

THE NARTHEX

The believers were first called Christians at Antioch

ACTS. 9:26

November-December 2013

The Orthodox Church of St. Dunstan of Canterbury, Poole
The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Great Britain and Ireland
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East
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Patience



In a recent homily on Sunday I mentioned the story of the creation of the famous Lee and Perrin's Worcester sauce. The recipe for the condiment was brought back from India at the beginning of the 19th Century. When Lee and Perrin concocted the first batch, the results were deeply disappointing, so it was abandoned in a cellar for a number of years. Coming across what they had made after about a decade they bravely ventured to taste the sauce again and this time were very pleasantly surprised at the results and Worcester sauce has been a feature of British dining tables ever since. The point being, of course, that Lee and Perrin had to let their product mature over time before it became edible, like fine wines that cannot be drunk too young.

Waiting with patience in order to reach maturity is not just a virtue in condiment production, nor even in growing up but also in the spiritual life in Christ. It is a feature of some forms of Christianity that value sudden conversion experiences

as the only way to find Christ, that they assume, as they will surely tell you, that they *know the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour* and that they are now *saved*. They will no doubt, cite the example of the conversion of the Blessed Apostle, Paul, forgetting that, as a special case, he had been chosen by Christ as an apostle to the gentiles and, moreover - as he tells us himself - spent three years in Arabia before going up to Jerusalem. In other words, although one might turn to Christ in an instant, spiritual growth is a slow and time-consuming process requiring effort and patience. In fact, it is something that we are indeed incapable of completing were it not that we cooperate with God's grace. This is what we call synergy; it is why we need to receive the Holy Mysteries, for without grace we cannot be saved by our own efforts. In this fallen world we require a hand up out of our state, having lost the likeness of God through sin.

On 15th November we begin the Nativity Fast. Like all our ascetic struggles, it is a part of the process of maturation, the spiritual growth through the stripping away of the Old Adam; a taking up of the Cross and a letting go of the things we imagine (through worldly beguilement) to be important to us in this life. Many of us may well feel that our spiritual warfare entails the occasional victory but so many daily defeats. But the answer to this is always the same: if we sin in the same old ways daily, then we must repent daily and continue

repenting daily with patience, awaiting our maturing. Falling a thousand times a day, we repent a thousand times and through a good will to press on and strive, through the virtue of patience, even if we have to force ourselves, we battle on until the grace of God transforms what we are.

The point of all this is not just our own salvation. In the Parable of the Sower those who receive the seed in good soil bring forth fruit. It is in the very nature of any fruit to bear seed in turn. And that is the point: as we mature, as we bear fruit for the Kingdom of God, we broadcast seed into other soil and those who receive within an honest heart will bear fruit in their turn. As St. Seraphim taught, acquire the Holy Spirit and a thousand around you will be saved.

But all this requires patient endurance on the part of the people of God. This lesson is evident in the Holy Scriptures themselves. God's old people, the ancient Hebrews, wandered for forty years in the wilderness learning the ways of the Torah, God's commandments. They had to endure invasions and conquests by enemies, even years in Babylonian exile. And they had to wait patiently for the coming of the Messiah and most of them were not ready to receive Him when he came. As we approach the feast of the Nativity once again, we can



learn once again the old lessons of patience. Indeed, waiting is an integral part of our ascetic approach in preparing for the feast. This salutary message is clearly illustrated by its very opposite: the saturnalian excesses in which the rest of the world might indulge at this time of year, are evidently anticipated earlier and earlier as they partake with childish impatience in the spirit of Yuletide. - you might spot which of your neighbours is the first to over-decorate their houses, even perhaps, before we have begun the fast!

We cannot be surprised by any of this. Pushed by the commercial imperative to spend as much as possible and divorced from the very theological beliefs that underpin our feast, they are doing something else. Meanwhile, we shall wait and endure with prayer and fasting and sobriety and with watchfulness over our souls, shall, like bottles of Lee & Perrin's Worcester sauce, continue to mature in soul and spirit.

Fr. Chrysostom

It has been suggested that we might start a kind of Sunday school for the little children in the congregation. This would take place during the first part of the Divine Liturgy on Sundays in the hall. Anyone who might like to help organise this should see Fr. Chrysostom in the first instance. [Parents may be assured that our Deanery has always had a proper child protection policy and carries out all necessary checks.]

Statement by the Secretariat of Holy Synod of Antioch at Balamand, The Lebanon

The Holy Synod of Antioch held its second session from October 15th through 17th, 2013. His Beatitude,

Patriarch JOHN X presided over the meeting, with the participation of their Eminences, the Metropolitans and Fathers of the Holy Synod of Antioch.

The Synod Fathers discussed the state of the Archdiocese of Europe which became vacant with the election of His Beatitude to the See of Antioch. They recognized that this Archdiocese had a growing number of parishes, a widespread territory, a multiplicity of languages used within its territory, and the increasing number of parishioners. All these factors require the reconsideration of its territorial boundaries in order to have an effective pastoral care. They decided to establish three new Archdioceses and a Patriarchal Vicariate in Europe as follows: the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of France, Western and Southern Europe; the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Germany and Central Europe; the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of British Isles and Ireland; the Antiochian Orthodox Vicariate of Sweden and Scandinavian countries. They elected the following Metropolitans: Ignatius (Al Houshi), Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of France, Western and Southern Europe; and Isaac (Barakat), Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Germany and Central Europe. They also delegated the Patriarch to appoint a Patriarchal Vicar over the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of British Isles and Ireland, until a Metropolitan is elected.



SERVICES

Vespers is normally served on Saturday's at 5.00pm in the Saints of Britain chapel. Fr. Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards. The *Proskomedie* is served at 9.0am and *Orthros* before the Liturgy at 9.30am.

November

Sun 3rd 19th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Sun 10th 20th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Fri 15th Start of the Nativity Fast

Sun 17th 21st after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Thurs 21st The Entry of the Theotokos



Sat 23rd No Vespers
Sun 24th 22nd after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

December

Sun 1st 23rd after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Sun 8th 24th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Sun 15th The Holy Ancestors
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Sun 22nd Sunday before Nativity
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Wed 25th The Feast of the Holy Nativity
Orthros 8.00am
Divine Liturgy 9.00am

Sun 29th Sunday after Nativity
Divine Liturgy 10.30 am