox Churches.
The Patriarch is His Beatitude Ignatius IV.*

*The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch
(Acts 11:26)*

BREAD

«Ὡσπερ ἦν τούτο το κλάσμα διεσκορπισμένον ἐπάνω των ορέων και συναχθέν ἐν, οὕτω συναχθήτω Σου η Εκκλησία ἀπό των περάτων της γης εις την Βασιλείαν σου».

Ήταν σιτάρι, σπαρμένο σε βουνό και σε φαράγγια. Θερσίστηκε, αλέστηκε, ζομώθηκε, έγινε ψωμί. Το ελογήσαμε και αγιάστηκε και έγινε σώμα Χριστού.

Και εμείς Κύριε, σκορπισμένοι είμαστε. Σε «βουνά» και σε «φαράγγια»! Μάζεψέ μας κοντά Σου, Κύριε. Άλεσέ μας. Κάνε μας Ψωμί. Κάνε μας όλους μας ένα μέσα στην Εκκλησία Σου και αγιάσέ μας. Πάρε μας στη Βασιλεία Σου! (Διδαχή των Δώδεκα Αποστόλων κεφάλαιο 9, 4. www.pigizois.gr)

It was wheat, sown on mountains and ravines. It was harvested, milled, kneaded, turned into bread. We blessed it and it was sanctified and became the body of Christ.

We, too, are scattered, Lord. On "mountains" and "ravines". Gather us round you, Lord. Pound us. Turn us into bread. Make us all one in Your Church and sanctify us. Take us to Your Kingdom. (From Didache of the 12 Apostles, chapter 9, 4, found in www.pigizois.gr)

Change

I love bread. Bread is rarely the protagonist of a meal. It will be there, next to your plate, as a nourishing accompaniment, as a tool to help you eat your food with. Bread is humble, yet essential, at the heart of the Holy Com-

munion, the essential moment of "changing... by Thy Holy Spirit".

We don't always welcome change in our life; we often resent it or resist it, even though it is unavoidable. I read somewhere that sin is surprisingly conservative; it means refusing to grow; to change.

Bread possesses a changing nature: from seed to plant, from wheat to flour, from flour to dough, from dough to bread, from bread to nourishment, from nourishment to life, from every day common commodity to prosforo, from prosforo to the Body of Christ. Humble bread turns to Holy Bread; it turns into a bridge between heaven and earth. Christ offers us His Holy Body. Man takes a part of creation and changes it, through his labour, then offers it back to the Creator, "Thy own of Thine own we offer Thee" (I also read recently - *The Apples of the Cook*, p.18 - that in the old times people called the prosforo "Panagia", Mother of God, humanity's "offer" to God, which, among other things, made me think that the word prosforo comes from the word *prosfero* = to offer).

As a child, I was blessed to have the chance to play out, in the fields that, in the early summer, turned into a green sea of wheat. We'd roll and hide and chew the milky, unripe seeds. Unbaked bread dough was one of my first toys, a primitive form of Playdough, that nourished my soul with the joy of playing and my mind with the joy of imagining

and creating, before another piece of the same dough would turn into the fragrant loaf that would nourish my body.

As an adult, I was blessed to have the chance to bake loaves that would later be transformed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

Maybe this is one of the reasons why I was so touched by the above quotation. It made me feel good to think that, as my father on earth is a baker, as my spiritual father is a baker for our church needs (the first prosforo I got from his hands filled the entire house with fragrance for days), my Father in Heaven is a Baker, too. It made me wonder, will I be as humble as an ear of wheat, that bows its head when full and ripe, and let Him take me, break me, knead me, turn me into a fragrant, useful, nourishing loaf? It made me think that we are all indeed, like the scattered grains of wheat, that can drift off with the wind, unless we let His hands harvest us, from our mountains of problems and trouble, from our urban ravines, and bring us together, transform us, make us sprout and flourish and yield fruit.

Not scattered but One

A seed is full of potential, but it can die without fulfilling it, as some seeds did, in the parable of the sower; but the seeds that will give fruit, will then be transformed into something good, something that will also benefit others. The single ingredients will have to

come together so that the flour, the yeast, the salt, the honey, the water, the oil, will transform into one, new, complete entity.

Break my will Lord, make me want what You want.

The grinding and the pounding and the kneading of the transformation process will only make us better, in the same way that the finer you grind your flour, the more you work your dough, the more patient you are with it, allowing it to prove and improve and bake properly, the better your bread turns out. Baking bread is a slow process that requires patience: for the yeast to activate, for the gluten to develop, for the dough to rise and then bake all the way through. The fragrant result is worth it. Growing and changing from a drifting, fruitless existence to a centred (with Christ in the middle), rounded (as a loaf), fruitful one, takes patience too. The result can be the fragrance of Heaven. How can we say no?



THE INSTITUTE FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STUDIES,
CAMBRIDGE

WHERE WE ARE NOW

It is over two years since the last Newsletter - simply because the cost of printing and distribution was beyond our straitened circumstances. Meanwhile, there have been upheavals, major staff changes, financial challenges - but also some signal successes.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

Here we are still - admittedly 'on a wing and a prayer' - in our eighth remarkable year, despite no government finance, minimal support from organizations, yet buoyed up by a few generous individuals, a brace of trusts - and chiefly by yourselves, our friends and supporters.

We are the only body in the whole of Western Europe teaching the Orthodox Christian faith in English, at all adult levels and in a university setting. We are a full member of the Cambridge Theological Federation, in a major centre of influence, one of the world's premier universities. With the blessing of the various hierarchs who have responsibilities in this country, we are an important force for pan-Orthodox unity in an otherwise fragmented Church.

In the past few years, our Board of Directors has been revamped: with eleven new Directors who have wide experience in the Church, in academe, in business and in finance. Last year saw

the re-ordering of our administrative and financial systems. Our much-valued Bishop Kallistos retired as Chairman (though not as a Director) and his place was filled by the then Vice-Chairman, James Heywood. This year we have a new Principal, Professor David Frost, who has twenty-two years' experience of university governance.

In 2005 we made our first move out of our Cambridge base, teaching the Certificate course to a new and talented group of students in London. Our introductory course to the Orthodox faith, THE WAY, has been offered to large and enthusiastic audiences at the Greek and Russian Cathedrals in London, at the Antiochian Cathedral in Sydney, to a just-founded church in Singapore, and this year at churches in Cambridge and Manchester. Currently, church groups in Cardiff, Lincoln, Melbourne and Romania are planning to run the course for themselves.

This year, while maintaining our Diploma course in Cambridge, we have also markedly expanded our postgraduate intake, with students for our MA in Pastoral Theology from Belarus, Ethiopia, FYROM and Romania. Our former Graduate Assistant, Razvan Porumb, has completed his thesis for the degree with distinction and encouragement from the examiners to publish his work; our current Graduate Assistant, Tamar Gogvadze, has submitted her thesis and awaits the result. At the highest level, our

Academic Director, Dr. Marcus Plested, has brought reputation to the Institute by publishing his book on The Macarian Legacy with Oxford University Press.

HIGHLIGHTS

Our Summer Schools continue to be a noted feature: an excellent set of lectures on 'Orthodoxy and the Arts' in 2005; and a conference in 2006 on 'Orthodoxy and the World Religions' that numbered among our speakers a practising Jew, a reformist Muslim, and a former Brahmin (now a convert to Orthodoxy) who spoke about Buddhism and the Hindu faith. In 2007, we have 'The Orthodox Approach to the Bible' and speakers include Metropolitan Kallistos, Father Thomas Hopko from the States, Father Nikolai Sakharov of the Monastery of St. John the Baptist, Essex, Archimandrite Jack Khalil from the Seminary of St. John of Damascus at Balamand in the Lebanon, and (we hope) a distinguished New Testament scholar from Greece.

WHERE NEXT?

The Institute and the body that has awarded our Certificates and Diplomas, the Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education, have, after six years, agreed on 'an amicable divorce'. Cambridge continue to praise our courses and our tutors - and how could they not, seeing we draw on a faculty of lecturers from around the country that any university department of theology would be

proud to have? But government and university demands on ICE and our own needs for our students grew increasingly incompatible. We require for our students courses that can lead to a degree of the awarding body, we need understanding of the slow completion rates incident to mature students, we would like the possibility of 'distance learning', and we want church people other than those seeking qualifications to attend our courses. All these things we shall be negotiating with a new university sponsor. Meanwhile, we will offer Certificates and Diplomas in 2007-8 under our own name.

A MAJOR RE-CONSIDERATION

Our Board of Directors has taken the opportunity to re-consider how best we can serve the Orthodox Church. If you have ideas on what the Institute should be doing, please contact the chairman of the group that is looking at future directions, Father Michael Harry. Write to him at the Institute or e-mail him at: mharry@beeb.net.

THE MISSION OF THE INSTITUTE

This Palm Sunday, your Principal was invited to give an hour's lecture/meditation in the quire of Canterbury Cathedral on the Orthodox approach to Lent and Easter. Not just our own people but also other Christians are keen to know what the Orthodox Church has to offer.

We need to educate our own young people - well-disposed men and women who are drifting away from their ethnic churches toward other denominations and even to cults because they want to learn the faith and to worship in English. We need also to support and refresh our clergy, for there is no fully functioning seminary in the whole of the United Kingdom and the Institute is one of only a few places that offer fellowship, education and development.

In the wider world: if you are distressed by a declining knowledge of the Christian faith in the United Kingdom at large, if you have noticed a continuing downward drift in numbers attending church worship, if you have felt a general downheartedness and lack of spirit among the well-established Churches, above all if you have experienced what Orthodoxy has to offer and want to make it available more widely, then your hopes and ours coincide.

FUNDING THE WORK

The Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies can fulfil its mission if ordinary Christians decide that it should. Your Directors have engaged (for the first time) a professional fundraiser. We are organizing an International Appeal, with three Archbishops as joint patrons: Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain, Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Archbishop of Westminster, Car-

dinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. We have approached all our hierarchs to encourage an annual 'Education Sunday' collection in their churches on behalf of the Institute.

But 'one-off' collections and even generous single donations don't keep the Institute financially stable. Archbishop Gregorios suggests that institutions like ours are maintained by an army of small contributors: by a 'widow's mite' from ordinary people who may feel they are 'little and of no account' (to quote St. Paul) but who in his day spread Christianity throughout the known world.

If you make or were to make a standing order to your bank in favour of the Institute of, say, £25 a month (the equivalent of 12 cups of coffee out or 10 ready-made sandwiches) we could do the work. If you already donate, you might give us a 'cost of new living' increase. But even better would be to enlist the help of a couple of friends: 'You think the Institute should survive? Then I'll tell you just how to do it!'

IF WE HAD 200 STANDING ORDERS FOR £25 A MONTH, OUR INCOME WOULD BE A STAGGERING £60,000 A YEAR.

IF ALL DONORS COMPLETED A 'GIFT AID' FORM, WE COULD CLAIM FROM THE GOVERNMENT A FURTHER 28% - £16,800 - MAKING £76,800 IN ALL.

THAT IS ALMOST HALF OF OUR
PROJECTED EXPENDITURE FOR
2007-8!

I have just signed up for my £25 a
month, on the enclosed form. Will
you join me?

DAVID FROST
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23rd Apr: St. George, the Holy and
Great Martyr

25th Apr: The Holy Apostle and
Evangelist Mark

30th Apr: The Holy apostle James



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS
MONTH

1st Apr: The Palm Sunday
8th Apr: The Great and Holy
Sunday of Pascha
15th Apr: Thomas Sunday
18th Apr: The Holy Martyr John the
New of Ioannina

For the lives of Saints please visit
the Prologue of Ohrid:
www.westserbdio.org/prolog/prolog.htm
or the Calendar of the Greek
Orthodox Archdiocese of
America:
www.calendar.goarch.org



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