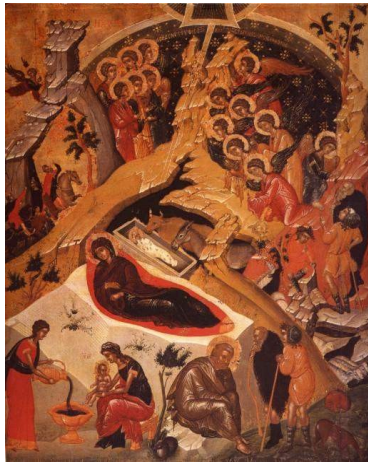


## The Orthodox Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross, Lancaster

### *The Stavronian*

*a monthly magazine & newsletter published by the 'Holy Cross Synodia Press'*



*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 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)*

## ENTRANCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

In the secular world and in this society there are no feast days but only **bank holidays** -how is it that the feasts of the Church have been eroded and replaced by the god of finance, commerce and mammon- yet we accept it. Not that banks take a holiday at all, greed and power do not sleep - they let others rest whilst they make more money. In this fastless-feastless world which we inhabit we witness those ironies and paradoxes of the obese poor and gaze with bewilderment on the political correctness that allows drinking all hours and that is surprised by the rise of binge drinking. The need to escape the monotony and treadmill of hopeless humanism continues to grow in all manner of artificial diversions whilst in the lives of the citizens of heaven the experience of being caught up in a spiritual realm of light and beauty is a reality which brings hope, joy and celebration.

It is only when God breaks in to the world that the world can sing again. In the Feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple we witness the beginnings of our salvation- the preparation of holy ground for the seed and Word of God. In a real sense this is what we do week by week when we take our children to the temple in order to bring them into contact with God so that they become accustomed to holiness, liturgy, the seasons and celebration of the feasts of the year. For you can be sure that the world will teach them much else besides. Jesus said *“suffer the little children to come unto me for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”* It may be that children as they grow into adolescence go away from the Church since God gives freedom to all, yet we invest eternal values and a purpose for life when we introduce children to that

glimpse of the higher realm which is heaven.

At the fortieth day after being born, the Church brings the child into the Temple and into the holy of holies just as Mary was brought into the Holy of Holies, she who was to bear the Christ later in her life. This is something beyond words- it is the gentle and decisive action of God in history. Where once only the High Priest could go once a year on the day of Atonement, Mary is led into that place and she herself is to become that most pure temple of the Saviour. Here begins that Transformation from **Place to Person**, from Institution to Inspiration, from the Organised legalism of the Old Testament to the Organic grace of the New, from heavy walls of a building to the living stones of the faithful.

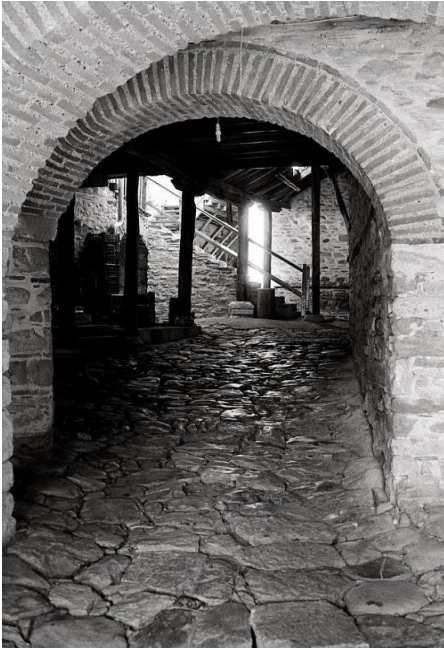


In the Gospels Christ said, *“destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,”* but as John the Evangelist added, *“He spoke of the temple of His Body”* (Jn 2: 19, 21).

Our Christian Faith is about personhood, about being remade into the image of Christ. That journey to fullness begins with those first tentative steps of the girl Mary into the Temple in Jerusalem.

As Father Alexander Schmemmann says: *“The meaning of all these events, words and recollections is simple: from*

now on man himself becomes the temple. No stone temple, no altar, but man -his soul, body and life- is the sacred and divine heart of the world, its 'holy of holies'. One temple, Mary -living and human- is led into a temple made of stone, and from within brings to completion its significance and meaning”.



We must not imagine for one moment that children possess a less heightened awareness of God -we see in our own congregation just how eager the youngest members of the Church are to reverence the Icons and to receive the Holy Mysteries. In their simplicity they have much to teach the older world weary- and we are responsible before God not to force them but to give them the opportunity to acquire this beauty.

Throughout the Holy Liturgy there is a transfiguration; for the very world is God's gift and is transformed through us who celebrate the feast - who keep holy

the day of the Lord, who treasure in our nascent hearts the word made flesh.

1 Corinthians 3: 16, *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

From that *kairos* moment when the Virgin Mary entered "the Holy of Holies," life itself became the Temple and the heart the place of celebration. Such cannot be eroded by fashion of man's invention or erased from human memory - it is the true treasury of grace and the **bank of holy-days**.

## THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

**How old are you?** Well in years this is fairly easily established - your date of birth gives the information. But if we consider that you are as an integrated personality we could say that you are different ages. We should think in terms of the **heart, mind, body and soul**.

The heart is seen as the source of our emotions and the passions - we talk about matters of the heart still today even though we know that in its essence it is a vital organ that pumps blood around the body. The heart beats faster when we exercise and when we are under pressure or anticipating something. God feels emotion when after Cain kills his brother Able He reflects: Gen 6:6, *The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*

Or when Solomon is asked by God what he would like he answers: 1 Kings 3:9, *So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?* Solomon the wise does not ask for wealth or power or even a super intelligent mind but a discerning heart - the ability to feel

compassion, mercy, empathy and emotional understanding in order to govern God's people. So how old are you emotionally? Perhaps the first broken heart in a relationship helps us grow to more mature years - or the death of a dear friend.

The **mind** is the source of the rational powers and the intellect. It is also the place of the will and the intention: 2 Samuel 7:3, *Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in **mind**, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you."*

Our Lord says in the gospels in answer to the question which are the greatest commandments: Luke 10:27, He answered: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself."*

In the parable of the Prodigal Son we read that when the son had spent all his money and realised that he was better off at home... He came to his right **mind**. Our judgements are often a matter of the will rather than the intellect. We live in an age of information but that does not equate to knowledge; knowledge needs to be sifted through the filter of experience until it becomes wisdom. How old are you intellectually? Some students progress at different stages- some are rather mediocre student at school but then perhaps grow and mature with the independence of learning and become a little intellectually older at University.

The **body** is also a strange chronometer. Children develop at different stages -some remain small and then suddenly mature and grow with great rapidity; some people age faster than others- we can put it down to our DNA and genetic inheritance but our age is not determined by our body. We may be restricted through disability but the greatest minds are sometimes held within aged or disabled bodies. The body is transient and changing and although we celebrate

birthdays there comes a time when we would rather forget our age in years.

That brings us to the soul or the **spirit**. How old is your spirit?

This is such a difficult question because spiritual development often has such a long gestation period. As a teacher I can teach pupils about religion, I can lead them to an understanding of spirituality and why it is important but what I can't do is make someone believe in God- since even God relinquishes this force in favour of free will and choice. However, I have seen remarkable spiritual conversions. One of my students at school was one of the most vociferous and sceptical opponents of God. He would always challenge everything with atheistic fervour and then went to read Theology at a leading University. We can never tell when the spirit matures - one of the greatest writers and theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century C.S. Lewis was for a long time a convinced atheist. He writes in *Surprised by Joy; You must picture me alone in that room at Magdalene, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.*

St Paul lists the fruits of the spirit in Galatians: 22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.*

*"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else" - C. S. Lewis.*



## ON THE UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN

When children grow up in an atmosphere of freedom and at the same time are surrounded by the good example of grown-ups, they are a joy to see. The secret is to be good and saintly and to inspire and radiate. The life of the children seems to be affected by the radiation of their parents. If the parents insist, 'Come on now, go and make confession, go and receive Communion', and so on, nothing is achieved. But what does your child see in you? How do you live and what do you radiate? Does Christ radiate in you? That is what is transmitted to your child. This is where the secret lies. And if this is done when the child is young, it will not be necessary for it to undergo 'great travail' when it grows up. Solomon the Wise uses a beautiful image about exactly this subject, underlining the importance of a good start and good foundations, Wisd. 6:14, "He who seeks Wisdom early shall have no great travail; for he shall find it sitting at his doors". The person who 'seeks it early' is the person who occupies himself with Wisdom from an early age. Wisdom is Christ.



When the parents are saintly and transmit this to the child and give the child an upbringing 'in the Lord', then the child, whatever the bad influences around it, will not be affected because by the door of its heart will be Wisdom - Christ Himself. The child will not undergo great travail to acquire Wisdom. It seems very difficult to become good, but in reality it

is very easy when from an early age you start with good experiences. As you grow up effort is not required; you have goodness within you and you experience it. You don't weary yourself; it is yours, a possession which you preserve, if you are careful, throughout your life.

*elder Porphyrios*

For the full article please click [here](#).

## CHRISTMAS EVE

Today Christ is born into the world, and we are just as bewildered as were the people in the centuries preceding the birth of Christ who had lost their faith in what they used to worship and did not know what else to seek. But we have nothing further to seek; only God, the living God who became man, who is one of us, near and dear to us, can resolve the consternation and despair both of the individual soul and of our present human situation. Therefore let us go to Him with confidence, let us go to Him knowing that He did not remain afar while we suffered and sorrowed on earth; He is among us.

*Metropolitan Anthony Bloom*

For the full article please click [here](#).

## OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Two of our Old Stavronians are back in the U.K. and working in London, Thomas Tziortziotis and Anna Sedina. We wish them well in their respective employments and hope that they will visit us in Lancaster.

Kostya Holubyev sends many regards in Christ from Germany where he is doing his postdoc in physics. He has started looking for a new position as his contract ends in February! Our best wishes in Christ for successful job hunting.

Also many regards from Costas Papas from Cyprus, who is going to be in the UK from the 8<sup>th</sup> until the 14<sup>th</sup> of December. He will visit our Parish for the Holy Liturgy on the 12<sup>th</sup> which would indeed be a blessing.

Fr. Jonathan has received news from Fiodar Sazanavets who sends his love to all at the community. We pray that his wish may be fulfilled in God's plan. His letter can be read below:

Dear Father,

I miss you and everyone else in the parish. I would very much like to attend a liturgy, especially just before the start of the advent, but unfortunately I still hold a weekend job and unable to do so at the moment. I am still living in Bradford. Haven't found a graduate job yet, but my current plan is to become an officer in the British army, for which I have an interview in December. I really felt like being guided to apply for this particular role and it feels like a right decision.

I am also planning to take advent fasting this year with all due strictness. Could I kindly ask you to pray for me? I will be remembering you and everyone else from the parish in my prayers. Hope that we will meet soon.

With love,  
*Fiodar*

## PARISH NEWS

Inna Higham's aunt Galina has passed away in Minsk on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November

2010 after a long battle with cancer. Galina visited England a few times, as well as the Parish in Lancaster, where she attended the liturgy with love, joy and grace. We will remember her in our prayers. May her memory be eternal! May the All Holy Spirit comfort her family and friends with love, strength and will to continue the good fight (Timothy II, 4;7).

## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

4<sup>th</sup> Dec: Great Martyr Barbara

6<sup>th</sup> Dec: St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

9<sup>th</sup> Dec: The conception of the Most-Holy Theotokos by the Righteous Anna

11<sup>th</sup> Dec: Hieromartyr Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov)

12<sup>th</sup> Dec: St. Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Tremithus

13<sup>th</sup> Dec: St. Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker of All America

20<sup>th</sup> Dec: The repose of St. John of Kronstadt

25<sup>th</sup> Dec: The Nativity according to the flesh of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

27<sup>th</sup> Dec: Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen

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)







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### Services during December

Sat. 4 <sup>th</sup>	9.00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C
Sun. 12 <sup>th</sup>	9.00 am	Holy Liturgy in Q.R. followed by Parish lunch
Sat. 18 <sup>th</sup>	9.00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Fri. 24 <sup>th</sup>	10.00pm	<b>Midnight</b> Holy Liturgy in R.C.

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“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)

