



Prophet Elias News

News for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
26thth June – 10th July 2021



Rublev's 'Trinity' and the Hospitality of Abraham: Two Aspects of Orthodoxy (4th July is Saint Andrei Rublev's Feastday)

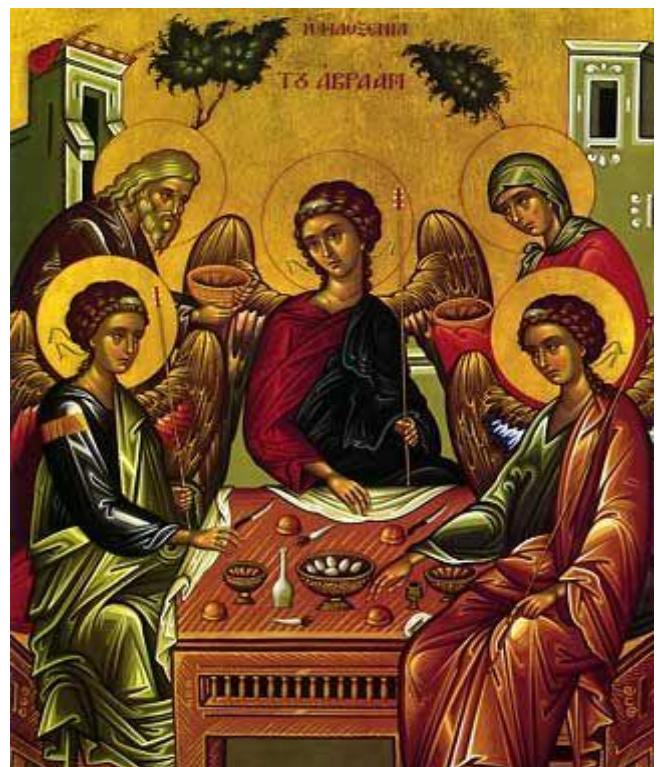


As an Anglican, I grew up with the impression that the doctrine of the Trinity was a difficult intellectual construct comprehensible only to theologians. One of the things that most strongly attracted me as I began reading my way towards Orthodoxy was that here was a Church whose teaching on the nature of the Trinity was no abstraction, but an expression of its lived experience of divine-human communion. Viewed in this light the Holy Trinity is not a 'concept', but a mystery - a mystery, in the words of Dr Philip Kariatlis 'to be "approached" in humility, reverence and thanksgiving rather than exhaustively "understood".'⁽¹⁾

Saint Andrei Rublev's 'Trinity' icon – strictly speaking, the icon of the Hospitality of Abraham – has become surely the best-known and mostly widely used icon in the Christian world. A quick search online will bring up any number of 'explanations' of the icon's symbolism,⁽²⁾ but to my mind the icon is not so much a doctrinal statement in paint as a meditation – a meditation on communion, both in the sacramental sense and more broadly in the sense of interrelationship. And what is so wonderful about it is that we are not only invited, but irresistibly drawn in to be partakers of the mystical supper prepared for us.

Rublev brings us this invitation to meditate on the mystery of the Trinity by distilling the subject of the Hospitality of Abraham to its purest essence. In the more traditional presentations, Abraham and Sarah are not only present, but are fully engaged with the angels, bringing them physical food which they will eat from a very physical table with physical condiments. This icon, which many people have in their kitchens, complements the mysticism of the Rublev icon with the reminder that Orthodoxy is also, because of the Incarnation, a deeply 'materialist' faith, as Father Athenagoras Stylianou points out:

'And then there is the physicality of the Orthodox sacraments and blessing services and indeed of everything connected with Orthodoxy. Blessed by the Church plain, material things acquire holiness and become the conduits of God's grace. Our souls apart, being ourselves material bodies, our salvation is accomplished by means of matter and in no other way. At the same time the use of physical objects in worship guards the fullness of the faith, preventing Christianity from becoming either some form of neo-Platonist philosophy or mere humanism... The strong impression formed by the outside observer of, as it were, Orthodoxy in action, is of a real, living, pulsating religion, not something artificial devised by man.'⁽³⁾



- (1) Dr Philip Kariatlis: *The Mystery of the Holy Trinity*
See [The Mystery of the Holy Trinity – Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia](#)
- (2) A helpful example is the article *Andrei Rublev's Icon of the Holy Trinity* from the book "Thoughts on Iconography" by monk Gregory Krug. See [Our Lord Jesus Christ \(holy-transfiguration.org\)](#)
- (3) Father Athenagoras Stylianou: *Orthodox Christianity: Materialism with a difference*. Posted on:
<https://www.thyateira.org.uk/chapel/articles/orthodox-christianity-materialism-with-a-difference>

From The Hospitality of Abraham & Sarah by Jessica Rose

The passage in Genesis 18 which describes the events shown in the icon is one of the most mysterious in the Bible. By the oaks of Mamre, Abraham sees the Lord. He sees three men. Throughout the story the narrative oscillates between these descriptions of the visitors. No explanation is given. It is as though we are somehow expected to take it on board as something completely natural. The pre-Rublev version of the icon itself has a very natural aspect. There is food and drink on the table, and utensils with which to eat it; Abraham and Sarah are placing very ordinary bowls of food on the table. They stand between the angels so that there are two structures that present themselves much as the two strands of narrative do in the story. One is aware of the circle of perfect communion between the three seated angels; and at the same time there are the two human beings standing attentively, offering them food from behind where they are sitting, so taking the wider view we see: angel -- Abraham -- angel -- Sarah -- angel. The two human beings, male and female, offering their own form of hospitality, are allowed into communion with the Godhead. It is a liturgical image: "Thine own, of thine own, we offer thee."

There are, perhaps, three different kinds of hospitality. There is a generosity which overflows from a sense of abundance --- the generosity of God himself in creating the universe. It is something we find easy to give when we are feeling good, but by the same token, something about which we are likely to be inconsistent, not just because our sense of wellbeing changes from day to day, but because we too often find ourselves involved with people we find more difficult than we had previously realized. Then there is the hospitality born of poverty of spirit: when our own suffering teaches us greater compassion for the suffering of others, and we learn to share in the spirit of Christ who emptied himself on the Cross. And thirdly, perhaps, hospitality which is built into our shared humanity, which welcomes the stranger for no other reason than this is what is required --- even if the strangers happen to be angels. Someone has travelled to where we are --- they must be hungry, thirsty, in need of hospitality, so, like Abraham and Sarah, we bake bread and kill the calf for meat. In our own society, such hunger and thirst may be as much psychological as physical, but our human duty is no less pressing. And when we practice it we express the truth of the icon of the Hospitality of Abraham: God and man working together, offering to God, through our hospitality, God's own gifts to us.

This opportunity is one which is open to church communities wherever they are, because we are all strangers in a strange land. We live in a society where our ways and attitudes are far from the mainstream. We live, as we are often told, in a 'post-Christian' society. The education system is deeply wary of any kind of religious instruction which grows from conviction..... Much has been lost by the erosion of Christian tradition from our education, from the cycle of feasts, fasts and festivals, and the losers are above all the younger people growing up in ignorance of their own spiritual tradition. But this also has the advantage of shaking us out of mistaking the religious life as any kind of excuse for complacency. It is perhaps from a position of weakness that we have the best chance of sharing the riches of our tradition in a spirit of true hospitality --- one which assumes nothing, and knows it must share, not only because we are all --- however materially rich --- impoverished, but also because we know that God's abundance is sufficient for everyone.

Jessica Rose is a retired pastoral counsellor, writer and teacher.

Posted 5/12/2004 on *In Communion* – website of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship: used by permission. The full article can be found at [HTTPS://INCOMMUNION.ORG/2004/12/05/ABRAHAM-AND-SARAH/](https://incommunion.org/2004/12/05/ABRAHAM-AND-SARAH/)

Dear Hugh,

I read Fr. Anthony Hughes's article in the [last] newsletter with tears in my eyes. That love and acceptance is what I encountered at St. Anne's, not just latterly, but also 40-odd years ago when I went there as a student, back in Fr. Benedict's day. Although I found certain things difficult to accept as they did not correspond to the formation I had received in the Methodist Church, it was the love that kept drawing me back....

That and Paskha (the pudding)!

Ian

Ian Bromelow now lives in western Scotland, but was for many years a regular visitor to Exeter for Paskha (both the Feast and the pudding).

Ed.

Rublev

One day, God walked in, pale from the grey steppe,
slit-eyed against the wind, and stopped,
said, Colour me, breathe your blood into my mouth.

I said Here is the blood of all our people,
these are their bruises, blue and purple,
these (god) are the chromatic pains of flesh,
I said, I trust I make you blush,
O I shall stain you with the scars of birth

For ever, I shall root you in the wood,
under the sun shall bake you bread
of beechmast, never let you forth
to the white desert, to the starving sand.
But we shall sit and speak around
one table, share one food, one earth.

Rowan Williams

From *The Poems of Rowan Williams*, The Perpetua Press 2002.

(By permission)

Abraham and Sarah at Mamre

They practice hospitality; their hearts
Have opened like a secret source, free flowing
Only as they take another's part.
Stopped in themselves, and in their own unknowing,
But unlocked by these strangers in their need,
They breathe again, and courtesy, set free,
Begets the unexpected; generosity
Begetting generation, as the seed
Of promise springs and laughs in Sarah's womb.

Made whole by their own hospitality,
And like the rooted oak whose shade makes room
For this refreshing genesis at Mamre,
One couple, bringing comfort to their guests,
Becomes our wellspring in the wilderness.

Malcolm Guite

From *Parable and Paradox*, Canterbury Press 2016

(By permission)

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday June 27th: **1st Sunday after Pentecost** **Sunday of All Saints**
Epistle: Hebrews 11:33-12:2a Gospel Matthew 10:32-33,37-38; 19:27-30

Saint Joanna the Myrrh-Bearer

We wish **Joanna M** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

Saint Austell, Hermit in Cornwall (6thC)

On Tuesday 29th: **Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul.**

We wish **Salem M** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

May God grant **Father Peter** and **Peter F** **Memory Eternal!**

On Wednesday 30th: **Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Twelve Apostles**

On Thursday July 1st: **Unmercenary Wonderworkers Cosmas and Damian** (3rdC)

Saints Julius and Aaron, First Martyrs of Wales (c304)

On Friday 2nd: **Saint John of San Fransisco** (1966)

We wish **Edward S** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Sunday 4th: **2nd Sunday after Pentecost – All Saints of Britain, All Saints of Russia**

Epistle – Romans 2: 10-16 Gospel: Matthew 4: 18-23

Saint Andrei Rublev (c1430)

On Monday 5th: **Saint Morwenna**, Hermit of Morwenstow (6thC)

On Wednesday 7th: **Great Martyr Kyriaki** (c303)

We wish **Kyriaki H** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Thursday 8th: **Saint Edgar the Passionbearer**, King of England (975)

On Friday 9th: **Saint Pancras (Pancratius)**, Bishop of Taormina in Sicily (1stC)

Noticeboard

Services:

Sunday 27th: Matins and Divine Liturgy at Saint Stephen's, Exeter High Street 9-12 (in Romanian)
Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

An important announcement from Fr Trayan:

On Sunday, **27 June**, in **Torquay** we are going to celebrate **Sts Peter and Paul** feast. Before COVID we made a great celebration after the Liturgy in the church yard. We would like to make it a tradition for this day to have a BRING and SHARE party. Matins starts 9.30. The Liturgy starts 10.30. 11.30 the party will begin in the church yard. There will be a big canopy with a table under it. Please, make and bring some traditional food and put it on the table. You can put a small note about the name of the food and for which country it is traditional. Even if you can't cook food, just come and enjoy eating. Fizzy drinks are welcomed. There will be a builders' site radio/amplifier/, so you can bring your own music. (Aux-in or bluetooth). I will tell a Biblical story to the kids, and they will make a competition of drawing on asphalt. About 2 pm the ice-cream van will come. Any additional ideas are welcomed. Type on Google maps "Greek Orthodox Church - Torquay" and you will find us. See you soon!

Monday 28th – Apostles' Fast

Saturday July 3rd: Divine Liturgy at Saint James' Hall 10.30am
Celebration of All Saints of Britain and of Russia

Saturday 10th: Divine Liturgy at Saint James' Hall 10.30am

Friday 23rd: Vespers – Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Saturday 24th: Divine Liturgy at Saint James' Hall 10.30am

Celebration of our Patronal Feast of the Holy Prophet Elias

Parish AGM The Parish **Annual General Meeting** will be held after the Liturgy at Saint James' Hall. Covid restrictions permitting, there will be a Bring and Share meal after the Meeting.

Patriarchal Address:

Patriarch Bartholemew's address to the online Conference of the French Vicariat has been published on the Deanery website on 18/06/21. See:

[Address of His All-holiness Patriarch Bartholemew to the on-line Conference of the French Vicariate on 6th June 2021](#)

The address can also be viewed (in French with English subtitles) on YouTube at:

<https://youtu.be/UDeeBKyZuh8>

Pentecost Tongues

What a lovely Liturgy we had last Saturday to celebrate Pentecost. Fr Trayan told us about his first experience of the feast when he met people influenced by American Evangelical missionaries who were speaking with 'tongues'. It's a concept I've never been able to understand and can only think it is a misinterpretation. There are many instances when 'tongue' is used to mean 'language'. In English we refer to a person's 'mother tongue'. In Russian you say speaking 'according to the (*Russian, English or whatever*) tongue'. To be honest I've always thought 'in tongues' meant gibberish - something I'm very capable of talking and it has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit!

However, I thought the aspect of the apostles going out into the world and preaching in people's own languages/tongues was very evident on Saturday. We had the Lord's Prayer in our usual Greek, Slavonic and English plus in Romanian, Chinese and Arabic.

How far the Apostles travelled to spread the teachings of Christ, which came to Exeter on Saturday.

Celia Olsson

Holy Martyr Nectan, Pray to God for Us

Sunday 15th June 1975. Church of St Nectan in Stoke, near Hartland Point, north Devon – pilgrimage to honour the memory of the saint. Divine Liturgy, blessing of the newly painted icon of the saint, followed by a procession around the church.

The weather was clear and bright, although at some point there was light rain, but that seemed appropriate in view of the connection of water with the saint – holy well, the sea.

We gathered at the church all bearing gifts – and we didn't know really that we did. Only later one could look back at vespers and see all gathered around in prayer and St Nectan in the middle, at the end, all walking up to kiss the icon – taking leave of him at the end of our visit, at the same time completing our recognition of him, at the same time accepting him into our family of saints, and venerating him and submitting to him and asking his patronage and his intercession for us. He was always there – a witness to God's truth – and through the efforts of initially Olga Mount – who was the first one to go there, and then Fr John, through whose efforts the event came about.

We all came to a party waiting to see what we'd find there, and one by one the presents we didn't know we brought were unwrapped – the hymns to St Nectan Tony composed, the cross, which Peter made, the banner Dawn made, at the head of the procession, the icon from Fr Mark, the bunches of flowers prepared by Olga's people and carried at the procession instead of candles, the life of the saint researched and told to us by Christopher, typed by Liz and distributed, not least everyone's gift of his presence, and finally contributions to cover the cost of the icon, as well as the hospitality of the Mounts' house.

We came to see what we would get out of it not noticing that we did not come empty handed – those who sing joined in the choir, Mathew and Thomas served, Tony Moss read the epistle, many carried the icons at the procession, others attended.

And what did we see, what did we get out of it? We saw the others' presents, we were surprised to see that we ourselves had brought something – and then we saw St Nectan in our midst, and we saw that he brought us together around himself, he joined us so that we may join him in witnessing to Our Lord, he brought us together and was revealed leading us in worship. Through this true disciple of Christ, we were seen to be one, as Our Lord wants us to be, as we heard in the Gospel reading. And in the epistle we were reminded of Christ's words, that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

We came looking for a saint, and found that he had called us and brought us together. We gathered around him, and we heard his life story, and how he had died at the hands of robbers, remaining faithful to Christ. We walked following the Cross, Our Lord, and His Holy Mother in the footsteps of St Nectan, with other saints among us.



In the Gospel reading Christ spoke of those in whom he was glorified – and we found one in whom Our Lord was glorified, and now we ask him to help us.

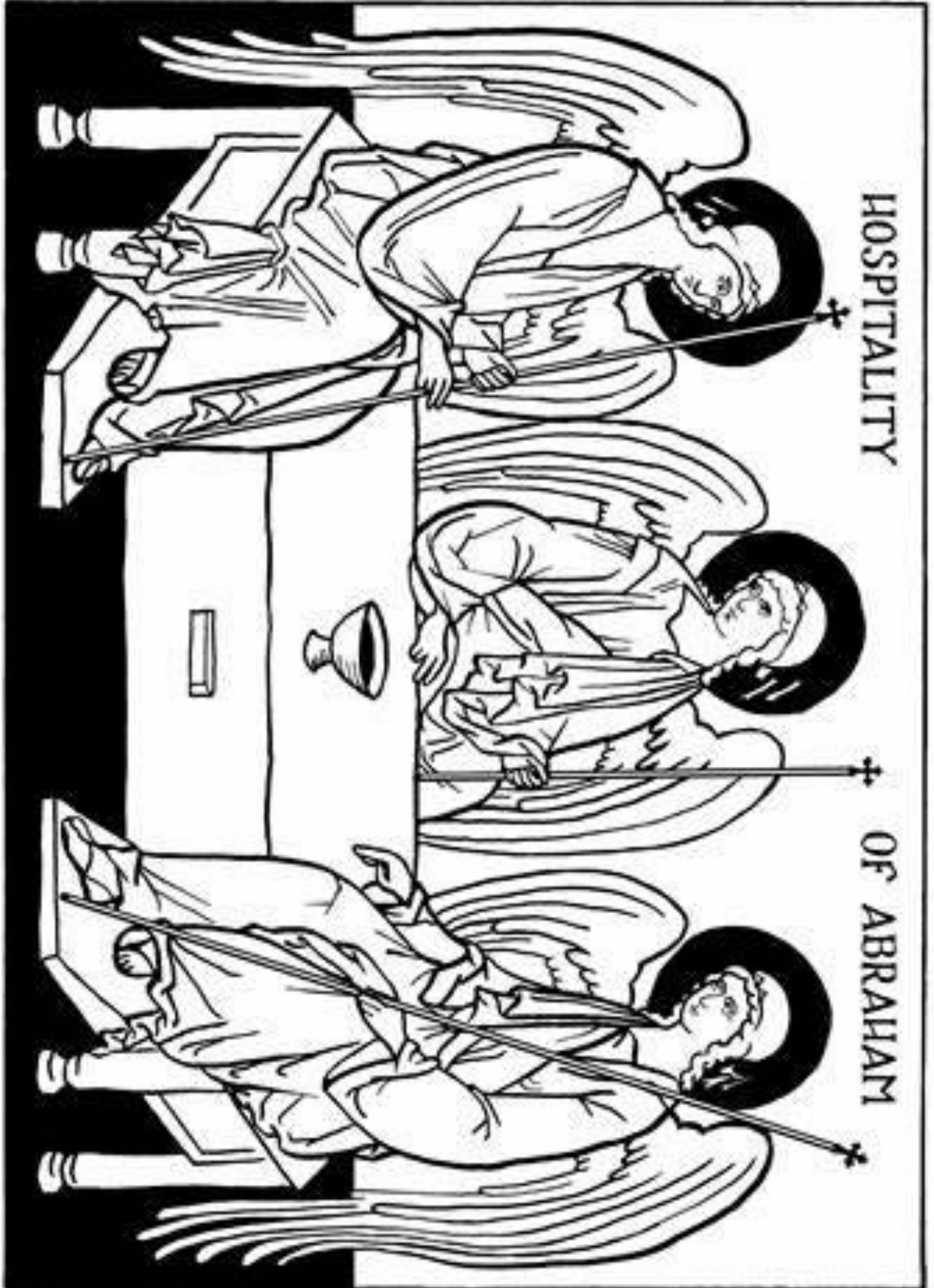
Irina Scorer

Irina found this lovely account of one of the early North Devon pilgrimages among her papers last week. It was too late to include it in the last issue for his feastday on June 17th, but it is still foxglove time, and foxgloves are emblems of Saint Nectan's martyrdom. According to tradition, having been beheaded by cattle thieves, he picked up his head and returned to his cell, whereupon foxgloves sprang up for each drop of blood that fell as he walked.

Saint Nectan was the eldest of the 24 children of King Brychan of South Wales and brother of Saint Morwenna of Morwenstow (5th July). Ed.

Left: Saint Nectan's Well, Stoke, near Hartland, with foxgloves.

FOR COLOURING



HOSPITALITY

OF ABRAHAM