



*“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. 7: September 2013



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

We welcome your ideas and questions, either in person or by email to [orthodox@btinternet.com](mailto:orthodox@btinternet.com)

**HAPPY NEW CHURCH YEAR ON SEPTEMBER 1ST!**

*We especially pray for our children as they start a new school year.*



In October, the Church celebrates one of her most loved feasts. It is celebrated by the Russian Church on October 1<sup>st</sup>, and in the Greek Church on October 28<sup>th</sup>, and both celebrate on this day the wonderful **Protection offered by the Theotokos, the Mother of God.**



The icons for the feast show the Theotokos holding a veil in her outstretched arms, surrounded by angels and saints.

Sacred tradition tells that during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, on October 1<sup>st</sup> St Andrew the Blessed Fool-for-Christ and his disciple St Epiphanius were in the church at Blachernae in Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) where several relics of the Theotokos were kept. As St Andrew prayed, he saw the dome of the church open and the Theotokos come down to them, surrounded by angels and saints. The Theotokos approached the centre of the church, knelt down, and with her face covered in tears, prayed for a long time, asking her Son, Jesus Christ to accept the prayers of the people there who were looking for her protection. Then she got up and held out her veil over the people. St Andrew turned to Epiphanius and asked 'Do you see, brother, the Holy Theotokos, praying for all the world?' 'Yes, Holy Father, I see it and am amazed' he replied.

As Orthodox Christians we pray 'Most Holy Theotokos, pray to God for us!' for we believe that her requests on our behalf will be answered. We need protection from many things: not just from physical danger, but also from the temptation to get involved in dangerous things we should avoid, from the dangerous destruction of our own anger towards others and countless other things that put us in danger of destroying our relationship with our loving God.



### *Saint Procla*

*There are some Saints that we know very little about, but that does not stop us remembering them. We all know the story of Jesus' trial, where the judge Pontius Pilate was eventually persuaded that Our Lord should be put to death by crucifixion. But his wife Procla urged him to have nothing to do with the death of an innocent man. For, she said, 'I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him'. We therefore look upon her as a saint, for having recognised Christ as God, and we remember her on October 27<sup>th</sup>.*

Orthodox Churches of St Aethelheard, Louth and St Marina & St Kenelm, Grimsby

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**OUR GARDIAN ANGELS** Orthodox Christians believe that we all have a personal Guardian Angel who cares for us and intercedes for us. Christ taught that children especially are protected, when He said "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18: 10) We should encourage our children to 'talk' to their Guardian Angel in their prayers. Make these prayers part of their prayer routine, saying them with them to make them familiar and comforting. (You can simplify the language if you think it would help)

**Prayer to our Guardian Angel at the start of the day:**

*O angel of God, my holy guardian, given to me from heaven, enlighten me this day, and save me from all evil. Instruct me in doing good deeds, and set me on the path of salvation. Amen.*

**Prayer to our Guardian Angel at the end of the day:**

*Angel Guardian, keep and preserve all of us from every evil, sickness and grief. Amen.*

*On this theme, we celebrate all the angels on November 8<sup>th</sup>: Archangels Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Salathiel, Jegudiel, Barachiel, and Jeremiel and all the bodiless powers. Angels were among the first part of God's creation, unseen things being created before things that we can see. We understand there to be nine ranks of these Holy Ones, including Cherubim, Seraphim, Archangels (messengers) and the Angels who are closest to man. It is from these that our Guardian Angels come, teaching us to live good lives before God. On this feast we remember especially all our brothers and sisters who bear names like Angela, Angelica, Michael, Raphael, and so on. So we wish our Priest, Fr Michael, 'Many years' on this day.*

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**CELEBRATING TOO SOON?**

We could be forgiven for thinking that Christmas is coming already, when we walk into a shop and find Christmas goods on display. We know why the shops do this; they want us to get 'into the Christmas spirit' and start spending our money and living luxuriously even more than we do already.

But some people start their Christmas shopping early, not so that they can start celebrating too soon, but so that they can prepare for the Feast by saving up the gifts and special celebration foods for when the Feast finally arrives.

We need to start making our preparations too in our Orthodox lives by preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ, born as a human child to live among us. This is why the Orthodox Church has a period of fasting, starting on November 15<sup>th</sup> called the Nativity Fast. We use this time to think about the wonderful gift that is coming to all of mankind.

It can be very difficult to keep this Fast because all around us, people are already celebrating: school parties, office parties, turkey and tinsel outings and so on. So what can we do? Firstly, if we want to have a party, arrange it for after the Feast of the Nativity. If we are invited to join others before the Feast, make sure to thank God for the gift of food and friendship that we are offered, and once back home, go back to a simple diet, perhaps foregoing some of our favourite treats.

Try to remember some of the special days that fall in this 'Advent' period: the Holy Apostle Matthew on November 16<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple on 21<sup>st</sup>, Great Martyr Catherine on 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup>, Holy Apostle Andrew on 30<sup>th</sup>, Great Martyr Barbara on 4<sup>th</sup> December, St Nicholas on 6<sup>th</sup>, the Conception of the Most Holy Theotokos by the Rigueous Anna on 9<sup>th</sup> are just a few that we can celebrate.

And returning to the theme of the angels, how about making an angel each week during the Nativity Fast? By the time we get to the Feast of the Nativity, you will have a choir of angels all ready to sing 'Christ is Born: glorify Him!' (here's a nice design using paper plates <http://www.marthastewart.com/272551/paper-plate-angels>)

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