



“BECOMING THE BODY OF CHRIST” THE ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE DEANERY OF GREAT BRITAIN 25-28 MAY 2012

This year our annual Deanery Orthodox Conference took place at the High Leigh Conference centre in Hoddeston near London. One hundred and twenty participants gathered there to think over and discuss the main topic of the conference entitled “Becoming the Body of Christ”.

Conference opened in the evening of the 25th of May with Archbishop Gabriel’s warm greeting and welcome, followed by the evening party where the participants could meet each other in a very friendly and warm atmosphere with glasses of soft drinks, beer and wine.

The central talk of the conference was entitled “The Church of Acts and the Church today”, and given by Fr John Musther. The discussion was being held around six general statements; each of them was followed by the concrete questions, which required constant reflections and answers about our everyday life. The central issue of these statements could possibly be reformulated as “What does it mean the Apostolate of Christ in everyday life of each Christian in the Church and in the World today?” with the practical question asked of each of us “what is your view of mission?”

The other talks were given by Pastor Martin Burrel, who has been working with Roman Gypsies, and who shared his experience of communication and pastoral activity; by psychoanalyst Tony Clapp, whose talk was dedicated to the aspects of emotional life. Kosta Carras presented his reflections about the historical issues of the existential controversy (the sense of life). Unfortunately the invited speaker from Russia, Alexander Ogorodnikov, was not able to come to the conference, and his talk (with his permission) has been presented by deacon Peter Scorer and Mrs Carol Graves.

During the impressive Sunday liturgy, celebrated by 25 members of clergy, two important events took place – the ordination of deacon of the church in Dunblane (Scotland) Mark McBeth to priest and the ordination of Stephen Rawlings to deacon to serve in York.

During the round table we discussed together the question about the different ways of the integration of the ethical differences into our life within the church and also about how our orthodox faith could rise above such differences. The conference finished with a very friendly party where anybody who wanted to could present their numerous talents. The general atmosphere at the conference was very open, creative and constructive and there was a feeling that the recent difficulties due to the split with the Moscow Patriarchate are well and truly in the past.



Archbishop Gabriel



Pastor Martin Burrel



The Church of Acts and the Church today

Father John Musther, may 2012

(Key Statement 1)

The overriding reality for the Church in Acts (1-2) was the power of the Resurrection and of Pentecost; so said St Luke, who is generally regarded as the author of Acts.

Luke also said that from the presence of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, flowed a whole new way of life. That way of life he summed up in the words in 2.42: *'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and communion, to the breaking of bread and prayer'*.

St Luke himself knew the power of the Holy Spirit. He was what one might call an enthusiast. In reality the Holy Spirit was upon him and moved him to write his Gospel and the Book of Acts as a masterpiece testifying to the force of the Gospel and the power of the Kingdom from Luke 1 to Acts 28 with dramatic effect.

He was also reckoned to be a friend of that other great enthusiast, St Paul. When we read the writings of these men we can feel the fire in their hearts. And such was the fire felt in those times that St Luke says 'everyone was filled with awe' at the presence of Christ in his Kingdom.

The church today still celebrates the presence of Christ in his Kingdom in the liturgy. But what has happened to the fire? The answer is 2000 years worth of history. History moves on another plane than the Kingdom. History as an encounter with largely unregenerate humanity dampens everything down. The church can even appear to be quite unbelievable; it can cast us into despair. It can cause great

suffering. It can bring faith to a standstill. It can put out the fire in our hearts.

The church is caught between the Kingdom and history. The beauty of the Kingdom may dwell in the church, but the church has also made options which cast a shadow on its life in the Kingdom. The Desert Fathers cried out to the church: do not use the power of the world. Do not use the power of money. Do not use the church for the advancement the self. Do not lose sight of the reality of the Kingdom by settling for existence in the plane of history.

We all know instinctively that confusion has entered the church. Just to give you one example. A senior Anglican member of the clergy recently changed his mind on the issue of same-sex marriages. When asked why, he answered: 'well the early church adopted the ethics of the world around it, and so we must do the same today' (!).

The early church adopted the ethics of the Roman Empire? I have never found on any reading of the Bible that they did so. Where did that man get that idea from? We are not reading the same Bible. But there is widespread opinion that we are no different and we ought not to be any different than anyone else in our daily lives. If we really thought that then there is no point in believing in Jesus, or in his Kingdom, there was no resurrection, and there is certainly no point in the church. Meanwhile on the ground, according to Anglican friends, their bishops prefer management to mission, and priests are expected to spend more time on paperwork than they do in prayer.

But our faith ought to tell us that the Kingdom of God is continually coming into time to gather up the church and the creation into the End of all things. It does so with every liturgy (and every service for that matter). Rightly understood this means that every liturgy explicitly and implicitly carries the church further into the Kingdom, and every member should implicitly experience growth in union with Christ and with one another.

Key Question 1

Is the church for you an experience of 'the kingdom which is to come'?
Is the church for you growth in union with Christ and with one another'?

St Luke indicated that from the Resurrection and Pentecost flowed a whole new way of life which was fundamental to being the church. He spoke of four constituent items: apostles' teaching, koinonia/communion, breaking of bread and prayer.

Today we tend to see the 'apostolic teaching' as the faith and doctrine which has guided our church over centuries. This is true; but we have to beware lest we take that as an essentially backward view; that

People comment on archbishop Gabriel at the conference may 2012

Archbishop Gabriel's has enabled us to discover our sense of identity and (to borrow a phrase of John Major), to live at ease with ourselves. He has brilliantly evoked in his own personality what was always there but which needed a focus – i.e. love, joy and commitment in a very relaxed setting.



Fr John Musther

could not have been the view of the apostles themselves; their view was new, revolutionary, and focussed on end of the world. The apostles teaching was that the Kingdom had come (though not completely), Christ was at hand, and soon, very soon he would appear in glory.

Before I go further I want to exclude one of the dominant views about apostles in our culture in the West, because these views tend to find their way into our minds too.

Many today see the church as an institution; some Christians see it as a necessary one, others an unnecessary one, depending on who you are. For Catholics the apostles are seen to be officers who organise it and run it, in the manner common to institutions, according to their authority and power. The reason for this is that that is how they experience the church.

Protestants see a visible institution as unnecessary, at best a convenience; all that is needed is Bible study and worship which can be held anywhere. The reason is that is how they experience the church.

In the modern evangelical point of view the apostles are seen as rather dumb-witted and disillusioned disciples who suddenly were emboldened to stand and give testimony to Christ before the Jews and the Romans. The aim of this

view is a testimony to Christ offered as some kind of 'proof' of the Gospel. In evangelical terms, the apostles 'saw the light', they had a 'conversion experience', a 'change of mind'.

The focus of this view is that the apostles had 'correct doctrine'. As Jews they became Christians and adjusted their theology accordingly. These views, both Catholic and Protestant, are distorted by their rationality. I put it to you that none of these views have anything to do with the true understanding of the church and the apostles. They are trying to make a rationalised construct of the church when in reality the beginning of the church was an event quite beyond the scope of the human mind to imagine.

The experience of the apostles from the day of the Resurrection through to Pentecost was of quite a different order. The apostles' teaching was first and foremost experiential. By that we mean that it stemmed from their experience of the Risen Christ. That experience was necessarily one of sanctification and transformation in Christ and with one another.

What the apostles needed first and foremost was the cleansing of their hearts. Only the cleansing of the heart leads to effective and transforming union with Christ. We know this because such union lies at the heart of that one way of holiness in Christ which is at the heart of the Orthodox tradition. This tradition of sanctity is a lived and a living tradition which has continued all the way down through the ages in Orthodoxy. It would be a strange beginning to the church if the sanctification known after that beginning was never true of it in the beginning. We call the apostles saints, and this is not an honorific title. It is appropriate because of their genuine experience of the power of sanctification. Being with the Risen Jesus for forty days must have had an unbelievably

powerful effect. It is that power of sanctification which is the basis for everything else the apostles did by way of mission and evangelism.

At the historical level we know very little about any of the apostles. All the more precious therefore is the testimony of the one apostle about whom we know so much. St Paul made that astonishing claim, 'we have the mind of Christ.' This has nothing to do with rational perception. It is the result of the cleansing and unifying of the heart and mind and the gift of contemplation so well documented in the tradition of saints.

He said, 'We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.' This is the description of transforming union in Christ attested by the saints (2 Cor 3.18).

He said, 'The God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.' (2 Cor 4:6). This is commensurate with the experience of the divine light known to all the saints, and which is beyond all description by imagination, word and image.

Key Statement 2

The chief thing about the Apostles is that they were sanctified, they were saints. If they were not so, the church is nothing; for a church without holiness is absolutely useless. It can in no way be an instrument of God; it can in no way receive and manifest the Kingdom. It is in no way fit to evangelise and testify to the reality of Christ

The error of other views of the church is that they fail to take into account that the church came into being before Pentecost. The church was in existence on the very day of

the Resurrection. On that day it was filled with the redeemed rescued from Hades, the whole of humanity in Adam and Eve. That is why every Pascha we sing again and again 'and those in the tombs he has given life' Where do they have that life? In Christ and in the church. There is nowhere else.

In his Nativity Christ had taken our whole humanity when he was born of a woman and took our human flesh upon him. As a rational statement this is not intelligible. Rationality can only tell what it knows. We think of a person as being contained in a body. We cannot understand how one person could also be the whole human race. We cannot understand how in his lifetime Christ rendered this humanity totally obedient to his divinity. We cannot understand how in the Ascension when what appeared to be a single human body he took with him in his person a perfected humanity fully united to his divinity. It is this reality, of the divine-human unity of person in Christ, which made it possible, even before Pentecost, for the apostles to be made one with him in his sanctified body. But the existence of this divine-human unity is the fundamental reason we believe in a holy church and the sanctification of a holy people. None of this would have been possible without the apostles and their experience of what it means to be the church. Whereas those other views are

People comment on archbishop Gabriel at the conference may 2012

In a missionary situation Orthodoxy can be cautious and slow-moving - and this can be frustrating. Abp Gabriel has quickened the tempo, enabled us to grow, given us a new dynamism. This all culminated on Sunday with the ordinations, receptions by concelebration, etc. I think of that phrase from the Didache: 'As this bread was scattered on the mountains...' We have become a focus for those seeking a home in Orthodoxy in a warm family setting.

working at the historical level and utterly fail - Orthodox are able to cope with the mystery of the church beyond the historical level,

The early church learnt very quickly about the gift of union one with another in Christ. The first martyrs beheld Christ in glory even while still breathing on earth. John the Elder recorded how in the liturgy on the Lord's Day the church on earth was lifted up into the worship of heaven. The church understood we have a High Priest in heaven and our sacrifice on the earthly altar is made one with the eternal sacrifice of Christ on the heavenly altar. In all those things we are gathered into the Kingdom which is to come. Once again we are working beyond the historical level as we are always bound to do.

It is vital that we Orthodox should be able to testify that our union in Christ and our communion with Christ is the proper context for the entire life of the church. It is the true context for all ministry, all sacraments, all interpretation of the scriptures, the creeds, the practice of the ascetic life and prayer: in other words for everything that is done in and by the church. Such a church is able to receive and manifest the Kingdom which is to come

This is the troparion for an apostle:
What should I name you, Apostle?
Heaven, for you declare the glory of God.

River, for mystically you water creation.
Star, which sheds its light on the Church.

Mixing-bowl, which pours out a holy draught.

True Friend of Christ. Companion of the Bodiless Powers.

Intercede that our souls may be saved.

Key question(s) 2

Do you recognise that our sanctification is the only necessary basis and goal of all church endeavour?

Is the church for you the union of the church in heaven and the church on earth?

Key Statement 3

Communion ('koinonia'), as our shared union in Christ, though given in baptism, grows only through an active and ongoing corporate synergy with the Holy Spirit.

The church in the West was not served well by making grace and human nature antithetical to one another. The necessary application of the human will to work with the Holy Spirit in the way of holiness has been lost to sight. The Reformers, by dismissing the Saints and regarding discipleship in the one way of holiness in Christ as useless works, made the situation doubly worse. The notion of communion as an imaginary remembrance of the past, both individualises and trivialises reality.

Our whole outlook in the West, socially, educationally and politically is dominated by the primacy of the individual. The interests and rights of the individual are paramount in shaping our thoughts and actions. The self has become the foundational building block of the Western way of life, and one which is steadily becoming universal.

The way of holiness on the other hand lived by all the saints and which forms a living tradition of lived holiness from the first century till now, while affirming the reality of each person, is diametrically opposed to the cult of the ego. Christ made it quite clear: 'Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while

anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life'. (Jn 12.25) 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'.

Christ said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit. St Paul said: 'I die daily'. But these words, their implications and practice, have found strong resistance both in the churches and outside them. We should not be surprised But for us these words must become the central reality of our daily life.

Someone once asked me, 'What difference does the Kingdom of God make to the church?'

The answer is that we ought to be relating to one another not out of the self with all its hostility and negativity, as happens in the world, but out of the virtues and modalities of the Kingdom. It is perfectly possible to do this; the sad thing is that the need to practice this all the time is not always realised.

These are summed in various places by the faithful disciple Paul:

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other'.

The communion of the church and the commandment to love one another should be the focus of our spiritual practice in daily life. Jesus said quite simply, 'If you love me, keep my commandments'. Then true koinonia will always flourish.

Key Question 3

Is your parish an evident synergy with the Holy Spirit for sanctification?

Or are we just a 'bunch of individuals' still tied up and lost in our own self made identities? Do we apply ourselves to spiritual training?

Key Statement 4

The power of the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit deeply animated the celebration of the liturgy in early times. This necessarily involved a vitality in participation in the liturgy by everyone.

It is well known that written sources do not give us much idea as to actual content and wording of the liturgy; so much so that some try and deny there was any liturgy at all. This is typical of the abrasive interpretation of partisan denominational scholarship. The reason for the absence of sources however is highly likely to be the fear of discovery and betrayal to the authorities, not to mention the strong belief that the End of all things was near. Celebrating the liturgy in these circumstances must have been full of awe and fire.

Given the birth of the church in the Jewish milieu there is every reason to believe that the church took over both the framework and the wording from Jewish worship. The creation of new hymnody is already evident in the New Testament and the first hints of interpretation of the 'breaking of bread' can also be gleaned from its pages. These are slowly expanded, as we see in the Didache, the writings of Clement, Ignatius and Justin Martyr. The church in its liturgy made a creative transition into the Greek and Roman world and was able to face

the huge challenge of coping with the flood of new people under the imperial pro-Christian legislation of Constantine and Theodosius.

The fingerprints of many generations can be found in the Liturgy. It has always been in a process of development. It did not become static until more recent times when the church was under different captivities. A belief that the liturgy is unchanging contradicts what the early church did in every new missionary situation. It is contrary to the need for the liturgy to effectively communicate its mission. But the tensions within Orthodoxy do not allow this to be discussed. The implication is that nothing need change and all we need to do is apply the rules.

The Liturgy in early times was always the local church celebrating at one altar around one bishop. It is well known that now in Britain there are 15 episcopal jurisdictions celebrating at different altars all over the place. Though this problem has been recognised, taking the necessary steps to do away with it are painfully slow. Much effort will have to be made if the churches are to avoid the impression of being dinosaurs stuck in the mud.

The Eucharistic liturgy is not of course the only liturgical worship. The prayer of the Evening and of the Morning were linked with the Jewish Day. It begins with the evening, continued in the night and is completed at Daybreak. Night is for fervent prayer awaiting the Bridegroom. Vespers begins at the setting of the sun with the offering of incense and a hymn to the incoming Light of Christ. Matins is the end of the night vigil welcoming of the Light of Christ at daybreak. These offices when done fervently contributes enormously to that flow and reflow of the Holy Spirit in the unity of heaven and earth which is characteristic of all Eastern worship.

Key Question(s) 4

Is there fire - the fire of the Kingdom and the Holy Spirit - in our celebration of the liturgy? Do visitors get excited by our liturgy?

Key Statement 5

Prayer means standing day by day in the spiritual conflict between heaven and earth looking to the Risen Jesus to hold us in his victory and set us free.

The Church is only as good as its prayer. If prayer is weak the church is weak

Monastic life is wonderful. We can rejoice in the number of men and women taking up the monastic life in our Deanery. The monasteries have always kept prayer in the forefront of the church. They are the backbone of that Living Tradition of holiness that has accompanied the Orthodox church wherever it has gone in whatever century there has been. One of the things that rejoices my heart is to know of young people who go and stay at monasteries and come home with their faces shining.

Having said that, as a parish priest, I know the struggle many of our congregations have to attain even a minimal level of prayer. The modern world is so fast and complex and the pressures from it so huge that one gets the impression of so many fish dying on the shore for lack of air and water. The clergy are also put under enormous pressures in their daily lives. On the other hand we also have to be aware of the effect of monasticism upon the laity. Monastic life can be overpowering. It has had a huge effect on our prayer books, our

People comment on archbishop Gabriel at the conference may 2012

To me, Archbishop Gabriel's most important contribution to the conference was in setting the right mood. Everybody felt uplifted by listening to him and being in his company. His message was that love, compassion and joy come above everything else. He was happy (he said so regularly) and this caused an epidemic of happiness to run throughout the conference. We all went home stimulated and probably all are still on a high. He must have gone back to Paris exhausted but he kept this well hidden.

calendars, our rules and reading. However it has to be said clearly that we can be sanctified without becoming a monastic, and we can most definitely be sanctified in the married state.

Growth in prayer is the key to any growth in spiritual life towards maturity. But it is a slow job. Nevertheless the pressures and trials of daily life are themselves the very key to growth. These trials constitute the spiritual conflict between the flesh and the spirit which is inherently built into the Christian life. Indeed God gives us the spiritual conflict in order to train us how to stand and look up to the Risen Christ to hold us in his victory and set us free from all that is not of him. Only when we practice this do we grow.

Key Question 5

Is standing in the spiritual conflict central to our life of prayer?

Key statement 6

Mission is essential to the church as its very life and breath

It seems to me there are two kinds of Orthodoxy, one is exclusive, the other inclusive. The exclusive one is

that which demarcates the church, puts boundaries round it, focuses on the rules, points out their every error, puts them in order, and will not let people in until they crossed every T and dotted every I. It is poker-faced, unfriendly, and often downright rude.

Now there are boundaries, there are rules, there are errors, there is order, but the way these are handled as described above is in effect to keep people out. People will never find Christ in such a church

Or there is the inclusive one, one which focuses on the connection between the church and the whole of humanity, one in which mercy is at all times at the forefront, one in which

loves opens doors, allows Christ to take the lead and do his work. It is a church which hears St Silouan, 'Lord, I pray that all people will find salvation before I do'. It is a church which prays and allows Christ to do the healing. It is truly a church which gathers all into the Kingdom

The exclusive view of mission is easy. Basically you don't have to do anything.

The inclusive view is costly, I mean very costly. It will break the old self apart but you will see sinners rejoicing and you will have eternal life and salvation.

Key question 6 What is your view of mission?

People comment on archbishop Gabriel at the conference may 2012

I think too that perhaps a tribute to Protodeacon Athanasios would be appropriate. In his quiet, friendly, unobtrusive way he steered us through a very complex liturgy smoothly, dispelling any anxiety or tension. He has a wonderful ability to organise things efficiently and to inspire trust and confidence.

IN MEMORIAM - PIERRE LOUKINE

« "No, I shall not die, but live: and shall declare the works of the Lord!" »

(3rd verse of "The Lord is God" - matins service: Ps 117:17)

Choir director Pierre Loukine fell asleep in the Lord on the day of Orthodox Pentecost 2012 following a heart attack.

Born into the Russian emigration taking refuge in France due to the Bolshevik Revolution, Pierre was from his youth a member of the ACER-MJO, Christian Action of Russian Students- Movement of Orthodox Youth (a movement of students and youth founded in 1923 by Russian intellectuals who had emigrated to Western Europe). Pierre became a monitor and later the director of the youth camp for years. For many he epitomized the spirit of the camp with his unflinching dedication, steadfast discretion and unwavering resolve on everything related to the essential, and always with kindness. His three children are themselves involved in ACER-MJO.

Gifted with a beautiful tenor voice, Pierre began to sing in Church choirs and concerts given by the parishes of the Presentation of the Mother of God (rue Olivier de Serres) and Saint Serge of Radonege (near the Theological Institute) in Paris.

His passion for singing quickly led him to choir direction. As such he took his first steps in the years of 1970-1975 at the ACER-MJO youth camp, a summer in the Alps, and then during the French Liturgies organised once a month at the parish of the ACER. These celebrations in French allowed numerous youth frequenting Slavic parishes to better understand the services and to sing and read in French.

Beginning in the 1980s, Pierre Loukine led for over 20 years the Church parish and concert community of the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God, near the «Russian cemetery» of Sainte Geneviève des Bois (20 km south of Paris).

This church, built by our Archbishop, was consecrated in 1939 by Metropolitan Eulogius to serve the cemetery. It quickly became a parish for many families living nearby, which is now the case again. Pilgrims who visit the cemetery often make a detour to the church and its crypt where the bishops of our diocese are buried.

Not only was Pierre Loukine able to find the correct tone during choir practice, but he also built the choir from a dozen amateur enthusiasts, youth and adults, which cemented the foundations of the community, served at that time by Archpriest Elijah Schmaïn, of blessed memory. Pierre's choral direction left an imprint of sweet ecclesial rigor, at once a source of monasticism as well as parish simplicity. His authenticity made «znamení» harmonies particularly present, harmonisations that he had practiced at the Theological Institute of St. Serge in Paris during his studies, and concerts of the St. Serge choir. These last years, Pierre directed the parish choir of Our Lady of the Sign in Parish (blvd Exelmans).

His vocation of hospitality in the Church, his patience and his desire to shape, to share and to witness his faith, especially to singers, made him a highly sought choir director for weddings in the provinces of France. He spoke passionately of the various scattered communities, who in turn appreciated him dearly, and during the 1990s he was one of the editors of the directory «The Orthodox Church in France,» published by the SOP (Orthodox Press Service) since 1983, which identified the Orthodox communities and associations of all origins.

Thank you to each person who supported Pierre in the realisation of his gifts and his lifetime of service to the Church!

The Association «Orthodox Liturgical Chants» dedicated its annual concert on the 14th of June 2012, bringing together eight Orthodox choirs in the Church of Saint Roch in Paris, «to our friend and vocalist Pierre Loukine.»



Memory Eternal!!!



ORDINATIONS

▮ Archbishop Gabriel was :

- ▮ ordained **priest** the deacon **Mark Mc Beth** 27th mai 2012. Father Mark was named the second priest in Dunblane (Scotland, UK)
- ▮ ordained **deacon** the hypodeacon **Stephen Rawlings** 27th mai 2012. He will serve in the St. Anne skite in York (UK).
- ▮ ordained **deacon** the reader **Ioan Drobot** 10th jun 2012. He is attached to cathedrale saint Alexandre Nevsky (Paris, France)
- ▮ received the priest in the Archdiocese **fathers John Ives** and **Alban Plant** 27th mai 2012 during the divin Liturgy. Father **Alban Plantis** attached to parish he Holy Prophet Elias in Exeter (UK).
- ▮ recognized the community st Aristobulos (UK) comme community of archdiocese. **Father John Ives** was appointed priest in charge.
- ▮ released archpriest **John Marks** from his position as Dean of Great Britain and Ireland. He is temporarily replaced by archpriest **Patrick Hodson**.
- ▮ received in the archdiocese the **father Ioan Khristenko**. Father Ioan received the mission of founding a new community in the Naples area (Italie).