

**The Orthodox Parish  
of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,  
Lancaster, UK**

***The Stavronian***

*Monthly magazine and newsletter published by the Holy Cross Synodia*



*The Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,  
belongs to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland.  
The Patriarchate of Antioch is third senior of the Orthodox Churches.  
Our Metropolitan is His Eminence Bishop Silouan.  
Our Patriarch is His Beatitude John X.*

*The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch  
(Acts 11:26)*

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

المسيح قام ! حقا قام

(Al-Masih-Qam! Hakkan Qam!)

Χριστός ανέστη! Ἀληθῶς ανέστη!

(Christos anesti! Alithos anesti!)

Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!

Христос възкресе! Наистина възкресе!

(Khristos vzkrese! Naistina vzkrese!)

Христос Воскресе! Воистину Воскресе!

(Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese!)

Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!

Chrystus zmartwychwsta! Prawdziwie zmartwychwsta!

(Kristus zmertvykh-vstau! Pradzivie zmertvykh-vstau!)

Kristus (ir) augšāmcēlies! Patiesi viņš ir augšāmcēlies!

(Kristus (ir) aughsham-elias! Patiesi vin ir aughsham-elias!)

Cristo è risorto! È veramente risorto!

Le Christ est ressuscité! Vraiment Il est ressuscité!

Cristo ressuscitou! Verdadeiramente ressuscitou!

Cristo ha resucitado! Verdaderamente, ha resucitado!

基督復活了 他確實復活了

ハリストス復活! 実に復活!

## SMELLS AND BELLS

*“In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations.” (Malachi 1:11)*

My earliest memories in childhood in terms of smells and bells were rather secular and mundane. The smells consisted of the fish and chip shop which fried chips in beef fat which my parents treated me to every Friday evening. Actually it was my first encounter with the Orthodox because the fish and chip shop was owned by a lovely Cypriot family. Freshly baked bread from my grandmother’s oven, beef dinner with roast potatoes and Yorkshire pudding at home after Church on a Sunday remain thoughts that give rise to both nostalgia and salivation. Not unusually therefore for a growing boy my earliest sense of smell was related to the sense of taste! Flavours and savours often work to established cultural principles; for instance the combination of garlic, tomatoes and olive oil with a sprinkling of basil is identifiably Italian.

My reminiscences of Church (not Orthodox in my young days ) was a strange and complex mixture of damp prayer books, oil central heating and lavender polish. If ever I smell lavender polish, I am whisked back to a 12 year old chorister in a rather cold, damp church. My earliest recollection of bells was that of school, particularly joyful was the one that signalled the end of lessons; a sound that has accompanied me for most of my life from schoolboy through nearly forty years of school teaching. Bells are a heralding of church services and a call to prayer, and a sign for change and completion in school.

Sounds, but particularly aromas can transport one to a certain place and time; they have the power to stir memories, to deepen attention and empower our focus, whether that is in a secular or sacred setting. This olfactory stimulation has the strength to capture feelings and retrieve emotions because the sense of smell is located and generated in the same place of the brain as memory and emotion. My 97 year old aunt who has dementia is whisked back to her youth when I spray her with her favourite perfume. Women generally outperform men in olfactory abilities and tend to have more sensitive palates having more receptive cells in the olfactory part of the brain.

The loss of smell and taste with Long Covid has been a reminder to us all how these senses

bring meaning and fullness to our life. I heard on the World Service recently on the Outlook programme first broadcast in 2019 how a barber called Lenny White known as Lenny the Barber goes to cut the hair of dementia patients in care homes in Northern Ireland. He creates the atmosphere for his clients with smells of hair oil and sprays used in the 1950s and 1960s.

The dynamic of memory and emotion is most eloquently expressed in Kenneth Grahame's charming book for children "Wind in the Willows":

*We others, who have long lost the more subtle of the physical senses, have not even proper terms to express an animal's inter-communications with his surroundings, living or otherwise, and have only the word 'smell,' for instance, to include the whole range of delicate thrills which murmur in the nose of the animal night and day, summoning, warning, inciting, repelling. It was one of these mysterious fairy calls from out the void that suddenly reached Mole in the darkness, making him tingle through and through with its very familiar appeal, even while yet he could not clearly remember what it was. He stopped dead in his tracks, his nose searching hither and thither in its efforts to recapture the fine filament, the telegraphic current, that had so strongly moved him. A moment, and he had caught it again; and with it this time came recollection in fullest flood.....*

*Poor Mole stood alone in the road, his heart torn asunder, and a big sob gathering, gathering, somewhere low down inside him, to leap up to the surface presently, he knew, in passionate escape. But even under such a test as this his loyalty to his friend stood firm. Never for a moment did he dream of abandoning him. Meanwhile, the wafts from his old home pleaded, whispered, conjured, and finally claimed him imperiously. He dared not tarry longer within their magic circle. With a wrench that tore his very heartstrings he set his face down the road and followed submissively in the track of the Rat, while faint, thin little smells, still dogging his retreating nose, reproached him for his new friendship and his callous forgetfulness.*

## **Incense**

Incense is made up of oils, resins and gums from trees. It is mentioned in the Bible 146 times ; it is a fragrance made from things of the earth, blessed

and offered to the Creator. The making and burning of incense goes back a long time, maybe 4000 years, to pre Christian and even pre Judaic times. Found in China, Babylonia, Persia and other places, it offered a practical purpose to cover foul stenches and a provided a symbol of prayers rising upwards. In churches it is burned on charcoal.

In the Old Testament we find an altar of incense next to the Ark of the Covenant and later in the Temple of Solomon, in accordance with the instructions of God to Moses recorded in Exodus Chapter 30.

King David could express in Psalm 141:2: *"Let my prayer be counted as incense before you and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice."* Ritual enshrines a symbolism which powerfully expresses the deepest needs, hopes, aspirations and feelings of humans. Symbolism is extremely important in everyday life. In the Orthodox Church, symbols from the Greek word *symbolon* with means to "throw with". Symbols are signs enshrined in rituals which extend or throw out or deepest feelings. Yet, we can easily lose or forget the meaning behind the symbol.

The earliest Christians were expected to put a pinch of incense on coals in front of a statue of Caesar in order to recognise him as a god, which they refused to do and for which they were martyred. So strong was their opposition to this requirement that it seems there was a certain reluctance to use incense in the early Church. Not until the time of Emperor Justinian I (May 11, 483–November 13/14, 565) do we hear of 36 gold jewel encrusted stationary bowls of incense being used in the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople.

Of course when our Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, the Magi came from the East and worshipped Him as the incarnate God bringing gifts of gold for kingship, frankincense for holiness and myrrh for suffering.

*<sup>11</sup>And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)*

We read in the early part of St Luke's Gospel how the father of St John the Baptist and Forerunner was offering incense in the Temple:

<sup>8</sup>Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup>he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. (Luke 1:8-10)

Today the Church burns incense in a censer that is held or swung. The thurible or "thumiatis" in Greek, can be small and used at home by Orthodox Christians in their Icon Corner and to cense the house or large as is used in Church. There is in fact a third type of censer used mainly in monasteries during Great week and fasting periods called a Katsion which is basically a larger hand censer with bells.

The ones used in Churches are composed of a lower bowl in which is placed the lighted charcoal connected to an upper bowl surmounted usually by a cross. These are connected to the handle by three outer chains and one inner chain which lifts the upper bowl from the lower one. Each chain has three bells so 12 in all. The lower bowl, which is earth, making the offering of sweet smelling prayer is connected to the upper bowl which represents heaven. The Four Chains represent the four Evangelists and the twelve bells are the twelve apostles which ring out proclaiming the Gospel.

The priest blesses the incense with these words:

*"Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Incense we offer unto Thee, O Christ our God, as an aroma of spiritual sweetness which do Thou receive upon Thy most heavenly altar and send down upon us in return the grace of Thine All Holy Spirit."*

All things are censed, the holy veils covering the Holy gifts of bread and wine, the holy table, the altar area, the holy Icons, water for baptism, kolviva for Memorials, graves for the departed. The people present in church are censed, for they are made in the image of God, their bodies being the temple of the Holy Spirit and vessels of grace. Indeed there is almost no service without incense in the Orthodox Church.

Practical, symbolical and mystical there is a problem with the use of incense which pervades the western mind. Many of our Churches are still

rented from non-Orthodox traditions. When we were looking to rent a Church some years ago we were told in no uncertain terms by three different denominations that we could not burn incense. They said it was because of the fire alarms or burn candles because of fire hazard, but I suspect a deeper cultural caution. When we did manage to share a building however we did on one occasion manage to set off the fire alarm which brought bells of a completely different magnitude into the experience into the frame. One Christmas, a resident in the University Chaplaincy Centre in Lancaster awaking from sleep recounted his dream in which he thought Santa Clause had visited because he heard sleigh bells whilst we were serving an early Holy Liturgy.

### **The experience of Incense**

The first time I went into an Orthodox Church my senses were suffused with sanctity. I fell in love with the whole ambient atmosphere and the tactile nature of the place. The beauty of holiness became real, it wasn't just an abstract concept, it could be seen, smelled, tasted, touched and heard.

*"So this is what heaven is like !"* I reflected.

We read in the book of Revelation:

<sup>3</sup>And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, <sup>4</sup>and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. (Revelation 8:3-4)

A priest once remarked to an interested enquirer into Orthodoxy who was questioning the use of incense. *"Well you have this for eternity so you may as well get used to it now!"*

There is a smell to holiness. The husband of one of my parishioners says to his wife:

*"Ah my dear you have been to Church, I detect the bouquet of incense."*

Glorification or sanctification is incremental in nature and is most often to be found, seen, and experienced in the humble things of this life.

Despite the fact that I possess a fine mobile phone and several new Liturgikons I revert in the services of the Church to the broken spined, torn-repaired, twice bound trusted friend I acquired

nearly twenty eight years ago. I have become accustomed to the olive oil stains from lighting the lamps before prayer, the wax from the candles at the Resurrection services and the Holy Water marks in the Blessing of Waters and Theophany section and the imbued smell of age and incense acquired through years of dutiful service! The yellowing faded glory of the book has taken on the hue of gold dust, the brown edged dog-eared edges from fingers finding their way through the Holy Liturgy are now welcome signposts and milestones in prayer. I have learned to see such accretions not as blemishes but blessings. The work of God leaves its marks!

In a similar manner the lingering fragrance of incense in a Church is a tangible reminder of a mystical communion made earlier. The flickering lamps, the smell of olive oil and beeswax candles are expressive of other offerings - even the carbon darkened walls speak of the work of the faithful; soaked, as they are, with their accumulated prayers. The saints depicted in the frescoes would find it wholly consistent with their earthly life to be covered by dust, smoke and dirt -- they knew only too well about work and prayer.

*"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40)*

Nothing is lost in Christ, even the ashes from the censer are put on the soil for plants to be blessed and grow. In Morecambe, in the far North west of England, some would say the Northern most part of Lebanon, we planted an Olive tree four years ago. A few of our people said "It will never fruit!" We feed it with the ashes from the censer each week; this year it fruited black olives. Even when spent, incense blesses! As St John Chrysostom teaches:

*Just as incense is good and fragrant even on its own, our souls like incense when burned in the fire of the Holy Spirit become an acceptable offering.*

Tradition has a vital dynamic, beyond the antiquarian outward token and nostalgic sentiment; beneath the grime of human worship is the living relationship between God and humankind. Indeed the grime is the evidence of the human evidence of this mystical encounter and synthesis.

I have a towel from Romania which was wrapped around a candle at the tonsuring of a nun in the Monastery of Pissiota back in 2004! It has

been used for all kinds of practical cleaning duties since and has been washed countless times. It is almost threadbare, but therein is to be found its function, purpose and story. Likewise we humans are made for prayer and service sacrificing ourselves, like candles, like incense, burning ourselves up in and for Christ.

Smell is the most evocative of the senses.

I could say more about the fragrance from relics or from the myron from St Demetrios tomb in Thessaloniki but that is for another time. I will end recalling what one of my Greek Parishioners wrote back in 2007 after discovering an Orthodox Church in Lancaster and rediscovering his Orthodox faith:

"I smelled the incense and it took me back to my 15 year old self again serving in the altar."

May this poor offering be like incense to the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Fr Jonathan*

## **Golden Threads**

*"Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight."  
(Luke 24:31)*

The Sun shone from the Holy Place  
Pouring forth streams of iridescent beauty  
From behind the curtain of the Holy Doors;  
The smoke of incense rising to the throne  
Of the thrice Holy One  
Took on an ethereal form of many layered  
Clouds curling upwards to the heavens.

Sweet chanting rose from the Choir  
To meet the morning Light and Risen Lord.  
Vibrant and yet calm  
Dynamic passivity and active peace  
Came upon the place to still  
The storms of earthly life  
Of those gathered together in worship

The child was lifted to venerate the Icon  
Of The Most Holy Virgin.  
A natural and most precious gift from  
The innocent soul of this little one.  
An exchange of love from a child to a mother  
This natural expression of holy joy found  
A resonance in the old woman's smile.

The Liturgy worked its heavenly way to

God's time of The Most Holy Gifts.  
Eternity broke in to the present and lifted the  
Veil

Of a Holy God and sinful man.  
The Mystery of Christ under Salem's type  
Drew the faithful nearer to their God  
In taking, making them Icons of their Lord.

The worn, dirty and shabby wedding garments  
Were transformed by sparkling golden threads  
That wove themselves into the very fabric of the  
lives

Of those gathered in silent contemplation.  
Five senses of humanity having received divinity  
Showered with blessings upon their heads  
They made their way glowing into the world.

*When you are praying alone, and your spirit is dejected, and you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that God the Trinity looks upon you with eyes brighter than the sun; also all the angels, your own Guardian Angel, and all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for they are all one in God, and where God is, there are they also. Where the sun is, thither also are directed all its rays. Try to understand what this means. (St. John of Kronstadt)*

Εν Χριστώ

Fr. Jonathan  
الحاج أبونا جوناثون

## THE CELTIC CROSS

The highlight of my holiday this year was the discovery of the Celtic Cross. I found myself for a few days on the Isle of Islay, off the west coast of Scotland earlier this year and discovered to my delight that one of the most famous examples of high crosses is to be found here, the Cross of Kildalton. On a gloomy, windy and wet early morning, I ventured in search of the famous 8<sup>th</sup> century cross. It was a moving moment finding it in the little graveyard, next to the ruined church of Kildalton (Cill Daltain which means in Scottish

Gaelic "Church of the Foster Son" referring to John the Evangelist). There are other smaller high crosses around the island, almost invariably near the sea shore. In centuries gone by, the Cross must have been the first thing travellers would see as they approached the island. Kildalton cross stands tall, despite its venerable age of over 1200 years old in exactly the same location where it was erected. The world has changed around it, Christianity flourished and declined as symbolised by the ruined church and abandoned graveyard, but the Cross still witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the early Christian faith in this land. The cross is carved in a particularly hard local stone, which explains how it lasted and is so well preserved in spite of the fact the climate is so harsh in the Hebrides with very high winds. On the cross, very similarly to other high crosses dating from the same era, 7<sup>th</sup>--9<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen traditional Celtic motives (geometric patterns and spiral motifs) and carvings of scenes from the Bible still distinct: Cain slaying Abel and the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, symbols like lions (Jesus being the Lion of Judah) and an image of the Mother of God holding the Child Jesus.

What has become known as the Celtic cross is a ringed cross (the intersection of the cross is encircled by a ring), usually made of stone, although the initial ones were probably made of wood. These crosses appeared in Ireland and the British Isles between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century and they were mostly used as public monuments, hence named high crosses as they were set in a stone base and could be seen a long way off. Excavations revealed that there was an even older cross base in Kildalton which attest an earlier Christian presence than the 700s. The symbolism of the Celtic cross is very rich. Tradition has it that Saint Patrick (or Saint Declan) around the 5<sup>th</sup> century, in their missionary work of converting the local kings superposed the cross over the sun or the moon which were worshiped at the time, thus showing the supremacy of Christianity over the polytheistic beliefs of the Celts and the Picts. The circle is also said to represent eternity and has a practical function as well of preserving the Cross by conferring more stability to its arms.

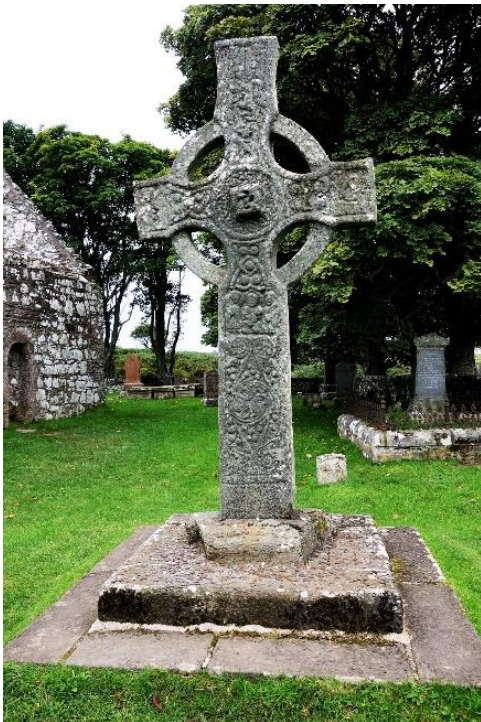
These beautiful witnesses of the conversion to Christianity of the British Isles are to be found in Ireland and especially in Scotland with famous examples on Islay and Iona, but also in England and Wales.

There are many debates among historians regarding the exact symbolism of the Celtic cross, its origins and precise date of its appearance. Some historians have noted the similarity between the Chi-Rho Christian symbol used in the Roman empire, one of the earliest Christograms, which also had the cross superposed on a circle, while other historians have also noted its similarity to Coptic textile prints of crosses surrounded by a ring. There are suggestions that the Irish missionaries might have brought the symbol of what is known as the Celtic cross from their pilgrimages where they had come into contact with other Christian symbols. The Celtic cross remains somewhat shrouded in mystery but it is the mark made on these lands by the first Christian missionaries. This beautiful tangible proof of the faith and devotion of the early Christians continues to stand erect in beauty as a reminder and a sign recalling us to Christ.

*Alexandra McCafferty*



*Celtic crosses the children made at Sunday school on 26<sup>th</sup> May*



*Kildalton Cross*



## PARISH NEWS

Kelan was made a catechumen on 2 June 2024. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ keep him under His protection!



## NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Jun. 5: *Vasileios*

Jun. 20: *Sylvia*

Jun. 22: *Ioannis*

### MEMORY ETERNAL!

Please send us the names of your departed loved ones and date of their departure in order for them to be remembered.





# MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

5<sup>th</sup> June: Hieromartyr Boniface of Crediton, Archbishop of Mainz († 754)

9<sup>th</sup> June: St. Columba of Iona, Enlightener of Scotland († 597)

13<sup>th</sup> June: Holy Ascension

14<sup>th</sup> June: The Holy Prophet Eliseus (Elisha)

16<sup>th</sup> June: Fathers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Council. St Tikhon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Amathus († 425)

17<sup>th</sup> June: St. Botolph, Abbot of the Monastery of Ikanhoe († 680)

19<sup>th</sup> June: Thaddeus (Jude) the Apostle and Brother of Our Lord († 80)

22<sup>nd</sup> June: St. Alban, Protomartyr of Britain († 304)

23<sup>rd</sup> June: **Holy Pentecost**

24<sup>th</sup> June: Monday of the Holy Spirit. Nativity of the Forerunner and Baptist John

26<sup>th</sup> June: Appearance of the Icon of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos of Tikhvin

29<sup>th</sup> June: Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles

30<sup>th</sup> June: Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles. The Sunday of All Saints

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: [www.calendar.goarch.org](http://www.calendar.goarch.org). The Orthodox Calendar and Scriptural Readings Lectionary, including the British and Irish Saints, is available online at [www.antiochian-orthodox.com/calendar](http://www.antiochian-orthodox.com/calendar)

## Online

Prayer  
Meeting

## Weekly

on

## Wednesday

7:30 pm

via Skype



Click here to join the meeting  
(no account needed):

[https://join.skype.com/K1CF  
OgMGxDQU](https://join.skype.com/K1CFOgMGxDQU)

**The Orthodox Christian Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross – Lancaster invites you to join our Online Prayer Group “Saint Seraphim & Saint Etheldreda”.**

**With the blessing of Fr Jonathan Hemmings, though without him until he recovers, the prayer meetings of our parish group are back.**

**Included: readers version of the Supplication to the Theotokos / St Luke of Simferopol to pray for the health of Fr. Jonathan**

### Services at St Martin’s in June\*

Sun. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	09:30	Making of catechumen
	09:45	Holy Liturgy
Sun. 9 <sup>th</sup>	09:45	Hours and Typica
Sun. 16 <sup>th</sup>	09:45	Holy Liturgy
Sat. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	16:00	Saturday of Souls. Memorial
Sun. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	09:45	Hours and Typica. Holy Pentecost
Sun. 30 <sup>th</sup>	09:45	Holy Liturgy. The Sunday of All Saints

\*May be subject to change. Please monitor the email updates and the parish’s [Facebook page](#)



### The Paschal Greeting in various languages\*

<b>English</b>	Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!
<b>Arabic</b>	المسيح قام ! حقا قام (El-Mesiyah qhama! Haqqan qaam!)
<b>German</b>	Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaft auferstanden!
<b>Greek</b>	Χριστός ανέστη! Ἀληθῶς ανέστη! (Christos angsti! Alithos angsti!)
<b>Romanian</b>	Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!
<b>Bulgarian</b>	Христос възкресе! Наистина възкресе! (Khristos vzkrese! Naistina vzkrese!)
<b>Russian</b>	Христос воскрес! Воистину воскрес! (Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese!)
<b>Polish</b>	Chrystus zmartwychwsta! Prawdziwie zmartwychwsta! (Krijstus zmęrtvykh-vsta! Pradzivie zmęrtvikh-vsta!)
<b>Latvian</b>	Kristus (ir) augšamcēlies! Patiesi viņš ir augšamcēlies! (Kristus (ir) aughsham-elias! Patiesi vin ir aughsham-elias!)
<b>Chinese (Mandarin)</b>	基督复活了！他确实复活了！ (Titu fūhuola! Ha-tieshi fūhuola!)

\*Underlined letters indicate the emphasis in pronunciation

*“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”*  
-- St. George Karslides –



*For further information please visit:*

The Orthodox Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross:  
[www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk](http://www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk)

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of  
the British Isles and Ireland: [www.antiochian-orthodox.com](http://www.antiochian-orthodox.com)

Orthodox online liturgical guide: [www.antiochian.org/liturgicday](http://www.antiochian.org/liturgicday)

Online Orthodox Calendar and Scriptural Readings Lectionary:  
<https://www.antiochian-orthodox.com/calendar>

The following blogs of Old Stavronians are available in English at [orthodoxcityhermit.com](http://orthodoxcityhermit.com)

