



# BASILDON ORTHODOX COMMUNITY BULLETIN

All Saints Church North Benfleet

No. 14 ~ DECEMBER 2016



## NATIVITY / NEW YEAR PERIOD: HOLY SERVICES

### December 2016:

Fri 23rd 10:30 - Royal Hours

Sat 24th 09:30 - Orthros

00000000 10:30 - Divine Liturgy *followed by Nativity Esperinos*

Sun 25th 09:30 - Orthros

00000000 10:30 - Divine Liturgy

Sat 31st 15:00 - Esperinos \_ [ note: earlier time ]

### January 2017:

Sun 1st 09:30 - Orthros

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00000000 10:30 - Divine Liturgy

Sun 8th 09:30 - Orthros

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00000000 10:30 - Divine Liturgy *followed by Great Blessing of Waters*

**Μετα φόβου Θεου, πίστεως και αγάπης προσελθετε.  
With fear of God, faith and love, draw near.**

Beloved Christians,

2016 has been another year of struggles, minor successes, and many tears, for all of which we give all thanks and all glory to God! As this year ends let us keep in mind that Christ the Lord has not only been born for us who believe. Christ has been born for everyone. He has come for the sake of everyone and everything. He has come for the world and every creature in it, for the solar system, for the universe. . . In coming He restores and reorders and divinizes the entire *kosmos*, all creation - for everyone and for everything. Christians of right-belief and worship are not to remain passive onlookers. In celebrating the Coming of God to Man, we are called to go forth, that we might put off the old man and put on the new; and that, as we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ, being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and, God willing, *rising with Him*. St. Ephrem the Syrian writes: "In Bethlehem did King David put on fine linen, / but David's Lord and Son / hid His glory there in swaddling clothes. / These same swaddling clothes / provided a robe of glory for mankind". (*Nativity*, 5:4) Let us always strive to be made worthy of the robe of glory.

I pray that you and your loved ones all enjoy a *demanding* (= blessed!) Nativity Fast, and a very blessed and solemn (= joyous!) Feast of the Birth According to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In Xp,

the sinner and unworthy priest, Jakob

## **ARCHDIOCESAN CONFERENCE 2017**

The theme of the 2017 conference is 'The Ordering of Divine Worship'. This will be an opportunity to strengthen our worship of God and our love for our Bishop and the clergy. The conference will take place at Swanwick (Derbyshire) on 29<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017. Application forms/programme are available.

## **ON FAITH**

Christ said: *Do not let your heart be troubled. Have faith in God. Have faith also in me. [ . . . ] Believe me that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me; or else believe me on account of my works themselves.* (Jn. 14: 1; 11)

Man was created to have faith in God. Not to believe in God is a perversion of human nature and the cause of all evils. The weakness and absence of faith in God is rooted in sin, impurity and pride. It is never simply the result of an intellectual mistake or mental confusion. It is always the result of the suppression of Truth through wickedness, the exchange of God's Truth for a lie, the refusal, consciously or unconsciously, to acknowledge God with honour and thanksgiving. (*cf.* Rom. 1) Without faith in Christ nothing is possible or profitable in the spiritual life: 'Whoever remains in me and I in him

bears much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing.’ (Jn. 15:5) Faith itself is a ‘gift of God’ given to all and accepted by the poor in spirit and the pure in heart, who are open to the activity of God in their lives. (Eph. 2:8)

The spiritual person, the person of prayer, knows that he does all things ‘by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and who gave Himself for me.’ (Gal. 2:20) True Faith is a virtue, and the foundation of all Christian virtues (righteousness, *etc.*) and of life itself. Faith in God is the ‘personal foundation of all things hoped for’, (Heb. 11:1) and is therefore the foundation of all the saints. The prototype of the saint, of the believer in God is Abraham, the father of Israel. The promise to Abraham and his ‘descendants’ (= spiritual descendants = Christians of true belief and worship) that they should inherit the world did not come through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. (Gen. 15:6)

Faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, in Him who rose from the dead, is the central fact of the Christian life and the foundation of the Church. (Mt. 16:16) Faith in Christ-God is the source of all wisdom, power and virtue. It is the means by which man can know and do *all things*, for ‘all things are possible to the one who believes’. (Mk. 9:23; cf. Mt. 17:20)

To him who denies Christ all things are foolish. Where someone lacks faith in man’s abilities for goodness and Truth, he also lacks faith in God: ‘for the fool has said in his heart, there is no God.’ (Ps. 13:1; 52:1) But genuine faith is never a blind leap in the dark, it is not an irrational acceptance of the unreasonable and the absurd, but is always eminently reasonable- for it is a return to man’s original (created) condition. Faith is rooted and grounded in man’s reasonable nature as made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27) Not to believe, according to the scriptures and the saints, is the epitome of absurdity and foolishness. Neither those of ‘lukewarm’ faith nor those who do not accept Christ *as God* are ‘Christian’ in any real sense - the latter are not in any way *true disciples* of Christ; such unfaithful ones shall ultimately be rejected by God. (Mt. 7:23, Lk. 13:27; Apok. 3:15-17)

~~~~~ ~ Fr. Jakob

## ON THE HEART ~ ST. MAKARIOS THE GREAT

*The heart itself is only a small vessel,  
yet dragons are there, and lions;  
there are poisonous beasts  
and all the treasures of evil;  
there are rough and uneven roads;  
there are precipices;  
but there, too, is God and the angels;  
life is there, and the Kingdom;  
there, too is light, and there the apostles,  
and heavenly cities, and treasures of grace.  
All things lie within that little space.*

## WORDS OF LIFE

*Let Eve today rejoice in Sheol,  
for her daughter's Son  
has come down as the Medicine of Life  
to revive His mother's mother.*

~ St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Nativity*, 13:2.

*. . .humbly accept what God has revealed, and do not be curious about what God  
has hidden.* ~ St. John Chrysostom

*'What do you do in the monastery?' a guest asked an old monk. And the elder  
replied, 'We fall down and we get up. We fall down and we get up . . .'*

*God: an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere.*

*God: the sphere which has as many circumferences as points.*

~ from *Liber xxiv Philosophorum*, 2 and 18.

*'I serve God' means  
I plunge in a deep river  
And surrender to its flow*

~ Mattheos Moundes, from *The Retaliation*

*Without temptations, it is not possible to learn the wisdom of the Spirit. It is not  
possible that Divine love be strengthened in your soul. Before temptations, a man  
prays to God as a stranger. When temptations are allowed to come by the love of  
God, and he does not give in to them, then he stands before God as a sincere  
friend. For in fulfilling the will of God, he has made war on the enemy of God and  
conquered him.* ~ St. Isaak the Syrian, *Homilies*, 5.

*if you want to converse with the invisible presence,  
continual, sustained, indwelling, be lost,  
be abandoned, so that the heart, the mind, as big  
as God, come to the place where you are lost*

~ Tryfon Tolides, from 'Calling' (unpublished poem)

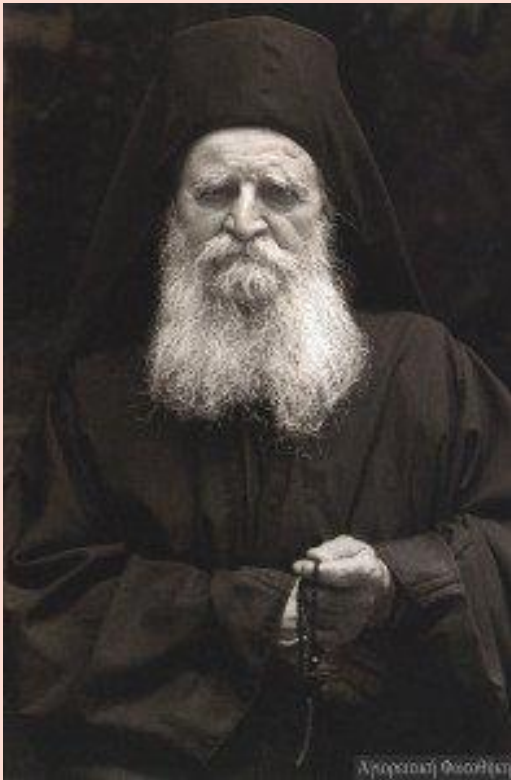
*Through the Jesus Prayer we aim at drawing Jesus Christ into our heart when we  
say, 'Lord Jesus Christ Son of God!'; and when we say, 'have mercy on me, a sinner!'  
we drive out the passions and sins which are there in our heart. .*

~ Elder Dionysios [Ignat]

*Whoever wants to become a Christian must first become a poet. That's what it is!  
You must love and suffer - Suffer for the one you love. Love makes effort for the  
loved one. She runs all through the night; she stays awake; she stains her feet with  
blood in order to meet her beloved. She makes sacrifices and disregards all  
impediments, threats and difficulties for the sake of the loved one. Love towards  
Christ is something even higher, infinitely higher. . . When you love Christ you exert  
yourself, but in blessed exertions. You suffer, but with joy. You make prostrations  
and pray because these are the things you crave with divine craving. .*

~ St. Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia (*Wounded by Love*, pp. 107-108).

## THE GIFT OF HOLY TEARS ~ ELDER XARALAMPOS DIONYSIOTES



*If you don't see Christ with the eyes of your soul when you pray, you haven't learned to pray. If only you knew what it is to see Christ with your eyes. . .  
As soon as you see Him, you're filled with indescribable joy. Yet you're overcome with an overwhelming feeling of awe, so that your legs fold involuntarily, you fall on your face before Him and you stay there, in ecstasy, sobbing unceasingly. What can you say there, in the presence of God? You simply wonder, you're shattered and you weep constantly. I'm telling you, it wasn't one day or two, it was three months I couldn't stop my tears. That sweetest of yearnings just burns you up. Try as you will, you can't help yourself. . .  
After three months, the tears grew less, but the memory never faded . . ."*

### From a HOMILY on LUKE 10:25-37

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho leads down just as Christ's road also leads down: down from heaven to earth, down into the womb of His most Holy Mother, down into the cave of His birth, down into the waters of Baptism, down into our pitiful human condition, down into the tomb, down into Hades. But Christ's road is a paradoxical one for us to follow, for as we descend in humility we ascend to resurrection and to salvation and to union with God. The road to eternal life is a narrow Way but we must never force it to become so narrow that we cannot share it with another person whom we call neighbour, friend and brother. [ Fr. Jakob, Sun. 12/11/16. ]

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EMAIL: [orthodox.basildon@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:orthodox.basildon@hotmail.co.uk)

TEL: 01702-305527

WEBSITE: [www.orthodoxbasildon.org.uk](http://www.orthodoxbasildon.org.uk)

+ GLORY TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS +