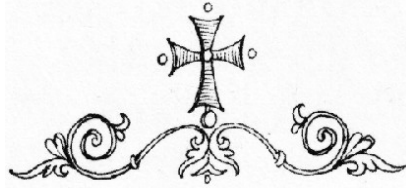


January 2008



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

Meeting at the Chaplaincy Centre of Lancaster University

Newsletter



*Ἦθηρος 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.*

*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)*

ABOUT BAPTISM

“God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” 1 Timothy 3:16.

It was a great joy at Holy Cross for us to welcome the neophyte Dimitra Maria Marguerite into the Lord’s family through Holy Baptism in December. The word Baptism, as St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite interprets it is a verbal noun from the verb to plunge or immerse. Baptism brings rebirth and the font, the spiritual womb. This new birth is connected with purification and illumination. St. Gregory the Theologian says, *“Where there is purification there is illumination, for without the former the latter is not given.”*

On January 6th we celebrate the Feast of Theophany. At this feast we are reminded that the Lord himself was baptised by St. John the Forerunner in the River Jordan. This important event in the Life of Christ and therefore in the Church is recorded in all four gospels. Here, we see the confession that the Son and Word of God is “one of the Holy Trinity” who became man to save the human race from sin, the devil and death. Christ had no sin but since humans are sinful we confess and are baptised by water and the Spirit.

In the patristic writings the Baptism of Christ is seen in terms of the earlier type connected with the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites. In God’s mercy we see salvation in operation in history, firstly in the act of saving His chosen people through His chosen servant Moses and

in the fullness of time the divine economy by which the whole of the human race is reshaped in Christ.

St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite says that in order to reshape a vessel a potter needs water for moulding the clay and fire to heat the moulded clay into a vessel. God, the divine potter wants to reshape us into holy vessels. The water is created and blessed the fire is the uncreated fire of the Holy Spirit. Thus through Holy Baptism which is the introductory Mystery we are admitted into the Church, just as Christ’s saving work began with His Baptism.

Christ gave the commandments to His disciples to make disciples of every nation: “baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matt.28:19-20.

We are to live with that divine promise given at our Baptism avoiding the death of sin so that we may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. However, St. Gregory of Nyssa reminds us that when the Grace of Baptism is clouded by sin then the baptism of repentance and tears must follow. “Even one tear of repentance is equivalent to the water of Baptism, and a painful groan brings back the grace which had departed for a while.”



A LETTER

We all face difficult times throughout our lives. Some of us have it easier than others and have to deal with less turbulences -and of smaller magnitude- than others. It is part of being human, part of our existence. Like with so many other things in human nature, we all deal with difficulties in unique ways. Some of us decide to 'tough it up' and pretend that we are all right, that -what is going on all around us- does not affect us. Others feel paralyzed and curl up in our corner and wait for the storm to end. But it does not, and we are forced to rethink our coping strategy.

Those of us that are lucky enough to have people that love us often retreat to the comfort and safety of their company. Life is that much easier when you have someone to love and be loved by. But what happens when you are in fact alone, or those around you are either unable or unwilling to help you? What happens if you do not want to trouble them with your problems? Who do you turn to?

Well, as Orthodox Christians we have the gift of prayer, this undefeated weapon against our enemies, this uniquely powerful tool in life. No matter how scared we are or vulnerable we feel, through our prayers we can reach our Heavenly Father and ask Him to grant us strength, courage and clear mind to withstand the severity of our situation. Moreover, through prayer we can become communicants of the unique love, care and grace that the Lord holds for His children. That is us, in case you are wondering.

Praying, some say, is a trait reserved for those who are not brave enough to take the situation in their

own hands. Praying, they continue, is for the old and the frail, the young and the scared. Could they be right? Is this all praying is? An easy way out? When we pray, do we simply ask God to do what we are too scared or too lazy to attempt?

Of course not. Praying is our prerogative, given to us by the Lord, as a gift of love and a sign of His dedication to us and our well being. In modern terms, praying is our communication channel to our Creator. The Lord wants us to fight to improve our life; He does not want us feckless and idle. He gave us prayers as a way for us to feel closer to Him, as a means of showing us that He cares.

I consider myself to be a well educated, strong minded individual that is not scared to take on my daily life and try and make the best out of any situation. I am not scared to fight to improve my life, I am lucky not to give up on the first hurdle (or the second, or the third...). Praying has always been an active part of my life, it always comforted me to know that my God is listening, that, in conjunction with my hard work, His divine grace blesses me and enlightens my thoughts, helps me concentrate and gives me strength to change my life for the better.

Glory to God



THOUGHTS

If I should build a house of happiness, the waiting room should be the biggest one in it.

C. S. Lewis says: "Make work your end during working hours; meet people you like during your leisure." The modern world is trying to make this sentence a little shorter: 'Make work your end.' Full stop.

There is a story about how a man loses his family, misses the funeral of his mother, because the company and his boss keep telling him that what he is doing there is more important and brings more benefit to people than, say, attending a funeral of his mother.

There is a story about how a banker stopped loving things natural such as bird's song (he considered it disturbed his concentration), and the falling leaves in autumn-he thought were just dirty and the smell in the air after the rain. He much preferred the deaf silence of his office, clean look of black columns of numbers on the crisp white paper, and a mixture of cigarette and perfume smells.

Extract from a conversation: 'You know I heard recently that we have some woman living on the outskirts of the city, who has a healing power.' - 'Oh, do not believe that. You know I think that all these things are simple PR. Take for example St. Illia of Murom. How do you think it is possible that a person whose whole his life was handicapped not being able to walk and then one day he stood up and went to fight. I am absolutely

convinced that all these miracles and other things of the sort are only PR.'

Conversation: 'Do you know any Church that I could go to.' '-Oh, yes not too far from here we have the loveliest little Church. I am absolutely sure that you are going to like it there. Recently they had refurbishing works done there, everything is very clean, it has double glazing windows and all other modern conveniences. You should go there this Sunday.' - 'Sounds lovely; and how would be the Priest there.' 'Oh, you know I would not remember that at once, but he looks as a nice chap.'

Anna Sedina

THE DIVINE THEOPHANY

We drown in the ocean of His good will - Who calmed the lake by the words "Be still!" - Ineffable love of the Lord you keep - Those who in His promise live and sleep.

**Christ baptised for our salvation
Bring good news to every nation**

The Word became man of a Virgin maid - Redemption for fallen Adam paid - Baptised by John as a man on earth - Blessed Jordan's waters for our rebirth

**Christ baptised for our salvation
Bring good news to every nation**

Hear the voice of the Father from above - See the Holy Spirit as a dove - Descend on Christ, blessed Trinity - On this the feast of Theophany

**Christ baptised for our salvation
Bring good news to every nation**

We are raised in the waters by Thy grace - Sealed and endowed with a shining face - To stand before the King of glory - Washed by this recreation story

**Christ baptised for our salvation
Bring good news to every nation**



**MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS
MONTH**

1st Jan: **Circumcision of Jesus Christ,
St. Basil the Great**

6th Jan: **Holy Theophany**

17th Jan: **St. Anthony the Great**

18th Jan: **St. Athanasios and Cyril,
Patriarchs of Alexandria**

20th Jan: **St. Euthymios the Great**

21st Jan: **St. Maximos the Confessor**

25th Jan: **St. Gregory the Theologian**

28th Jan: **St. Ephraim the Syrian**

30th Jan: **The Three Hierarchs**

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

