

# 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)*

## HOW TO GROW A CHURCH: A YEAR IN PISCULEȘTI

In January 2009 I attended Divine Liturgy in the church of the Dormition in Pisculești. The tiny church, not much larger than the living room of my Ploiești bloc apartment, felt warm and the parishioners' welcome even warmer. It is furnished with traditional icons and familiar religious scenes sheltered by richly embroidered scarves - 'angel wings'. We stood as Father Bogdan began Matins. The church filled with familiar fragrance and *simantron* and bells urged worshippers to attend. God was with us.

After liturgy Father Bogdan directed me past the property's crumbling water tower and wooden bell framework to see the new church, a chalky outline on frosty soil. I admired Father's vision and imagination but wondered if this 'church' would ever be anything more than 'virtual'. But Father saw white walls, with arched windows, supporting a frescoed Byzantine dome. The architecture and construction would follow traditional practices; but now only a chalk line and a dream. But all things are possible.

The mild winter slid into Lent with seasonable weather. For me, as I am from the California Bay Area, it was reasonable weather with the kind of warmth that softens the earth preparing for growth - of a church? Perhaps. The *simantron* and the bells now had new accompaniment. Sharp insistent sounds of brick on brick were pounded out by a whisper thin old woman bent on chipping away resistant mortar from the water tower bricks which would, she was certain, rise again in church walls. Father said she is a saint. She is amazingly strong and indefatigable and indefatigably joyful despite really serious tribu-

lations. Yes, she is a saint and precious in the sight of the Lord. A low concrete wall now overlays the chalk line. How and when that happened I do not know. Christ is risen!

May is a time in Romania for flowers, pilgrimages to monasteries and to the Black Sea. School is almost over and the children are restless and itching for vacation along with their weary teachers. The low concrete wall of the incipient church has been filled. The slender iron rods that are resting on the ground will reinforce the brick walls and pillars. Now the concrete wall is cemented over making a floor and support for the rods. The chalk line of last winter has become three dimensional. Indeed Christ is risen!



A visitor from Spain contributes to the construction effort. A large collection of used bricks is offered for sale at a good

price. Brick layers are needed! In the middle ages, Christians contributed their labor to build a cathedral, a cathedral they would never live to see completed. But this church has an energy which commands response. Bricks are laid and the walls reach skyward. Volunteers work - although some would be masons come instead to party and hint at sacramental wine. Father deals with it. The water tower bricks find a home; rejected stones become a cornerstone.



Summer melts into Fall with promises of aid - but all of it conditional. The church waits. The brick walls, lovely as they are showing the various colors of their old brick origins, will be dressed in white stucco. Iron rods now form pillars and black metal window frames curve between them. The pillars are concrete grey. Some donations come and are

translated into mortar. Father appeals for more support. Faith moves mountains and builds churches.



Winter snow softens the stark outlines of the unfinished church. It has been a year since I first saw the chalk line that promised much but invited skepticism. Now funding promised conditionally needs no more proof, no more conditions. And a contagious enthusiasm has drawn a pledge of support from a construction company and others. Our Lady church will have her dome, her diadem, her white skin. This *is* the day the Lord has made!

*Catherine Mary Spiro*

## SPIRITUAL FASTING

*There is both a physical and a spiritual fast. In the physical fast the body abstains from food and drink. In the spiritual fast, the faster abstains from evil intentions, words and deeds. One who truly fasts abstains from anger, rage, malice, and vengeance. One who truly fasts abstains from idle and foul talk, empty rhetoric, slander, condemnation, flattery, lying and all manner of spiteful talk. In a word, a real faster is one who withdraws from all evil.*

St. Basil the Great

There is a Welsh proverb: "Gossip is the devil's mailbag." Fasting as St Basil and St Ephraim say means that we refrain from idle talk. Indeed, in the Lenten fast we should cultivate silence in order to grow in spirit. How difficult it is to make contact with the monks on Mount Athos during the forty day period before Pascha. The monks by their silence are teaching us an important lesson. They are fasting from vain and idle talk which flows from making judgements about others. The desert fathers imitated Christ and went into the desert to meet with God and in so doing they often encountered the devil before finding themselves. In silence we enter into the secret chamber of our heart with its passions, aspirations and desires. The heart needs to be illumined by the Light of the Holy Spirit who makes His communion with us. Our spirit needs to be anchored and focused on Christ - any division will bring disharmony and restlessness. That engagement with Christ in the chaos of our age involves us in making choices and discerning priorities and ultimately in realising to whom or what we owe our obedience.

*Fr. Jonathan*

## THE LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

Of all Lenten hymns and prayers, one short prayer can be termed the Lenten prayer. Tradition ascribes it to one of the great teachers of spiritual life - St. Ephraim the Syrian. Here is its text:

*O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to*

*Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother; for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen*

This prayer is read twice at the end of each Lenten service Monday through Friday (not on Saturdays and Sundays for, as we shall see later, the services of these days do not follow the Lenten pattern). At the first reading, a prostration follows each petition. Then we all bow twelve times saying: "O God, cleanse me a sinner". The entire prayer is repeated with one final prostration at the end.

Why does this short and simple prayer occupy such an important position in the entire Lenten worship? Because it enumerates in a unique way all the "negative" and "positive" elements of repentance and constitutes, so to speak, a "check list" for our individual Lenten effort. This effort is aimed first at our liberation from some fundamental spiritual diseases which shape our life and make it virtually impossible for us even to start turning ourselves to God.

The basic disease is *sloth*. It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us "down" rather than "up" - which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable. It is in fact a deeply rooted cynicism which to every spiritual challenge responds "what for?" and makes our life one tremendous spiritual waste. It is the root of all sin because it poisons the spiritual energy at its very source.

The result of sloth is *faint-heartedness*. It is the state of despondency which all spiritual Fathers considered the greatest danger for the soul. Despondency is the impossibility for man to see anything good or positive; it is the reduction of everything to negativism and pessimism.

It is truly a demonic power in us because the Devil is fundamentally a liar. He lies to man about God and about the world; he fills life with darkness and negation. Despondency is the suicide of the soul because when man is possessed by it he is absolutely unable to see the light and to desire it.

*Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann*

The full article can be found here:

[http://www.sv-luka.org/misionar/lentenpr\\_n2.htm](http://www.sv-luka.org/misionar/lentenpr_n2.htm)

## WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS

In the patristic writings, and especially in the teaching of St. Maximus, philosophy is referred to as the beginning of the spiritual life. However, he used the term 'practical philosophy' to mean cleansing the heart from passions, which really is the first stage of the soul's journey towards God.

Yet Christianity cannot be regarded as a religion, at least not as religion presents itself today. God is usually visualised as dwelling in heaven and directing human history from there: He is extremely exacting, seeking satisfaction from man, who has fallen to earth in his sickness and weakness. There is a wall of separation between God and man. This has to be surmounted by man, and religion is a very effective help. Various religious rites are employed for this purpose.

According to another view, man feels powerless in the universe and needs a mighty God to help him in his weakness. In this view God does not create man, but man creates God. Again, religion is conceived as man's relationship to the Absolute God, that is

to say, the "relationship of the 'I' to the Absolute Thou". Yet again, many regard religion as a means whereby the people are deluded into transferring their hopes to the future life. In this way strong powers put pressure on the people by means of religion.

But Christianity is something higher than these interpretations and theories; it cannot be contained within the usual conception and definition of religion given in the "natural" religions. God is not the Absolute Thou, but a living Person Who is in organic communion with man. Moreover Christianity does not simply transfer the problem to the future or await the delight of the kingdom of heaven after history and after the end of time. In Christianity the future is lived in the present and the kingdom of God begins in this life. According to the patristic interpretation, the kingdom of God is the grace of the Triune God, it is vision of the uncreated Light.

We Orthodox are not waiting for the end of history and the end of time, but through living in Christ we are running to meet the end of history and thus already living the life expected after the Second Coming. St. Symeon the New Theologian says that he who has seen the uncreated light and united with God is not awaiting the Second Coming of the Lord but living it. So the eternal embraces us at every moment of time. Therefore past, present and future are essentially lived in one unbroken unity. This is so-called condensed time.

Thus Orthodoxy cannot be characterised as the 'opium of the people', precisely because it does not postpone the problem. It offers life, transforms biological life, sanctifies and transforms societies. Where Orthodoxy is lived in the right way and in the Holy Spirit, it is a



communion of God and men, of heavenly and earthly, of the living and the dead. In this communion all the problems which present themselves in our life are truly resolved.

*fr. John Romanides*

Additional reading:

[http://www.pelagia.org/htm/bo2.en.orthodox\\_psychotherapy.01.htm](http://www.pelagia.org/htm/bo2.en.orthodox_psychotherapy.01.htm)

## RECIPE: TUNISIAN CARROT SALAD

Crunchy and light, the orange and carrot in this recipe complement each other perfectly.

### Ingredients:

3 carrots  
2 celery sticks  
1 large orange (or 2 medium)  
4 tbs olive oil (or tahini, for an oil-free dressing)  
2 tbs apple cider vinegar  
1 handful of toasted pine nuts  
Fresh coriander  
sea salt, to taste  
Pepper, to taste

### Method:

1. Peel and cut the carrots into sticks, then bring them to the boil in a pan of water and cook until *al dente*.
2. Cut the celery into fine sticks and the orange into bite-size pieces.
3. In a bowl, add in this order: vinegar, salt, pepper and mix them together. Now add the oil (if you're using tahini, whisk

everything together first, with the addition of a little water, to achieve the right consistency)

4. Mix the carrots, celery, pine nuts and freshly chopped coriander leaves together.

Variation: add cumin powder to the water when boiling the carrots, or toasted cumin seeds with the seasoning.

Adapted from [www.clearspring.co.uk](http://www.clearspring.co.uk)

## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

2<sup>nd</sup> Mar: **Our Holy Father Nicholas Planas**

6<sup>th</sup> Mar: **Finding of the Precious Cross by St. Helen**

12<sup>th</sup> Mar: **Symeon the New Theologian**

17<sup>th</sup> Mar: **St. Patrick the Enlightener of Ireland**

20<sup>th</sup> Mar: **St. Cuthbert the Wonderworker, Bishop of Lindisfarne**

25<sup>th</sup> Mar: **The Annunciation of the Theotokos**

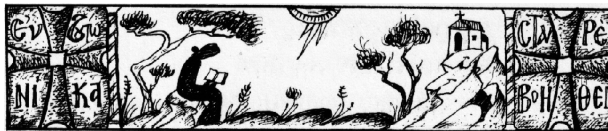
27<sup>th</sup> Mar: **Lazarus Saturday**

28<sup>th</sup> Mar: **Palm Sunday**

30<sup>th</sup> Mar: **Holy Tuesday, John Climacus, the author of the Divine Ladder of Ascent**

31<sup>st</sup> Mar: **Holy Wednesday, Innocent the Enlightener of Siberia and Alaska**

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



## TIMETABLE OF SERVICES DURING HOLY PASCHA\*

DATE	TIME	ROOM	PURPOSE
12/03 - Fri	18:30	RC	Akathist Service
13/03 - Sat	09:00	RC	Holy Liturgy
19/03 - Fri	18:30	RC	Akathist Service
20/03 - Sat	09:00	RC	Holy Liturgy
28/03 - Sun	09:00	QR	Holy Liturgy and meal
29/03 - G. Mon	18:30	RC	Bridegroom Matins
31/03 - G. Wed	18:30	RC	Holy Anointing
01/04 - G.Thurs	16:30	RC	Matins of the Twelve Gospels
02/04 - G. Fri	10:00	RC	Royal Hours
02/04 - G. Fri	12:00	RC	Preparation of Epitaphion & Confessions
02/04 - G. Fri	15:00	RC	Vespers and Deposition
02/04 - G. Fri	18:30	RC	Matins and Burial Procession
03/04 - G. Sat	09:00	RC	Vespers and Holy Liturgy of St. Basil
03/04 - G. Sat	23:00	RC	Midnight Office
04/04 - G. Sun	00:00	RC	Holy Liturgy
04/04 - G. Sun	02:00	QR & lounge	Paschal Meal
04/04 - G. Sun	15:00	RC	Paschal Vespers of Love

\* Services will be confirmed by fr. Jonathan via email.

---

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



*For further information please contact:*

Father Jonathan Hemmings  
67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ

Tel: +44 1524 840759, +44 1524 580600

Email: [frjah@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:frjah@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk](http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk)

