

# 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)*

## TALKING AND LISTENING

One of the joys of a meal with friends is the conversation and dialogue. At the very heart of our faith is that sense of relating to one another. We read in Genesis how God spoke and creation came into being. Just how we acquire the ability to talk is still a mystery-it seems we have an innate ability for language. Yet we spend more and more time in front of a computer screen and mobile phone. Communication technology invades every moment of our waking day. Of course we could not work without technology - it adds a lot to our information but little to wisdom and discernment. It can become compulsive and does not make our load lighter. The constant need to check e-mails and send texts contributes to a certain restlessness of spirit. It devours our mental faculties and confuses those compartments of rest, recreation and work. It leaves us feeling that we must avoid silence at all cost and it lessens our desire to make the effort with writing a letter or speaking with someone face to face.

The challenge for us in society today is not to let this electronic technology enslave us.

We are indeed creatures that are made for communication - it is our very complex language that sets us apart in God's creation. But communication is not simply about speed; silence too is a vehicle that reflects the quality of the human condition through locating our spiritual centre and our equilibrium.

Hard wired into that communication of God's creation was a day set aside for rest the principle of the Sabbath-time and space to be rather than do. The silence of nature is powerful and moves to a gentler pace but in its movement peace and serenity speaks volumes. Perhaps

that's one reason why people are trying to escape the hectic pace of the urban sprawl and move to the country. We are creatures that both need company and space.

We need to cultivate the art of listening and not speaking as essential for prayer; the communication which God has at the heart of his creation.

A lot of things are superficial and unnecessary. In John's Gospel Our Lord and his disciples go to the house of two sisters and their brother Lazarus. One of the sisters Mary sits and listens to what Jesus says-the other sister annoyed that she has to do all the work says to Jesus "do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work." Jesus says to Martha "Martha, Martha you are troubled about many things but one thing is needful and Mary has chosen the greater part that shall not be taken away from her."

*JAH*

## UPDATE ON THE CHURCH AT GALGATE

Dear friends in Christ,

As many of you may be interested to have an update on our search for a Church building, we would like to inform you that it unfortunately seems as though negotiations about the Church at Galgate have fallen through over the commercial rent being demanded. As a result further communication with the trustees has been stalled.

Please keep our community in your prayers during our search for a Church building.



## LETTER FROM FR. DEACON CHRISTOPHER

I am in London at the time of writing having been to see Fr. Michael Harper today and taken your greetings as well as my personal thanks. In the course of this trip I have been the subject of a bit of verbal abuse in the street (some people react against clergy you know) I have also been smiled at a lot, waved at by take away owners through windows and had a young man offer his seat on the tube. I think I ought to wear my *rasson* more than I originally intended...

Last Sunday saw the first Liturgy served by Fr. Jonathan and the new parish deacon of course. As in my ordination report I cannot be objective, I was amazed how very fast the service went. I made two mistakes I know about, I will not tell you what they are, if you did not spot them- no panic. It is a blessing, and a very humbling experience to lead the prayers at the defining service of the Church, and I feel the most fortunate of men to be able to do it. The choir coped well with the new arrangement and I am grateful to them all for that.

My thanks too for Father's grace as we set off together on a new phase of ministry together - for it is new territory for him as well. We are very blessed having him as our priest, I know others who would be harder to work with, but open to the guiding of the Holy Spirit as he is, he is a joy to serve with, as I KNOW (viscerally) after last weekend. I thought he would be, now I know it.

Your acclamations of *Axios* were wonderful; if I seemed undemonstrative it was simply because I had to hold myself together. The friends who came over were impressed with the welcome by the way. They claim to have found the service fascinating as well.

I am not going to attempt to list everyone who cooked with such generosity, but well done.

Now on a slightly serious note, some of you have already opened up in a new way, I am suddenly clergy rather than just a friend and I thank you for that, but whilst of course I regard everything as confidential (unless told otherwise) I am still a friend. I am still part of the congregation and we are all just as much part of the body of Christ as each other.

The difference with me is that I have been selected, assessed and entrusted with certain functions and as Barnabas points out so delightfully it makes me the general dogsbody! Where that leads is very open, and I seem to have been stuck with deanery jobs as well, we are all part of the wider church and this is to be expected.

The other thing is how to address me. I am personally getting used to being addressed as "Father" mainly by other clergy so far. My spiritual father tells me that "Father Chris" is not to be encouraged; it ought to be "Father Christopher" since that is what I was ordained as.

It is all part of a subtle change in relationships, I need your support and friendship as much as ever, just now I have another official hat to wear as well as.

Your loving friend,  
*Fr Deacon Christopher*



## VISIT TO ESSEX

A short visit to a monastery always wake pilgrims up spiritually; time there passes with a different rate as the fathers always like to remind us; indeed you somehow find yourself realising that time is a factor rather irrelevant in Christian monastic life. You may have spent a weekend but it's like you've been there for at least a week; you gain immediate familiarity, the monastery becomes your home and family much sooner that you would expect and just before the time to go has come, it seems absolutely normal and obvious that it only takes two days to be, without really great effort, rejuvenated and "reconstructed" in terms of attitude and view towards life; it only takes two days to become anew.

It was the second time I visited the Monastery of St. John the Baptist at Essex and I thought it would be a good idea to share with you a few photos I took as well as a small account of the history of the Monastery which follows below.

*Thodoris Papadopoulos*



*Bell tower of St. Silouan's church*



*St. Silouan's church*



*The interior of St. Silouan's church*



*Cell where fr. Sophrony stayed during the last years before his repose in 1993.*



*The crypt where fr. Sophrony and other monks and nuns rest*



*Monastery cells*



*A path in the monastery*



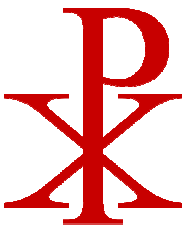
*The interior of the monastery's dining room*

The Patriarchal Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist is a monastic community directly under the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It is located in Tolleshunt Knights, Maldon, Essex, England. The community was founded in 1959 by Elder Sophrony (Sakharov), under the jurisdiction of His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh and ruling Russian bishop in England, with six monastics from a number of nations; soon after, in 1965, the Monastery moved under the direct jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

### Daily life

When founding the monastery, Elder Sophrony wanted to be sure that his community would not just have outward conformity, but have its focus on inner asceticism. The typikon of the monastery, consisting of repetition of the Jesus Prayer for approximately 4 hours per day and Divine Liturgy three or four times per week, found inspiration in Elder Sophrony's experience in the Athonite desert, and precedent in Athonite skete practise, St Nicodemus and St Paisius Velichkovsky.

Also, another distinctive part of this monastery is that it is a double monastery; that is, the community has both



monks and nuns. This is rare, but is not unheard of in Orthodox monasticism.

### History

The Monastery of St John the Baptist had its beginnings largely in the person of Elder Sophrony. After his departure from Mt Athos and his subsequent move to Paris, he was to live in a Russian old-age home, assisting the priest. Soon, two men would seek out Elder Sophrony, desiring the monastic life. They were allowed to live at the old-age home, using the repetition of the Jesus Prayer in lieu of liturgic books and eating the food that the old-age inhabitants didn't eat. There were also a few nuns living at the old-age home at this time.

In 1958, Elder Sophrony had six people living around him, seeking the monastic life. Realising that such a situation could not continue, he went to Tolleshunt Knights, Maldon, Essex, England to inspect a property; in the spring of 1959, the new Community of St. John the Baptist was formed at the same property, under Metropolitan Anthony's omophorion. The monastery, from its beginnings, had both monks and nuns, due to Elder Sophrony being unable to oversee two separate communities.

The Monastery of St. John the Baptist moved under the omophorion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1959, becoming Patriarchal; later, the monastery would also be titled 'Stavropegic'.

The monastery had been informed that the only way that it could bury people on its property was to build an underground crypt, which it proceeded to build, and to which Elder Sophrony said that he would not repose until the crypt was ready. Then, having been told of the expected completion date of 12 July, Elder Sophrony stated that he

“would be ready”. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, Elder Sophrony reposed; and on the 14<sup>th</sup> was his funeral and burial, attended by monastics from around the world. Mother Elizabeth, the eldest nun, reposed soon after on the 24<sup>th</sup>, according to Elder Sophrony's words that he would repose first, and she would repose soon after.

### Books published by the Monastery

- \* *A Monk of Mt Athos*, by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), 1973.
- \* *Wisdom from Mt Athos*, by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), 1975.
- \* *His Life is Mine*, by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), 1977.
- \* *We Shall See Him As He Is*, by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), 1985.
- \* *Service of Our Father among the Saints Nectarius: Bishop of Pentapolis*, by Gerasimos Mikragiannanitis
- \* *Conversations with Children: Communicating our Faith*, by Sister Magdalen, 2001.

Source:

[http://orthodoxwiki.org/Patriarchal\\_Stavropegic\\_Monastery\\_of\\_St.\\_John\\_the\\_Baptist\\_%28Maldon,\\_Essex%29](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Patriarchal_Stavropegic_Monastery_of_St._John_the_Baptist_%28Maldon,_Essex%29)



## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1<sup>st</sup> Jan.: St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of  
Caesarea in Cappadocia

6<sup>th</sup> Jan.: The Holy Theophany of our Lord  
and Saviour Jesus Christ

9<sup>th</sup> Jan.: St. Adrian and St. Brithwald,  
Archbishops of Canterbury (710 and 731  
A.D)

10<sup>th</sup> Jan.: St. Gregory, Archbishop of  
Nyssa

18<sup>th</sup> Jan.: St. Anthony the Great

18<sup>th</sup> Jan.: Sts Athanasius the Great and  
Cyril, Archbishops of Alexandria

20<sup>th</sup> Jan.: St. Euthymius the Great

21<sup>st</sup> Jan.: St. Maximus the Confessor

24<sup>th</sup> Jan.: St. Xenia, the Fool-for-Christ of  
St. Petersburg (c.1803)

25<sup>th</sup> Jan.: St. Gregory the Theologian,  
Archbishop of Constantinople

28<sup>th</sup> Jan.: St. Ephraim the Syrian

For the lives of Saints please visit the  
Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdi-  
ocese of America: [www.calendar.goarch.org](http://www.calendar.goarch.org)

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“We have been called to become unknown heroes,  
visible only to the unsleeping eye of God”  
- Elder Ephraim -



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Sketches are created at the Holy Monastery of "The Annunciation of the Theotokos" Chios, Greece, courtesy of fr. Theodosios Dendrinos and the Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece.

