

August 2007



The Orthodox parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross, Lancaster

Meeting at the Chaplaincy Centre of Lancaster University

Newsletter



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

*The parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
belongs to the Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the United Kingdom and Ireland,
which is part of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Western and Central Europe.*

*Our Metropolitan is His Eminence Archbishop Gabriel.
The Patriarchate of Antioch is third senior of the Orthodox Churches.
The Patriarch is His Beatitude Ignatius IV.*

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

THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS

In this month of August we celebrate the “Summer Pascha” or the Pascha and Dormition of the Theotokos. After supporting the nascent Church witnessing the Ascension of her Lord and living in the home of the Beloved disciple John, the angel Gabriel came to tell her of her repose which took place three days later. The apostles whose missionary activity had taken them throughout the world were drawn to Jerusalem to say their goodbyes, all except Thomas who was characteristically three days late and therefore he is not featured in the Icon at the funeral bier. Mary, according to her will was buried in Gethsemane and Thomas asked the apostles that he might see the grave so that he too might pay his respects. When they took him to the place where she had been buried, her body had gone leaving a sweet fragrance. Christ had taken her body to Himself in Heaven so that his mother’s body may not see corruption and so reunite her body to her soul as a foretaste of the general resurrection.

As we have sung in the Exapostilarion of the Paraklesis:

*O You Apostles from far off,
Being gathered together
in the village of Gethsemane,
Lay my body in burial,
And You, my Son, and my God,
Receive now my spirit from me.*

Mary fell asleep as all humans do, but her soul was received by Christ upon death and her body was resurrected on the third day after her repose passing beyond death and judgement

and lives in the age which is to come. This is then an inspiration and exemplar of the hope that we poor sinners have in our own resurrection, to share in that same glory in that closer presence of Christ. As we await this, we have the reassurance that we have access to her who bore God the Word as our constant intercessor.

*You are the sweetness of Angels,
The gladness of the afflicted ones,
A protection of all Christians,
O Virgin Mother of our Lord;
Grant me now help and save me
From the eternal torments.
I have you as Mediator
Before God who loves mankind;
May He not question my action
Before the hosts of the Angels,
I ask of you, O Virgin,
Hasten now quickly to my aid.*



Just as the apostles were called to the side of the Theotokos in her repose-so we who are the fruit of the apostles word are called to view her

passing, we are called to this same scene in order to bring us hope and to remind us of our own resurrection.

This holy tradition of the Dormition of the Mother of God is not a dogma of the Church but it is the teaching of the Fathers, found in apocryphal literature and wholly consistent with what the Apostle St. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians:

1Cor; 15:20&23 *“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has now become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. But each one in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” Even so come Lord Jesus.*

In this glorious departing we rejoice in the communion of saints:

“Christ and His mother dear and all the saints are here, and where they are is heaven and what they touch divine.”

LETTER ABOUT JACKIE

Dear Friends,

Jackie (Georgiana) is unwell and has been for a long time, many of you know the situation but this has a wider circulation than the services messages etc. She has been in hospital since 13th April at first in Barrow in Furness and since late July in Hope Hospital, Manchester. Hope has a specialist unit which deals with intestinal disease and artificial feeding. It really is a centre of excellence in the UK and takes patients from all over the county.

The diagnosis is still vague but we do know her intestines are simply not working. She was not absorbing nourishment in her food and getting weaker. She is now being fed into her bloodstream direct and it looks like she will be for a long time to come. We expect her to be receiving this “total parenteral nourishment” at home for years to come now. It contains all she needs in an emulsion made up to suit her.

She is still having tests. She is getting a lot of support from all of those who pray for her and also for Duncan and I. We are seriously very, very grateful. I am also told to thank everyone for the cards and letters and visits. It makes such a difference. Fr Jonathan has been wonderful and now Fr Gregory Hallam from Levenshulme has also visited and taken her communion too.

Since she has been in the new place she has had an infection cleared and batteries of tests and scans etc. She also has a new feeding line, which was put in surgically last week. She is getting physiotherapy and gaining weight.

Now if you would like to be kept up to date I am e-mailing updates and will gladly add you to the list. Email me on c.neill@kencomp.net.

Jackie can be contacted by post and is delighted at the cards and letters she gets from her friends attached to Holy Cross. The address is

Mrs J Neill
Intestinal failure Unit
Ward B4
Hope Hospital
Stott Lane, Salford
M6 8HD

You can also phone her by ringing 0161 206 1338, this is the phone in her part of the ward and just ask for Jackie Neill. The visiting is open i.e. at any reasonable time, it is an easy ride from Manchester stations by the metro link tram to Ladywell stop on the Eccles line, then about 10 minutes walk round the corner to Hope Hospital.

Thank you all again,

Chris Neill



REPENTANCE & HUMILITY

Repentance is the renewal of baptism. Repentance is a contract with God for a second life. A penitent is a buyer of humility.

Repentance is constant distrust of bodily comfort. Repentance is self-

condemning reflection, and carefree self-care. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. A penitent is an undisgraced convict.

Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the sins. Repentance is purification of conscience. Repentance is the voluntary endurance of all afflictions. A penitent is the inflicter of his own punishments.

Repentance is a mighty persecution of the stomach, and a striking of the soul into vigorous awareness.

St. John Climacus

Those who seek humility should bear in mind the three following things: that they are the worst of sinners, that they are the most despicable of all creatures since their state is an unnatural one, and that they are even more pitiable than the demons, since they are slaves to the demons.

You will also profit if you say this to yourself: how do I know what or how many other people's sins are, or whether they are greater than or equal to my own? In our ignorance you and I, my soul, are worse than all men, we are dust and ashes under their feet. How can I not regard myself as more despicable than all other creatures, for they act in accordance with the nature they have been given, while I, owing to my innumerable sins, am in a state contrary to nature.

St. Gregory of Sinai, Philokalia, Vol. IV.

WALKING ON WATER

Letter to my Spiritual brother Fr. Bogdan Costin Georgescu and the faithful of Pisculesti Romania on the occasion of the Summer Camp.

*Matthew 14:22-33 Gospel
for 9th Sunday*

Dear friends in Christ,

I am sorry that I cannot be with you enjoying what I am sure is a blessed Summer Camp but through the Communion of Saints, The Divine Mysteries and prayer I am with you in spirit. It fills me with great joy to know that some of those visions and dreams that Fr. Bogdan Costin Georgescu and myself had are being realised through the good efforts of my friend and colleague Mr Andrew Nicholson and those staff and students from Ploiesti and LRGS Lancaster who are making it possible.

The Prophet Joel is quoted by Peter in the Acts of the Apostles when he says in the last days *it shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh and your young men shall see visions and your all men dream dreams.* The passage ends on a note that is familiar to the Gospel story for today that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The Gospel tells us of the disciples in a boat on Lake Galilee when a storm comes up and threatens their very lives. Such storms are indeed found on this Lake; the hills either side of Lake Galilee act as a funnel for a northern wind. Our Lord had been praying to His Father alone and He had sent His disciples ahead of Him.

The boat in which the disciples were seated was being tossed about by the storm - Jesus goes to them walking on the water. The disciples when they see Jesus, are troubled and fearful thinking that they are seeing a ghost. But Jesus tells them not to be afraid.



Peter, always ready to speak first, answers Him *"If it is You command me to come to you on the water."*

Here, then is an echo of doubt - **if** it is you - not entirely different to that more pernicious **If** that Satan used when he tempted Jesus **"if** you are the Son of God command these stones to become loaves"; **"If** you are the Son of God jump down from the pinnacle of the Temple"; **"If** you are the Son of God bow down and worship me"- that little word **"if"** - is full of doubt, suspicion and condition.

Jesus invites Peter to step out of the boat and come to Him. Faith

involves us in stepping out into the deep. Peter begins to walk towards Jesus and then he becomes conscious of the wind and the waves and cries out "Save me". Peter hesitates, vacillates and weakens because he takes his eyes off Jesus and concentrates on the storm. Our Lord stretches out his arm (like in the icon of the resurrection) towards Peter and says "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they get into the boat the wind ceases and we are told that the disciples worshipped Him and confessed, "You are the Son of God."

This is one of the great miracles over nature that Our Lord showed in his earthly ministry - He who made the seas and oceans has dominion over them. This is why we bless all creation at Theophany and why all creation gives glory to God - the birds sing, the stars and sun shine, the flowers give their colour and scent but in a fallen world creation too groans (as the Apostle Paul says). When Adam fell from grace all creation fell with him and only the Father can restore harmony and atonement in Christ.

This miracle tells us that Christ will be with us in the storms of life that will beset us, that he will be with His disciples in every generation in the middle of our turmoils, wherever and whatever form they may take. Suffering is a condition that we bear in Christ - this gladdening sorrow is a trial and proof of carrying our own cross. Christ invites us "Come!" for we cannot bear these turmoils, sufferings and trials alone - only He can save us! When Peter cries out "Save me!" Our Lord does just that. How clearly, precisely and immediately Christ answers prayer that comes from the

heart and soul. Our prayers may come from the mind but they must be warmed by the heart with the energy of the soul where the Holy Spirit makes his home. This is why our prayers are sometimes ineffective because they are not heartfelt - we must say our prayers as if our very life depends upon them - because our life truly does depend upon how we say our prayers.

Lord save me is echoed throughout the Liturgy in the petition *Lord have mercy*. This often repeated Liturgical refrain and the disciples confession together is to be found in the Jesus Prayer, the prayer of the Orthodox "Lord Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy on me a sinner." When we pray this prayer with our heart the storms of life cease and the peace of Christ is with us.



My dear friends, let us rejoice in that calling that Christ gives to us knowing that in His invitation is salvation so that we may never take

our eyes from Him but” 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 12:2).

Fr. Jonathan

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

2nd Aug: Translation of the relics of St. Stephen

6th Aug: The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ

15th Aug: The Dormition of our Most-Holy Theotokos

23rd Aug: Apodosis of the Dormition of our Most-Holy Mother of God

24th Aug: St. Cosmas of Aitolia

29th Aug: Beheading of the Forerunner and Baptist John

31st Aug: Venerable Sash of the Most-Holy theotokos

For the lives of Saints please visit the Prologue of Ohrid:

www.westsrbdio.org/prolog/prolog.htm

or the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America:

www.calendar.goarch.org



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