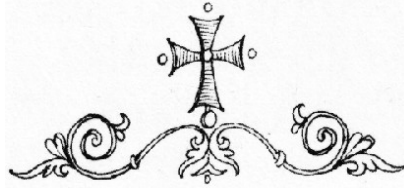


August 2008



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

Meeting at the Chaplaincy Centre of Lancaster University

Newsletter



*Ἰερός Χριστός, Παντοκράτορας.
(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 John.

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)*

DAILY ROUTINE AS SALVATION PATH

Honestly, very few people, if any, can boast their life has been a pleasant walk on the beach, since the daily routine they have on their shoulders is a heavy cross we have to bear. This everyday practice can always be an act of faith so that we should be saved in the end. Sure, there are more ways to that, and God was good so much that He gave us the freedom to choose our own way to salvation. Yet, many or most of us have got only that one.

My humble opinion holds that the act of faith named here as daily routine is what we cannot be deprived of. That is, it is always there at hand, while other ways to salvation may seem too hard, hazardous or almost inaccessible. But God is gracious and we are always able to keep to that path. So much more precious it is! Thus, what one must do is merely reveal his daily routine a worthy picture to demonstrate and account for his deeds when asked. Well, in practice it is not so easy, is it?

It does not really matter how many abilities or disabilities one has. Living through the day, we all face, perhaps, the same temptations though the evil one has disguised them so craftily. That's why at the end of the day, the evening confessions of believers may look pretty much the same. Again it makes the faithful the one body, who are pursuing so many a personal way to salvation but in reality following one and the same path.

In other words, the salvation path in this case depends very much on how the person manages his or her daily routine.

What else makes the daily routine a challenging path to salvation? There are lots of things behind the cares of the day, and, therefore, we pass them by unheeded. These may include such common judgements about colleagues, superiors and inferiors and just people we commute together with in the same bus. Indeed, a contemporary man believes his day unthinkable without indispensable judgements like this. But he, who nevertheless keeps his salvation in mind, will think twice before saying or doing anything with regard to his neighbour. Most likely, this is how the act of faith during monotonous and lulling days is done, being always on the alert and, thus, not forgetting about the eternal life.

Technically, the routine of the day covers exactly the period, during which we find some of our doings wrong and deserving to repent for during our confessions. No, I do not call upon you to exclude what is in human nature, that is, to live between, say, two Liturgies when we partake of the Holy Mysteries absolutely with nothing to be sorry about. But it is possibly another reminder that our actions of the daily routine make our salvation path, too, and each of the faithful is empowered to pave this way with the cobbles of actions, non-actions and repentance.

Thank you nobody has assumed that the appeals I am making here are no concern of mine. But I would rather like to make sure that there are like-minded friends to walk together through the daily stumbling points, as nothing like the family of the church helps one pave the salvation path.

Pavel Zlobin

PANAGIA TRICHEROUSA (THE MOTHER OF GOD OF THREE HANDS)

I thought it would be interesting to write about the miraculous icon of my local church, Panagia Tricherousa (the Mother of God of Three Hands). I shall begin with the history of the original icon of Panagia Tricherousa, which is now in the Monastery of Chilandari (at Mount Athos), and then proceed to the icon of my church in Limassol.

The History of the Holy icon of Panagia Tricherousa:

The Holy icon of the Mother of God was a family heirloom of St. John Damascenos who lived in Damascus in the 8th century. Syria, at that time, was ruled by Muslim Arabs. The then Caliph (ruler) of Damascus hired St. John Damascenos as his first counselor regarding the affairs of his subjects Christians of Syria.

At that time in Byzantium, the iconoclast crisis began, instigated by the then Byzantine Emperor Leo III the Isaurian. St. John Damascenos was a great fighter against the iconoclast crisis both in written and spoken language and was the most ardent supporter of keeping and venerating the Holy icons.

Leo the Isaurian accused St. John Damascenos of allegedly conspiring to overthrow the Caliph of Damascus. The Caliph believed Leo's slander and, without examining the accusations, he ordered the right hand of St. John be cut off and hanged in Damascus square.

Later that afternoon St. John asked his friends to go to the Caliph and ask the return of the chopped hand. The Caliph gave the permission and the hand was given to St. John.



Icon of the Theotokos Tricherousa, Chilandari monastery, Mt. Athos.

Afterwards, St. John took the severed hand and prayed on his knees all night in front of the icon of the Mother of God to cure him so that he would continue to write supporting the venerating of the Holy icons. He kept praying on the same position till he fell asleep from pain and exhaustion. The Theotokos wrought the miracle of re-attaching the dead hand of her servant and bringing it back to life. When St. John awoke, he found that his hand was completely healed. In honour of that healing, he made a silver votive offering in the shape of a hand and placed it on the lower left side of the icon of the Theotokos. From that time the icon has been known as "Tricherousa" ("Of Three Hands") because the silver

votive offering of St. John appeared like a third hand.

After his miraculous cure, St. John Damascenos left Syria and went to the Lavra of St. Savvas the Sanctified, in Palestine, always carrying the icon of the Mother of God of Three Hands with him.

In the year 1217, after 5 centuries, the icon of the Theotokos of Three Hands was gifted to St. Savvas Chilandarinos (who was a son of the king of Serbia and was later ordained Archbishop of Serbia) during a visit to the Holy Land. St. Savvas returned to Mount Athos (the Holy Mountain) and placed the icon of the Tricherousa in the Monastery of Chilandari. The icon remained in that Monastery until 1347 and was then taken to Studenitsa Monastery in Serbia.

During the 15th century the Monastery of Studenitsa, as also the whole of Serbia, was under Turkish attack. When the monks of the Monastery were informed that the Turks were approaching the Monastery, they fastened the icon of the Theotokos of Three Hands on the back of a mule and set it free to go wherever the Theotokos would lead it. Indeed, the mule, led by the Virgin Mary, crossed Serbia and Macedonia and went to Mount Athos, stopping at a small distance from the Monastery of Chilandari. The astonished monks ran and took the icon off the mule, which died immediately after. Then, with prayers, chants and incense, carried the icon in the Monastery.

At a later date, when there was quarrelling amongst the brotherhood of the Monastery of Chilandari about the election of an Abbot, the Tricherousa moved miraculously from the sanctuary, where it had been up till

then, to the Abbot's stall. A saintly hermit monk then told the brotherhood that from then on, in order to avoid quarrelling, no Abbot should be elected at Chilandari, since the Theotokos would occupy the position herself and govern the Monastery. And it is a fact that though the Chilandari brotherhood is a coenobium, it has no Abbot and is administered in accordance with the system of idiorrhythmic monasteries.

The miracle of Panagia Tricherousa in Limassol-Cyprus:

In addition to the miracle of St. John Damascenos, Panagia Tricherousa performed a lot other miracles. One of them took place in my local church, "Panagia Tricherousa".



The half-burned icon of the Theotokos Tricherousa, as it was saved from the 27th July 1985 fire.

On July 27th, 1985 a fire broke out in the church from a lit candle and resulted in the burning of seats and other objects. The icon-stand on which the icon of Panagia Tricherousa was placed was completely burned and the flames surrounded and started burning the icon itself. A Divine Power, though, did not let the fire to proceed and limited it to the lower part of the icon. The main icon, with the figure of the Theotokos holding the Son, remained totally untouched from the flames.

The half-burned icon, as it was saved, without any repair, is placed on a stand at the back of the church and is undeniable evidence of the miracle of the Most Holy Theotokos.

Eftychia Schini

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2. <http://www.mountathos.gr/active.aspx?mode=en%7B20379333-12ac-4e81-b5fc-723b387800df%7DView>

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I DID NOT WANT TO BE ORTHODOX SIMPLY BECAUSE I AM RUSSIAN

My conversion from Protestantism was similar to yours with the only difference that at first I had to convert to Christianity all together. It is quite a long story, but I will try to be brief. While I was still at school I often thought about life and questioned what the most important things in it were. However, I was also always very affected by the injustice that there was, is and always will be, in the world. I resolved to be bad in order to protect my family from sorts of injustice. It did not occur to the young mind that fighting evil with evil could and, most certainly would, create more evil. Well, it seems that God decided to prove me wrong and to save my soul. He sent me to United Kingdom. It was not ever planned that I should go to study here and all rather appeared out of the blue. However, I must say that I always have an icon in my room - it was not a Church icon, one of my relative painted it and gave it to us as a gift and at hard times I did pray. I also often felt a tendency toward Church and religion, which I believe all of us do, but some deny.

When I arrived to England, on my own and at the age of 17, it was quite a trial in many ways. Quite a long time past before I seriously came across some Christianity and it was at the end of my second year in Britain that I met a friend who was a Protestant Christian. Unintentionally, we started having challenging discussions; which eventually forced me into reading the Bible. This was the

beginning of the end of one life and the beginning of the other.

As I began to do so I was totally amazed by this book, because on one hand it was so real and yet wondrous. I visited my friend's Church, a protestant one, and started to search for historical and archaeological facts that would support stories and miracles described in the Bible. Gradually my confidence was beginning to grow. By that time I parted with my friend and moved to study at the University of Lancaster. There I was also welcomed by a community related to my friend's Church and began to attend regular Sunday services. This began another stage of my path towards Orthodoxy.

I started attending Sunday services at the local protestant community. At the same time, I continued to read Christian teachings and to study the history of Christianity. There were three major stages left on this path. First, I firmly resolved that I wanted to be a Christian all my life. I asked the leader of the community if I could be Baptised and told him that I was convinced of my decision. We had another meeting where we talked over my motives once more. I informed them that I was Baptised in the Orthodox Church at the age of 7 or 8 on my mother's decision; but in most of protestant traditions a person could be 're-Baptised' if it was their conscious decision in the grown up age. Another girl volunteered to be Baptised on the same day as me. The date was established (in about a month's time) and friends were invited for the occasion.

However, I could never foresee what was about to come... I continued to study and research into Christianity; I realize now that at some point I

was bound to come across Orthodox teaching. And so I did. I began to read Fr. Paisius of The Holy Mountain (+1994) on the internet and was quite swamped by the teaching. It corresponded so well with my feelings where, unconsciously, I was finding protestant church somehow not deep enough. They were lovely and very kind people; I still keep in touch with some of them. But somehow I did not find neither the services nor the teaching fulfilling.

I continued to read Fr. Paisius and soon moved on to other Orthodox teachers. I knew that I was familiar with Orthodoxy from my native land and in a way it created a stumbling block for me: I did not want to become Orthodox, leave the community -friends, by then- simply because something else was more familiar to me. In other words, I did not want to become Orthodox simply because I am Russian; I was only prepared to do so in the situation if I truly found it to be THE Church.

The final and decisive moment became for me when I was reading about the Holy Fire of Easter. From then I knew I could not stay in the protestant church, but how was I supposed to tell them about this considering the fact that my Baptism was due to be in 3 days?! I prayed...

Quite unexpectedly my Dad phoned for no particular reason and I thank God for this. By then my father was Orthodox already and hence I was able to relate my doubts to him.

I was quite distressed with the whole situation and probably would just remain paralysed in my anguish. It was through his support that I was able to come to a decision, as hard as it was. He told me that I should meet

with one of the leaders that very evening and tell them that I should not come for Baptism. One of my Dad's phrases really gave me the heart to do so. He said: 'Brides sometimes run from the Altar; this is what you have to do now.'

I can only guess now, in the community everyone was quite surprised at the news and perhaps somewhat perplexed. They still went on with the Baptism, only they Baptised one girl instead of two. I do not think they ever realised that I became Orthodox for other reasons than being Russian :)

I began to attend the Orthodox Church from that weekend (sometime close to Pentecost in 2003), which, thanks be to God, there was in Lancaster. As small as it was then, but it was there!

Anna Sedina

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

6th Aug: The Holy Transfiguration

15th Aug: The Dormition of the Theotokos

20th Aug: Prophet Samuel

24th Aug: St. Cosmas of Aitolia

27th Aug: Martyr Phanourius

29th Aug: Beheading of the Forerunner

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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