



St John's Church News No 24: April 2011

**РУССКАЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНАЯ ЦЕРКОВЬ
СВТ. ИОАННА ШАНХАЙСКОГО, ЧУДОТВОРЦА
ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Military Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 2AN**

**His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias
Most Rev. Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of ROCOR
Very Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain**

For this newsletter in electronic form: www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/zchurchnews.htm

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Расписание богослужений / Services in April

Saturday 2 April

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 3 April: память преп. Иоанна Лествичника / Sunday of St John of the

Ladder: 10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy Часы и Божественная литургия

Tuesday 6 April

5.30: Vigil of the Annunciation/Всенощное бдение праздника Благовещения Пресвятой Богородицы

Wednesday 7 April: The Annunciation / Благовещение Пресвятой Богородицы:

10.00: Hours and Liturgy / Божественная литургия

Saturday 9 April

No Vigil – Service of Unction at 2.00 pm with Archbishop Mark at the London Church, 57 Harvard Road, London W4 4ED. All are invited. / Всенощной не будет – все приглашаются на соборование в 2.00 в Лондонский собор, где будет служить архиепископ Марк.

Sunday 10 April: Sunday of St Mary of Egypt / память преп. Марии Египетской

10.00 Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 16 April

5.30 pm: Vigil for Palm Sunday, the Entry into Jerusalem / Всенощное бдение праздника Входа Господня в Иерусалим

Sunday 17 April: Palm Sunday / Вход Господень в Иерусалим, Вербное Воскресенье

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Great Wednesday / Великая среда 20 April

6.00 pm: Matins / Утреня

Great Thursday / Великий четверг 21 April

10.00 am Vespers and Divine Liturgy / Вечерня и Божественная литургия

6.00 pm: Matins with the Twelve Gospels / Утреня и чтение 12 Евангелий

Great Friday / Великая пятница 22 April

4.00 pm: Vespers / Вечерня с выносом Св. Плащаницы

6.00 pm: Matins with the Lamentations, Procession with the Burial Shroud / Утреня и чин погребения, крестный ход со Св. Плащаницей

Great Saturday / Великая суббота 23 April

9.30 am: Vespers and Divine Liturgy / Вечерня и Божественная литургия

23.15: Midnight Service. Procession begins at 23.45. Matins, Hours and Blessing of Food in Meeting Room at 23.00 and 01.00 a.m. Divine Liturgy /

23.15: Полунощница. Начало крестного хода в 23.45. Заутреня, пасхальные часы и освящение пасхи и куличей в церковном зале в 23.00 и в 01.00. Божественная литургия.

Пасха/Easter Sunday 24 April
The Radiant Resurrection of Christ/
Светлое Христово Воскресение

Saturday 30 April

5.30: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 31 April: Thomas Sunday / Фомино воскресенье

10.00: Hours and Liturgy. Children's Easter Procession / Божественная литургия. Детский крестный ход.

Sunday 8 May: VE Day / День победы. 12.00: Lity in front of the Memorial Cross in the presence of the Garrison Commander, Colonel Tom Fleetwood, the Right Hon. Bob Russell (MP), the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Helen Chuah, and Councillor Mike Hoggs. Reception Afterwards

Patronal Feast: Saturday 2 July
Престольный праздник: Суббота 2 июля

Births in February

2 February: To Michael and Irina Brown: Victoria

21 February: To Simon and Natasha Blackburn: Daniel and Elizabeth

Questions and Answers

How do we enter the Church?

In front of the church doors we make the sign of the cross three times, saying ‘Lord, have mercy’ to ourselves. We enter and again make the sign of the cross three times, saying ‘Lord, have mercy’. If it is the Liturgy, we buy a prosphora and put it in the basket provided, together with our lists of names or, better, our book of commemorations. Then we buy the candles that we need and go and light them in front of the icons, praying for ourselves and for those for whom we light the candles.

What do we do before and after communion?

Having asked forgiveness of those whom we have offended, read the prayers before communion or prayer rule and made our confession to God before the priest, we come to communion. Towards the end of the Liturgy, after the priest has closed the holy doors and drawn the curtain, we kiss the icon in the middle of the church and any other icons as we choose, we cross our arms right over left and come to the front of the church and wait in a queue. The newly-baptised, babies and children are first.

After the priest has opened the curtain and the holy doors and read the prayer before communion (‘I believe and I confess...’), he brings out the chalice, saying ‘With fear of God and faith draw near’. Those in the queue come up to communion at once, their arms crossed, right over left. After they have received communion, they kiss the bottom of the chalice. They do not make the sign of cross and do not kiss the priest’s hand. Then they go to drink wine and eat bread, so that they make sure that they have consumed communion and none of the Holy Blood and Precious Blood is left on their lips or in their mouths.

We now wait at the front of the church. After communion, when the priest comes out holding the chalice, saying ‘Always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages’, he blesses us with the chalice, placing it above our head. At the end of the liturgy, we should listen to the prayers after communion, if they are read in church, and we kiss the cross after the prayers after communion. If the prayers are not read in church after communion, we should read them at home.

What do we do with prosphora?

If we have bought a prosphora, either we eat it at once after the Liturgy, or else we share it with anyone who is present for whom we have prayed. We take great care not to make any crumbs, by cupping our hands under the prosphora to catch crumbs. We should be very careful that children do not make crumbs with the prosphora.

Some people keep a custom of taking the prosphora home, cutting it at once into six portions, once for each day before next Sunday We eat one portion of prosphora first thing every morning and take a sip of holy water with it. The prosphora needs to be cut into six parts on Sunday, as it will be too hard to cut later.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

A talk given by Fr Andrew in Manningtree Methodist Church on 30 March 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Orthodox Church is a family or confederation of fifteen Local Churches, as were the Churches of the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Romans, the Thessalonians, the Colossians, the Corinthians etc, as described in the letters written to them by the holy Apostle Paul. Today, the Orthodox Church worldwide numbers nearly 220 million and ranges from by far the largest, the Russian Orthodox Church with 164 million members, to the Czech and Slovak Orthodox Church with only 110,000 members. The Russian Orthodox Church, to which we belong, is spread over 62 different countries and uses nearly as many languages in her worship.

Although the Orthodox Church is nine times bigger than for instance the Church of England, it still remains very much unknown in this country. For example, although some people have heard of Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox, they have never heard of any of the other Local Orthodox Churches, for instance the Romanian Orthodox, which is much bigger than the Greek Orthodox, nor have they heard of Georgian Orthodox, Japanese Orthodox, Latvian Orthodox, Ugandan Orthodox, Chinese Orthodox or any of the other Local Orthodox Churches. And then, for some reason, many people think that Russian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox are quite different. In fact, the difference is essentially only that between, say, English Methodists, who use English, and Kenyan Methodists, who use Swahili. They are still Methodists. In other words, throughout the large and diverse family of Orthodox Churches, the Faith is the same. Only language and a few local customs vary.

Why is the Orthodox Church so unknown in the UK? Firstly, because we are a small minority in this country, with only about a quarter of a million members, about the same as the number of Methodists. However, Orthodoxy, unlike Methodism, has only been present here in numbers for a few decades. Then the Orthodox Church is multicultural and may indeed seem 'foreign' to some. For example, unlike Methodists in England, the vast majority of Orthodox Christians are not English. Finally, the Orthodox Church is much more ancient than, say, the Church of England, which, as such, was only founded some 450 years ago. Indeed, the Orthodox Church is much more ancient than the Roman Catholic Church, whose existence as such does not go back beyond the Middle Ages. For the Orthodox Church all this is very recent, for we look back to our roots not to the Second Millennium, but to the First Millennium.

ORTHODOX AND NON-ORTHODOX

Many people ask about the differences between the Orthodox Church and more recent forms of Christianity, like Catholicism or the Church of England. These both have their origins in the Orthodox Church and it is this fact which means that both Catholicism and the Church of England have many things in common with the Orthodox Church. However, it is also true that that, as they are more recent forms of Christianity, they have lost some things and they have added other things. At first sight, therefore, it may seem that the Orthodox Church is somewhere between Catholicism and Protestantism. .

In saying this, I am reminded of an elderly and very strict Romanian bishop some forty years ago attending an ecumenical gathering. In order to seem friendly to Lutherans, he blurted out: 'We Orthodox are in absolute agreement with you Protestants...against the monstrous pretensions of the Pope of Rome'. Well, of course, I think that bishop did achieve his aim of getting some sympathy from the Lutherans, but, on the other hand, he did not get much sympathy from the Catholics, and then of course, he had left unsaid everything where we do not have the same view as the Protestant world.

To highlight my point, only a few weeks after this incident, I heard the late Greek Archbishop in London, Athenagoras, rather undiplomatically telling Methodists that in order to have a dialogue with the Orthodox Church, they first needed to return to their roots - by becoming Catholics. Then they could speak to Orthodox. This must have seemed to them like an Orthodox bishop working for the Vatican.

These apparently contradictory views put forward by two different Orthodox bishops are not at all contradictory - from an Orthodox viewpoint.

Thus anyone entering an Orthodox church may at first sight think that this resembles a Catholic church - not the rather bare ones we have in England, but the ones on the Continent. On the walls we have images of Christ, of the Mother of God, of the saints and angels, we use candles and lamps, you can smell incense, we have deacons, priests, bishops, and monasteries for monks and nuns, we fast, and the devout fast very seriously.

On the other hand, when you dig a little deeper, you discover other aspects of the Orthodox Church. Thus, no bishop is the Head of the Church. The Head of the Orthodox Church is Christ Himself. Although bishops have an important role in administration and liturgy, bishops can be replaced and they are certainly not fallible. Any Orthodox bishop who said he was infallible would simply be laughed at. Councils of bishops can meet, but what they decide must first be received as a revelation of the Holy Spirit by the Body of Christ, the people, before it can be accepted.

Orthodox clergy are married, we have families. Indeed, parish churches are like families or communities. Every day we are tied together in communities by our common readings of the Scriptures which devout people read in conjunction with the common Orthodox daily prayers. Some of these readings were fixed by the Church some fifteen hundred years ago. We are reading the same Scriptures as other Orthodox, not only in different countries, but also in different centuries. The living and the departed are joined together by these common bonds.

But here again, despite the similarities between the Orthodox Church and other Christians, which are due to their inheritance, there are many things in the Orthodox Church, which are unknown to other forms of Christianity. Most importantly, for example, our understanding of God the Holy Trinity and God the Holy Spirit is different. The Orthodox teaching on these is that which was set out by the Church in the fourth century. Unlike others, we have never altered it. In the same way, our calendar is also that of the fourth century, we have a different calendar from both Pope Benedict and Ian Paisley - who share the same calendar. If only Ian Paisley knew...

Similarly, our understanding of the Gospels, our veneration of the Mother of God, our use of images or icons, our understanding of the importance of faith and works, even the layout of the church building itself, the complete absence of musical instruments, statues, stations of the cross, pews, the presence of bearded but married clergy. All of this goes back to the very first centuries of the Church. All of this gives the Orthodox Church a different understanding and perspective of Christianity.

In the Orthodox Church you will find many monasteries and convents. For example, there are over 800 of them in the Russian Church, which have nearly all re-opened since the fall of the enemy of the Church, atheist Communism, in 1991. The fall of atheism in Russia has already led to the canonisation of over 30,000 who were martyred by the atheists, including 600 bishops, and the restoration or building of nearly 25,000 churches in the last 20 years. This process of restoration is continuing and three new Russian Orthodox churches are opened somewhere in the world every day of the year. Let us look at some of this in more detail by looking at Orthodox worship.

ORTHODOX WORSHIP

Orthodox church buildings are divided into naves and sanctuaries, which represent earth and heaven. They are separated by an icon screen, called an iconostasis. The doors in it and the central curtain are opened during the services and represent the entrance into heaven. On the left and right hand sides of the Church you will see images, or icons, of favourite saints and in the middle there are candle-stands. For Orthodox Christians icons are not decorative pictures but real, spiritual presences of the saints, who are spiritual friends for us. Icons are windows to heaven, doors of perception.

According to apostolic tradition, we stand during services, since we are in the presence of Christ, though there are a few benches and chairs for children, the pregnant, the elderly or ill to rest for a moment. We do not use musical instruments in church, only the voice. Organs appeared only fairly recently, in most C of E and Catholic churches they were introduced in the nineteenth century. We also keep the original Old Testament, over 1,000 years older than that used by other Christians, we baptise by immersion, keep the original calendar, as used by the apostles, and use the original form of the cross with three bars. Orthodox services go back to apostolic times and the services in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Our main service, the communion service, is called the Liturgy. It has altered little since the first centuries and it represents the life of Christ, from His Birth to His Ascension and then Pentecost. We have the same teachings as the early Church. We have inherited all our teachings on the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God become man, the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Birth, the Mother of God, the Communion of the saints, from the Church Councils and Church Fathers of the very first centuries.

The Orthodox Church is unchanging in spirit. But that does not mean that we are a museum or always conservative. On the contrary, we are often radical, living and dynamic because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. That presence is called the Tradition, which is the whole collection of revelations of the Holy Spirit through the millennia and which continue today. To deny the Orthodox Tradition and its teachings would simply mean that we are no longer Orthodox, that is, not a member of the Orthodox Church. The Church does not change, but we change.

These words about not changing remind me of the old joke about the light-bulb. Question: 'How many Orthodox bishops does it take to change a light-bulb?' Answer: 'Why change a light-bulb?' Well, of course, if light-bulbs don't work, we do change them. But on the other hand, if they do work, why change them? In other words, if the Church is giving light, leading to holiness, then She is doing Her job, and there is no need to change, the Church is fulfilling Her role, making saints.

The only changes that we have are changes in continuity. For example, in Colchester we have a new church, new icons, some of the saints venerated there are twentieth-century saints, some of our services have been written only recently, our patron saint passed on to eternity only in 1966. However, everything new is in conformity with the Orthodox. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

The central point of the Orthodox Church Year is the Resurrection of Christ, Easter. This is far more important to us than Christmas. Christmas is the beginning, but Easter is the end, the fulfilment of Christ's Coming, and on it depend both Ascension and Pentecost. For forty days after Easter we hang out the letters 'C' and 'R' in our churches. They signify 'Christ is Risen'. They are the essence of our faith, for Christ has defeated death. Sometimes I hear Non-Orthodox talking about the importance of the Cross. Orthodox talk rather about the importance of the Resurrection, the Cross was only the stage necessary to reach the Resurrection. Otherwise we would have the impression that everything stopped on Good Friday. An Orthodox Easter card does not have the mournful image of the Cross on it, but rather the image of Christ Risen out of the tomb in glory. As the Apostle Paul said: 'And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain' (I Cor. 15, 14).

OUR LOCAL CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

There are three categories of Orthodox church in this country. Firstly, there are the cathedrals and large parish churches, which are virtually all in London. These are Greek Cypriot, Russian, Romanian and Serbian. Average Sunday attendance here may be between 500 and 1,000. At Easter it can be 5,000 or more. It is rare that they use any English in their services. Each such church will be served by a group of clergy, two, three or more, and there may be daily services.

Secondly, there are the churches in provincial towns, for example in this area, in Colchester, Cambridge and Norwich. In such towns there are usually two churches, one Russian, the other Greek, Romanian, Serbian or Arabic. One, either the Greek or the Russian for example, is bigger, with between 50 and 200 attending on Sundays and it may be permanent, having its own premises and facilities, hall, kitchen toilets, office and services on weekdays. The other is small, perhaps with a flock of only 10 to 30, and with only temporary, borrowed premises.

Finally, there are the mission chapels. These may exist in small towns or villages, set up in a borrowed church, a spare room or even in a shed. Generally they use only English and the flock may be very small, fewer than ten, consisting of a non-stipendiary priest, his family and two or three individuals. These often lack stability and a service may only take place occasionally.

Colchester is a provincial town, though St John's Orthodox Church in Military Road is the largest wooden Church in the UK and built at the highest point in Colchester proper. It was formerly the Garrison or Camp Church – once called 'the most important military building in Colchester'. It was built in 1855, measures 6,500 square feet, 650 square metres, and once had seating for 900. In April 2007, just after its 150th anniversary, it closed and was emptied of almost all its contents. It was sold to the developer Taylor Wimpey, as part of the redevelopment of the old Garrison. As part of a job lot, Taylor Wimpey's only wish was to get rid of the Church, but it was hampered by the conditions set by English Heritage and Colchester Borough Council.

Many feared the Church would be burned down by a developer, be vandalised or simply fall into ruin. When we heard about the then empty Church in April 2007, we were very interested, since we had been looking for permanent premises in the area since 1997 – ten years. We were only allowed to visit it in January 2008. The problem then was we had only £4,000 in our account to make a tender for the Church. So we launched an Internet appeal and within six weeks we had received pledges of £180,000. 90% of the pledges came from English Orthodox, with smaller sums from Orthodox in Belgium, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, most exotically, Venezuela and Alaska.

Therefore, in March 2008, we were able to make a tender, together, surprisingly, with only three other interested parties. To our amazement, in May 2008 we heard that out of the four tenders, ours had been accepted. We then had to wait for four months to obtain the keys, as it was legally very complex to take over ex-MoD property. Everything was 'top secret', including the names of the gas and electricity suppliers. So in September 2008 we became legal owners of an emptied shell, much to the relief of Taylor Wimpey, who told us that we were 'the answer to their prayers'. They did not know that they were the answer to our prayers of eleven years standing.

From that moment on, we began a programme of refurbishment, which cost us £120,000 in all. Everything had to be repaired and refurbished. Church members painted, using nearly 40 gallons of paint, and washed, and three professional carpenters worked there every day for ten weeks. Also two tons of grass and weeds were removed from the gardens, which Taylor-Wimpey had allowed to run wild. The gas heating was finally reconnected, the Church was carpeted where necessary. We scraped and washed the floor, revealing large amounts of army chewing gum, increasing towards the back of the Church. There was a lot of work. The Church was blessed and the first services held there at the end of November 2008.

At present we have 240 regular parishioners of seventeen different nationalities. We use two languages in particular in our services, one is Slavonic, similar to Russian, and the other is English, the common language. We also use some Romanian and Greek. In principle, as we alternate which parts of the service we do in which language, an English person can come two Sundays running and hear the whole service, or liturgy, in English. A typical parishioner is aged between 20 and 40, is single or else married with small children and lives in Colchester or in our catchment area which spreads as far as Felixstowe, Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury, Bishops Stortford, Braintree, Clacton, Chelmsford, Southend and villages inbetween.

CONCLUSION

To summarise what has been said this evening, I would like to come back to a word which I mentioned earlier: Community. When I hear that word in an Orthodox context, I often think of Fr George. He was a Russian priest in London who passed away nearly forty years ago. One day he was travelling on a train and met a very ardent but very young Protestant man, who asked him what his name was. When he answered 'Fr George', the young man replied: 'I cannot possibly call you 'Father', because it is against the Gospel'. So Fr George answered: 'Well, in that case, you can call me 'Daddy'.

That may seem a superficial anecdote, but in fact, it contains much truth. In the Russian Orthodox Church, for example, the word used to address the parish priest is precisely 'Daddy', and the priest's wife is called 'Mummy'. This does sum up the whole feeling in the Orthodox Church. We are a family. Here we are together with our ancestors, our families, our friends, and among them, the saints, who are also our intimate friends. In some cases they are even related to us. They are our family and we ask the saints to pray for us in our needs, just as we ask our friends to pray for us. It is the same thing. It is the same family.

If you looked in our meeting-room in our church, you would find there among the photographs, photos of three of our parishioners who passed away a few years ago. They are there because we remember them, because they are with us and we are with them. In the Church we live together and we are saved together, we are an extended family, a community. We live together because our Orthodox Christian Faith is a way of life, not an idea or a philosophy to bother people with. Our way of life is patterned by the daily Gospel and Epistle readings, by the saints of the Church calendar, from all ages, and from all climes, by the seasons of the Church services and the customs attached to them.

Иаcxa

Событие Воскресения Христова — самый большой и светлый христианский праздник. Этот праздник еще называют Пасхой, то есть Днем, в который совершилось наше переходение от смерти — к жизни и от земли — к Небу.

Христос воскрес! — и для всего мироздания началась истинная весна, светлое, радостное утро новой жизни. Воскресение Господа Иисуса — первая действительная победа жизни над смертью. Вот как это было:

По прошествии субботы, ночью, на третий день после Своих страданий и смерти, Господь Иисус Христос силою Своего Божества ожил, то есть воскрес из мертвых. Тело Его, человеческое, преобразилось. Он вышел из гроба, не отвалив камня, не нарушив синедрионовой печати, и невидимый для стражи. С этого момента воины, сами не зная того, охраняли пустой гроб.

Вдруг сделалось великое землетрясение; с небес сошел Ангел Господень. Он, приступив, отвалил камень от двери гроба Господня и сел на нем. Вид его был как молния, и одежда его бела, как снег. Воины, стоявшие на страже у гроба, пришли в трепет и стали, как мертвые, а потом, очнувшись от страха, разбежались.

В этот день (первый день недели), как только кончился субботний покой, весьма рано, на рассвете, Мария Магдалина, Мария Иаковлева, Иоанна, Саломия и другие женщины, взяв приготовленное благовонное миро, пошли ко гробу Иисуса Христа, чтобы помазать тело Его, так как они не успели этого сделать при погребении. (Женщин этих Церковь именует мироносицами). Они еще не знали, что ко гробу Христову приставлена стража и вход в пещеру запечатан. Потому они не ожидали кого-нибудь там встретить и говорили между собою: «Кто отвалит нам камень от двери гроба?» Камень же был очень велик.

Мария Магдалина, опередив остальных женщин-мироносиц, первая пришла ко гробу. Еще не рассветало, было темно. Мария, увидев, что камень отвален от гроба, сразу же побежала к Петру и Иоанну и говорит: «Унесли Господа из гроба, и не знаем, где положили Его». Услышав такие слова, Петр и Иоанн тотчас побежали ко гробу. Мария Магдалина последовала за ними.

В это время подошли ко гробу остальные женщины, шедшие с Марией Магдалиной. Они увидели, что камень отвален от гроба. И когда остановились, вдруг увидели светозарного Ангела, сидящего на камне. Ангел, обращаясь к ним, сказал: «Не бойтесь, ибо знаю, что вы ищете Иисуса распятого. Его нет здесь; Он воскрес, как сказал еще будучи с вами. Подойдите, посмотрите место, где лежал Господь. А потом пойдите скорее и скажите ученикам Его, что Он воскрес из мертвых».

Они вошли внутрь гроба (пещеры) и не нашли тела Господа Иисуса Христа. Но, взглянув, увидели Ангела в белой одежде, сидящего справа от места, где был положен Господь; их объял ужас.

Ангел же говорит им: «Не ужасайтесь. Иисуса ищете Назарянина распятого. Он воскрес. Его нет здесь. Вот место, где Он был положен. Но идите, скажите ученикам Его и Петру (который своим отречением отпал от числа учеников), что Он встретит вас в Галилее, там вы Его увидите, как Он сказал вам».

Когда же женщины стояли в недоумении, вдруг снова пред ними явились два Ангела в блистающих одеждах. Женщины в страхе преклонили лица свои к земле.

Ангелы сказали им: «Что вы ищете живого между мертвыми? Его нет здесь: Он воскрес; вспомните, как Он говорил вам, когда был еще в Галилее, говоря, что Сыну Человеческому надлежит быть предану в руки грешных людей, и быть распяту, и в третий день воскреснуть».

Пасхальная служба начинается в полночь с субботы на воскресенье; вся она исполнена духовной радости и ликования. Вся она — торжественный гимн Светлому Христову Воскресению, примирению Бога и человека, победе жизни над смертью.

Праздник Пасхи каждый год совершается в разные числа месяца и время его празднования «переходит» по своей дате, но всегда приходится на воскресный день. Все праздники, связанные календарно с Пасхой (а это Вербное Воскресение, Пасха, Вознесение и Троица) тоже меняют свою дату и называются переходящими или подвижными. Другие двенадцатые праздники (Рождество Христово, Крещение, Сретенье и др.) имеют постоянную дату и называются неподходящими или неподвижными.

В ПОИСКАХ ВОЛШЕБНОЙ КНОПКИ

К нам приехал с «сеансами» вычитки отец N. Он уже был лет десять назад, и храм, вмещающий до трех тысяч народу, тогда буквально ломился от публики. Как будто в захолустную провинцию явился цирк «Дю Солей». Народ валом валил на «церковное шоу». Я не касаюсь сейчас самого чина, но только говорю о том нездоровом ажиотаже, который сопровождал эти молебны. Духота, жара, вопли, стоны, крики болящих, плач детей, толчея, обмороки и... пополнение епархиальной казны за счет продажи «билетиков счастья». Когда я высказал сомнения по поводу действенности подобных массовых мероприятий, кто-то

возразил мне: «Как же, ведь и Господь говорил в Евангелии, обращаясь к ученикам: "Бесов изгоняйте"». Но никто почему-то не вспомнил, о чем Господь говорит дальше: «Даром приняли, даром давайте». Но я сейчас даже не об этом хотел поговорить, а об одном распространенном заблуждении.

В последние дни у меня состоялось несколько встреч, подобных следующей:

– Батюшка, благословите к отцу N пойти на вычитку.

– А вы что, страдаете беснованием? Хрюкаете, лааете, может быть, пену выпускаете?

– Да нет... Но, знаете, мне кажется, у меня порча...

– Ладно... допустим, «порча». А вы не пытались понять: почему Господь попустил такому случиться и что вам нужно делать для того, чтобы от этой беды избавиться? Вы исповедовались когда-нибудь?

– Нет.

– Причащались?

– Нет.

– Так как же вы хотите, чтобы Господь вам помог, если вы сами ничего для этого не делаете?!

Ведь нам помогает не какой-нибудь «батюшка», не «особый чин» или «молитовка», а Сам Господь, если только мы Его слушаем. Христос так и говорит: «Что вы зовете меня: Господи, Господи! – и не делаете того, что Я говорю» (Лк. 6: 46). То есть нужно не только верить в Бога, но и знать свою православную веру, читать Евангелие, исполнять заповеди, молиться дома и в храме, соблюдать посты... Вроде бы простые вещи, но если мы и этого не соблюдаем, тогда возникает вопрос: а что дает нам право называться православными? Вера? Но вера без дел мертва есть. И если шофер путает педали газа и тормоза – он не шофер, как бы он ни называл себя сам. И столяр, который не знает, чем циркулярка отличается от фрезы, – не столяр. Мы все понимаем, что в жизни нужно соответствовать своему званию. Вот и православные люди должны соблюдать какие-то элементарные условия христианской жизни. И не только внешние условия, но и внутренние, главные из которых – любовь к Богу, стремление к Нему, желание жить по Его правде... Тогда благодать Божия помогает нам правильно строить жизнь, защищает от многих напастей и содействует в преодолении трудностей, без которых жизнь любого человека, не только христианина, невозможна.

Люди приходят на вычитку, полагая, что им «подпортили ауру», что им нужно «подчиститься», защититься от завистников... И лучшим средством в решении этих «астральных напастей» они считают какой-то особенный «чин». Да и в другие дни самые популярные вопросы в храме: «Какую молитву читать? Какому святому молиться? Какую службу заказать?» – свидетельствуют о том, что люди ищут какие-то действенные, но внешние, «разовые» средства, чтобы избавиться от тех или иных неприятностей.

И дело не в отце N, которого у меня нет никаких оснований подозревать в чем бы то ни было, и не в тех несчастных, которые в самом деле страдают от злых духов. Проблема в нашей общей расположенности искать разрешения от бед в волшебной «молитовке», «иконке», «обряде», «дедушке» – словом, в волшебной кнопке, на которую можно было бы нажать без особых хлопот, чтобы все встало на свои места.

Но нет в Церкви такой волшебной кнопки, и невозможно разом избавиться от проблем, возникших в результате долгой греховной жизни, неправильного отношения к Богу, к своей душе, к ближним. А значит, нужно последовательно и целенаправленно менять свою жизнь. И для этого необходим труд повседневный и постоянный, о чем и говорит Господь: «Царство Небесное силою берется, и употребляющие усилие восхищают его» ([Мф. 11: 12](#)).

Почему на вопрос о том, какие существуют заповеди, 80% крещеных людей отвечают не сговариваясь: «Не убий, не укради»? Почему называют именно шестую и восьмую заповеди Ветхого Завета? Не первую, не третью, не десятую?.. Я долго размышлял над этим и пришел к любопытному выводу: из всех заповедей человек выбирает те, для исполнения которых ему **ничего не надо делать**. «Я не убил, не украл – я отличный парень, и оставьте меня в покое!» А седьмую заповедь «Не прелюбодействуй» знаете, почему пропускают? Да очень «неудобная» в наше распутное время заповедь. Вот и обманывает себя человек, выбирая из закона Божиего только то, что ему удобно, и попирая сознательно или неосознанно то, что мешает ему жить по-своему. Юристы говорят, что незнание закона не освобождает от ответственности. Это верно и в отношении духовной жизни, и именно потому, что знание (или незнание) закона всецело зависит от нас, от нашего доброго или худого произволения.

Нарушая заповеди, человек ведь не Бога оскорбляет даже. Бог свят и поругаем не бывает. Но человек калечит собственную жизнь и жизнь своих близких, потому что заповеди – это не какие-то кандалы: вот, мол, и так жизнь трудная, а тут еще какие-то заповеди нужно соблюдать! Нет, все не так. Заповеди Божии – это именно условия нормальной, полноценной, здоровой и радостной жизни для всякого человека. И если человек эти заповеди нарушает, он вредит, прежде всего, себе и своим близким.

До сих пор люди, приходящие в храм, ссылаются на пресловутую «советскую власть», когда «нас не учили», хотя этой самой власти нет уже 20 лет. И

возможностей для познания собственной веры сейчас более чем достаточно. Нужно только понять, что вера – это не какое-то приложение к жизни, а ее основание, фундамент, то, на чем мы с Божией помощью строим свою вечность. И другого времени для этого строительства, кроме кратких дней земной жизни, не будет. Только бы не быть равнодушными!

«По вере вашей да будет вам», – говорит Господь. Так неужели те духовные средства единения с Богом, которые нам предлагает Церковь: исповедь, причастие, пост, молитва, соблюдение заповедей, – неужели эти средства недостаточны для решения самых острых проблем, неужели что-то может быть еще выше и действеннее святых таинств?! Да ведь и прямо кощунственно так думать. Но вот, привычка, маловерие делают и величайшие таинства для нас чем-то привычным и бездейственным. И причина тому – в нашей расслабленности, в нашем самоволии, в нежелании понимать и принимать волю Божию. И тогда начинаются поиски заветных «молитовок», особых «иконок», «святых на разные случаи», магических «старчиков»...

Только мы забываем, что скорби случаются с нами даже не для того, чтобы мы от них мгновенно избавились, а чтобы с их помощью смогли понять что-то важное, относящееся к вечной жизни вечной души; и не будь этих скорбей, мы бы никогда не изменились. Мы думаем о земном, меряем все мерками житейского интереса, но все-таки давайте помнить слова Господа, реченные через пророка: «Как небо выше земли, так пути Мои выше путей ваших, и мысли Мои выше мыслей ваших» (Ис. 55: 9). И вместо того чтобы лезть из кожи, осуществляя свои планы, давайте хоть иногда смиренно молчать всем сердцем, вслушиваясь в «Божии мысли», а затем и просить сил для их исполнения, стараясь следовать «Его путями». И для этого нам вовсе не нужна волшебная кнопка.

[Священник Дмитрий Шишкин](http://www.pravoslavie.ru/put/44395.htm)
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