

September 2007



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

Meeting at the Chaplaincy Centre of Lancaster University

Newsletter



*Ἵερωσος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης.
(Φ. Κάντογλου, 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 BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH YEAR

The first of September marks the beginning of the Church Year when we pray for the Crowning of the new year; that the Lord will forgive our transgressions in the past year, that He will guide us in the way of righteousness, that He will provide us with temperate seasons, that He will give peace to the world and enlarge the Church.

Apolytikion of the Indiction

O thou Creator of the whole universe, who didst appoint times, by thine own power, bless the crown of this year with thy goodness, O Lord. Preserve in safety all Orthodox Christians, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, and save us.

Liturgies in September:

- 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd at the RC Chapel
- 30th at the Quiet Room (10.00-15.00, available for lunch).

THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS

In Orthodox practice, the Exaltation of the Cross commemorates both the finding of the Cross in 326 and its recovery from the Persians in 628, and is considered to be one of the Great Feasts of the church year. One of the high points of the celebration is when the priest or bishop brings the Cross out of the sanctuary, where it has been reposing on the Holy Table (altar). The cross is lying on a tray that has been covered with an Aër (liturgical veil) and decorated with basil leaves and

flowers. He sets the cross on a table in the centre of the church as the choir sings of the festal Troparion of the Cross: "Save, O Lord, Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance, granting unto Orthodox Christians victory over enemies, and by the power of Thy Cross, do Thou preserve Thy commonwealth." Then, all the members of the congregation prostrate themselves on the ground as all sing, "Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify" three times (at the words "Thy holy Resurrection" all stand up again on their feet). Then all come forward to venerate the cross and receive the priest's blessing.

In cathedrals and monasteries, a special "Exaltation" is performed by the bishop or abbot, standing in the centre of the church. This consists of his taking the cross in his hands and raising it above his head. He makes an exclamation, to which the choir responds, chanting, Kyrie eleison 100 times. As they chant, he makes the sign of the cross with it three times, then slowly bows down to the ground, and stands up again raising the cross above his head as before. This process is repeated four more times to the four points of the compass.



ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN

This Holy Father of the 7th century, was born in the region of Qatar on the western shore of the Persian Gulf. Gifted with a keen intellect, he thirsted also for spiritual knowledge, and, when still quite young, entered a monastery with his brother. He gained considerable renown as a teacher and came to the attention of the Katholikon Giwargis (George), who ordained him bishop of Nineveh, the former capital of Assyria some distance to the north. For reasons not entirely clear, he requested to abdicate after only five months, and went south to the wilderness of Mount Matout, a refuge for anchorites. There he lived as a solitary for many years, in strict asceticism, eating only three loaves a week with some uncooked vegetables. His constant study of the divine writings strained his eyes, and eventually blindness and old age forced him to retire to the monastery of Shabar, where he died and was buried.

It was already towards the end of his life in the wilderness that, out of love for his neighbour, he felt compelled to share the experience he had gained. The result was a collection of incomparable texts on the spiritual life, from which we have gathered the following pearls.

What salt is for any food, humility is for every virtue. To acquire it, a man must always think of himself with contrition, self-belittlement and painful self-judgment. But if we acquire it, it will make us sons of God.

Let us love silence till the world is made to die in our hearts. Let us always remember death, and in this

thought draw near to God in our heart--and the pleasures of this world will have our scorn.



Walk before God in simplicity, and not in subtleties of the mind. Simplicity brings faith; but subtle and intricate speculations bring conceit; and conceit brings withdrawal from God.

As a man whose head is under water cannot inhale pure air, so a man whose thoughts are plunged into the cares of this world cannot absorb the sensations of that new world.

It is a spiritual gift from God for a man to perceive his sins.

Ease and idleness are the destruction of the soul and they can injure her more than the demons.

The purpose of the advent of the Saviour, when He gave us His life-giving commandments as purifying remedies in our passionate state, was to cleanse the soul from the damage done by the first transgression and bring it back to its original state. What medicines are

for a sick body, that the commandments are for the passionate soul.

A life of spiritual endeavour is the mother of sanctity; from it is born the first experience of perception of the mysteries of Christ-which is called the first stage of spiritual knowledge.

To bear a grudge and pray, means to sow seed on the sea and expect a harvest.

A small but persistent discipline is a great force; for a soft drop tailing persistently, hollows out hard rock.

The key to Divine gifts is given to the heart by love of neighbour, and, in proportion to the heart's freedom from the bonds of the flesh, the door of knowledge begins to open before it.

Dispassion does not mean that a man feels no passions, but that he does not accept any of them.

This life has been given to you for repentance; do not waste it in vain pursuits.

SAYINGS FROM MATTHEW THE POOR

"Whenever physical hunger turned cruel against me, I found my gratification in prayer. Whenever the biting cold of winter was unkind to me, I found my warmth in prayer. Whenever people were harsh to me (and their harshness was severe indeed) I found my comfort in prayer. In short, prayer became my food and my drink, my

outfit and my armour, whether by night or by day."

"It is no joy for the church to have many active members of varied services who lack the spiritual proficiency for renewing souls and regenerating them in a genuine spiritual rebirth to win them for the Kingdom of Heaven. The true joy of the Church lies in leaders who possess spiritual insight, who walk ahead of their flocks so that the flocks can follow a sure path. It is not possible to obtain spiritual insight by action or study, spiritual insight is attained by silence, retreat and long prayers in their various stages."

"I felt I was late to come to the knowledge of Christ; studying the Bible appeared such a daunting task. In desperation, I asked the Lord to give me either a long life to have enough time to study the Bible well, or enough wisdom to grasp its hidden meanings. In His everlasting generosity, God gave me both."

When asked why he never defended himself against the many accusations regarding some of his writings, Father Matta El-Meskeen replied, "Did you read the Exposition of the Gospel of John and benefit from it? ... My son I won't spend my time replying to anyone, but, my son, I will die and they will die and the Church will remain, as well as what we offered to her, and the next generations will judge us."

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ST. LIOBA

St. Lioba was an Anglo-Saxon nun who was born in Wessex to a noble

family. She was part of Boniface's missionary work and was invited by him, along with other Anglo-Saxon nuns, to come to Germany. Her acta derives largely from Rudolf of Fulda, who indicates that she arrived in Germany around 748. Boniface established a convent in the Franconian town Tauberbischofsheim, where she became the abbess being in charge of all of the nuns who worked for Boniface.



She was a learned woman, and in the following years she had a leading role in evangelising her area, and, during her life, she was credited with quelling a storm with her command. Bishops in Fulda consulted with her, and she was the only woman allowed to enter into men's monasteries in

Fulda to consult with the ecclesiastical leaders on issues of monastic rule.

In her later years, she retired to an estate near Mainz and departed on Sept. 28 in 782. Several miracles are attributed to her shrine. Her relics were translated twice and are now behind an altar in a church dedicated to Mary and the virgins of Christ in Petersburg in Fulda. Her feast day is on the 28th of September.

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

8th Sept: **The Nativity of the Theotokos**

14th Sept: **The exaltation of the Holy Cross**

21st Sept: **Apodosis of the Holy Cross**

26th Sept: **The Translation of St. John the Theologian**

28th Sept: **St. Lioba of Wimborne**

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



For further information please contact:

Father Jonathan Hemmings

67 Sibsey Street, Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ

Tel: +44 1524 840759, +44 1524 580600

Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk

www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk/lancaster.htm