



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

The Stavronian

Monthly magazine and newsletter published by the Holy Cross Synodia



*Ἐθρώνος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης.
(Φ. Κόντογλου, 1962).*

*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)*

THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET ELIJAH (20th July)

The grace bearing nature of Icons within Holy Orthodoxy means that we encounter a window into heaven. The veneration of an icon is the expression of the love we have for our Lord and Saviour, His most Holy Mother and His sanctified family, the righteous who foretold His coming and the saints who followed His example; it is the physical expression and consequence of our belief in the communion of saints. We venerate the prototype who is worthy and who in turn prays for us. The grace that is given to each Icon, which in its very formation and writing is the fruit of prayer rather than art, brings us to a deeper understanding of our own salvation.

I remember some years ago on the feast of the St. Elijah (Elias) looking at the Icon of the Prophet. I had read the story of this bold ambassador of God's word as a student of the Old Testament years before; how he dared to speak the word of God to his own people who were following other gods and how he earned the wrath of the evil Queen Jezebel and her 400 hundred prophets of Baal. Exhausted by his labours the righteous prophet seeks refuge in a cave. There God sustains

him through commanding ravens to feed his servant.

The Icon of the prophet shows him in a cave with a black bird with food in his beak coming to feed the prophet.

1 Kings 17:2-6 (New King James Version)

²Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ³“Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. ⁴And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” ⁵So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. ⁶The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

This for me, as I looked at the Icon was a revelatory moment. Exhausted spiritually, these words came back to me with great force for I too was hungry for spiritual food which was to be found in the East and God sent black robed priests from the west to come and feed me and others so that we could be strengthened and sustained.

(Stavronian July 2007)



RELICS OF THE SAINTS

Set into the Holy Antimins upon which the Holy Mysteries are offered at every Holy Liturgy are to be found bones of a martyr or saint. This is because the faith and growth of the Church is based upon the witness of the martyrs. Set into our own antimins at Holy Cross is a piece of bone from a holy martyr monk of St. Sabas Monastery (Feast Day -- March 20th). When our Archdiocese was making an inventory of relics that we had in our Archdiocese Churches, one of our Archdiocese priests wrote: *“I really do think that we need to acquire many more relics along with Bishops, priests, deacons and monastics, icons, service books and vestments the relics of the saints were ALWAYS part of the mission equipment. I see no difference between our first missions in these lands and our current ones.”*

We are indeed blessed that our community has two tiny relics of St. Nicholas Planas who is one of the great examples of priesthood from the last century. Moreover, we have been given a relic of St. Joachim of Ithaca (“Papoulakis” 1868) who by strange coincidence -- no, by Divine providence -- is commemorated on March 2nd, the same day (though a different year) that our beloved St. Nicholas Planas reposed in the Lord.

The way that the holy relics of the Saints were translated and greeted is in a touching manner described by St. Chrysostomos in an eulogy on St. Ignatios: *“You, inhabitants of Antioch, have sent forth a bishop and received a martyr; you sent him forth with prayers, and received him back with crowns; and not only you, but all the cities which lay between. For how do you think that they behaved when they saw his remains being brought back? What pleasure was produced! How they rejoiced! With what laudations on all sides did they beset the crowned one! For as with a noble athlete, who has wrestled down all his antagonists, and who comes forth with radiant glory from the arena, the spectators receive him, and do not suffer him to tread the earth, bringing him home on their shoulders and according him countless praises. So also every city in turn received this Saint from Rome, and bearing him upon their shoulders as far as this city, escorted the crowned one with praises, hymning the champion... At this time the holy Martyr bestows grace to the very same cities, establishing them in piety, and from that time to this day he enriches this city”*.

Speaking of the miraculous power of holy relics, St. Ephraim the Syrian relates the following concerning the holy Martyrs: *“Even after death they act as if alive, healing the sick, expelling demons, and by the power of the Lord rejecting every evil influence of the demons. This is because the miraculous grace of the Holy Spirit is always present in the holy relics”*.

Although they are rare and it is difficult, it is our duty to try to acquire and so venerate the relics of the saints of this our land which was blessed by their presence and by whose prayers the Holy Orthodox Church is strengthened and will grow once more.

(Stavronian July 2008)



THE CARROT, THE STICK AND THE GIFT

When my children were young, there was a great fashion for reward charts. You would have a wall chart with the name of each child on and for every good deed, positive attitude and correct behaviour they would get a star or a sticker on the chart. When a pre-agreed number of stars accumulated there would be a reward (a toy, a gift of sorts or trip etc). I was never consistent enough as a parent to use a reward chart and my accounting skills as well as my parenting skills leave a lot to be desired. I was quite admiring of the parents who used charts, some of them very successfully. I saw great improvements in some of my friends' children's behaviour. The British school system seems to operate a similar system of reward. My children got rewarded at the end of term for good attendance with a trip to the cinema or a certificate in assembly, they got medals not only for doing well, but also for participating in events. Where it seems only fair to reward all good behaviour, this approach has nonetheless a couple of inherent problems. Firstly, real life doesn't operate a strict reward system. People who lead a very healthy life sometimes get very ill, good people have terrible things happen to them, while others who have done terrible things live a long and prosperous life. This comes as a great shock to the wall chart children and makes life seem extremely unfair. For Christian children, it is even more difficult to accept the lack of fairness in the “great reward system” and they may (wrongly) begin to perceive God as being “unfair”. But as Christians we know that fairness is not the ultimate value. Our God was crucified for our sins. We cannot even begin to talk about fairness in this context where Love and sacrifice are at the centre of the Christian universe. The second flaw with rewarding a child for every good deed is that it fosters an attitude focused on gain. Good should be reward in itself. We ought to do good out of love, out of a wish to please our Father and bring joy to our brothers and sisters, not for rewards, even if the ultimate reward is Heaven.

If we persist in adult life looking for a reward from God, we might end up like the Pharisee who prays: *“God, I thank you that I am not like other people-robbers, evildoers, adulterers -- or even this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”* (Luke 18:10) Two large stars on

the wall chart. Or, like the brother of the prodigal son: *"Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends, but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!"* (Luke 15:29-32) The sense of injustice robs the brother of joy and peace: *"He was angry and refused to go in"*. There is in this son the same expectation that his good deeds be rewarded with the fattened calf and moreover that his "naughty" brother be punished and not rewarded, forgiven, loved.

At the opposite end of the education scale, I grew up in the "punishment" education system. In my time, children were harshly corrected for any deviance from what was perceived to be right and good. This extended to beatings for as little as not doing your chores or not dusting well enough or getting a poor mark at school. I was spared such punishments in my own family because my mother was a very merciful person, but all my friends suffered harsh treatments at the hands of their parents. School operated the same system of correction. I remember being caned in front of the class because the stick on my letter d was consistently not straight in my homework. This school of thought has produced a culture where people make out God to be a just but very harsh master, who punishes mercilessly any transgression. Any form of misfortune or suffering is then interpreted as a just punishment for our sins. This is the school of "who sinned, this man or his parents?" In John 9:1-7, Jesus and his disciples encounter a man who was born blind. The disciples asked Jesus, *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* Jesus answered, *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him."*

Psalms 129 reminds us that all men are sinners and salvation through our own endeavours alone is not possible: *"If Thou O Lord should mark iniquities, who should stand?"*

We all know from experience and from the Scriptures that the consequence of sin is suffering and pain while good deeds bring joy and often if not always, the natural consequence of hard work is success. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:23)

Nonetheless things are not always as

straightforward as that. Both the carrot and the stick approach to our spiritual life present a completely false image of God. Our God is not a petty accountant who counts every penny or who strikes us down for every misdeed. He is the God of love, of boundless generosity and infinite mercy, who does not give up on us. God does not meet out harsh punishments or offer rewards for our efforts. He showers gifts on his Creation. We do not speak of the rewards of the Holy Spirit but the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38) The invitation extends not only to the righteous and the worthy but to "everyone" because the gift of divine love is offered unconditionally.

Until we accept that we can never deserve God's love, but that sinners as we are, it is possible that we are loved beyond our comprehension, we cannot truly draw closer to our Father. All we can do is receive God's gift and open our heart to offer our own love and sacrifice to God and to our brothers and sisters.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Martha and Mary

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Dear brothers and sisters, last Sunday school we talked about two of the best known and most loved apostles, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, whose feast we celebrated on the 29th of June. They are the founders of our church, the Church of Antioch.

The children were weaving a little basket to remind us of when Saint Paul was in Damascus and his friends lowered him in a basket down the wall, so he could escape from his persecutors, who wanted to kill him. How wonderful it was to see their little hands busily weaving that basket! They really enjoyed it and they were very pleased with the results.

We filled the basket with little things, to remind us of the two disciples and of moments in their lives:

- A fish and a fishing net, because Peter was a fisherman. When Jesus went into his boat, He told Peter and his brother Andrew, as well as their friends, James and John, who were with him at that time: "I will make you fishers of men".

- A piece of blue plastic (water) to remind us of the story when Peter walked on the water.

- A cockerel to remind us of the time when Peter denied Jesus 3 times, before the cockerel crowed.

- A piece of broken chain, to remind us of the story when Peter was in prison and an angel appeared and told him to stand up and walk out of prison. The double set of handcuffs fell to the ground and Peter walked out of the prison without problems.

- A little stone to remind us that Jesus said to Peter: "On this rock, I will build my church"

"At that time, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:13-19)

- A little boat to remind us of Saint Paul, who sailed far and wide on his missionary journeys, planting new churches and spreading the Gospel everywhere he went. Eric kindly prepared the boat for us, and he showed other kids how to make a paper boat.

- A little envelope with a quote from Saint Paul's letters to remind us that every Sunday in church we read a passage from the letters Saint Paul wrote to the churches he had established (in Rome, Corinth, Phillipi) to encourage them and guide them.

Finally, we attached an icon of Saint Peter and

Saint Paul to the baskets.

These are little "treasure baskets" of our faith, containing symbols to help us recall only a few of the events in the wonderful lives of St Peter and St Paul.



We are looking forward to the next Sunday school, which is always on the last Sunday of the month and we hope more kids will join us.

*In Christ,
Daniela, Petronela, Luci, Alexandra*

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Jul. 6: *Constantin, Soultana*

Jul. 9: *Metropolitan Methodios Fougias*

Jul. 23: *Christina*

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

1st July: Cosmas and Damian, the Holy and Wonderworking Unmercenaries

2nd July: St. John Maximovitch, Bishop of Shanghai & Archbishop of San Fransisco (✚ 1966); St. Juvenal, Protomartyr of America and Alaska (✚ 1796)

3rd July: St Germanus, Bishop of the Isle of Man and Enlightener of Peel (✚ 474)

4th July: St. Andrew of Crete, author of the Great Canon

7th July: Great-martyr Kyriake

11th July: Great Martyr Euphemia the All-Praised; St. Olga, equal to the Apostles, Princess of Kiev

13th July: Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Gabriel

15th July: Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Great Prince Vladimir, in Baptism Basil, Enlightener of the Russian Land

17th July: Great-Martyr Marina of Antioch and Child-Martyr Prince Kenelm

20th July: Holy Glorious Prophet Elijah

22nd July: Mary Magdalene, the Holy Myrrh-bearer and Equal to the Apostles

25th July: Dormition of righteous Anna, mother of the Most Holy Theotokos

26th July: Holy Martyr Paraskeve

27th July: Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon

31st July: St Joseph of Arimathea

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: 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

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 the prayer meetings of our parish group are back.

Included: akathists, paraklesis

Services at St Martin's in July*

Sat. 6 th	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 7 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy or Typica
Sat. 13 th	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 14 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Sat. 20 th	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 21 st	09:45	Divine Liturgy or Typica
Sat. 27 th	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 28 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy

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

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



For further information please contact:

Parish priest: Father Jonathan Hemmings
67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ
Tel: 07951 722 877
Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk

Orthodox Church of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross:
www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of
the British Isles and Ireland: www.antiochian-orthodox.com

Orthodox online liturgical guide: 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

