



"As many as have been Baptised into Christ have put on Christ: Alleluia!"

ORTHODOX FAMILIES' NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the quarterly newsletter for families of the Louth and Grimsby parishes. Issue No.10: June, July, Aug 2014



We've started this newsletter to help us keep in touch with all our families, and give them support when raising children in the warmth of the Orthodox Church family.

HELP FROM GOD FOR AN ORTHODOX PARENT

Do you find yourself thinking that there must be an easier way to bring children up in the Orthodox faith? Do you always seem to have to nag, to remind, to encourage your children: 'say your prayers', 'come to church', 'venerate the icons', 'stand up', 'keep quiet' and so on. Perhaps this is because you are trying to do it all on your own!

*Elder Porphyrios in his book 'Wounded by Love' has some wise advice; he explains in effect that we should let God take some of the strain. **"Pray and then speak. That's what to do with your children. If you are constantly lecturing them, you'll become tiresome and when they grow up they'll feel a kind of oppression. Prefer prayer and speak to them through prayer. Speak to God and God will speak to their hearts. That is, you shouldn't give guidance to your children with a voice that they hear with their ears. You may do this too, but above all you should speak to God about your children. Say, 'Lord Jesus Christ, give Your light to my children. I entrust them to You. You gave them to me, but I am weak and unable to guide them, so, please, illuminate them.'** And God will speak to them and they will say to themselves, 'Oh dear, I shouldn't have upset Mummy by doing that!' And with the grace of God this will come from their heart."*

This doesn't mean that we can just sit back and leave it all to God: it means that if we are full of prayer, and we trust in God, then we will be guided to act and speak to our children in a way that helps them to perceive His will. We are all influenced by those around us, and children most of all. If as adults we show an example of how we try all the time to be true to our faith, our children will absorb this as surely as they take in the air that they breathe.

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

Here we have two icons of the same saints - Peter with his grey bushy hair, and Paul with his bald head and Jewish topknot. But the icons show them doing different things: in one they are holding between them a model of a church and in the other they are embracing each other. This tells us something important. To Peter, an ordinary and rather outspoken fisherman, Christ gave the job of converting the Jews to the Christian faith: Paul, an educated and Romanised Jew was dramatically shown the truth of Christianity in a vision (Acts 9:3-9) and then asked to convert the Gentiles (non-Jews) to the faith. But they were both asked to build the faith, and that is why the icon shows them 'holding a church' between them. So what about the other icon: why are they embracing each other? It



is because during their struggles and hard work to spread the Christian faith and build the Church, they sometimes had arguments. St Paul had to tell St Peter off because he thought he wasn't following the right path (read about it in Galatians 2:11-13). But in the end, they made up their quarrel, and this icon celebrates their forgiveness of each other. We celebrate these two great saints on June 29th: Holy Apostles Peter and Paul pray to God for us!

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS AND THE STOLE

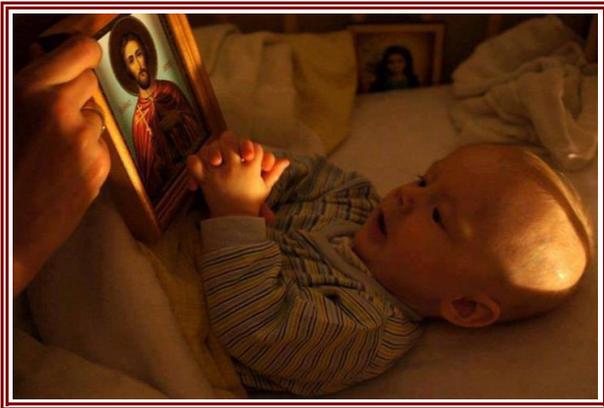
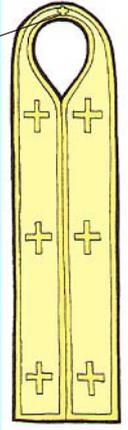
The Orthodox Church is deeply sacramental, believing that everything that we do and pray as members of the Church combines outward visible signs and inward spiritual grace. It holds in particular reverence the seven sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, Communion, Confession, Holy Unction (Healing), Marriage and Ordination.

The vestments given to the clergy at their Ordination are sacramental in the sense that they are both outwardly visible – we can see them in all their glory – and tell us truths about our faith. Each piece of the vestments for Deacons, Priests, and Bishops has a special meaning. The picture shows the Priest's *epitrachelion* which means "what is worn around the neck" and sometimes it is called the stole (another word for a scarf).

As the Priest puts on this part of his vestments, which falls down from his shoulders to his feet, he makes the sign of the Cross over the small cross which will be at the back of his neck and says some words from one of the Psalms: "Blessed is God Who poureth out his grace upon His priests, like unto the oil of myrrh upon the head, which runneth down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, which runneth down to the fringe of his raiment".

You can see that the epitrachelion has six other crosses on it, and tradition says that these seven crosses refer to the seven sacraments. So the Priest when he puts it on, is praying that God will give him grace to carry out all his duties as a Priest, in particular as he administers the sacraments. The sacraments are personal; this is how God's grace is given to each one of us. You will know that when you take Communion the Priest mentions your name: in most of the sacraments, people are referred to by name. You may not remember your Baptism and Chrismation, but your name would have been mentioned many times during these services!

Have a careful look at the Priest's vestments next time you come to a service. In the next Newsletter, we'll find out more about some of the other parts of the vestments.

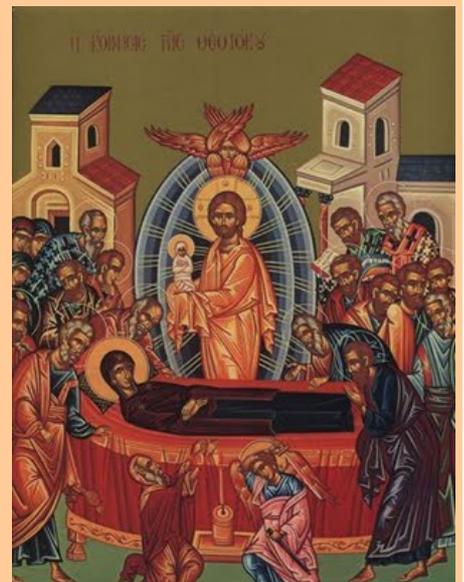


This lovely photo reminds us that 'You Can't Start Them Too Young'. Make sure that a love and understanding of icons is a part of your childrens' lives from the very beginning

St Aethelheard's is now on Facebook! Please visit www.facebook.com/orthodoxlouth

FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THEOTOKOS

This feast, one of the twelve major Feasts of the Orthodox Church is on August 15th. It is when we remember the 'falling asleep' of one whom we reverence with particular love, Mary, the Mother of God. It is in the Tradition of the Church that we learn of her life, for Scripture contains very little about her. But in this very interesting series of posts <http://www.orthodoxmom.com/2009/08/14/15-days-for-panagia-day-14/> we read many of the accounts of the events of her life, including this lovely account from St Kosmas of her death (Dormition). The icon clearly shows what he tells us. *The angelic powers were amazed as they looked in Sion upon their own Master, bearing in his hands the soul of a woman: for as befitted a Son, He said to her who without spot had borne Him, "Come, honoured among women, and be glorified together with thy Son and God."* The apostles surrounded her bed weeping and the face of the Theotokos shone like the sun and a splendid and sweet perfume emitted from her most pure body. They venerated her and were sanctified from contact with it.'



MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, INTERCEDE FOR US WE PRAY!