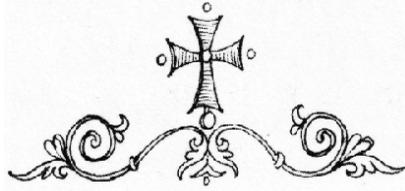


November 2008



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

Meeting at the Chaplaincy Centre of Lancaster University

Newsletter



*Ἐθρονος 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 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)*

ST. JOACHIM OF ITHACA

Joachim Patrikios was from Ithaca, the beautiful island of Odysseus in the Ionian Sea. He was born near Polyktoria in 1786 where his father, Angelos, was based as a Captain. Agnes, his mother, was a devout Orthodox Christian but she died when he was still a child. From her Joachim learnt the daily prayers and the importance of regular church attendance.

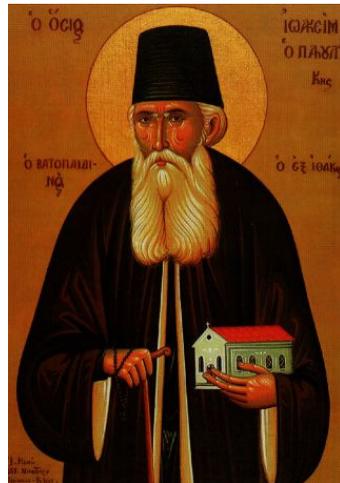
Angelos took another wife after Agnes died. She detested Joachim and was particularly irritated by the hours he spent in church every day and the vigils that he kept. She made his life a misery and finally persuaded Angelos that he be sent away to learn a trade. From that time on, Joachim made a living helping the sailors on the ships. He travelled across the Mediterranean but was not interested in anything other than the churches and shrines of the ports that he visited.

At the age of 17 he found himself on a ship bound for Mount Athos. On arrival there Joachim took the opportunity to visit and speak to the Abbot of Vatopaedi Monastery. The latter was impressed by the young sailor and, after long discussions, agreed that he could stay on as a novice. Giorgis, the Captain of the ship, did not like the idea of losing one of his crew but Joachim assured him that this was what he had always wanted. Captain Giorgis finally agreed to speak to Joachim's father about the matter and left.

The hard working and ascetic young novice had few difficulties in adapting to the monastic life and was soon made steward of Vatopaedi. In later years, Joachim was sent to preach around Greece and he came to be considered one of the most notable elders of Vatopaedi. His mission, particularly to the Pelopon-

nese, was comparable in scope to the work of St. Kosmas Aitolos (1714-1779) in Northern Greece and Albania. Known to Muslims and Christians alike as "Papoulakis" -the little father, Joachim refounded monasteries, helped organise schools and distributed Bibles.

During the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832) Joachim devoted himself to raising funds for the refugees and travelled around the liberated areas to preach and raise the morale of the beleaguered Greeks. Joachim had earlier founded a monastery at Tripotamos of Elia, with the outbreak of hostilities this became the supply centre for the free lands and as such was often the target of Turkish raids. Joachim repeatedly supervised the defense of the monastery but it was finally sacked by Ibrahim, the leader of the Egyptian troops (after 1825). All those who had resisted were massacred but Joachim and a famed eldress were taken prisoner.



Both Joachim and the nun were publicly invited by Ibrahim to become Muslims. The Egyptians believed that they had led the resistance and realised

monastery, the abbot of St. Barbara postponed the funeral in an attempt to disperse these. It is claimed that many miracles took place at this time and at the tomb of the Saint ever since.

St. Joachim of Ithaca is commemorated on March 2, the day of his repose. Long revered as a Saint, he was formally canonised in 1992. With St. Raphael of Therme (d. 1463, also from Ithaca) he is held to be the patron of the island. The Elder Joseph of Vatopaedi has written a "Life" of St. Joachim ("Papoulakis", Athos -1992).

Taken from:

<http://www.arimathea.co.uk/joachim.htm>

THE TREE OF LIFE

One of the first things I notice when the season changes is how trees change, as if they are the first ones in creation to bring us this message of change.

I recently heard in a homily that trees in biblical language are called "xylo": wood. We ate the fruit of the forbidden *xylo* and now we are in exile. Through His Divine Grace and Mercy we can return Home by eating the fruit of another "xylo": the one used to make His Cross. The fruit of Sacrifice, Mercy, Love and Forgiveness, the sweetest fruit of all, the one that will nourish and replenish us more than any other fruit that we'll have the joy to taste.

The Holy Fathers, seeing in the centre of paradise the tree that man couldn't eat from as it would take him from heavenly life to spiritual death, put in the centre of holy Lent the Veneration of the Cross, i.e. they suggested the consumption and communion of the *xylo*, the tree, that as an axis mundi connects

the underworld to the Heaven and bears spiritual fruit.

St. John Chrysostom said: "instead of the wood of the knowledge of good and evil, the wood of the cross; and instead of the death of Adam, the death of the Master. Do you see by what means he won, and the other was defeated? It was around the tree that the devil decisively fought Adam. It was around the cross that Christ also decisively fought the devil. The former wood expelled Adam to hades. This wood, the wood of the cross, however, recalled from hell those who had been expelled there. The former wood hid him who was defeated as a captive and naked. This wood, however, showed the victor naked and nailed on high."



Take some time to notice the beauty of trees around you these days. Their beautiful colours won't last for long. Their beauty will soon die, for a little while, only to be reborn in spring again, a promise that keeps us full of anticipation, full of hope, same as in our Faith.



HEARTS OF OAK

Theme: Despondency

John 15:5, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing".*

Luke 6:44, *"For every tree is known by its own fruit"*

"When despondency seizes us, let us not give in to it. Rather, fortified and protected by the light of faith, let us with great courage say to the spirit of evil: "What are you to us, you who are cut off from God, a fugitive for Heaven, and a slave of evil? You dare not do anything to us: Christ, the Son of God, has dominion over us and over all. Leave us, you thing of bane. We are made steadfast by the uprightness of His Cross. Serpent, we trample on your head."

St. Seraphim of Sarov

It was said of Abba John the Dwarf that one day he said to his elder brother, "I should like to be free of all care, like the angels who do not work, but ceaselessly offer worship to God". So he took leave of his brother and went away in the desert. After a week he came back to his brother. When he knocked on the door he heard his brother say, "Who are you?" before he opened it. He said, "I am John, your brother". But he replied, "John has become an angel and henceforth is no longer among men". Then John besought him, saying, "It is I". However, his brother did not let him in but left him there in distress until morning. Then, opening the door, he said to him, "You are a man and you must once again work in order to eat". Then John made a prostration before him, saying, "Forgive me".

I hear Lord, there was once a Tree
planted here in this place

A Tree so fine and so splendid, a Tree
full of beauty and grace.

Who planted this Tree of Life Lord here
in this garden?

It's said that its fruit was so sweet and
had the gift of peace and pardon

Who tended this Tree in its youth Lord
when it was growing into the light?

When the gales blew and the storms
raged in the middle of the night.

Who first saw this Tree bud and blossom
into flower

As the sap of its spirit gave joy to each
hour?

Who watered this Tree Lord when it was
parched and dry

When some men ate of its labour and
others wagged heads and passed by?

Who cut down its branches where the
birds of the air made a nest?

Didn't they taste of its fruit Lord, did not
they know it was best?

Who cut the Tree down to the ground
Lord whilst it was rich in finest full
bloom?

There must have been more than one axe
Lord to bring about such a doom.

But look Lord I see a young sapling
springing from out of its roots

And what wondrous a sight to behold
Lord, there are thousands and thousands
of shoots.

What is this Garden called Father, is it
Eden, what mystical name please impart?

“The Tree is my Son, my young gardener
and the garden my child is your heart.”

OUR MANY THANKS!

The Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross would like to express our heartfelt thanks for the trikeri that Alexandra Potraskof and Konstantinos Arfanis have donated to our Parish and the beautiful reliquary that Anastasios and Eupraxia Papadopoulou have given to our community for the relics of St. Joachim of Vatopaedi and Ithaca. We would also like to thank Li-ying Wu for her most generous donation to our Parish. We have also taken delivery of the icon of St. Joachim painted by our iconographer Dimitrios Hakim in London.

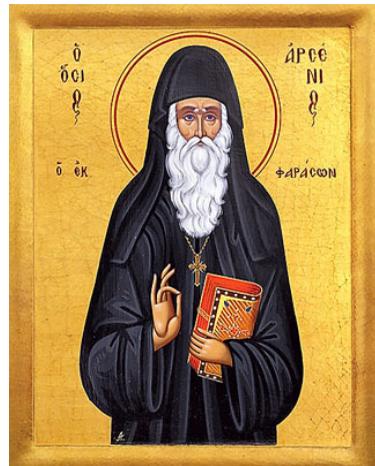
May God grant you a rich blessing
for your generosity of spirit.

In Christ
Father Jonathan

ST. ARSENIUS THE CAPPADOCIAN

Cappadocia (today in eastern Turkey) is virtually devoid of Christians now, but in 1840, when St. Arsenius was born there, there were still vital Orthodox communities. He became a monk and was sent to his native town, Farasa, to serve the

people. He became known as a mighty intercessor before God, praying for all who came to him, Muslims as well as Christians. His countless miracles of healing became known throughout Cappadocia; those who could not come to see him would sometimes send articles of clothing for him to pray over. He became known as Hadjiefendis, because he made pilgrimage to the Holy Land every ten years on foot. He never accepted any gifts in return for his prayers and healings, saying “Our faith is not for sale!”.



He concealed his holiness as much as he could beneath a rough and sharp-tempered exterior. If anyone expressed admiration for him, he would reply “So you think I'm a saint? I'm only a sinner worse than you. Don't you see that I even lose my temper? The miracles you see are done by Christ. I do no more than lift up my hands and pray to him.” But as the Scriptures say, the prayers of a righteous man avail much, and when St. Arsenius lifted up his hands, wonders often followed.

He lived in a small cell with an earthen floor, fasted often and was in the

habit of shutting himself in his cell for at least two whole days every week to devote himself entirely to prayer.

Fr. Arsenios predicted the expulsion of the Greeks from Asia Minor before it happened, and organised his flock for departure. When the expulsion order came in 1924, the aged Saint led his faithful on a 400-mile journey across Turkey on foot. He had foretold that he would only live forty days after reaching Greece, and this came to pass. His last words were "The soul, the soul, take care of it more than the flesh, which will return to earth and be eaten by worms!" Two days later, on November 10, 1924, he departed in peace at the age of eighty-three. Since 1970, many apparitions and miracles have occurred near his holy relics, which reside in the Monastery of Souroti near Thessalonica.

He was the godfather of fr. Paisios of Mt. Athos who later wrote a book about his life: "St. Arsenios the Cappadocian". When St. Arsenios baptised fr. Paisios, he foretold that the child would become a

monk. He was officially glorified a Saint by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1986.

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

8th Nov: *Synaxis of the Archangels*

9th Nov: *St. Nectarios the wonderworker*

10th Nov: *St. Arsenius of Cappadocia*

13th Nov: *St. John Chrysostom, Abp. of Constantinople*

14th Nov: *Gregory Palamas, Abp. of Thessalonica*

21st Nov: *Entry of the Theotokos*

25th Nov: *Great Martyr Katherine*

30th Nov: *Apostle Andrew, the 1st called*

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America:

www.calendar.goarch.org

"We have been called to become unknown heroes,
visible only to the unsleeping eye of God"

- Elder Ephraim -



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