



# The New-Martyr



**A Newsletter of the Parish of Saint Elisabeth the New-Martyr**  
*A Parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia  
in the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland*

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Each month we hope to keep readers abreast of parish goings-on. Please send details of your nameday to the editor for inclusion.

**O Heavenly King, Comforter,  
Spirit of Truth,  
who art everywhere present  
and fillest all things;  
Treasury of good gifts  
and Giver of Life:  
come and abide in us,  
cleanse us from every impurity,  
and save our souls,  
O Good One!**



## A Word from the Saints

*'Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of sons, our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory, and, in a word, our being brought into a state of all "fullness of blessing," both in this world and in the world to come, of all the good gifts that are in store for us, by promise hereof, through faith, beholding the reflection of their grace as though they were already present, we await the full enjoyment.'*

- St Basil the Great *On the Holy Spirit*



*'As the Lord put on the body, leaving behind all principality and power, so Christians put on the Holy Spirit, and are at rest.'*

- St Macarius the Great



*'Lay aside all theoretical considerations that it is forbidden to slaughter millions, women, children, and elderly; be content to manifest your moral sense by in no way killing the human dignity of your neighbour, neither by word, nor by innuendo, nor by gesture...'*

*It is difficult to pray at night. But try in the morning. If you cannot manage to pray at home then at least as you travel to your place of employment attempt with a clear head the "Our Father" and let the words of this short prayer resound in your heart. And at night entrust yourself with complete sincerity to the hands of the heavenly Father. This indeed is very easy.*

*And give—give a glass of cold water to everyone who has need of it; give a glass filled to the brim with simple human companionship to everyone who lacks it: the very simplest companionship.*

*O wondrous path of little things, I sing thee a hymn! Surround yourselves, O people, gird up yourselves with little works of good—with a chain of little, simple, easy, and good feelings which cost us nothing—a chain of bright thoughts, words, and deeds. Let us abandon the big and the difficult. That is for those who love it and not for us for whom the Lord in his mercy, for us who have not yet learned to love the greater, has poured forth the lesser love everywhere, free as water and air.*

- St John the Wonderworker



*'I have not seen a beast or a living being ever since I came into the desert. I never learned from books. I have never even heard anyone who sang and read from them. But the word of God, which is alive and active, by itself teaches a person knowledge.'*

- St Mary of Egypt



# The Ascension of the Lord

Priest Paul Elliott

**H**e Holy Ascension of the Saviour is a beautiful Feast. It has a quietness and gentleness about it that I especially love. I have a particular affection for this Great Feast of the Lord because of an experience I had when I finally went to the former Soviet Union. My last evening at the extraordinary convent of St Elisabeth in Minsk was on this Great Feast. I assisted at the Vigil that lovely evening in May with blossom on all the trees around the convent church and spring flowers adorning the neat gardens. As the doors of the iconostas opened I realised that there was a choir of about 80 nuns and hundreds of people gathered to celebrate this feast. The singing was perhaps the most wonderful that I have ever experienced and in my mind, I still return there to re-live what I felt that evening.

The readings of vespers are particularly instructive. The first one from Isaiah, chapter 2 calls us, the people of God, to "come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." So we gather, expectant, hopeful, ready and yearning for revelation. We learn that the Saviour has won a great victory, and in his love for us, has opened the gates of heaven for his people "in his love and in his pity, He redeemed them and He bare them and carried them." (Isaiah 62). Finally, we are told that Jesus, the Victor, shall gather all his faithful people and "shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." (Zechariah 14). As the vigil continues, more of the poetic songs prepare us for the coming down of the Holy Spirit upon us, especially in the Canon of Matins. These songs make us ready for our high calling as the consecrated children of God.

As the vigil concluded on that lovely evening, Archpriest Andrei and I came to venerate the icon of the Ascension. The icon was taken up and carried in procession. The choir of nuns lined up before the icon and Fr Andrei and I followed behind. All the people - and there were hundreds - gathered behind us. The procession went out of the great west doors as

the sun was beginning to set, and round the church we went through the convent garden until we arrived back at the west door. The nuns had gathered in two rows on either side of the steps that led up into the church and sang most beautifully as the icon was carried through them to take its place once more in the church. A great semi-circle of nuns, sisters and faithful formed itself around the icon as we all sang the Great Magnification of the Ascension. As the chant, 'We magnify Thee' rang out. At the end the whole congregation prostrated themselves and the service came to a close.

That final prostration of the vigil is very powerful for it is the worshipping action of the Church. We are like the Apostles once more, gathered on the Mount of Olives. We worship our Saviour who is carrying our humanity into the heavenly courts, we know that God "has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2 v 6) and in this sure hope we return to Jerusalem with great joy ready to welcome the Holy Spirit into our hearts and lives.





# The Feast of Pentecost



Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemann

**T**he Feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit. I say these words I've known since childhood, and all at once they strike me as if I'm hearing them for the first time. Yes, from the time I was a child I knew that ten days following the Ascension - meaning fifty days after Pascha - Christians from time immemorial celebrated and continue to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit in a feast known by its church name as Pentecost, or more popularly as 'Trinity,' the day of the Holy Trinity.

For centuries, to prepare for this feast the churches were cleaned and adorned with greenery and branches, and grass was strewn about the floor. On the day of the feast, at solemn Vespers, the faithful stood in church holding flowers in their hands. These customs explain how the Feast of Pentecost entered Russian popular consciousness and literature as a kind of sun-filled, bright celebration, the feast of flowering, a kind of joyful encounter between human beings and God's world in all its beauty and grace.

All religions, including the most ancient and primitive, had a feast of summer flowering, a feast to celebrate the first appearance of shoots, plants, fruit. In ancient Judaism, this was the Feast of Pentecost. If in Old Testament religion Passover celebrated spring's resurrection of the world and nature, then the Jewish Pentecost was the feast of movement from spring to summer, celebrating the victory of sun and light, the feast of cosmic fullness. But in the Old Testament a feast common to all human societies acquires a new meaning: it becomes the annual commemoration of the ascent of Moses up Mount Sinai, where in an inexpressible mysti-



cal encounter God revealed Himself, entered into a Covenant, gave commandments, and promised salvation. In other terms, religion ceased being simply nature, and now became the beginning of history: God had revealed his Law, his commandments, his plan for humanity, and had shown the way. Spring, summer, the eternal natural cycle, became a sign and symbol not only of nature, but of man's spiritual destiny and the commandment to grow into

fullness of knowledge, life and perfect wholeness. Finally, in the very last phase of the Old Testament, through the teaching and insight of the prophets, this feast becomes a celebration directed toward the future, to God's final victory in his creation. Here is how the Prophet Joel speaks of this:

*'And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the men-servants and maid-servants in those days, I will pour out my spirit. And I will give signs in the heavens and on the earth... before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered...'*

-Joel 2:28-32

Thus, the Jewish Feast of Pentecost is a feast of nature and the cosmos, a feast of history as the revelation of God's will for the world and human beings, feast of future triumph, God's victory over evil and the coming of the great and last 'day of the Lord.' All this must be kept in mind in order to grasp how the first Christians experienced, understood, and celebrated their Feast of Pentecost, and why it became one of the most important Christian celebrations.





*Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast shown forth the fishermen  
as supremely wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit,  
and through them didst draw the world into thy net. O only Friend of Man, glory to Thee!*

The Book of Acts, devoted to recounting the history of the first Christians and the initial spread of Christianity, starts precisely with the day of Pentecost, describing what took place fifty days after Christ's resurrection and ten days after his ascension into heaven. Just before his ascension Christ had told the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). So in ten days, according to St Luke's account,

*'When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance... And all who heard were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."'*

-Acts 2:1-4, 12-13

To those witnesses who remained sceptical, the Apostle Peter explained the meaning of the event using the words of the Prophet Joel quoted above.

*'This is what was spoken by the Prophet Joel,' he said, 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...'*

-Acts 2:16&17

For the Christian, therefore, the Feast of Pentecost is the completion of all that Christ accomplished. Christ taught about the Kingdom of God, and here it is, now opened! Christ promised that the Spirit of God would reveal the truth, and now this is fulfilled. The world, history, life, time, are all illumined with the final, transcendent light—all are filled with ultimate meaning. The last and great day of the Lord has begun!

*From 'Celebration of Faith: The Church Year', by Fr Alexander Schmemann (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994).*

## Did you know?

Our parish website address is [www.newmartyr.info](http://www.newmartyr.info). Have you ever explored our website? There is a wealth of resources on there which you may find interesting.

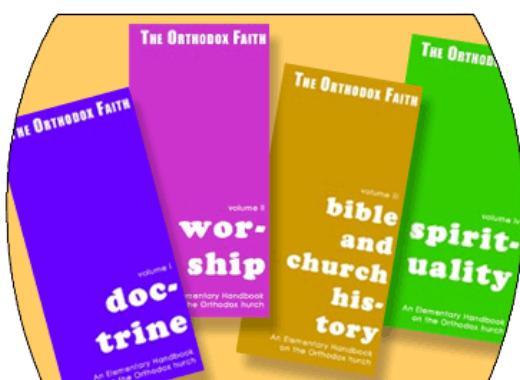
The screenshot shows the homepage of the St Elisabeth the New-Martyr website. At the top right is a large icon of Christ Pantocrator. The title "St Elisabeth the New-Martyr" is at the top left, followed by the text "A Parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia" and "Wallasey - Birkenhead - Liverpool". A sidebar on the left contains links to "Home", "About Our Parish", "Our Worship", "Learn About Orthodoxy", "A Word from the Saints", "Newsletter", "Using our church", and "Links". The main content area features a large icon of St. Elisabeth and the heading "Welcome to Our Church!". Below it is a paragraph about the parish's mission and diversity, followed by a note about the May newsletter and a rail service disruption notice.

All of our regular services are publicised on the website, in the calendar which is accessible from the homepage. Details of services are usually published some weeks in advance.

Almost all of the music that we use at the Divine Liturgy and at our other regular and occasional services may be found [here](#). Why not familiarise yourself with some of it and join in the singing on Sundays and feasts?

Some of the services even have outlines explaining how they fit together, for those who are interested in learning about the structure and compilation of the services. [This is in its early stages](#) but more guides will appear in the future.

A [guide for altar servers](#) has been produced for the use of our servers but is accessible to all, and may prove a useful way to learn about the order and structure of the Divine Liturgy.



Also, [here is a collection](#) of printed, internet, and audio-visual resources for people who are exploring the Holy Orthodox Christian faith. Some of the videos in particular are enlightening , and give something of the flavour of who we are as Orthodox Christians, bringing the text of books to life.

A collection of photographs, recording significant events in the life of the parish, may be viewed in [the photo gallery](#), and, of course, we mustn't forget that [the archive of The New Martyr](#) is kept on the website for download.

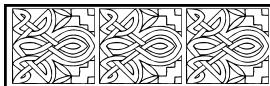
Finally, we must not fail to mention [the website of our diocese](#), which contains details and contact information for the parishes and clergy of our diocese, as well as a compendium of useful links to various Orthodox liturgical, practical, educational, spiritual, and other resources.

Happy surfing!



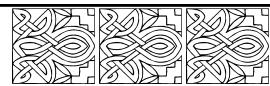
**THE DIOCESE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND  
of the  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA**



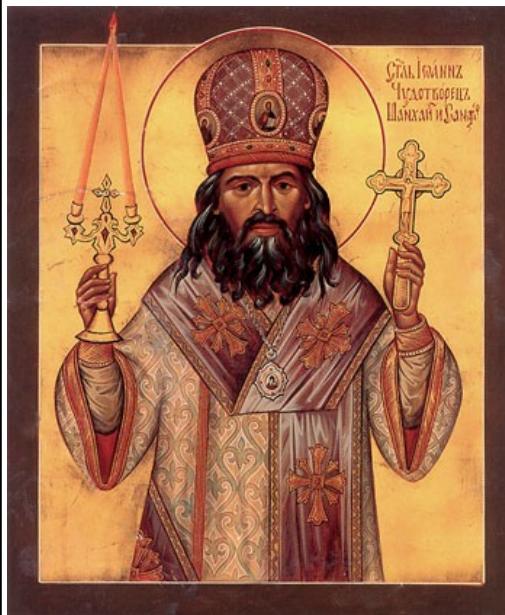


# Saint of the Month

## St John the Wonderworker



*Feast day: Saturday nearest 19th June  
(2nd July by the civil calendar)*



**S**aint John (Maximovitch) of Shanghai and San Francisco also John (Maximovitch) the Wonderworker (1896–1966) was a prominent Orthodox ascetic and bishop of our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), who was active in the mid-20th century. He was a pastor and spiritual father of high reputation and a wonder-worker to whom were attributed great powers of prophecy, clairvoyance and healing, and he is often referred to simply as "St John the Wonderworker.

St John was born Mikhail Borisovich Maximovitch in 1896 in the village of Adamovka in the Kharkov Governorate (in present-day southern Ukraine). He came from the same family of Serbian origin as that of St John (Maximovitch) of Tobolsk, whom he was said to resemble in several respects. From 1907 to 1914 he attended Poltava Military School. He received a degree in law from Kharkov Imperial University in 1918. His family brought him to Belgrade in 1921, where in 1925 he graduated from Belgrade University with a degree in theology.

In 1926 he was tonsured a monk and ordained a hierodeacon by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), who gave him the name of John after his saintly relative. Later that same year, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Gabriel of Chelyabinsk. For several years afterwards he worked as an instructor and tutor. In 1934 he was consecrated a bishop by Metropolitan Anthony and assigned to the diocese of Shanghai.

In Shanghai, Bishop John found an uncompleted cathedral and an Orthodox community deeply divided along ethnic lines. Making contact with all the various groups, he quickly involved himself in the existing charitable institutions and personally founded an orphanage and home for the children of indigents. It was here that he first became known for miracles attributed to his prayer, and as a public figure it was impossible for him to completely conceal his ascetic way of life. Despite his actions during the Japanese occupation, when he routinely ignored the curfew in pursuit of his pastoral activities, the Japanese authorities never harassed him. As the only Russian Orthodox bishop in China who refused to submit to the authority of the Soviet-dominated Moscow Patriarchate, he was elevated to the rank of archbishop by the Holy Synod of ROCOR in 1946.

When the Communists took power in China, the Russian colony was forced to flee, first to a refugee camp on the island of Tubabao in the Philippines and then mainly to the United States and Australia. Archbishop John travelled personally to Washington D.C. to ensure that his people would be allowed to enter the country. In 1951 St John was assigned to the archdiocese of Western Europe with his see first in Paris, then in Brussels. During this time, he had care for the ROCOR communities here in the British Isles. Thanks to his work in collecting lives of saints, a great many pre-Schism Western saints became known in Russian Orthodoxy and continue to be venerated to this day.

St John was also an unwavering pillar of support to the Western Orthodox Church—a group of Western Rite parishes in France, who at the time were part of ROCOR. [He himself often served the](#)

[Orthodox Mass in the Western Rite](#), and even consecrated a bishop for the Western Rite parishes. When Abbot Augustine (Whitfield) turned to him for solace due to the hostility that many Western Rite Orthodox received from their Eastern Rite brothers and sisters, St John replied: 'Never, never, never let anyone tell you that, in order to be Orthodox, you must also be eastern. The West was Orthodox for a thousand years, and her venerable liturgy is far older than any of her heresies.'

St John's charitable and pastoral work continued as it had in Shanghai, even among a much more widely scattered flock. In 1962 he was once again reassigned by the Holy Synod to the see of San Francisco. Here too, he found a divided community and a cathedral in an unfinished state. Although he completed the building of Holy Virgin Cathedral and brought some measure of peace to the community he became the target of slander from those who became his political enemies, who went so far as to file a lawsuit against him for alleged mishandling of finances related to construction of the cathedral. He was exonerated, but this was a great cause of sorrow to him in his later life.

Deeply revering St John of Kronstadt, St John of Shanghai played an active role in preparation of his canonization. On the 2nd of July, 1966 (19th June by the Church calendar), St John reposed in the presence of the miraculous Kursk Icon of the Mother of God, which has visited our parish a number of times. He was entombed in a sepulchre beneath the altar of the cathedral in San Francisco, dedicated to the Most Holy Mother of God, the Joy of all who Sorrow. In 1994 he was solemnly glorified on the twenty-eighth anniversary of his death. His incorrupt relics now occupy a shrine in the cathedral's nave. His feast day is celebrated on the Saturday nearest to the 19th of June (2nd July by the civil calendar).

St John is beloved and celebrated worldwide, with portions of his relics located in Serbia, Russia, Mount Athos, Bulgaria, Romania, United States, Canada, England (St John's Church, Colchester) and other countries of the world.

As I was many a time told when I was only a child, then every time I used to come close to him he would say with his humble and gentle words: 'Sinok ti budesh odnashdi Velikh Blagoslavlenie!' (My son one day you will be great. God Bless you!) 'Pomni vsegda Shdi Molis nemnogo!' (Remember always to pray a little bit more!) Although I was very little then, these humble words uplifted me and made me what I am today. He helped the nuns to come out of sheer struggle and form a thriving Orthodox community in London, opening the doors of a convent in Willesden, where children could be taught about the Orthodox Liturgy and the etiquette of the Church.

St John is truly a wonderworker, a clairvoyant, and a visionary, and he helped many people to change their lives, bringing them to freedom. As a saint of modern times, who united the cradle

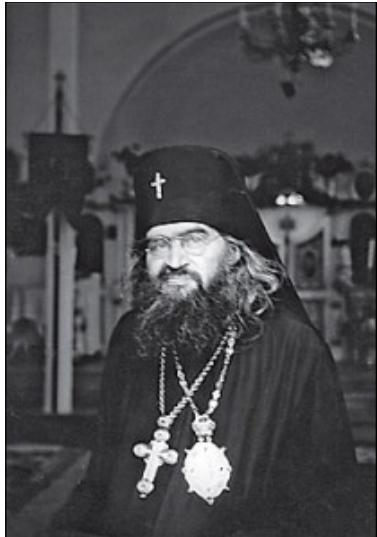
Russian and western convert Orthodox faithful, St John is a beloved unitive figure in the Russian Orthodox Church today. He instilled in western converts that Orthodox Faith and those traditions that had been preserved intact by generations of the Slavic peoples, while at the same time embracing within the Russian Orthodox Church those saints who had lived the faith in these western lands, as well as the hymns, prayers, and forms of worship by which they worked out their salvation.

*O Holy Bishop John, pray to God for us!*

Many thanks to Igor Stepanous for his research and personal thoughts, which lie behind the bulk of this piece.

St John's relics were washed and re-vested in 2011. In our church, near our relics of Ss Elisabeth and Barbara, is a fragment of the vestments in which he was originally vested for his glorification in 1994.

On Thursday, the 4th of July, our evening prayers will take the form of a Moleben to St John, and we shall then view a film about his life and the events leading up to his glorification. [Here](#) is a trailer of the DVD. Also, [here](#) is some rare and fascinating footage of his glorification service in Holy Virgin Cathedral.



# A Parable

 here was once a great city, in the centre of which stood a very tall building, whose top was lost in the sky. It was said that everyone who reached the top was very, very happy. You would have thought that everybody would want to get to the top. But such was not the case.

There were some who lived in parts of that city who had never even seen the tall building. Still others had seen it, but did not know what was inside. Yet others, though they had heard about how pleasant it was at the top, either did not believe it or else simply refused to go and look, saying that they preferred to stay where they had always been.



Nevertheless there were great crowds milling about the building. Many tried to enter it, yet somehow never managed to, even though the doors were wide open. They said the doors were too narrow. Some of them would try to enter through a window or look for other doors. They never succeeded. Some would peer in through the doors out of curiosity, others would actually go in, but quickly come out again, saying that they did not like the look of the ground floor.

Inside, on that ground floor, there were throngs of people scurrying about, very busily. Some of them were looking for the lifts that had been installed to replace an ancient staircase, the remains of which could be seen in the panelling of the lifts. Many people found the lifts and got in; however the lifts were out of order and did not go very far. Some realised this and got out of the lifts in disgust. Certain people got out and began looking to see if there was not somewhere another ancient staircase.

To their surprise, there, not far away for those who bothered to look, there was indeed another staircase, and there were many people who were already going up. Unfortunately there were those who, having found the staircase, did not go up it. Some of them simply stood there, admiring the carpet; others stood looking at the woodwork, comparing it to that in the lifts. Still others just stood there at the bottom writing books about what it was like at the top - though they had never been there. What imagination!

Of those who started going up the staircase, a certain number kept looking around and would then come back down. Of these some would complain that it was too hard to go up. Others complained about other people who were going up the stairs, many of whom, apparently, did not speak English.

And yet there were others who went up their stairs and did not come back down, and there were many who went right up to the top. I know, because a cloud of witnesses has told me so. And although I am still at the bottom of these stairs, I am determined to start going up and not look back.

And how about you, will you come with me?

*From Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition, by Archpriest Andrew Phillips.*

# Let Us Attend!

Michael Astley



**A** little over two years ago, we began to use the liturgical fans in our worship at St Elisabeth's. They form a regular part of the worship of the Orthodox Church, so much so that they can easily fade into the background, and we perhaps do not realise how ancient they are or what a fascinating history they have.

First of all, the nomenclature is interesting. There is no doubt about the purpose of these implements: at one time they were most definitely functional fans, and the names by which they are called today reflect this. In the west, the liturgical fan goes by the name *flabellum*, which is simply the Latin word for *fan*. In the Russian church, it is called the *ripidi*, from the Greek word *ripidion*, again meaning *fan*. However, in the Greek church, the fans are generally no longer known as *ripidia* but are commonly called *hexapteryga*,

meaning *six wings*, reflective of the six-winged Seraphim that are often depicted on them. Curiously, it seems that this name is applied even to examples that do not bear images of the Seraphim, (which many do not). In English, it is best, I think, simply to refer to them as the fans. As it happens, I rather like ours. They are a beautiful wooden pair, and they form a complete set with our processional Cross and icon, which we keep at the High Place when not in use.



It seems that the use of such implements dates from the time of the ancient Egyptians, who would likely have used them to fan the pharaoh and other important figures, keeping them cool, providing shade from the sun, and

driving away flying insects. The earliest known surviving example dates from the 14th century BC, and was discovered in 1922 in the tomb of Tutankhamun.

How these fans came to be used in Christian worship across various places and times is perhaps a mystery lost in the mists of time. In general terms, I think that it is fairly safe to assume that, by association, they came to be thought of as a sign of honour given to a sovereign god or other important and revered figure, and that this was simply transferred to the holy things used in Christian worship in honour of the Saviour. By what route this took place is unclear. Did they, for instance, come to be used in the Roman/Byzantine imperial ceremonies and from there make their way into the eventual state religion? Or did they perhaps, due to the Egyptian connection, begin use in the Alexandrian/Coptic rites and spread from there to other local churches? I do not know.

The earliest extant record that we have of the use of fans in Christian worship is in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*. The *Apostolic Constitutions*, as it is more commonly known, is a compilation of liturgical and other instructions drawn and expanded from various sources, and is generally agreed to date from the mid-to-late fourth century. Book 8 is itself an expansion of an earlier document (the "Apostolic Tradition") discovered in the 19th century and now widely believed to be Alexandrian or possibly Syrian in origin, due to the nature of the liturgical praxis described in it. In the 12th chapter of Book 8, we find a description of what appears to be the part of the eucharistic rite immediately after what we would today call the Great Entrance:

*...let the deacons bring the gifts to the bishop at the altar; and let the presbyters stand on his right hand, and on his left, as disciples stand before their Master. But let two of the deacons,*

*on each side of the altar, hold a fan, made up of thin membranes, or of the feathers of the peacock, or of fine cloth, and let them silently drive away the small animals that fly about, that they may not come near to the cups.*

-The Apostolic Constitutions

The use of the fans prescribed here is more or less exactly what appears in the rubrics of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy to this day, where, after the Great Entrance and the Litany of Oblation, the deacon is directed to fan the Gifts throughout and after the Anaphora, laying the fan aside temporarily only to perform his other duties before continuing to fan. Today, this is generally only done on the occasion of the ordination of a deacon but I find it staggering that, after 1700 years, our service books still contain this direction. In my experience, when some ancient practice is dismissed as archaic and obsolete, it is usually not very difficult to find a church where it still takes place. This particular use of the fans is no exception. These two videos, depicting the fanning of the Gifts during the Anaphora, would suggest that this practice, while no longer common, is most certainly not forgotten:

[The main chapel of the former Milan Synod\\*\\*, Italy.](#)

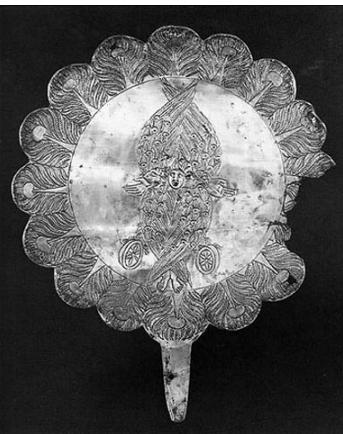
[The Ukrainian Catholic parish of St Elias, Brampton, Canada.](#)

Another intriguing element of this description is the specification of peacock feathers. Why these as opposed to the feathers of other birds? It may simply be that peacock feathers are what were used in pre-Christian times and that, by association, their use, like that of the fan itself, came to take on honorific significance. Alternatively, it could be that other cultural traditions surrounding the peacock were inherited and christianised. According to George Ferguson in *Signs and Symbols of Christian Art*, there is a pre-Christian legend that the flesh of the peacock does not decay. Thus the peacock came to be

\*This document had previously been identified as a lost "Apostolic Tradition" of St Hippolytus of Rome, an attribution that is now largely discredited, partly because the services described therein bear little resemblance to those of the city of Rome and also because there is no firm evidence that such a document ever existed in the first place.

\*\*The Holy Synod of Milan was an Old Calendarist Synod whose hierarchy was supplied by our own Church Abroad some decades ago. While this synod has since ceased to exist, the remnant communities in Italy have been in discussion with the Russian Orthodox Church in recent years with a view to being received.

a sign of immortality, and of Christ's Resurrection. The peacock does seem to be quite prevalent in early Christian imagery, notably in the ancient [Roman catacombs](#) of Priscilla and Sebastian. Even when other materials were used, there is evidence that sometimes there was still representation of the feathers of the peacock, as can be seen in the example below.



This is the earliest known surviving liturgical fan, dating from the 6th century. It was discovered in Syria in the 20th century, along with numerous other artefacts. This also shows just how far back the depiction of the seraphim goes, and indicates that the purpose of the fan very early came to be seen as more honorific than functional, as the feathers ceased to be real.

The western form of the fan seems to have retained the feathers for much longer than in the east - indeed, it never lost that form, as can be seen from these photographs of processions. [The first](#) is of Roman Catholic pope, Pius XI, at Corpus Christi in the early 20th century, and [the second](#) is from the Anglican parish of St Timothy, Fort Worth, a few years ago.

Here is a photograph of a Coptic fan, dating from the 8th or 9th century, and currently housed in the Brooklyn Museum. This bears the four winged creatures from [Ezekiel's vision](#) of the chariot. Within each wheel is the face of the creature. On this particular fan may



be seen what appear to be the ox and lion. Presumably, the eagle and the man would have been depicted on the other fan from the pair, which I assume has not survived.

All of these symbols - the seraphim with their six wings, the four living creatures attending the throne of God, and even the peacock - point to our earthly entering into the worship of heaven. In our services today, the fans are used at the Divine Liturgy at the Little and Great Entrances, and at the proclamation of the Gospel, where they are carried before and after the Gospel Book and Holy Gifts in the procession, with those creatures truly attending the King of kings and Lord of lords in those mystical symbols of the Book of Gospels and his Body and Blood as the fans are held over them. They are also held over the Gospel at other services and also over particular icons when they are carried solemnly in procession or set up for the veneration of the faithful. I am delighted we at St Elisabeth's are able to continue this ancient method of giving honour. The fans certainly add something of majesty to our worship, even in the humblest of settings.

I cannot think of a better way to close than to share with you [this awe-inspiring depiction](#) of the use of the fans at the Little Entrance from the Vesperal Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at St Vladimir's Church in our ROCOR Eastern American Diocese.



# Impressions

This article originally appeared earlier this year in Walrus, the magazine of the New Brighton Community Partnership. It is clearly written in an enthusiastic and generous spirit and, while we may perceive some of the factual details differently, it provides us with a rare and invaluable opportunity to think about how what we consider quite normal appears to a benevolent visitor encountering us for the first time.

**I**n the midst of our community we have a little-known gem that is providing new use for a previously redundant building, and holding out the hand of cultural fellowship to all. That gem is the Russian Orthodox Church of St Elisabeth in Rake Lane Cemetery, Liscard.

I came across it by accident. Cycling to the prom at Seacombe recently, I got to talking to a lady who hailed from Siberia, (as you do!) My penchant for engaging in conversation with absolute strangers has rarely brought me into contact with a more fascinating person. After a while it came up in the conversation that she was a member of a thriving Russian Orthodox congregation in Liscard. This was news to me. A Russian Orthodox church in Wallasey? I was intrigued. 'You are very welcome to attend!' my new comrade exclaimed. 'We have a service at 9 a.m. this Sunday'. She gave me directions and then sauntered off into the distance. Well, what's a man to do? You don't get a invitation like that every day.



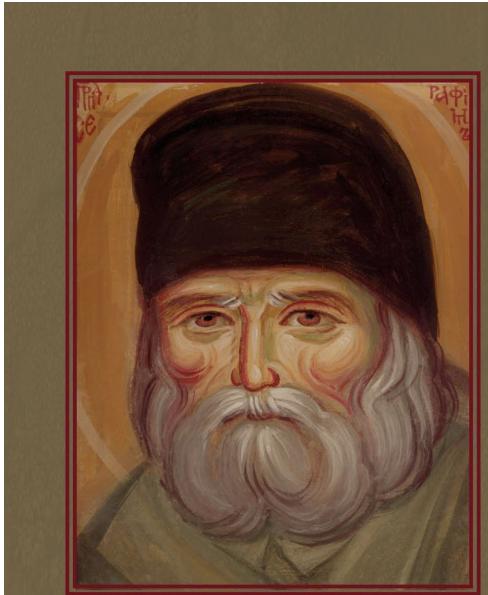
The following Sunday saw me strolling through the grounds of Rake Lane Cemetery on the lookout for exotic persons from behind the Iron Curtain. All was quiet as I came to the door of the chapel. I opened the imposing latch and entered. I was met inside by my new Siberian friend and a mere handful of other people, who nonetheless made me extremely welcome. The interior seemed a little altered in its fabric from when it served as a chapel for the cemetery. However, its walls were adorned with multitudinous small icons, candles twinkled everywhere, and at one end of the building an ornately carved altar screen separated the public from the private domain of the clergy. I must admit, I was a little disappointed by the size of the congregation, which numbered no more than ten, but I was to learn later that there was probably a very good reason for this. My friend gave me a rite of service, which was in both English and Russian. Despite the fact that it was in two languages, the tome seemed suspiciously thick. As I rifled through its pages, it struck me I was in for a long service—in fact a very long service indeed!

It transpired though that as well as being a solemn religious service, the Russian Orthodox Mass is also a wonderful piece of theatre. Having been raised as a Roman Catholic in the sixties, I am well used to the dramatic in religious ceremony. However, nothing I have experienced prepared me for the wonderful spectacle I was about to witness. Beautiful singing mixed with incense, a priest elaborately dressed, the script in a foreign, mysterious language, all in a magical setting, couldn't help but be a truly riveting experience. I spoke to the officiating priest after the service and was surprised to find that, despite appearances, he was English and was actually a convert from Anglicanism.

Despite being very dramatic, the service was also very long. After about an hour and a half, the constant standing and gymnastic nature of the Orthodox sign of the cross (which would not be out of place as an Olympic gymnastic event), were beginning to take their toll. However, as time wore on, I began to notice a steady trickle of people entering the church to swell the ranks of the congregation and the decibel meter of the choir. These Ivan-come-latelys were obviously no mugs. They had turned up for the essential part of the service which fulfilled their religious obligation without incurring the loss of circulation I was now experiencing. However, on a serious note it was obvious that inside this building was a solidarity of love for each other that was positively palpable. These people, part of a modern diaspora from all over eastern Europe, were united in a shared language, creed, and experience. What was truly humbling in our increasingly insular country was the strength and sincerity of the welcome offered to me.

At the end of the service, I mingled with the congregation and was treated to home-made cake and tea. I thanked my Siberian friend for the blessing she had bestowed on me by inviting me into her church. That same welcome will be extended to any of our readers who wish to experience a fabulous cultural and religious treat. One word of warning, though: if you wish to attend the whole three-hour service, get a good night's sleep and have three Weetabix for breakfast!

## Book Review



### An Extraordinary Peace St. Seraphim, Flame of Sarov

By Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore)

#### An Extraordinary Peace

Anaphora Press, 2009

In this reprint of his classic work, Archimandrite Lazarus exposes the reader to a depth of spiritual beauty far beyond anything that most of us know in our day-to-day lives. Yet, with simple clarity, he is able to present this in a way that is accessible to all, irrespective of their own stage of spiritual growth. As I read the book, I came to realise that this is perhaps reflective of the spirit of St Seraphim as much as it is due to the labours of Father Lazarus.

The first chapter tells a little of the early life of St Seraphim and perhaps strays a little into the tedium of historicity and precision of dates. However, it quickly makes the transition into the real substance of the work. Drawing heavily on the sayings of St Seraphim himself, the book draws the reader into a world that overturns everyday reality, and time after time challenges the expectations based on it, as the astounding story is told of the faith, humility, and ascetic struggles of St Seraphim, recounted in the written accounts of many of those who had the great privilege of knowing this extraordinary man of God during his earthly life. Fr Lazarus'

own humble approach to the task of recounting the Saint's life allows the accounts to speak for themselves, as indeed they in turn allow the astounding wisdom of the clairvoyant Fr Seraphim to shine through, no doubt benefitting the reader today almost as much as those who sat at the feet of this great spiritual father.

This is essential reading for anybody seeking a better appreciation of the ascetic labours of those who give up everything for the love of Christ, and while being caught up in the beauty of St Seraphim's life, the reader should not expect to remain free from the discomfort of introspection that *An Extraordinary Peace* ironically evokes.

This review originally appeared in Orthodox News, published by the [St George Orthodox Information Service](#), from which *An Extraordinary Peace* may be purchased.

## News

### Holy Week & Easter

The services of Great and Holy Week & the paschal services were beautiful this year, as ever. Much work goes into preparing these services and actually serving them, and the dignity and prayerfulness with which we have been able to offer them would simply not be possible without the assistance and support that many of you give. To all of those who assisted in any way with the preparation of the services, by cleaning and beautifying the church with decorations and flowers; by singing, reading, ironing; by being present and taking part, or indeed any of the other practical and spiritual efforts that made the services a channel of grace: thank you.

### New Catechumen

On Sunday, the 12th of May, Paul Cavendish was made a catechumen. He is to be baptised on the 16th of June. This marks the next stage for Paul on what has been a long journey into the Orthodox Church. Please welcome him and pray for him.

## New Server

Also on the 12th of May, Igor Stepanous served in the altar for the first time at our parish. As a young boy, Igor grew up serving in the altar at the Holy Annunciation Convent in Willesden, which was at the time part of our diocese, and he is delighted once again to be able to take part in something that once proved a source of nourishment to his Orthodox faith.



Men and boys of the parish are encouraged to consider whether they, too, may have the necessary gifts of prayerfulness, alertness, and observation, which are essential for service in the altar. If anybody would like to serve, please contact [Subdeacon Michael](#).

## Engagement

On Sunday, the 26th of May, the parish learnt the joyous news that Michael Kelly and Olga Jeneson are to be married. Olga is one of the founding members of our parish, and it is a joy that she is taking this next step on her life in Christ. The betrothal will take place in church on Sunday, the 2nd of June. May God grant them both many years!

## More visitors



Also on the 26th of May, we were pleased to welcome back two friends of the parish. Deacon Andrei Psarev serves at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York but often visits our diocese for his studies. On this, his second visit to our parish, he delivered an enlightening address on the place of the holy canons in the life of the Church, reminding us of the obedience and good order that we ought to maintain by following our bishop's and priest's application of the canons. He called us to recognise that what lies behind the canons is not slavish legalism but rather the love of Christ.

Reader Nicolas is one of the readers at our cathedral in London and is always a welcome addition to our servers in the altar, where his sober manner and years of experience add to the prayerfulness of our offering to God.

## Annual General Meeting

Our parish AGM was held on the 26th of May over our shared luncheon. We focussed on the spiritual and numerical growth of the parish over the past few years and the resultant need for the gifts of our people to be allowed to flourish to support the increased responsibilities and the building up of our common life.

Aidan Draper and Svetlana Jeneson were formally re-appointed as trustees of the parish, while Chad Newman was appointed as the new parish secretary. Svetlana has volunteered her services in looking after the sourcing of candles for use in church. Other ministries within the parish were discussed and volunteers would be welcomed:

- **Building maintenance**—Svetoslav Svetoslavov will co-ordinate a group to look after the fabric of our church building. From time to time, odd jobs need to be done pertaining to lighting, heating, electrics, roofing, flooring, and so forth, and it would be good if those with the necessary skills were to make themselves known to Svetoslav.
- **Parish sisterhood**—Many Russian Orthodox parishes have a sisterhood, whose role includes such things as showing hospitality to guests, preparing or co-ordinating the preparation of food for parish meals, cleaning and making ready the various vestments, hangings, and other cloths used in church (particularly as the seasons change), and beautifying the church with flowers or greenery according to the feast or time of year. It was felt that the way in which we do some of these things at our parish could be better organised, and Rodica and Ribca have agreed to co-ordinate a group for this. If you would like to be part of the sisterhood or would like to contribute occasionally, (such as food for parish meals or money towards flowers), please speak with one of them.
- **Altar servers**—Men and boys are needed to help with serving in the altar at the Sunday Liturgy **and other services**. If you would like to think about serving, please speak with Subdeacon Michael. Once there are enough servers, we could operate on an informal rota system, so that committing to serving will not necessarily mean committing to serving every Sunday, unless that is desired.
- **Choir**—We need people to sing in the choir. At present, we have a small group of committed singers, who can easily vary from one week to the next, and who would welcome help from others to swell the numbers. Singing plays an enormous part in our worship, and leading the congregational singing is both an honour and a challenge. Many of our people come from afar so we have no real opportunity for rehearsal. However, most of our regular music is on the parish website, with varying parts for a particular service sent out to the choir during the previous week. If you are willing to learn the basic order of the services, can channel your prayer through concentrating on a particular task, and are able to sing, then please consider joining the choir.

If you would like to use any other of your gifts in service to the church, please speak with Father Paul.



## Charitable giving

Please remember that we support the [Wirral Churches' Ark Project](#) and that donations of food, clothing, toiletries, and other necessities may be left in church. Also, the St Barbara Trust welcomes donations of money or comestibles.

## Dates for Your Diary

### Thursday, 13th June—**Ascension**

This is the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. There will be no Divine Liturgy for this feast but Vespers will be served at 7.30 on the Wednesday evening.

### Sunday, 23rd June—**Pentecost and a Wedding**

This is the Feast of Pentecost. Following the Divine Liturgy will be the wedding of Igor and Ribca Sepanous.

### Saturday, 29th June—**Colchester Patronal Feast**

This is the feast of St John the Wonderworker, and the patronal feast of [our sister parish in Colchester](#).

The Vigil will be served at St John's church at 5.30 on the Friday afternoon, with the Divine Liturgy and Cross Procession on the Saturday morning, beginning at 10 o' clock.

### Thursday, 4th July—**Prayers & Film Night**

Thursday evening prayers will take the form of a moleben to St John the Wonderworker at 7.30. Please see opposite for details.

## Upcoming Events

### **Moleben & Film Night**

The regular Thursday evening prayers on the 4th of July will take the form of a Moleben to St John the Wonderworker, whose feast will have been celebrated a few days earlier. This will be served at church rather than Fr Paul's house, at the usual time of 7.30 p.m.

The service will be followed by the viewing of a film about the life and glorification of St John. Please bring food to share.

### **Patronal Feast**

With Archbishop Mark's blessing, we keep the feast of St Elisabeth this year on the 21st of July. Please make a special effort to take part as fully as possible in this feast, which is of great significance in the life of our parish.

### **Parish Pilgrimage**

We are planning a parish pilgrimage for later in the year, perhaps in August/early September. More details will follow as they are decided.

## Namedays



### Saturday, 1st June (19th May) - **St Nina, Enlightener of Georgia, Equal of the Apostles**

Nina Murray  
Nina Hyland

### Monday, 3rd June (21st May) - **Ss Constantine and Helen, Equals of the Apostles**

Konstantin Gontsarov  
Konstantin Akimov  
Alina Ostroverkh  
Elena Golubeva

### Wednesday, 5th June (23rd April) - **Synaxis of the saints of Rostov & Yaroslav**

Sascha Stepanous (St Alexander Nevsky)  
Alexander Burnip (St Alexander Nevsky)

May God grant them many years!

Here are the references to the Scripture readings from the Divine Liturgy in the coming weeks.

<b>2nd June</b>	<i>The Fourth Sunday after Pascha</i>	Acts 11:19-26, 29-30	John 4:5-42
20th May	(The Samaritan Woman)		
<b>9th June</b>	<i>The Fifth Sunday after Pascha</i>	Acts 16:16-34	John 9:1-38
27th May	(The Blind Man)		
<b>13th June</b>	<i>The Ascension of the Lord</i>	Acts 1:1-12	Luke 24:36-53
31st May			
<b>16th June</b>	<i>The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost</i>	Acts 20:16-18, 20:28-36	John 17:1-13
3rd June	(The Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council)		
<b>23rd June</b>	<i>Holy Pentecost</i>	Acts 2:1-11	John 7:37-52, 8:12
10th June			
<b>30th June</b>	<i>The 1st Sunday after Pentecost</i>	Hebrews 11:33-12:2	Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38, 19:27-30
17th June	(All Saints)		

St Elisabeth's is a Christian church. We hold to the ancient Orthodox faith of the Apostles, confessing our faith in the Holy and Indivisible Trinity: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are a parish of the [Great Britain & Ireland Diocese](#) of the [Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia](#), a self-governing part of the international Russian Orthodox Church with our chief bishop in New York. Our own bishop is His Grace Archbishop Mark of Great Britain.

Among our regular congregation are Britons, Russians, Romanians, Ukrainians, Serbs, Americans, and others. Our Sunday services are approximately 85% in English with the rest in Slavonic and occasionally some Greek and Romanian, according to who is present. We tend to use more English for other services. Conversation is predominantly in English, and we share refreshments after the service. On one Sunday each month, we stay for a bring-and-share luncheon together. All are welcome.

The Hours and Divine Liturgy (The Holy Eucharist) are served every Sunday morning at 9.45, as well as on other feast days as announced. Only Orthodox Christians receive Holy Communion, and our parish practice is that communicants should confess regularly. Visitors who wish to receive communion are asked to make themselves known to one of the clergy beforehand.

We follow the traditional Church calendar which was established by the First Ecumenical Council. Currently, this is 13 days behind the civil calendar. (Therefore, for instance, our celebration of Christmas, which is the 25th of December, falls on the 7th of January in the civil calendar). Both dates are usually given in published details of church services and other events, which may be found on [our parish website](#).

Our parish supports the Wirral Churches' Ark Project for homeless men and women. Donations of clothes, toiletries, and non-perishable foodstuffs may be made at church, and monetary donations may be made either directly to the Ark Project or through Mrs Irina Burnip at church.

We have two priests:

**Priest Paul Elliott**

Address: 58 Shrewsbury Road, Oxton, Birkenhead, Merseyside. CH43 2HY  
Telephone: 07926 194 031  
e-mail: [fatherpaul@newmartyr.info](mailto:fatherpaul@newmartyr.info)

**Priestmonk Lazarus**

Address: Flat 1, 4 Rake Lane, Wallasey, Merseyside. CH45 5DF  
Telephone: 07906 578 313  
e-mail: [fatherlazarus@newmartyr.info](mailto:fatherlazarus@newmartyr.info)

Father Lazarus prays the Hours in church on most days of the week and is happy to receive visitors, as well as requests for prayers, molebens, and other services.

For pastoral or other enquiries for Russians who do not speak English, our parish has a Russian-language contact:

**Mrs Svetlana Jeneson**

Telephone: 01704 212 959  
e-mail: [svjetlana@newmartyr.info](mailto:svjetlana@newmartyr.info)



The New-Martyr is published with the blessing of the Revd Fr Paul Elliott, Rector of the Parish of Saint Elisabeth the New-Martyr. The [archive](#) may be found on the parish website. Articles, poems, book reviews, as well as questions and comments may be sent to the editor:

**Subdeacon Michael Astley** e-mail: [editor@newmartyr.info](mailto:editor@newmartyr.info)

