

✠ BASILDON ORTHODOX COMMUNITY BULLETIN

No. 2 ~ Nativity Fast 2011 * CHRIST is born! Glorify Him!



It has been a wonderfully busy time of late. On Saturday 3rd December, following a blessing by the priest, the Holy Liturgy was served for the first time in the newly-prepared Saint Agnes' Chapel. We shall return to St Basil's for *one last time*, for the Liturgy on 7th January 2012 (the Feast of Saint Basil is on 1st January), then the chapel will become our new temporary home. We shall, of course, continue searching for a permanent home, be it at North Benfleet, or wherever God intends. With the creation of our own chapel, we have taken a leap forward; we now have somewhere for Orthodox use at any time, and we are now ready for extra services to begin (see *below for dates*), enabling us to lead a fuller Orthodox liturgical life. Please do support us and pray for God's blessing on our work as we continue to grow, and attempt to reach out to those in the vicinity. Please remember that the chapel is *yours*, and is *available for prayer at any time*, but as a courtesy do please first telephone 01268-410247.

Our sincere thanks to God for His many blessings, and to Saint Agnes. Also, to Fr Alexander; to George for generously allowing us to turn an old outbuilding into a beautiful chapel; and to all those who have worked so hard for our community this past year – may God bless you all. Please remember Ann in your prayers, as she continues her fight against cancer.

Do enjoy a very happy Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

NOTE:

The first Liturgy of the new year will be served on 7th January 2012, at St Basil's Church, Luncies Road, Basildon, SS14 1SD.

All other services will be at ~

SAINT AGNES' CHAPEL, 18 ST AGNES ROAD, off NOAK HILL ROAD (A176), BILLERICAY, ESSEX, CM12 9UR.

WHEN THE LORD JESUS WAS BORN OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, ALL THE WORLD WAS ENLIGHTENED. THE SHEPHERDS WATCHED IN THE FIELDS, THE MAGI ADORED AND THE ANGELS PRAISED IN SONG; BUT HEROD WAS TROUBLED: FOR GOD HAS APPEARED IN THE FLESH, THE SAVIOUR OF OUR SOULS.

SAINT AGNES of ROME, VIRGIN-MARTYR



TROPARION (Tone 4)

Your lamb Agnes, calls out to You, O Jesus, in a loud voice: "I love You, my Bridegroom, and in seeking You, I endure suffering. In baptism I was crucified so that I might reign in You, and I died so that I might live with You. Accept me as a pure sacrifice, for I have offered myself in love." Through her prayers save our souls, since You are merciful.

SAINT AGNES (c.291- c.304) HER LIFE & MARTYRDOM

According to holy tradition, Saint Agnes was a member of the Roman nobility born (c. 291) and raised in a Christian family. The Prefect Sempronius wished Agnes to marry his son, and on Agnes' refusal he condemned her to death. As Roman law did not permit the execution of virgins, Sempronius had a naked Agnes dragged through the streets to a brothel. Various versions give different methods of escape from this predicament. In one, as she prayed, her hair grew and covered her body. It was also said that all of the men who attempted to rape her were immediately struck blind. In another the son of the prefect is struck dead, but revived after Agnes prayed for him, causing her release. There is then a trial from which Sempronius excuses himself, and another figure presides, sentencing her to death. When led out to die she was tied to a stake, but the bundle of wood would not burn, or the flames parted away from her, whereupon the officer in charge of the troops drew his sword and beheaded her, or, in some other texts, stabbed her in the throat. (Interestingly, the failure to burn the saint, followed by stabbing is identical to the martyrdom of another virgin-martyr, St Lucy, who was martyred the same year as St Agnes). It is also said that the blood of Agnes poured to the stadium floor where other Christians soaked up the blood with cloths.

Through her death at the age of twelve or thirteen, St. Agnes inherited eternal life. The holy virgin-martyr was buried by her parents in a field they owned outside of Rome. Many miracles occurred at the grave of St. Agnes. Her holy and grace-filled relics rest in the church built in her honour, along the Via Nomentana.

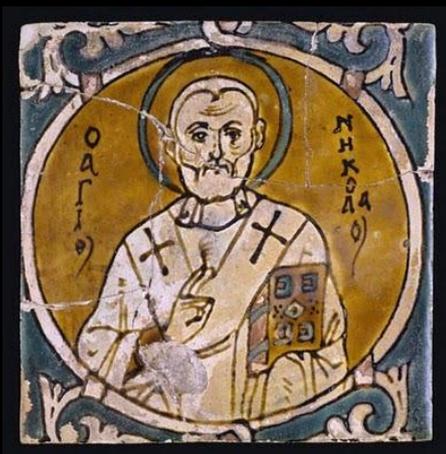
A few days after Agnes' death, her foster-sister, Saint Emerentiana was found praying by her tomb; she claimed to be the daughter of Agnes' wet nurse, and was stoned to death after refusing to leave the place and reprimanding the pagans for killing her foster sister. Emerentiana was also later canonized. The daughter of Constantine I, Saint Constance, was also said to have been cured of leprosy after praying at Agnes' tomb. Emerentiana and Constance appear in the scenes from the life of Agnes on the 14th-century Royal Gold Cup in the British Museum.

Agnes' bones are conserved beneath the high altar in the church of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura in Rome, built over the catacomb that housed Agnes' tomb. Her skull is preserved in a separate chapel in the church of Sant'Agnese in Agone in Rome's Piazza Navona.

St Ambrose, St Damasus and Prudentius sang her praises and she is a patroness of chastity.

Although there is a clear resemblance of her name to *agnus* (the Latin word for lamb), Agnes is actually derived from the feminine Greek adjective ἀγνή (*hagnē*) meaning "chaste, pure, sacred".

She is commemorated by the Holy Orthodox Church on 21st January.

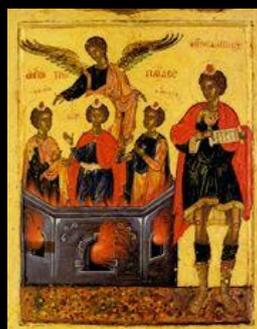


DECEMBER-JANUARY SELECTED FEASTS:

- 5th December - Saint Sabbas the Sanctified
- 6th December - Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker.
- 9th December - Conception of the Theotokos.
- 15th December - Saint Offa, King of Essex.
- 17th December - Prophet Daniel.
- 20th December - Saint Ignatius of Antioch.
- 22nd December - Saint Anastasia Pharmakolytria.
- 25th December - Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1st January - Circumcision of our Lord; Saint Basil.
- 6th January - Theophany.
- 21st January - Saint Agnes, Virgin-Martyr.

Saint Makarios the Great on "The Heart" *The heart itself is only a small vessel, Yet dragons are there, and lions; There are poisonous beasts, And all the treasures of evil; There are rough and uneven roads; There are precipices; But there, too, are God and the angels; Life is there, and the Kingdom; There, too, is light, and there the apostles, And heavenly cities, and treasures of grace. All things lie within that little space.*

The **Prophet Daniel** and the Three Children were all descended from the royal tribe of Judah. In the year 599 before Christ, in the reign of Joachim, who was also called Jechonias (I Chron. 3:16, and II Chron. 36:8). While yet children, these righteous ones were led away as captives into Babylon together with the other Jews by Nebuchadnezzar. He singled them out from among the other



captives to serve him, and renamed them thus: Daniel was named Baltazar; Ananias, Sedrach; Misaël, Misach; and Azarias, Abednago. They were reared in the royal court, and taught the wisdom of the Chaldeans; and after the passage of three years, they surpassed all the Chaldean sages (Dan. 1).

Prayer at Daybreak *by* Archimandrite Sophrony



O Eternal Lord and Creator of all things, in your inscrutable goodness you have called me into this life and have given me the grace of baptism and the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. You have instilled in me the desire to seek your face. Hear my prayer!

I have no life, no light, no joy, no strength, no wisdom without you, O God. Because of my unrighteousness, I dare not lift my eyes in your presence. But I obey you who said:

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mark 11)

Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father He will give it to you in my name. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16)

Therefore I now dare to approach you. Purify me from all stain of flesh and spirit. Teach me to pray rightly.

Bless this day which you give to me, your unworthy servant.

By the power of your blessing enable me at all times to speak and to act with a pure spirit to your glory; with faith, hope and love, humility, patience, gentleness, peace, purity, simplicity, sobriety, courage and wisdom. Let me always be aware of your presence.

In your boundless goodness, O Lord God, show me your will and grant me to walk in your sight without sin.

O Lord, unto whom all hearts are open, you know what I need and what is necessary for me. You know my blindness and my ignorance. You know my infirmity and corruption. My pain and anguish are not hidden from you. Therefore I beg you: Hear my prayer and teach me by the power of your Holy Spirit the way in which I should walk. And when my perverted will leads me otherwise, O Lord, do not spare me, but force me back to your way.

Grant me, Lord, to hold fast to what is good by the power of your love. Preserve me from every word and act which corrupts the soul, and from every impulse that is displeasing in your sight and harmful to the people around me. Teach me what I should say and how I should speak. If it be your holy will that I be quiet and make no answer, inspire me to be silent in a peaceful spirit that causes neither harm nor hurt to my fellow human beings.

Establish me in the path of your commandments, and until my last breath do not let me stray from the light of your ordinances. May your commandments be the sole law of my being in this life and for all eternity.

O Lord, I pray to you: Have mercy on me. Spare me in my affliction and misery and hide not the way of salvation from me.

In my foolishness, O God, I plead with you for many and great things. Yet I am ever mindful of my wickedness, my baseness, my vileness. Have pity on me! Cast me not away from your presence because of my foolish presumption. Increase rather in me the right presumption of your grace and grant that I, the worst of people, may love you with all my mind, all my heart, all my soul and all my strength, as you have commanded.

By your Holy Spirit, Lord, teach me good judgment and sound knowledge. Let me know the truth before I die. Maintain my life in this world until the end that I may offer worthy repentance. Do not take me away while my mind is still blind and bound by darkness. When you are pleased to end my life, give me warning that I may prepare my soul to come before you. Be with me, Lord, at that awesome hour and assure me by your grace of the joy of my salvation.

Cleanse me from secret faults. Purify me from hidden iniquities. Give me a good answer at your dread judgment seat.

Lord of great mercy and measureless love for all people: Hear my prayer! Amen.



NAME - DAYS

TO ALL WHO CELEBRATE A NAME-DAY IN DECEMBER WE SEND CONGRATULATIONS AND WISH YOU MANY YEARS.

9TH DECEMBER – CONCEPTION OF THE MP ΘΥ- ANNA GREENWARD

13TH DECEMBER - ST LUCY OF SYRACUSE – LUCY BRIGHTON-CROSS

17TH DECEMBER – PROPHET DANIEL– DANIEL CARTER

27TH DECEMBER - ST THEODORE – THEODORA FORD

Keep in mind that the Church is a heavenly institution but the people who work in the Church are humans like you and me, everyday people. We should never be stopped by the disenchantment that will come. Disenchantment must come because this is a fallen world. I insist on this. God wants us to overcome the disenchantment and go on. We must never stop. I will tell you in closing an example that Mother Gavrilia used to give. "The Church is like a huge ship full of sailors, biting each other on the throat, tearing hair, punching, but the wonder is that the ship is coming into port because Christ is at the helm." And since we are talking to readers, some of whom may be new converts, I would also say, have patience and keep in mind the story of St. Anthony, when from his cave he saw a vision of the desert full of holes and traps. He said, "Oh Lord, who is going to be saved from falling into these traps?" Then he heard a voice, "Humility will save the people. The humble will never be trapped." Although I was born Orthodox, I too was like a convert because I entered the Church at the age of forty – and when I saw what was going on in the Church I said, "No, it can't be, why is this happening?" But it does happen, and God permits it so that I can overcome it and go ahead, not stop in despair. Jumping over hurdles is the road of a Christian. Never think that it is a walk on the beach in the moonlight. Have patience, that is all.

~ **SISTER GAVRILIA**, spiritual daughter of Mother Gavrilia (1897-1922) "the Ascetic of Love".

Note: The Nativity Fast, which began on 1st December, ends on Christmas Eve. The period between the Nativity and Theophany (26th Dec. to 5th Jan.) - is **FAST-FREE**.

From Saint Sergius Mechov (+1942) ~

All the present things shall pass, but it shall not be so with my soul and The Kingdom of God of which I partake here, on earth. It is our duty to prepare ourselves for the afterlife and to internalize the notion that death for Christ is the path to the true, genuine, real life. We ought to make use of all things, however not for our own benefit, we must not turn earthly goods into true values – and then faith will acquire for us a wholly different meaning from that it used to have. Thus, faith is a gift of God, for which we must pray; faith depends on the way we humiliate ourselves, and we reach faith by way of our remembrance of death, our detachment from earthly goods and even from the life in this world, our readiness to die for the faith in Christ.

Orthodox worship in Basildon (December 2011-January 2012)

MATINS:

**Thursday 15th December, 10:30, in
St Agnes' Chapel.**

**Thursday 22nd December, 10:30, in
St Agnes' Chapel.**

DIVINE LITURGY:

**Saturday 7th January 2012, 11:00,
at St Basil's.**



The Basildon Orthodox Community is a Mission under the supervision of the British Deanery of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. The Patriarchate is the successor to the community founded in Antioch by St Peter the Apostle. Two of the Antiochian daughter churches include the Church of Cyprus (granted autocephaly by the Church of Antioch in 431 AD), and the Church of Georgia (granted autocephaly by the Church of Antioch circa 474 AD).

Email: orthodox.basildon@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 01702-305527

+GLORY+TO+GOD+FOR+ALL+THINGS+