

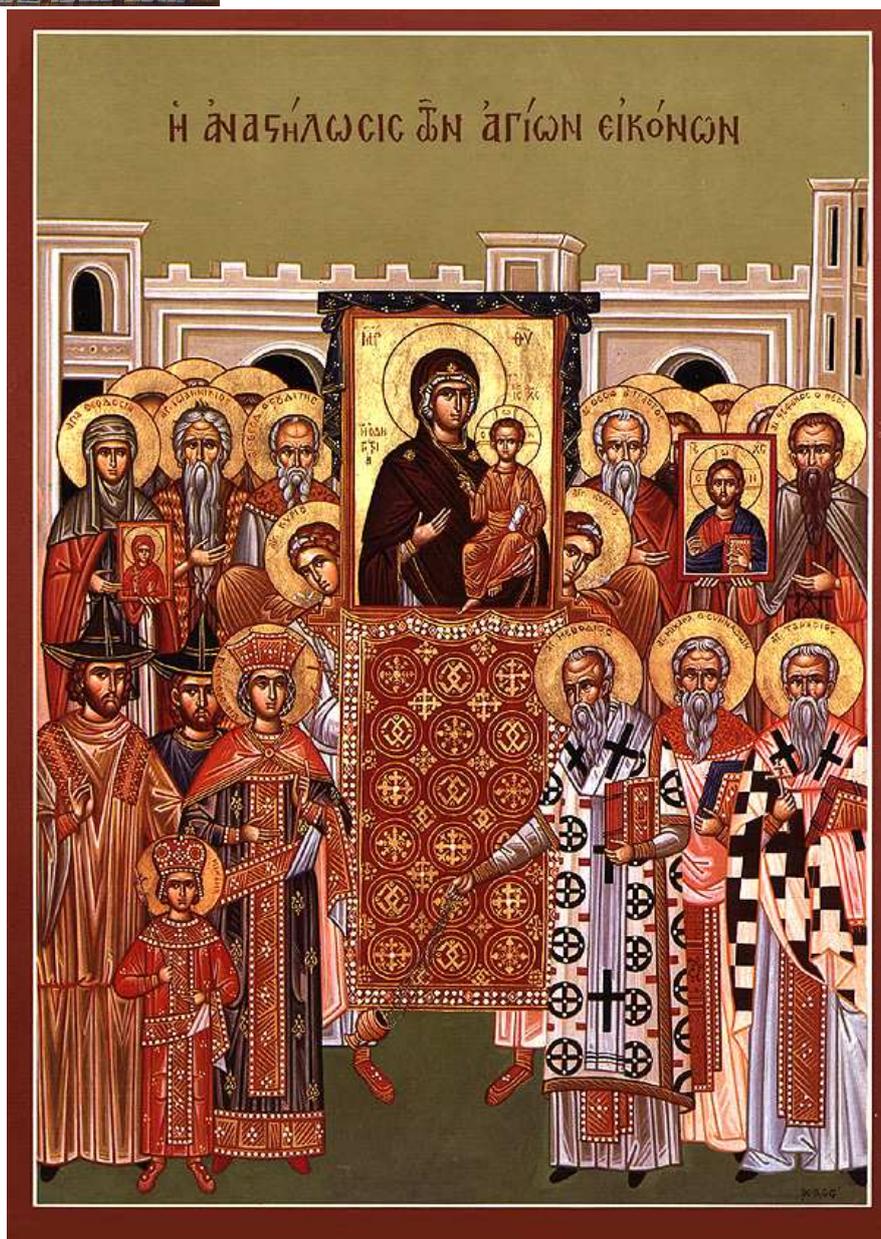
The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese  
of the British Isles and Ireland  
(incorporating the Deanery of the UK and Ireland)



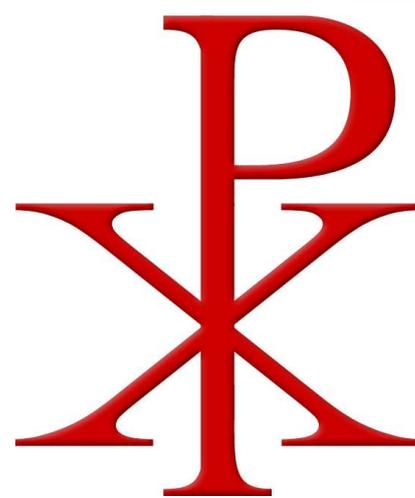
# Cornerstone

Number 2 • Spring 2014

Spiritual Battleground



**This is the Faith of the Apostles!  
This is the Faith of the Fathers!  
This is the Faith of the Orthodox!  
This is the Faith which has  
established the Universe!**



## Index

**Page 2-3:** The Lenten Address of His Beatitude JOHN X, Patriarch of Antioch

**Page 4:** The Triumph of Orthodoxy by Archpriest Gregory Hallam

**Page 5:** St Gregory Palamas by Fr Alexander Tefft

**Page 6:** The Veneration of the Holy Cross by Fr Jonathan Hemmings

**Page 7:** St John of the Ladder by Fr Michael Harry

**Page 8:** St Mary of Egypt, by Fr Samuel Carter

# Lent Address

Of His Beatitude JOHN X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East



By God's mercy John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East; Brethren, Pastors of the Holy Church of Antioch; Beloved children in all dioceses in this apostolic see; Brethren and dearest spiritual children, whose strength and anticipation in God, strengthen ours:

Entering this redemptive period which leads us to the Cross (of Christ) and the dawn of His and thus our resurrection, these days bring to us the anticipation to Jesus and His divine consolation for His beloved humans; for whom He descended from His highest, incarnated in the Virgin, submitting Himself to the human law, willingly walking the path of the Cross, in order to rise from the dead, becoming the first fruit for our resurrection from our earthly misery and

tribulation.

Jesus chose the path of the Cross, and drank from the chalice of death to simply tell us that the tribulation of our times will not overshadow our hope for light, and that hardship cannot eclipse the brightness of resurrection.

Entering this redemptive period of the Great Lent, we have bid farewell to brothers, fathers and mothers, who were taken away by sudden or forced death, but we anticipate to meet them in Christ's light.

We receive these days while our brothers and sisters, amongst whom are bishops, priests, monks, nuns and beloved children, are abducted and suffer the cruelty of this world.

"We shall not celebrate without them. We did and shall spare no endeavour to ensure their safe return."

Brethren! Despite their severity, these times reinforce the spirit of consolation, growing our sense of empathy. Lent is based on love, reinforced by almsgiving and completed with the leaven of purity and chastity.

Fasting and almsgiving are inseparable.

Fasting, mercy, almsgiving, purity and care for the neighbours and the needy are paths to the doorway to the Godly mercy and thus acquiring God as a friend. A Church Father, Peter Chrysologus (the golden-worded) effectively described the pillars of fasting:

"Brethren, Fasting does not germinate unless watered by mercy. When mercy dries up, fasting suffers drought, for mercy is to fasting what spring is to

earth; as the smooth breeze that help buds flourish into flowers, mercy grows the seeds of fasting to become blossoming flowers. Love is to fasting what oil is to a lantern; oil feeds the lantern; similarly, love feeds fasting and enkindles it. Almsgiving is to fasting what the sun is to the day. The sunshine illumines the day, scattering darkness. This is how almsgiving sanctifies the sanctuary of fasting with the light of love".

We all are called upon to consolidate the unity in our Orthodox Antiochian Church. In the Church of Antioch, we are entrusted to the name "Christians" by both word and deeds. Jesus's disciples were first called "Christians" in our land, but we, in our Orthodox Antiochian Church are called upon, by loving each other and unifying our hearts, to testify for Jesus Christ in this contemporary world which is corroded by mere interests.

"For look ye! How these Christians seem to love each other" (Tertullian, Apology 39:7). Tertullian found no better expression in his apology to defend the Christian values and those who follow them. This means that by loving each other, and refusing defamation, we give witness of Lord Jesus in our world.

"The Church of Christ is alien to parties, divisions or disputes; it only acknowledges the zeal for God, a zeal that enflames our hearts. The Church of Christ do not fill the social networking sites and the Media with a barrage of threats, defamation nor disdain."

Brethren! We are called upon, by embracing love and living by the teachings of the Gospel, to overcome all the impediments to our progress, cleanse

our inner selves and scrutinise our conscience rather than preaching others. O merciful God! Who for our sake dwelled in the womb of the Virgin, was born in a manger, patiently endured human suffering, willingly suffered His Passion and who, by His burial, buried the sin that overwhelmed our nature, look upon us in our journey during this Lent, crowning it with the light that shines from Your life-giving tomb. Let us realize that despite its heaviness, the stone of the tomb could not stop the light of resurrection, teaching the world that the bell towers of the Churches in this land have been erected for many centuries even through harsh times and that they will keep ringing echoing Christ's love for all people, endorsing the fact that Christ's children are deeply rooted in this land and announcing their openness to all people despite hardships through the centuries.

O God bestow upon us the spirit of Your peace, alleviate by Your Passion the passions of those who love You, visit our countries casting upon us the beauty of Your presence. Accompany the abducted and the displaced, journey with those who travel and bless our children in the diaspora.

Stand, O God, by those in need; strengthen us to console the hearts of our children with Your words and the acts of philanthropy. Bring the departed closer to you, and crown our fasting journey to witness the Holy Resurrection, hallowed be Your name for now and ever, Amen.

# First Sunday of Great Lent: The Triumph of Orthodoxy

by Archpriest Gregory Hallam



**The first Sunday of Great Lent is subtitled “The Triumph of Orthodoxy.”** This is a phrase that makes some people uncomfortable. It smacks of triumphalism and fanaticism, so they say.

This, however, is to misunderstand completely the significance of the celebration. We are emboldened by this day to share in Christ’s victory over evil, suffering and death. We do this by using the disciplines of the Lenten period to gain mastery over ourselves, not others!

Believers will use the opportunities of the Fast in slightly different ways depending on their own circumstances, but the goal is the same, to advance on the way to salvation, to acquire holiness and purity of heart. Catechumens will be preparing for baptism at Pascha. The Faithful will be stepping up their warfare against the passions in the battleground of the heart. All seek the same thing, the Triumph of Christ.

During Lent we must be severely practical and consider prayerfully what we should to share in Christ’s victory. Here are some spiritual principles for any soldier of Christ contending against the enemy, Satan.

First we must be armed with spiritual grace and fortified by spiritual grace and humility. No one should embark on this struggle unless he be equipped with the full armour of God in the study of Scripture, the perseverance of prayer and the exercise of Godly works. We should take care to attend the Church’s services as frequently as we can, confess

our sins and tame our desires by God’s grace.

Second the Christian must learn from the saints on how to fight. The Holy Ones have gone before us in the struggle and we need their wisdom to avoid some of the pitfalls into which the devil would love to ensare us and make us stumble. Spiritual readings from the lives of the saints and their teachings is vital to make progress here.

Thirdly we should always have before us as both our encouragement and goal the resurrection victory of Christ, Pascha. Christian hope is what always should inspire us to persevere and to never, ever, cease to fight.

The Triumph of Orthodoxy then is the beginning, middle and end of all our strivings because above all things we should seek salvation for ourselves and for the world by the exercise of sacrificial love, the same love that God has for each and all.

*Fr Gregory*

---

## Troparion of the Feast

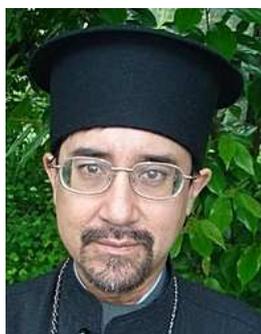
No one could describe the Word of the Father;

But when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described,

And restored the fallen image to its former beauty.

We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images.

## Second Sunday of Great Lent: St Gregory Palamas by Fr Alexander Tefft



**What is theology?** What is prayer? Are they two utterly distinct categories: the former, the preserve of academics; the latter, of illiterates? Anyone who thinks it understands nothing of our

Orthodox faith. Theology is no arid, academic discipline. It is a vision. Prayer is no holy high. It is a word beyond words, befitting God.

Monk of Mount Athos, later Archbishop of Thessaloniki, Gregory Palamas teaches that he who prays in truth is a theologian, while a theologian is one who literally prays in Truth: in the Light that is Truth, Himself. Around 1330, a scholar and convert from the West named Barlaam asserted that no one can know God. Know about God, yes, but know God? Such a concept is impossible. Is not God 'inconceivable, incomprehensible'? What then, replied Gregory, of prayer? What is the Light that a hesychast, a monk who silences all thoughts, sees in his cell? His own pure heart? Or the Light of Christ, transfigured on the mountain (Matthew

17.2, Mark 9.2)? It is not a ball thrown over the wall that the hesychast sees. It is what lies beyond the wall - God himself.

Educated at court, Gregory wrote nine learned treatises to testify to the principle: 'In your light shall we see light' (Ps. 35[36].9) and 'Be still and know that I am God' (Ps. 45[46].10).

Scholars opposed him. The Holy Mountain, however, upheld his doctrine. In six councils, collectively nicknamed the 'Ninth Ecumenical Council', the Church affirmed that prayer is theology: the vision, not of a First Principle, but of a Living God. Fittingly, Saint Gregory's last words were his directions to us: 'To the heights! To the heights!'

Following the Triumph of Orthodoxy in Lent, Saint Gregory fulfils it. In an era that divides academic theology from prayer, Gregory testifies to the basis of Orthodox faith: a praying mind. Palamism, as its critics call it, is no system such as Thomism. It is simply the belief, unchangeable in the Church, that He to whom we pray is alive.

*Fr Alexander*

## The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland

The first Archdiocesan Conference will be held at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, Monday 26th May to Wednesday 28th May. Please make every possible effort to attend, even if only for one day: this conference will be your chance to have your say on the structure and formation of the new Archdiocese. If you never come to another conference, please at least come to this one!

The Archdiocesan website: <http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk>

The Archdiocesan Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/archdiocesebii>

# Third Sunday of Great Lent: The Veneration of the Holy Cross

by Fr Jonathan Hemmings



## Sat Navs and Salvation

Sat Navs are useful if you can figure out how to use them but they are not always accurate. Road maps have a certain solidity but can be clumsy but road signs remind us of

where we are, if we are going in the right direction and how far we have still to travel before we reach our destination.

The Cross stands at the very centre of the Lenten period to remind us of where we are going and why we are on our journey.

*“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-2)*

That phrase "Looking unto Jesus," is all important. At this time when we are feeling the physical and spiritual effort of fasting and our fatigue more evidently we need to keep our eyes fixed on Him.

As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes in his book on Great Lent:

*“.....we can not take up our cross and follow Christ unless we have His Cross which He took up in order to save us. It is His Cross, not ours, that saves us. It is His Cross that gives not only meaning but also power to others.”*

The sign of the Cross is the “I” crossed out both in the unique life saving act of Christ and in our response by which we must live in order to be saved. Indeed, we must take up our cross if we are to be counted as worthy followers! The Way requires enough fuel for the journey and our obedient response to the Sign since in the Cross of Christ we find the power and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24)

Be wise, venerate the Sign, take power!  
To the Cross and beyond!

*Fr. Jonathan*

## The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland

**Two new missions are being prepared**, almost as far apart as it is possible to get (without swimming). These are in Crediton, Devon (under the patronage of St Boniface), and Tain, Highlands (under the patronage of Ss Duthac and Columba). The Scottish mission celebrated its first Divine Liturgy on 16th March, and there were two Orthodox Christians present (including Fr Christopher Neill) and two catechumens. It is anticipated that Divine Liturgy will be celebrated every two months for the next year, but there is great potential for an Orthodox mission in this area, so who knows?

The Archdiocesan website: <http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk>

The Archdiocesan Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/archdiocesebii>

# Fourth Sunday of Great Lent: St John of the Ladder by Fr Michael Harry



## A First Step

In the 1980s I was marking exam papers for the Open University. The students had to describe choices that had led to their being ridiculed or ostracised.

One Northern Ireland student wrote that not attending church had made him a family outcast. Another student, from a smart area of Sussex, described how attending church meant ridicule from her friends. Both students faced what we Orthodox face at our first step on the Ladder of Divine Ascent, namely: 'Renouncing the World'.

'Renouncing the World' includes rejecting materialism; but it also includes rejecting those unquestioned worldly assumptions and pressures from all around us that can pollute our Faith. The World invites us to see Orthodoxy as just one part of a religion called Christianity; which is just part of a choice called 'a lifestyle'. This model presses us into avoiding any embarrassment or alienation that might come from asserting Orthodox belief. Yet the plight of other churches, who strive to absorb the values of the World, gives us a clear warning.

But there is another worldly view is just as dangerous as any cosy compromise. It is the World's demand for confrontation and justification, which permeates just about every one of the social and news media. Do we beat others into emotional submission, or assert our intellectual superiority, as a means of leading them to a love of Christ?

The Orthodox way, in both of these situations, is the message of 1

Corinthians 13. However, the love to which Saint Paul witnesses, is not lying to ourselves or to others; so fudge and compromise are out (1 Cor 13:6). Neither is this love arrogant, rude, or insisting on its own way; so we are cautious about 'winning' arguments rather than offering salvation (1 Cor 13:5).

So before we step on to the Ladder, perhaps we should first become aware of how much the World and its values have perniciously penetrated our thinking. Have we really seen what it is that we have to renounce? If not, then the remaining 29 Ladder steps of asceticism, fasting, etc., could be just part of a secular lifestyle.

*Fr Michael*

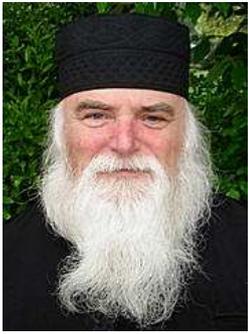


**Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba)**  
1931 - 2014

It is with great sadness that we learn of the repose of Metropolitan PHILIP of North America. His Eminence was a staunch supporter of the formation of the Antiochian Deanery in the UK and Ireland. We owe him much.

May his name be thrice-blessed and his memory eternal!

# Fifth Sunday of Great Lent: St Mary of Egypt by Fr Samuel Carter



**If you have still not read the life-story of this most wonderful saint, you are missing something really precious.** 1st April is her feast day, but she is commemorated on the Fifth Sunday of Great

Lent and her life is read in great detail on the fifth Thursday of Great Lent within the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete.

Totally enslaved by her sexual appetite, young, beautiful, with a voracious desire for sex, she suddenly found herself excluded from the Veneration of the Holy Cross, even entry into the church building, by an invisible force. Turning in desperation to the icon of the Theotokos in the porch of the church she asked for leave to repent and begin again.

Read her story to see how she espoused true repentance, strict asceticism and how God blessed her. Speaking to elder Zossima she tells him that the first seventeen years in the desert were the most difficult as she battled with the “wild beasts”, her frenzied desires.

The Church gives us Saint Mary as an example of a sinner who truly repents, turning from her life of sin and beginning anew. The forgiveness and blessings of God are wonderfully evident.

We have barely begun in the spiritual

battle which confronts our self-absorption and carnal appetites and turns us to God. At the first pang of hunger or fanciful craving we give way and forget our battle. Let us measure ourselves in the very smallest of things: How have we kept the Fast so far this year ... meat, dairy, fish, wine etc.?

How have we increased our daily prayers and spiritual reading?

How have we given to those in need?

The world is always keen to judge and condemn but has no concept of repentance and forgiveness. When we engage in spiritual warfare, and the body is the battleground, we fail initially but we pick ourselves up by the Grace and mercy of God, confess, receive forgiveness and begin again. Do not give up the fight!

Holy Mother Mary pray to God for us!

*Fr Samuel*



## Contact the Editor

Fr Jonathan Hemmings, 67 Sibsey Street, Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ

Tel: 01524 840759 Mobile 07951 722877 Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk

Publication: September, December, March, June. Contributions by 15th of the previous month.

Archdiocesan Website - <http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/archdiocesebii>