

# The Ordination

of

## Father Antony Bardsley

For the past two years the Orthodox community worshipping at the Church of the Ikon of the Mother of God: Joy of All Who Sorrow in Mettingham, Suffolk have been establishing an Orthodox Christian presence in the Waveney Valley, between the two counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, through daily and weekly reader services and Divine Liturgies on Sundays whenever the nearest available Russian Orthodox priests in North Norfolk were able to serve. Over that time, the community has begun to attract a regular core of members and turned to the Mother of God in prayer to provide the means for a resident priest to be able to provide the community with a regular sacramental life.

We were thus deeply thankful to God when Archbishop Mark confirmed that the Synod of Bishops had agreed to ordain our newly-assigned Reader, Antony Bardsley from the nearby town of Bungay, to the priesthood to serve our community. After much preparation to ensure that everything was ready for the Episcopal visit and services, in the evening of Thursday, the 10th of February, Vladyka Mark was driven up from London, accompanied by the acting rector of the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God, Fr Vladimir Vilgerts. The next morning, Friday 29th January/11th February, whilst the Hours were read, Subdeacon Michael Astley, from our sister parish of St Elisabeth's, Wallasey and Reader Gregory Soloviev on loan from the Eastern American Diocese, led Reader Antony in front of Archbishop Mark so that Vladyka could ordain him Subdeacon. As the orar was placed around him the first cry of "Axios" (worthy) resounded through the church. Although it was a weekday service, we were so pleased to see many friends who had travelled to be with us, including a large contingent from the Shrine in Walsingham with Fr Philip Steer. For the first half of the service, Subdeacon Antony remained on the solea before the Ikon of the Mother of God holding the basin of water which would be used later in the service to wash Vladyka's hands.

The ordination to the diaconate occurred after the consecration of the Holy Gifts, as Deacon Andrew Bond led Subdeacon Antony three times around the altar as the

clergy then the choir sang the three wedding hymns uniting Antony to the service of Christ in the Altar. Several cries of "Axios" later, and the newly-ordained Father Deacon Antony was soon on the solea, orar in hand, leading the petitions of the Litany after communion.

Back in the house, there was further opportunity to talk informally to Vladyka and many interesting discussions were raised around translating the church services into English. In the evening a full All-Night Vigil was served with both Deacons Andrew and Antony serving.

With a sense of great expectation in the air, on Saturday 30th January/12th February, the Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs, we were delighted to be joined at this foundational Liturgy for our community by many concelebrating clergy. Fr Paul Elliot, of the Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr travelled from Birkenhead to be with us and we were also pleased that Fr Liviu Barbu, of the Romanian Orthodox Parish of Ss Philothea and Bede in Norwich, was able to be present. The church was full when Vladyka was greeted at the church door by Deacon Antony's wife, Helen, who presenting him with bread and salt according to the traditional Russian custom. After reading the Epistle as a second deacon, Antony then joined the end of the procession at the Great Entrance with the aer ceremonially placed over his head. As he was to be ordained to the priesthood, Deacon Antony was then once again led around the altar, this time by Fr Philip Steer. The shouts of "Axios" again resonated throughout the church as Vladyka joyfully vested Antony as a priest before the whole congregation as he then took his place with his fellow priests to join in the consecration of the Holy Gifts. At the end of an exhausting roller coaster through three grades of orders, everyone sang "Many Years" to the newly ordained Priest Antony.

Back in the House, the church sisterhood had done a brilliant job in organising the catering to add a festive conclusion to a grace-filled couple of days. Special thanks are due to all who helped in various ways to make this special event in the life of our small, new community go so well.

May God, through the prayers of his Most Holy Mother, grant that our church will be able to minister to the Orthodox Christians and ordinary people of this area so that they may encounter and receive the Joy of Christ whatever the weight of their sorrow.

Reader Mark Tattum-Smith

24th February (9th March), 2011