

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

***The Stavronian***

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



*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 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)***

## JOY AND HAPPINESS

*“Joy can be real only if people look upon their life as a service, and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness”. - Leo Tolstoy*

What would make you happy? Well some people would say £1,000,000 and some would say a smile and a kind word. The range of answers is inexhaustible and immeasurable. I think Tolstoy was right when he talked about Joy - Joy is a deeper state than the emotion happiness.

Life is a mixture of happy and sorrowful moments. In the bigger society that the Prime Minister David Cameron envisages he wants to know what makes us happy, what makes us content? The Prime Minister has recently asked the Office of National Statistics to devise new ways of measuring our general well-being - or GWB as it might become known.

The trouble is happiness is a hard thing to define, let alone measure. Ask anyone how happy they are and their answer will probably be subject to the vagaries and vicissitudes of their immediate circumstances: the cost of fuel and heating has increased, the unpaid bill - sad; their football team won on Saturday - happy; it's Monday, back to work - so they're sad. What a person feels does not fit neatly into a tick-box.

The human condition is not going to be improved by completing a form. Well being is not just to do with the physical state, it has to do with faith, will and spirit. Of course we would hope that all people would not be cold, hungry or homeless and we should put our faith in action to effect a change. Yet this would not change an underlying malaise.

Spiritual well being is underpinned by religious conviction and that is why we can have joy when we are of service to others. Actually the bigger society starts

with the smaller society - what we do at a local level, in our schools, churches and within the community.

Before Christmas we hosted about 80 senior citizens for a Christmas Party at school-they were served by some of the sixth form, had a traditional Christmas dinner, they were entertained and given gifts before having a lift home-it was not just a happy event for them it was for us too because it is still true that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

I think it is significant that Our Lord Jesus Christ outlines the deeper blessings and joys of true discipleship in The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-16)

Matthew 5:3-11 (New King James Version)

3 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4 *Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.*

5 *Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.*

6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst  
for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.*

7 *Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.*

8 *Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.*

9 *Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.*

10 *Blessed are those who are persecuted  
for righteousness' sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *“Blessed are you when they revile and  
persecute you, and say all kinds of evil  
against you falsely for My sake.*

The word Blessed here is a translation from the Greek *Makarios* which means happy. Such states of being as outlined here at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount would seem to be the very antithesis of happiness. Yet such happiness and exaltation and rewards

are possible when we walk with God; when we are anchored in the virtues of faith, hope and love rather than blown in every direction by the changing circumstances, fashions and blandishments of this world.

JAH



## BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the 1980's there was a very successful trilogy of science fiction comedy films produced by Steven Spielberg and starring Michael J. Fox having the title Back to the Future. The series deals with time travel and whether it is possible to

change or repair history whilst being able to return to the present.

At the beginning of the New Calendar Year we often take stock of the past year and make New Year resolutions. We ask ourselves "How can we change the past and be better?" The Gospel lesson for the beginning of the New Year is designated by the Church to answer that precise question. Matthew 4:12-17: "*From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near"*".

Repentance is like the double headed eagle of Byzantium -with one head facing the past with repentance- the other facing the future with faith. It is the mystery of Confession that is offered by the Church that enables us to grow in the Holy Spirit.

In order to move forward we have to think back and repent of those things in which we have offended God and our neighbour. A new year can mean a new life if we truly repent - it is not merely the negative "sorry" with all the regrets, remorse and reflections on wasted opportunity, "*if only I could live my life over again*"; it is the positive opportunity to live fully in the present. With God we are **victors** able to change the direction of our life and we can find the calmness, peace and strength to face all that the New Year will bring - without him we are **victims** drifting through the year subject to the vicissitudes of circumstance and change.

Progress as the world understands it is about economic development, but this is not how the Church understands progress. C.S. Lewis wrote: "*We all want progress. But progress means getting to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken the wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the*

man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. There is nothing progressive about being pigheaded and refusing to admit a mistake. And I think that if you look at the present state of the world, it is pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistakes. We are on the wrong road. And if that is so, we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on". Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis

As to whether history can be changed or re-written, this is no science-fiction for therein is the truth and the purpose of the Incarnation. God the Son entered into the arena of history, marred by ancestral sin, in order to restore our communion with the Father who bestows to us the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

Back to the future, with Christ!! Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near!!

*Fr. Jonathan*

## DECONSTRUCTING THE TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11 , The Tower of Babel

1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

"Let's scale the heights and take the lights of the firmament.

We'll call the tune and pocket the moon.

Come on! let's grab the Sun and that being done We will be called great;

Let's create another state by

Storming heaven's gate and gain control."

**From below...** the bright "hello"

Led to a sad "goodbye,"

The smile became a rueful sigh.

And people asking why?

And who are you?

What did you say?

That once friendly question where

is met by a beleaguered stare!

From nostalgic then to.... tell us when?

The change from common sense

to non-sense came because of man.

What was his plan?

To build a tower and to steal God's power!

Much later in an upper room,

Diners seated round a table

Take bread and wine,

And as they are able

De-construct the tower of Babel.

God initiates a new conversation

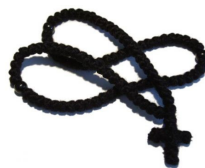
His language: love, for every nation.

And **from above** that which was lost

Is found, and invested with a Pentecost!

A soldier asked Abba Mios if God accepted repentance. After the old man had taught him many things, he said, "Tell me, my dear, if your cloak is torn, do you throw it away?" He replied, "No, I mend it and use it again". The old man said to him, "If you are so careful about your cloak, will not God be equally careful about his creature?"

27<sup>th</sup> November 2010, JAH



## THE ICON OF THEOPHANY EXPLAINED



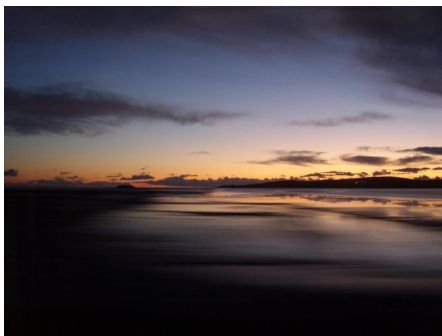
To find the icon of Theophany explained, please click on the next [link](#) which is from the website of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

## OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

We would like to thank Costas Papakonstantinou and Marianna Neophytou from Cyprus for their generous donations of ecclesiastical gifts to our Church. The charcoal, incense, candles, wicks and Commandaria wine are all essential for our worship and for which we are so grateful and will remember them both in our prayers. It seems that the Old Stavronians sense when we are running short of supplies and so God's grace prompts generous hearts to remember us.

## ULVERSTONE

Coming back from Ulverston last night, this is what I saw:



This is the bay from the train; it melts together in earth, sea and sky!

## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1<sup>st</sup> Jan: **St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesaria**

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

7<sup>th</sup> Jan: **Synaxis of John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner**

17<sup>th</sup> Jan: **St Anthony the Great**

18<sup>th</sup> Jan: **St Athanasius and Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria**

20<sup>th</sup> Jan: **Righteous Euthymios the Great**

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

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

30<sup>th</sup> Jan: **Synaxis of The Three Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian & John Chrysostom**

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 January\*

Sat. 1 <sup>st</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 8 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 15 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 30 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in Q.R. followed by Parish lunch

\*Help setting up the church is greatly appreciated and starts from 9.15 a.m.

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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)

