

Editorial

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SYNDESMOS – the term is slightly surprising, and invites a short explanation.

It means ‘the bond’: we find it in two passages from St Paul: ‘And above all these things put on charity, which is the *bond* of perfectness’ (*Col.* 3.14); and ‘Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the *bond* of peace’ (*Eph.* 4.3).

In binding individual perfections into a single bundle, we attain to the pinnacle of the virtues – charity; and in pouring the unctions of peace on points of division and separation, we make unity blossom. And this leads us on to that other word of the apostle: ‘the body whole and entire, well coordinated and steadfastly unified through all the joints which link the parts together’.

It is precisely that – performing the function of a joint: casting the seed of unity at the crossroads of the world, where East and West collide and square up to each other, in that fearsome mass of mixed humanity, at grips with the pitilessness of life; where all lies scattered, where young Orthodox lose their way and break their moorings, seek themselves and find loneliness; it is, precisely at that point, helping these young people, in the private truth of their own consciences, to discover the genuine catholicity of Orthodoxy.

It is to create a new harmony, an atmosphere that attracts and refreshes, abounding in young and creative energy, the promise of harmony in the Body – and doing so not by imposing force, nor through the isolated efforts of a few lone knights, but through the bonds of peace, in the grandiose sense of the Biblical shalom, and through burning love for the absolute other, the absolute beloved: serving the Church and the Kingdom.

This little word, *Syndesmos*, contains a whole world of action, and our own face is already clearly outlined in it.

Our meetings in Thessalonica and Bossey (from 1931–1949) left us with an aspiration. The meeting in Sèvres (1953) makes it reality. The hope is small, very small, but ‘Hope is the faith I love the best – saith thy God’ and we know, do we not, that what we hope for already exists.

Can we really forget the moments that moved us in our liturgical services during the conference, as we all sang together, many tongues, one soul? That came as a pure gift of grace, but every gift awakens a response, a powerful, living and bodily witness.

As we courageously face the days ahead – times perhaps of hard and thankless labour – not with complacent optimism, but steadfast in all the support which the Church provides, and resisting the stings of barren pessimism (it is for God to mete out our strength), we in turn can utter the beautiful words of St John of the Ladder: ‘Singing Your praise I advance on the way.’

Neither feverish activism nor mystical isolation, but the fulsome chants of liturgical life will be our unfailing replenishment, from the treasury of Tradition, down the unending march of our activities. Our times have traced the channels of our life, and must be heeded.

One saint has said: 'There is only one thing lacking to Christians today, in order for them to recover the heroism of the great martyrs and confessors, and that is *resolve*'.

This resolve is within the capability of each and every one of us – the Gospel understanding of the chosen one is the one who hears, accepts and receives, and so becomes an unshakable rock of faith.

The Church has called us to her service – let us rise to the mighty level of this calling, and may the gift of ourselves and our humility spring forth and soar in like degree.