



# 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)*

## THE LITURGY BEFORE AND AFTER THE LITURGY

Liturgy (λεειτουργία-leitourgia) is a Greek composite word meaning originally a public duty, a service to the state undertaken by a citizen. Its elements are λήϊτος (from λαός, people) meaning public, and ἔργον-ergon (obsolete in the present stem, used in future ἔρξω-erxo,) to do. From this we have λητουργός or λειτουργός-leitourgos in the attic dialect, "a person who performs a duty beneficial to the public".

The meaning of the word liturgy may be extended to cover any general service of a public kind. In the Septuagint it is used for the public service of the temple (e.g., Exodus 38:27; 39:12). It comes to have a religious sense as the function of the priests, the ritual service of the temple (e.g., Joel 1:9, 2:17, etc.). In the New Testament this religious meaning becomes firmly established. In Luke 1:23, Zachariah goes home when "the days of his liturgy" are over.

However it would be quite wrong to see the Liturgy as simply the work of the priest or deacon - it is the work of the whole people of God including the holy laity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our preparation prayers before we go to the Liturgy are vital if we are to place ourselves before God in a humble frame of mind. We should be quiet and to talk as little as possible before the Holy Liturgy because this promotes not only an external peaceful atmosphere but an internal stillness. It is the rich ground in which Christ can sow the seed of the gospel.

In our community of Holy Cross this "public duty" includes the added necessity of having to prepare the Church itself -to set up the Holy Icons and stands, to move furniture and to provide

the essentials of our faith- this requires the public service of all people. A faithful few do this diligently, with love, commitment and care.



There are circumstances of *economia* which may mean that some of the faithful arrive late to the Liturgy but every effort should be made to arrive in good time and to be present and wait on God from the outset. After the Liturgy there is that other opportunity of public duty for the faithful to be of service to others with joy in the world as little icons of Christ. The Liturgy never ceases.

JAH

## SIN AND REPENTANCE

The word "sin" in Greek is (h)amartia, "a term from Greek tragedy that literally means 'missing the mark'. Originally applied to an archer who misses the target, a hamartia came to signify a tragic flaw, especially a misperception, a lack of some important insight, or some blindness that ironically results from one's own strengths and abilities. In Greek tragedy, the protagonist frequently possesses some sort of hamartia that causes catastrophic results after he fails to recognize some fact or truth that could have saved him if he recognized it earlier. The idea of hamartia is often ironic; it frequently implies the very trait that makes the individual noteworthy is

*what ultimately causes the protagonist's decline into disaster*" (Literary terms and definitions: [http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit\\_terms.html](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms.html)).

It surprises me how notions have been altered. Choosing sin, i.e. choosing to miss the mark, to not recognise our true nature, our divine potential and to live a life that doesn't do justice to our holy origins, is considered to be "progressive", "liberal", "open-minded". Choosing not to sin, choosing to live close to God, is perceived to be a conservative choice, a term associated with prudishness, narrow-mindedness, puritanism. However, there's nothing more conservative than conserving an ill state. There's nothing more narrow-minded than refusing to see your illness.

These are not the only terms that have deviated (deviate-device-devil, the original deviator and slanderer that we keep listening to and imitating) from their true meaning, or replaced by fake or negative ones: zest of faith has become fanatic religious zeal, spirituality has become social moralism, love in Christ has become humanism/charity, divine worship has become celebrity worship (our version of the golden calf), sharing our pain for our common condition and finding comfort in the holy mystery of a memorial liturgy has been replaced by the roadside shrine culture (because no matter how hard we're trying to turn a blind eye to what our soul knows, the soul cannot forget its origin and its Creator)

It seems that today it is not enough to say you're Christian for people to know what you mean and believe, as the word carries so many connotations. It is as if we need to define each term before we can use it and be understood. So many words have become a source of confusion and warped perception; two people may choose to do the same ap-

parent thing but for completely opposing reasons. For instance, two people take the decision to marry their respective loved ones. One chooses to get married to fulfill social expectations, or to combat fear of being alone, or for improving their socio-economic status, or to please family. The other chooses marriage in order for God to bless and sanctify their relationship, in order to partake of one of the Holy Mysteries. To an outsider, both acts are the same, labeled "marriage", but the two couldn't be more different.

One of the notions relating to language is that of performativity, "that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (Butler, 2000). The concept places emphasis on the manners in which identity is passed or brought to life through discourse. In others words, by speaking words that have deviated from their true meaning, we create or reinforce mental or moral deviation, and vice versa. Think in terms of Newspeak. We are using a language closely based on our familiar language but nevertheless altered to suit the regime of the society, whose aim is to make any Christian thinking "thought-crime", impossible, by removing any words or possible constructs which describe the ideas of orthodox faith (the other day, while watching a TV programme, I heard the show participant, who had just used the word "Christmas" in relation to a dish she was preparing, ask "oh, am I allowed to say 'Christmas'?"). Will we become like the Orwellian character, who says admiringly of the new dictionary: "It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words".

As a result of this ongoing word-warping, Christian life has been associated with hypocrisy, conventional behaviour, conformity, obedience to strict rules (when it is the exact opposite: a true

Christian is the freer person on earth, someone who freely and willingly makes choices with the love of God as the only criterion), inability to adapt to new social standards and developments. However, the point is that Truth is timeless, therefore any notion of adapting it and updating it, again, distorts the meaning of the word.

Sometimes I wonder about the shock and frustration the Babylonians must have experienced when they realised they couldn't understand each other anymore. I think today the frustration, miscommunication and alienation are greater, because they happen among people who seemingly speak the same language. However, frustration and confusion are the smaller of the two prices we pay. The great one is that by altering notions and changing word meanings, choosing sin, missing the mark, the mark that has been camouflaged through twisted definitions, becomes ever so easy. Remember the definition of hamartia: *a misperception, failure to recognize the truth.*

How do we find the mark then? How do we re-aim and find the target? I read once: *"sin is surprisingly conservative —it means refusing to grow"*. Growing means changing and changing brings to mind the stage that should follow sin: metanoia, i.e. a change of mind, a state where we realise the ethical and spiritual consequences of our actions. Sin might be in our "flawed", since the ancestral sin, nature, but metanoia is a choice that we make. Or not. Great athletes have this mental exercise where they visualise their goal before they act, so that they have a very clear understanding of what they want to achieve. You have to know what your target is, before you hit it, otherwise you remain aimless. Linguistic and conceptual confusion is there but it is

up to us to re-define our terms, recognise the truth, re-turn to our true self, re-set our mind, re-think our state, i.e. repent.

*A parishioner of Holy Cross, Lancaster*

## LEAVING

It is impossible to be a Christian and not leave something. The Apostles and Evangelists left their nets, their livelihood, their security, their homes and families. Monks and nuns still leave the world in order to gain heaven.

Part of the nature of our community and ministry is that it is transient. Every year we have to say our farewells to some who have been part of our Church of the Holy and Life Giving Cross. It is, as Shakespeare so aptly described parting, a sweet sorrow. Yet this is a microcosm of the pilgrim church on earth- we are all in a sense pilgrims with heaven as our real home. What is important is that during the journey we grow in faith, deepen our love towards one another and uphold one another in prayer.

Thank God, that we do not just leave and spend our lives wandering around in a search for truth. No, we put all our focus and all our energy into following Jesus who is The Way and we are bound to one another in His love.

The fishermen disciples in their boats didn't know what they were to do in the years to come or where they would go, but they knew Jesus and that was enough for them, for Jesus had so touched their lives that they wanted to do nothing else but follow him.

It is sufficient that we are Christ's servants of one another for a time; and as for distance this is only a measurement in

miles. We are never far from one another; we are as close as the nearest prayer in the Holy Spirit.

JAH

## WALK AT DERWENT WATER AND KESWICK

During mid May, fr. Jonathan, Evangelia Stergiou and Andreea Popescu had a lovely walk around Derwent Water and Keswick. English landscapes during spring are wonderful. They had the chance to enjoy the Lake District and the beauty of God's creation at this time of the year.

Friar's Crag is a viewpoint looking over Derwent water towards the Jaws of Borrowdale. According to Ruskin it has one of the three or four most beautiful views in Europe. Friar's Crag is so called because it is believed to be the embarkation point for monks making the pilgrimage to St. Herbert's Island.



The last two photos are taken from:  
<http://www.english-lakes.com/derwentwater.html>



## PARISH PHOTOS DURING PASCHA



*Royal Hours during Holy Friday.*



*The epitaph decorated by our parishioners.*



*Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the Cross.*



*The epitaph procession on Holy Friday.*



*Christ is Risen!*



*Easter Parish photo*

## THE KURSK ROOT ICON

*On Sunday June 27<sup>th</sup> the visit of the wonderworking Kursk Root Icon to St. Elizabeth the New Martyr at Wallasey will occur. The Icon recently returned to Russia and was greeted by thousands of people. Now it is coming to Wirral. It normally resides in New York. There are hundreds of miracles and cures attributed to this ancient Russian icon including curing St. Seraphim of Sarov when he was a child. Some of our parishioners will be going to attend the liturgy at St. Elizabeth's; we are hence including a small history of the icon below.*

The Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God of the Sign dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and is one of the most ancient icons of the Russian Church. The icon is commemorated on September 8 and on November 27.

During the Tatar invasion in the thirteenth century the city of Kursk was ravaged by the Horde of Batu and fell into desolation. After this, the residents of the city of Rylsk, often journeyed to the site of Kursk to hunt wild beasts.

On September 8, 1259, a hunter noticed the icon lying on a root face downwards to the ground. The hunter lifted it and saw that the image of the

icon was similar to the Novgorod "Znamenie" Icon of the Mother of God. Just as the hunter lifted up the holy icon from the earth, a strong spring of pure water surged up at that place where the icon rested.

With the help of friends the hunter rebuilt an old small chapel and placed the newly-found icon in it. When news of this spread, many came from Rylsk to this old chapel to venerate the icon and pray about their sorrows and needs. There the Mother of God healed all who came to her icon.

Soon after, the icon was transferred to Rylsk and put it in a new church in honor of the Nativity of the Theotokos. But the icon did not long remain there. It disappeared and returned to the place of its first appearance. The inhabitants of Rylsk repeatedly took it and carried it back to their city, but the icon incomprehensibly returned to its former place that is now on the grounds of the Kursk Root Hermitage. It was realized, that the Theotokos preferred the place of appearance of her icon.



This icon, and the help granted by the Mother of God, is linked with important events in Russian history: with the war of liberation of the Russian nation during the Polish-Lithuanian incursion in 1612, and the 1812 Fatherland war. Several copies of the icon were made, which were also glorified.

Source:

[http://orthodoxwiki.org/Kursk\\_Root\\_Icon](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Kursk_Root_Icon)

For more information click here:

[http://www.kurskroot.com/kursk\\_root\\_icon\\_history.html](http://www.kurskroot.com/kursk_root_icon_history.html)



## OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Andrei, Alla and Masha Ganshyn have moved to the United States! Andrei has been given a 3-year contract related to research on particle physics and RF superconductivity at the Cornell University, Ithaca. Our Parish will be missing them! They have been a strong and active presence in our community, giving a firm and generous commitment to our Parish and we wish them every blessing in this new chapter of their life.



## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

5<sup>th</sup> Jun: Hieromartyr Boniface of Crediton, Archbishop of Mainz

6<sup>th</sup> Jun: All Saints of Russia, Britain, Romania and Mt. Athos

9<sup>th</sup> Jun: St. Columba of Iona, enlightener of Scotland

11<sup>th</sup> June: Holy Apostles Bartholomew and Barnabas

19<sup>th</sup> Jun: Holy Apostle Jude

22<sup>nd</sup> Jun: St. Alban, Protomartyr of Britain

24<sup>th</sup> Jun: Nativity of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

29<sup>th</sup> Jun: Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul

30<sup>th</sup> Jun: Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Twelve Apostles

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)



## Liturgy/Hours in June

Sat. June 5 <sup>th</sup>	10.00 a.m.	Holy Liturgy in R.C. Chapel
Sat. June 12 <sup>th</sup>	10.00 a.m.	Holy Liturgy in R.C. Chapel (Archbishop John is giving a talk at St. Botolphs on Christianity in the Middle East at 2.00 p.m.)
Sat. June 19 <sup>th</sup>	10.00 a.m.	Hours and Typica lead by Panagiotis Georgopoulos followed by Bible Study (Fr. Jonathan and Fr. Dc. Christopher will be in London for the Archbishops Deanery Visit and Hierarchical liturgy on Sunday in the Cathedral).
Sun. June. 27 <sup>th</sup>	10.00 a.m.	Holy Liturgy in Q.R. followed by a shared meal <b>OR</b> Holy Liturgy at the Church of St. Elisabeth the New Martyr at Wallasey CH45 5DE to follow the visit of Kursk Root Icon.

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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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