

# **St John's Church News No 22: February 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](http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/zchurchnews.htm)  
Расписание богослужений / Services in February**

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## **Расписание богослужений / Services in February**

### **Saturday 5 February**

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

### **Sunday 6 February: The New Martyrs and Confessors / Память святых НОВОМУЧЕНИКОВ И ИСПОВЕДНИКОВ РОССИЙСКИХ.**

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

### **Saturday 12 February**

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

### **Sunday 13 February: The Publican and the Pharisee / Мытарь и Фарисей**

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy

**Monday 14 February**

Vigil / Всенощное бдение

**Tuesday 15 February: The Meeting of the Lord / Сретение Господне**

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy

**Saturday 19 February**

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

**Sunday 20 February: The Prodigal Son / Блудный сын**

10.00 Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

**Saturday 26 February**

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

**Sunday 27 February: Sunday of the Last Judgement / Неделя о Страшном суде.**

**Meatfare Sunday / Масленица**

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

**Wedding in January**

Yuriy and Tatiana Sverekov

**Baptism in January**

22 January: Victoria Mateychuk

**Births in December and January**

30 December: To Mary and Andrey Kisliakov: George

12 January: To Nadia and Mike Bell: Anthony Michael

**Сердечно поздравляем! Warmest Congratulations!**

**December 2010 Report on St John's Russian Orthodox Church, Colchester.**

**Introduction**

St John's Orthodox Church stands just outside Colchester town centre, fifty minutes by train from Liverpool Street Station in London. On a site of nearly one acre and at the highest point in the town (33 metres), it is the largest wooden church in the UK. Originally Colchester Garrison Church, it opened in 1856 and was closed in April 2007. As such, St John's Orthodox Church, which used to have seating for 900, has an area of 650 square metres (6,500 square feet).

After a lengthy and complex process, in September 2008 we bought this disused Church for the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. This was thanks to the generous gift of £180,000 from the many benefactors who responded to our Internet appeal, which was launched in January 2008. Between September and November 2008 we had the 800 square metres of the Church, chapel, meeting room and office, and the separate St John's Hall, converted for Orthodox use, being entirely refurbished and equipped for Orthodox worship.

Many parishioners worked very hard on this, although the heavier and more complex work was carried out by several local enterprises. The cost of purchase and of all this work, together with the acquisition from Moldova of the widest iconostasis in this country (15 metres), came to approximately £157,500. The main Church was dedicated to St John of Shanghai, who was responsible for our Diocese between 1951 and 1963, and the chapel was dedicated to All the Saints of these Isles.

Over the next two years further improvements and other minor repairs, at the time not urgent or else not apparent, were made. These cost another £12,500. It can therefore be said that the Church was 'finished' only in November 2010, at a total cost of £170,000. These improvements were as follows.

### **Improvements and Repairs**

- a. In September 2009 six wooden icon-shrines which had been made for six large icons were mounted on pillars in the Church.
- b. In November 2009 fourteen large canvas frescoes were made and fixed to the walls.
- c. Also in November 2009 four large oil radiators were bought.
- d. In January 2010 six different coloured sets of deacon's vestments were bought.
- e. On account of the weight of thawing snow sliding from the roof in January 2010, guttering came away from the side of the Church roof in two places. Also in early February, an attempt was made to steal lead ridging on top of the meeting-room. This failed because the lead had been sealed. Necessary repairs were carried out in February.
- f. In February 2010 the vents in the roof were covered with breathable membrane, allowing ventilation but making sure that snow, rain, leaves and insects could never get in. The Church became much, much warmer as a result. We now have to switch the heating off, as it gets too warm!
- g. Also in February tree surgeons pruned the 105-foot high lime-tree in the Church gardens.
- h. Following an enquiry we had made, in March 2010 EDF confirmed that our electricity supply was not up to standard. It was modernised, at no cost to ourselves, giving us a 100 amp supply.

i. Also in March the chapel door, which had been damaged in January, was repaired, the front Church doors were planed, making it easier to open them, and a rotten window-sill on the Hall repaired. Later the kitchen door of the Hall was repaired and four other repairs to rotted woodwork, two on the hall and two at the back of the Church, were made.

j. Also in March 2010 the three front Church windows (the only ones which were poor) were reputtied and repainted.

k. In April 2010 we noticed problems with leaks of rainwater around the brackets on the guttering of the Church. All 44 brackets were sealed. Later a piece of the Church roof guttering which had cracked and fallen because of the snow was repaired and two drainpipes were unblocked.

l. In May 2010 the nine high-level smoke detectors in the roof which dated back to 1989 were renewed. This updated our fire alarm security.

m. In October 2010 the last four canvas frescoes were made and put up, giving us eighteen frescoes in all.

n. In November the ten-foot high Russian Orthodox Memorial Cross was erected in the Church gardens, where 469 soldiers were buried 200 years ago. (It had taken us one year to obtain planning permission to do this). The Cross also commemorates our parishioners' deceased, who nearly all lie abroad. On 8 May 2011, the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe (VE Day), we will hold an inaugural ceremony. The present Garrison Commander, Col. Tom Fleetwood, with a military delegation and the local MP, Bob Russell, have already accepted invitations. We hope that the Mayor of Colchester, who has also been invited, will be able to attend. We have always had excellent relations with the local authorities, as with our neighbours.

### **Church Finances and Parishioners**

With the blessing of Archbishop Mark and the then Dean, since 2000 our Church has been governed by a Trust, 'Felixstowe Orthodox Church', which is registered with the Charity Commission (Reg. No. 1081707). The then Dean advised on the appointment of the trustees and any dangers. The Church accounts are presented to the Charity Commission annually and are available online ([www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk)). Although much work has been done over the last two years, the Church is entirely self-financing and all bills are paid promptly. Income stems from donations, mainly made on Sundays, and rentals of St John's Hall to various weekly clubs.

This income covers not only one-off repairs and improvements like those listed above, but also regular servicing charges, heating, electricity, water, telephone, fire extinguisher and fire alarm service bills, gardening and general maintenance costs, as well as our main cost, which is the annual insurance. We have a reasonable reserve for the future, but, like virtually all Orthodox Churches outside London, the Church can still not afford to pay a priest even a small salary.

In October 2008, still waiting in rented premises in Felixstowe after eleven patient years, we had fewer than 40 parishioners and regular attendance was just over 20. Leaving Felixstowe behind us in November 2008, we were able to forge ahead and by October 2009 we had 196 parishioners and visitors and regular attendance was about 50. By March 2010, the figure was 229 and by December 2010 the number of regular parishioners and visitors had grown to 270, of seventeen different nationalities, especially Russian, Romanian and Greek.

This number is still growing as Orthodox immigration, especially from Latvia, continues. We now have knowledge of over 1200 Orthodox in Colchester and a 30-mile radius. The increasing congregation can be seen from candle sales. For this year we have had to buy a quarter of a ton of candles, whereas last year we only used one eighth of a ton. Our parish newsletter has also expanded and we have to print more copies now, although several are sent out by e-mail (<http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/zchurchnews.htm>).

## **Publicity**

Since 2008 we have received very good publicity on Russian Television (RT), BBC TV Look East and BBC local radio. Throughout 2008, 2009 and 2010 we have also had several very positive articles in the local press - The Essex County Standard and The Colchester Gazette. (<http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/zchurch.htm>). Recently we had a nice, though sometimes inaccurate, article in Saga magazine for December 2010. This has a circulation of over 600,000 and is the best-selling magazine nationally.

## **Future Projects**

Six projects stand before us:

The first is to encourage parishioners to attend services more regularly. Even though there are 270 regular parishioners, average Sunday attendance is only between 50 and 100.

The second is to increase attendance at Saturday Vigil services, which are rarely attended by more than a dozen.

The third, as our many small children grow up and when the rector is able to move to Colchester, is to set up a permanent Church school.

The fourth is to ensure daily services, at least daily vespers and a weekly akathist.

The fifth is to hold a weekly meeting for parishioners, where adult catechism can be given and our scattered, multinational flock can socialise more. In this way parish and community life can be cultivated, building up a sense of belonging.

The sixth is to buy a peal of six bells in the coming years. We have a supplier and price, but need another £5,000 to buy them.

Projects three, four and five are related to the difficulty of buying a house for the priest near the Church. This is frustrating, as three fine properties have come onto the market within 200 metres of the Church within the last two years. One of these, which is ideal, actually adjoins the Church and is still empty. However, £300,000 is the going price and the priest cannot buy it because all his personal money is tied up in his present house and there is no other source of money to purchase it. At the present time the property market is so poor that the priest is unable to sell his house. At the moment the old Garrison opposite the Church is being demolished and 250 homes

are to be built there in 2011, together with a car park for our Church. Perhaps it is God's Will for him to live there and that is why he has not been able to move until now.

Archpriest Andrew Phillips,  
Chairman of the Trustees

## Просфоры

### Форма (печать) для выпечки просфор

Просфора́, просвира́ (др.-греч. πρόσφορος «приношение», мн. ч.: πρόσφοροι) — богослужебный литургический хлеб, употребляемый в православии для таинства Евхаристии и для поминания во время проскомидии живых и мёртвых.

На просфоре помещаются изображения (для этого тесто отливается в специальные формы) креста с греческой надписью ΙΣ ΧΣ ΝΙΚΑ (*Иисус Христос побеждает*) или образ Богородицы или какого-либо святого. Просфоры делаются двухсоставными (из двух половинок) в ознаменование двух естеств Иисуса Христа — божественного и человеческого.

После церковной реформы патриарха Никона для проскомидии стало использоваться пять просфор в воспоминание евангельского чуда о насыщении Христом пятью хлебами пяти тысяч человек.

Для проскомидии просфора полностью не используется — из неё копием изымаются частицы. Одна из просфор используется для приготовления Агнца, которым на литургии причащаются верующие.

Священник берёт в левую руку просфору для Агнца, обращая её буквами ΙС ΧС к себе, а в правую — копие, делает им трижды знамение креста над печатью просфоры, произнося каждый раз слова «*В воспоминание Господа и Бога и Спаса нашего Иисуса Христа*». Затем он приступает к вырезанию из просфоры Агнца:

режет с правой стороны печати (где буквы ΙС и ΝΙ) со словами «*Яко овца на заколение ведется*»;

режет с левой стороны (где буквы ΧС и ΚΑ) со словами «*И яко агнец непорочен, прямостригуцаго его безгласен, тако не отверзает уст своих*»;

надрезает верхнюю сторону печати (где буквы ΙС ΧС) произнося «*Во смирение Его суд его взятыся*»;

надрезает нижнюю сторону печати (где буквы ΝΙ ΚΑ), произнося «*Род же Его кто исповесть*».

Затем вырезанная таким образом средняя часть просфоры вынимается и со словами «*Яко вземлетя от земли живот Его*» полагается в центре дискаса.

Затем Агнец крестообразно надрезается священником с нижней стороны с произношением слов: «*Жрется (приносится в жертву) Агнец Божий, вземляй (взявший на Себя) грех мира, за мирский живот (жизнь) и спасение*». После священник при произнесении слов из Евангелия от Иоанна: «*един от воин копием ребра Ему прободе и абие (тотчас) изыде кровь и вода; и видевый свидетельства и истинно есть свидетельство его*» (Ин. 19:34) протыкает копием правую сторону Агнца. По произнесению этих слов в потир вливается вино, смешанное с водою.

### **Изъятие частиц из прочих просфор**

Агнец и частицы, выложенные на дискосе

из второй просфоры, называемой «*богородичною*» вынимается частица в память [Богородицы](#) (со словами «*Предста Царица одесную Тебе, в ризы позлащенны одеяна, преиспещренна*») и помещается на дискос по правую сторону от Агнца;

из третьей просфоры, называемой «*девятичинной*» вынимаются девять частиц, помещаемых по левую сторону от Агнца, в память:

- [Иоанна Прелтечи](#),
- [пророков](#),
- [апостолов](#),
- [святителей](#),
- [мучеников](#),
- [преподобных](#),
- [бессребреников](#),
- [равноапостольных](#),
- составителя литургии: [Иоанна Златоуста](#) или [Василия Великого](#);

из четвёртой просфоры вынимаются две частицы в память живых и помещаются на дискос ниже Агнца,

из пятой просфоры вынимается частица в память умерших и помещается ниже частиц, вынутых за живых.

Затем вынимаются частицы из просфор (число которых неограничено), подаваемых верующими. В это время читаются поминания о здравии и спасении живых и об упокоении усопших. Вынутые частицы помещаются на дискос вместе с частицами из четвёртой и пятой просфор.

Частицы вынутые из просфор, поданных верующими, по окончании литургии опускаются священником в потир со словами: «*Отмый, Господи, грехи поминавшихся зде Кровию Твоею честною, молитвами святых Твоих*».

### **Помянник**

Помянник - небольшая книжка или тетрадка с написанными в ней для молитвенного поминовения именами живых и усопших. Называется еще синодиком.

Почти у каждого христианина имеется маленькая книжка, называемая помянник - образ древнего диптиха, где написаны имена живых и усопших. Эту книжку он подает в храме на проскомидию и ектеньи, на молебны и панихиды, ее он должен читать ежедневно в своих домашних молитвах.

Что означает список имен? Каждое имя знаменует собой человека: в списке живых - человеческую личность, в списке умерших - душу, ушедшую в другой мир - в неведомое нам бытие. Помянник это то духовное поле, на котором мы невидимо встречаемся с душами живых и усопших, не только с ними, но и с их ангелами-хранителями. Помянник - это связь между живыми и мертвыми, между всеми, кто носит имя христианина, связь через благодать, где нет препятствий и расстояний, нет далеких и близких, нет разделения и различия между живущими на земле и теми, кто находится под землей, чьи тела пребывают в могилах, как на своих ложах до воскресения из мертвых. Мы все находимся в духовном граде, имя которого Церковь.

Помянник это место встречи; путь туда лежит через человеческое сердце. Только голос сердца слышан на небе, а слова одних уст бесследно растекаются по воздуху и исчезают, как рябь на поверхности воды. Нерадивая молитва не единит человеческих душ; она похожа на цепь с разорванными звеньями. Под каждым именем скрыт человек, с его нуждами, страданиями и болью. Каждое имя это уста, которые просят нас о помощи, особенно имена умерших - это беззвучные крики из могил. Мы должны обращаться с именами, словно с теми людьми, которые скрыты под ними, как под завесой.

Есть обыденное выражение "читать помянник". Как часто мы делаем это буквально - читаем, а не молимся, перечисляем имена, будто отсчитываем камушки, а нередко читаем с отключенным сонным сознанием, расслабленной волей, рассеянными мыслями, как будто слепыми глазами. Молитва имеет один корень со словами "молить, умолять, миловать, милость, умиление". Молиться это просить Бога о помиловании, как осужденный просит судью о пощаде. Умолять это значит, почувствовать чужую боль, как свою собственную, это протягивать руку упавшему, это как бы брать на себя тяжесть изнемогающего под ношей. Молиться -

значит обращаться к морю божественного милосердия, поэтому молитва должна быть одушевлена надеждой; даже белый цвет страниц помянника, на которых написаны имена, служит как бы фоном молитвы, а вернее знаком надежды, с которой мы должны произносить их.

Две части помянника похожи на день и ночь. Живые находятся на земле, как бы при свете дня; мы можем их видеть, слышать и осязать. Усопшие ушли в тот мир, который для нас остается тайной: они живы, но мы не видим их, как в ночной темноте.

Помянник это символ того, что наши близкие всегда с нами. Помянник это память о смерти, с которой каждый из нас подписал договор в день своего рождения: те, кто находятся в списке живых, в свое время перейдут в список умерших, но нет ни одного имени, которое было бы перенесено обратно. Еще ни один человек на свете не обратился назад на этом пути, как не может волна реки пойти против потока. В тоже время, помянник - свидетельство о том, что смерти нет, что смерть это только разлука, но и ее преодолевает молитва.

На земле все страдают - и праведные и грешные; все нуждаются в помощи и сострадании, поэтому имена, написанные чернилами, в духовном плане написаны слезами и кровью. Помянник - барометр нашей любви: насколько внимательно мы читаем его, насколько имена глубоко проходят через наше сердце и согреваются теплом, - настолько мы исполняем заповедь Божию о любви, которая выше закона. Вера, надежда и любовь - триедины. Но вера это первая ступень духовного восхождения; она рождает внимание и укрепляет терпение в молитве. Внимательная молитва дает человеку некое таинственное извещение о том, что он услышан Богом. Надежда изгоняет сомнение и низводит в душу благодать, которая открывается как любовь; тогда человек молится о своих врагах, как о друзьях, и не хочет, чтобы кто-либо был наказан за него. Он молится о благополучии своих обидчиков и прощает их, хотя бы они не просили прощения. Имена врагов в помяннике это ключ к духовной сокровищнице, это тот огонь, который сжигает зависть как солому, изгоняет злобу и мстительность, как змей из сердца, и делает врагов друзьями. Молиться сосредоточенно и внимательно трудно, как проливать кровь; поэтому помянник похож на поле невидимого боя; но после усердной молитвы за людей человек чувствует покой совести и радость как торжество победы. Помянник - это возможность выплатить долг усопшим, который остался за нами. Помянник - это запечатанное письмо, посылаемое Богу. Помянник - проверка веры, обличение надежды, испытание любви, это раскрытие того, что скрыто в нашем сердце: сострадание или безразличие, тепло весны или холод зимы. Помянник - это приготовление к собственной смерти, когда душу встретят те, кого она любила, за кого молилась, кто опередил ее на пути в вечность. Помянник - это трапеза в твоём доме для нищих и странников, и пир любви для друзей. Невнимательная молитва похожа на расстеленную скатерть без яств: ты позвал гостей и отпустил их голодными. Нерадивая молитва это зеркало твоего лицемерия. Помянник - это плат, которым ты можешь оттереть слезы скорбящих или обиженных тобой. Помянник - это вервь, брошенная тем, кто находится в аду, как бросают веревку утопающему в омуте. Помянник, отданный в алтарь на литургию, становится подобным скинии Авраама, где все нуждающиеся обретают покой. Когда ты внимательно читаешь помянник, то он становится подобным небу, сверкающему звездами, а когда нерадиво - то небу, покрытому облаками.

Грешник - враг собственной души, которая не только в будущем веке, но и здесь на земле страдает, хотя бы он сам не осознавал этого, как не понимает рожденный в темнице, что он лишен солнечного света. Но в душе даже грешника есть некая память о небе и, поэтому, имена людей, потерявших Бога, это очи их духа, наполненные слезами, которые обращены к тебе с мольбой.

Помянник - возможность всегда и везде делать людям добро. Когда человек от души молится за других, то их ангелы-хранители молятся за него; поэтому помянник один из источников духовного света для тебя самого, и твоя молитва, как отраженный свет, усиленный молитвами ангелов, возвращается к тебе. Помянник - копилка духовной милостыни, и ее твой ангел-хранитель положит на весы правосудия Божия в день Суда; и тогда ты увидишь, что каждая твоя молитва, похожая на лепты вдовицы, превратилась в слитки золота. Помянник это предвестник твоей будущей встречи с теми, о ком ты молился; они будут благодарны тебе больше, чем голодные тому, кто кормил их. Самое высшее счастье человека - умение любить. Любовь это сама жизнь, а помянник - возможность ежедневно учиться науке любить людей.

В помяннике скрещиваются пути: от сердца к сердцу - тех, кто на земле; молитва о тех, кто спасен, - это путь, уходящий в небо; молитва о тех, кто осужден, - луч, нисходящий в бездну ада. Эти три пути, пересекаясь друг с другом, образуют крест.

Господь сказал: "Какой мерой мерите, такой будет отмерено вам", и еще: "Блаженны милостивые, ибо они помилованы будут". Твой помянник, если ты часто раскрываешь его как птица крылья, это надежда на то, что твое имя будет написано в вечном Помяннике на небесах в памяти Божией.

о. Рафаил Карелин



## How We Conduct Ourselves in Church

Let all things be done decently and in order (I Cor 14, 40)

### **1 Foreword**

Although worship is fundamentally inward, in the rule of prayer, because we are incarnate and have bodies, we also need to follow outward disciplines. These physical disciplines help us to deepen our attention and prayer, making sure that our bodies, as well as our souls, are involved in the worship of the Holy Trinity, and that we are not distracted. For are not our bodies ‘temples of the Holy Spirit’ (I Cor 6,19)? We avoid distraction all the more when we follow these disciplines together in public prayer, as the Body of Christ. For we do not pray ‘My Father’, but ‘Our Father’.

Thus, we dress modestly for church; men do not come to church in dirty work clothes, or in open shirts or shorts; women do not enter church in trousers, mini-skirts and low-cut dresses, and modestly cover their heads in obedience to the Apostle (I Cor 11). We also make sure that mobile phones are switched off. In church in principle we stand. We do not sit - unless we are ill or other exceptions can be made, especially for children, pregnant mothers etc. In church we are in the presence of the Risen Christ. In some churches, they still follow the pious custom of children standing at the front, men on the right and women on the left. There are also some basic outward disciplines of piety which we physically observe very frequently during Orthodox worship. Before we can explain when we follow these disciplines, we first have to know what they are. This is explained below

#### **a) The Sign of the Cross and the Bowing of the Head**

In making the sign of the cross, we sign ourselves or bless ourselves, placing over ourselves the cross of Christ. To make it, we always use the right hand. First, we put the tips of the thumb and the tips of the two fingers nearest to the thumb together in the name of the Holy Trinity. Then we lay the little finger and the finger nearest to it across the palm, recalling that Christ is both God and man, that He has two natures. Then with the tips of our thumb and the two fingers, we touch our forehead, our stomach, the right shoulder and the left shoulder, making a cross. (Not left shoulder and then right shoulder, as the Roman Catholics have been doing since the late Middle Ages when they altered the sign of the cross). After this we bow our heads.

According to St Ambrose of Milan, in this way ‘the seal of Christ appears on our forehead, on our heart and on our arms. On our forehead so that we will always confess Christ, on our heart so that we will always love Him, on our arms so that we will always do good’. In signing our head, we remember God Who dwells in the Highest and also the Head of the Church, Christ the Word, Who was born from Him, just as our own words also come from our heads. In touching our stomach, we remember the earth and the descent to hades of the Son of God and also the conception of the Son in the womb of the Mother of God. In touching the right shoulder, we remember the sitting on the right hand of the Father, in touching the left, we recall those who are condemned and receive eternal torment on the left hand. In touching our shoulders we also recall the Holy Spirit, ‘Who is everywhere present and fills all things’.

#### **b) The Sign of the Cross and a Bow from the Waist or Small Bow**

In the words of the Typikon, the book which contains the instructions for Church services, a small bow is when, having made the sign of the cross, we incline the upper body from the waist, in such a way that we touch the ground with our right hand, neither kneeling, nor touching the ground with our head.

#### **c) The Sign of the Cross and a Bow to the Ground or Prostration**

A prostration is when we first make the sign of the cross and then bow down to the ground, in such a way that we bend our knees, and touch the ground with our knees, our hands and our foreheads. Then we at once raise ourselves up. As St Basil the Great says, this symbolises our fall into sin and also the fact that we have been raised up again by the Redemption of Christ, receiving our calling to heaven. (The English word heaven actually means to heave, that is to raise up).

For this reason, on days when we think especially of the Resurrection, we should not kneel. These days include all the Lord’s Days, that is Sundays, known as the day of the Resurrection. This was decreed by the canons of the First Oecumenical Council in the year 325, repeated in Canon 91 of St Basil the Great and again in Canon 90 of the Sixth Oecumenical Council in 681. Other non-kneeling days are the fifty days between the Resurrection (Easter) and Trinity (Pentecost). This is because these are days of the Resurrection, when, raised up with Christ, we naturally stand. Finally, there are all those feast days when the Polyeleion is sung at Matins. On all these days, we celebrate the victory of Christ over death. We celebrate this by standing, like the angels who stand at the throne of God.

An apparent exception to this is at Pentecost Vespers when we kneel at the ‘Kneeling Prayers’ of St Basil the Great. However, we should remember that this Vespers, though taking place on a Sunday afternoon or evening, is actually the Vespers of the Monday of the Holy Spirit. According to ancient tradition, we should not kneel during these prayers, looking upwards, as is common practice at present, but should in fact kneel with our heads touching the

ground. (This is also the case at the Great Entrance at the Liturgy of the Presanctified). Not kneeling does not mean that we cannot make prostrations. On the Third Sunday in the Great Fast, the Sunday of the Cross, and on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, if it falls on a Sunday, we do make prostrations in honour of the Precious Cross, the source of our salvation.

## **2 General Observations**

On entering and leaving a church, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow three times. During the Great Fast we make the sign of the cross and prostration three times. Each time we say the prayer: ‘O God, cleanse me a sinner’.

When we see a bishop or a priest, we always take their blessing. Approaching the priest, we do not make the sign of the cross, but bow our head, placing our hands in front of us, with our right hand placed flat on our left, to receive his blessing. In the case of a bishop, we make a small bow first, without the sign of the cross and then ask for his blessing.

After we have bought candles (and also at the Divine Liturgy prosphora), we go up to the holy icons or relics. We make the sign of the cross and two small bows, or prostrations (according to the day – see above), kiss the icon and then make a third sign of the cross and small bow, or prostration. Then we say our prayer, lighting our candle. We take care to kiss the icon in the correct place. If it is an icon of the Saviour or the Mother of God, we take care to kiss the fringe of their raiment, if a martyr, we kiss the cross they hold, if a bishop, the Gospel they hold. In any case, we take care never to kiss the holy faces on the icons. From this moment on, we do not wander around the church without a good reason, but take up a place and stand silently in worship.

At the beginning of a service, we should make the sign of the cross and a small bow three times. In general, whenever we hear ‘Come let us worship...’, or the Thrice-Holy Hymn, or ‘Blessed is the Name of the Lord...’ (all of which are read or sung three times), we make the sign of the cross and a small bow three times. (The exception is at the beginning of Matins and at the triple Alleluia in the middle of the Six Psalms, when we simply sign ourselves three times). According to the Typikon, during the Six Psalms all candles should be blown out, for this moment is night and we await the appearance of Christ.

During litanies we should make the sign of the cross and small bow once at the first petition and at the exclamation at the end, when the priest glorifies the Holy Trinity. (Some pious people do this at every petition, like the clergy).

During the singing of stichira or other hymns, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow once at the end of the stichira, if appropriate, for example after the words ‘and save our souls’ or ‘glory to thee’. At the reading of the Kathisma and the threefold singing of ‘Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Glory to Thee, O God,’ we make the sign of the cross and a small bow three times, except on Saturdays, Sundays and feast days, when we simply make the sign of the cross and incline our heads three times.

At the Ninth Ode of the Canon at Matins, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow once at the end of every ‘More honourable...’.

When we are censed or the priest says to us ‘Peace be unto all’, we do not make the sign of the cross, but bow our heads. Similarly if a bishop blesses us with the double and triple candles, we bow our heads, without making the sign of the cross. However, if we are blessed with the Gospel, the Holy Gifts or the cross, then we make the sign of the cross and a small bow, or prostration, according to the day. When a priest says, ‘Bow your heads to the Lord’, or, ‘Let us bow our heads to the Lord’, we do so, like the priest, and raise them only when the priest gives the exclamation. In such a way, we show both humility and our gratitude to God.

## **3. At the Divine Liturgy**

At the Little Entrance at the Liturgy at ‘Come let us worship...’, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow once.

Before and after the Gospel reading, at the singing of ‘Glory to thee, O God, glory to Thee’, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow once. We should listen to the Gospel with our heads slightly bowed, for Christ is speaking to us.

At the Great Entrance, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow once, for the gifts are not yet consecrated. We incline our heads as the priest makes the commemorations. After the Great Entrance, at the end of the Cherubic Hymn at the triple Alleluia, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow three times.

At the beginning of the Creed, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow. Some devout people make the sign of the cross at every article of the Creed, others at particular moments during it.

At the end of ‘We sing to thee’, during which the gifts are consecrated, we make a small bow, or prostration, once, according to the day.

At the end of the Hymn to the Mother of God, ‘It is meet’, we make a small bow, or prostration, once, according to the day.

Before the Lord's Prayer, we make the sign of the cross and a small bow, or prostration, once, according to the day, and at the exclamation at the end we make the sign of the cross and a small bow once.

At the exclamation 'The Holy Things for the Holy', we should make the sign of the cross and a small bow three times.

When the holy gifts are brought out at the words 'With fear of God and faith, draw near', we make the sign of the cross and a small bow, or prostration, once, according to the day. We do the same when they are brought out again at the words 'Always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages'. (We do not make prostrations if we have received communion).

#### **4 Afterword**

Such are some pious customs for our conduct in the church of God. However, it should be remembered that there is great variety of practices in the Orthodox Church. Different Orthodox people have different customs. Thus, in some countries it is customary to kneel during the Gospel, or during the Great Doxology at Matins, even on Sundays and between Easter and Trinity. Others may follow few of the above physical disciplines and perhaps dress for church carelessly or make the sign of the cross negligently. In such cases, we should not be tempted to pass judgement on the piety, or seeming lack of piety, of others like the foolish pharisees, but rather think of our own sins and lack of piety, seeking our salvation and not our condemnation.

