



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

The Stavronian

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*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)***

DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS?

Matthew 17:20 ; *So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this **mountain**, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."*

Mountains come in many forms and we all have our "Everests" to conquer, but faith requires a determined application of the will, a child like trust in the Father's authority and a heart full of prayer sown in humility. Even if we have faith the size of a mustard seed we can move mountains. The power and super abundant grace of God works with our effort through physical effort and spiritual prayer.

Fr. Michael Harper, of blessed memory, told the story of a little boy who answered a geography exam question wrongly. "Is Everest in Africa or Asia?" The boy answered "Africa?" On realising his mistake he was upset and so when he got home he prayed that God would fulfil His promise and the mountain would "Move from here to there." Well, that night the exam papers were burned in a fire and lost!

There is another story that illustrates the power of faith and prayer. A small congregation built a little chapel next to a rocky hill on a piece of ground willed to them by a former Church leader. When the new Church was due to open an inspector informed the Priest that the parking facilities were woefully inadequate for the size of the building. In order to provide more space for the car park they had to move the mountain! The Priest asked the congregation to pray that God would move the mountain and enough money to create a car park. For the whole

day the congregation began their work of prayer with faith.

The next day a knock came at the door. "Excuse me Reverend but I'm from a construction company and we are building a shopping precinct just over the hill. We need a lot of land fill! Would you be willing for us to buy some of your mountain behind the Church- we will pay you and pave the exposed area free of charge!"

In the words of St. Antony-the Father of all desert Fathers; *"The City of God has its foundations in every seat of human habitation... the Kingdom of God is within... the goodness that is in us asks only the human will."*

One day a man from the world went to visit a hermit on the top of the mountain. The hermit said, "How are things getting along in the world? Do people have enough faith so that they can say to this mountain, 'Rise up and be cast into the sea?'" Well, as the monk said those words the mountain on which he and his visitor were sitting began to rise up. "Oh mountain," said the monk, "I was not giving orders, I was just quoting the Bible. Sit down!"

What do we see from these three illustrations:

- A child like trust in the power of God.
- Faith in God's ability to act through prayer.
- Human will acting in synergy with the grace of God.

Do people have enough faith so that they can say to this mountain, 'Rise up and be cast into the sea?'

Fr. Jonathan



ON FASTING

Fasting and the abstinence is a body's way to contemplate and reflect on itself. It opens up a 'reflective emptiness' in us; emptiness which creates the space receptive to the labours of the Spirit in our lives.

Fasting could also be a way of surrendering and offering of our own will to the love of the Eternal Trinity, and acknowledgement of our basic helplessness in the world. Nothing that we are or we could ever become should be taken for granted, without deep and humble gratitude. Giving up on various material things should remind us on that. In other words, it is useful to abstain from almost everything at different times; I said almost because we should never abstain from loving God and also our neighbours.

To fast from love is counter productive, because the very goal of any fast should be the enlargement of our capacity to love the others as well as ourselves. By exposing our needs and weaknesses open to healing love of the Trinity through our fasting, new spiritual space is revealed to us by the way our own bodies.

This sacrificial *surrender* of our bodily desires is not an exercise in our will power, which often ends up in self harm, quite the opposite. This is a way to open up divine channels of trust and compassion in our lives. It is an invitation to the Spirit of Christ to inhabit newly claimed territories of our souls. If the sense of gratitude is the beginning of man's spiritual journey, genuine compassion is the constant and trustful companion on that path. Compassion is the compass and the map of our inner searching, without it we could be lost forever - forgetting why we got on the road in the first place.

So, in some way the fast is a meditation on the sensual externals of our lives. We start to meditate on them by avoiding

or diminishing their presence in us and their influence on us. While entering into this meditation through the Spirit of love and abandonment, we are paradoxically sanctifying the same things that we abstain from. Fasting becomes a way of respecting and honouring of that which offers itself for our consummation. Fast can also remind us of the divine simplicity of God, the One who doesn't need anything external to his Being. This utter simplicity of Perfect Love is also the invitation to his Creature to contemplate the meaning of the Life as a gift, as the Divine overflow of His love and the surplus of his Infinite Mercy.

Thinking about us as about beings created out of Love, and without any other purpose than that of being loved is a tremendous privilege that cannot be either deserved or earned. It offers us all the peace needed to sustain in the efforts to maintain the fast and at the same time to joyfully relish in it. We will never experience total stillness in this life, but our own fast may give us a flavour of the God's incomprehensible *serenity*, pointing to the way of being where nothing external is needed or even possible, and where everything is contained fully and finally.

Fasting is sacramental reminder of the childlike self-forgetfulness in the world obsessed with ever more sophisticated ways of consuming and generating. When offered in love and humility, fast can reveal possibilities and mysteries of the human heart and help to protect us from the obscurity and insularity of our sins.

For a human being fasting is ultimate creative act, which bring us closer to ourselves and to our Father, who is a source and goal of everything created. In His stillness we are free from the terror of human anxieties, fears and futile desires; open to great Wonder of being fully alive.

Aleksandar Miljkovic
London

THE AKHTYRKA ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

This icon is numbered among the most renowned icons of the Mother of God in Russia (*currently Ukraine*).

In the first half of 17th Century at the Dormition Church in Akhtyrka, Kharkov province (*Sumy district now*), served the priest Father Vassily Danilov. He lived a very righteous life, was fervent in his faith and untiring in labors. On the second of July in 1739, during the hay harvest, Fr. Vassily, wanting to try out a new scythe, took it to the garden, which was located near the church. He had barely started to swing the scythe when he saw lying before him in the tall grass an icon of the Mother of God which emitted a dazzling light. The scythe fell from the hands of the priest; he fell on his knees and began to recite all the prayers he knew by heart to the Mother of God. Then he reverently carried the icon to his home. Here it remained for three years, arousing an involuntary feeling of respect in the household of Fr.Vassily. It was noticed that if someone decided to pass the night in the room where the icon was kept, an incomprehensible fear came upon that person and he involuntary ran out of the room.

In spite of the profound feelings of the devotion that Father Vassily had for the icon which he had found, the icon was not looked after as it should have been.

Three years after finding the icon Fr. Vassily during sleep received a command from the Mother of God to clean off with his own hands the dust that had settled on the icon, using clean water, and then to embellish it.

He woke up filled with fear and that night fulfilled the command of the Queen of Heaven. That very night he had a second dream. He dreamt that he walked

down to the river in order to pour into it the water that remained after the cleansing of the icon. He was met by the Mother of God in the form of a beautiful maiden and she said, "Where are you taking the water? Take it home and save it, it will heal those suffering from malaria." Fr. Vassily had a daughter who was suffering from the disease . He woke up and gave her the water to drink and she immediately recovered. The ailing who drank of this water also received healing from malaria and other fevers which tormented them.



The Akhtyrka icon of the Mother of God

Once, while inspecting the icon, the priest noticed that the board was damaged and commissioned an iconographer to repair it. The iconographer took the icon with him to his home and after two days intended to start work. But at night he heard a voice from the icon: "Get up, for already the time has come to return the icon to the place from which you took it. You will not be able to repair it." The iconographer prayed before the icon the rest of the night, and early in the morning took it back to Fr. Vassily. He told him what had happened during the night.

In view of all these circumstances, Fr. Vassily was convinced of the unquestion-

able miraculous power of the icon and decided that it was more proper that the icon be placed in the church. Having been placed in the church, the icon in a short time became famous through new phenomena.

The iconographer John was commissioned to touch up the painted part of the icon. His son was ill with malaria at the time. Having heard about miraculous healings the father washed the icon with water and gave it to his son to drink. He recovered. After this healing there were several more.

An investigation was ordered to examine the authenticity of the miracles. Brigadier Lesovitsky along with his regimental sergeant-major gave a written testimony that many people coming from different parts of Russia received healing from this icon. Their report was requested in St. Petersburg, at the Holy Synod, and the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna ordered an investigation again of all the miracles which proved to be authentic. A third investigation was made. Having arrived in Akhtyrka, the commission summoned all those who had experienced the grace-filled power of the icon. Testimony was given under oath. Finally, the Holy Synod in the year 1751 resolved that the Akhtyrka icon be venerated as wonderworking.

The glorification of the icon was very pleasing to the Empress. In order to honor the icon she decided to build a stone church in Akhtyrka. The plan was drawn up by the famous architect, Count Rastrelli. The Empress herself pledged the amount of two thousand rubles, a very significant amount at the time. The pledge book is preserved to this day. The church, which was consecrated in 1768, was very majestic and spacious: 168 feet long, 98 feet wide, and 210 feet high.

The glorification of the icon among the higher circles of Russian society and the ardent zeal of the Empress herself contributed much to the following inci-

dent. In 1748, the ailing Baroness Vedel stopped in Akhtyrka on her way to St. Petersburg with her two daughters. Fearing for the welfare of her two daughters lest they be orphaned, the Baroness prayed fervently before the icon of the Mother of God and asked for healing. That night in a dream she saw the Most Blessed Lady, who said: "In vain do you ask for healing. Death awaits you. Hasten to distribute to the Church and the needy all that you possess, it will be beneficial for your soul." "The sick woman asked about the fate of her daughters. "Do not worry about your children, I will always be their protectress, but you prepare for death because you will die in three days. Give away to the Church and the poor so that they will pray for you." "The sick woman related her dream to her spiritual father and hastened to give away all that she owned. Indeed, within five days she was dead. News of all this reached the Empress and she took the orphans to the imperial court, raised them, and gave them in marriage to two nobles: one to Count Panin, and other to Count Chornishov. Both of the women to the end of their lives never forgot the blessings they received from the icon and made generous endowments to the church where the icon is enshrined. Every year on the Saturday before Pentecost, by the Imperial command of Nicolas I, the holy icon was carried in solemn procession to the Akhtyrka-Holy Trinity Monastery. During the week of All Saints the icon was returned in procession from the monastery to the Protection Cathedral.

In 1905 on the first of April the miraculous icon kept at the Protection Cathedral was stolen.

In 1917 the revolution took place. The Russian people, having gone mad, lost all sense of normal reasoning, especially during the first period of revolutionary fervor. Instigators of the revolution began cruel persecution against religion,

they began to destroy churches and desecrate icons.

Again there was a robbery and the Akhtyrka icon was taken. Many copies of the icon were made before this period. According to the account given by Archpriest N. Tyfanov, a copy was kept in Harbin. This icon was miraculously acquired by C.A. Stepanov and was kept for a short time in the Annunciation Cathedral. In 1950 the icon was taken by the son of C. A. Stepanov to Brazil and there it brought much comfort to believers by its miraculous help. The icon was later taken to San Francisco. In February 1975 it was presented to the vice president of the Committee of the Russian Orthodox Youth as a blessing. Metropolitan Philaret, the protector of this organization, turned the icon over to the keeping of the Council of Bishops. The icon was then sent to Europe and later to Australia where it was met by the faithful who were greatly uplifted. There is a custom on the 2nd July to bless water in honor of the first miraculous event which took place in 1739.

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Words in italics added by Albina Ganshy-na, Ithaca, USA, in order to put the places mentioned in the article in modern day context.



GLOSSARY OF ORTHODOX TERMS: -F-

Fantasy: (fantasia - φαντασία) A mental image formed in the mind by oneself or by the demons which when pondered upon becomes an instrument for sin.

Flesh: (sarx - σαρξ) Apart from the literal meaning the word flesh denotes the carnal passions or a carnal way of thinking.

Forty Day Liturgy: (sarantaleitourgou - σαρανταλείτουργου) When the Divine Liturgy is served consecutively for forty days.

BOOK ON THE LIFE OF ST. JOACHIM

The book of the Life of Blessed Joachim the Ithacan (121 pages) translated into English by the Holy Cross Synodia Press, Lancaster, U.K. is now available at cost of package plus donation to the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, Lancaster. For further information please contact Fr. Jonathan at frjah@yahoo.co.uk or have a look at next section "Parish News".

OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

We would like to sincerely express our thanks for the candles that were donated to our Community by many Old Stavronians and friends from Cyprus and Greece. Namely, [Maria Christofidou](#), [Fr. Adamos Papadopoulos](#), [Sophocles & Angeliki Ioulianou](#), [Ioanna Leontiou](#), [Costas Papakonstantinou](#) and [Marina, Ioanna Nassiopoulou](#) and [Anastasios Papadopoulos](#). We are so grateful for your generosity and philanthropy. Indeed, our request for candles

has met with such an overwhelming and generous response that it has truly humbled us. May God grant you and your families His blessing!

We would like to congratulate Cristina Sin in obtaining her Doctorate degree in Educational Research from Lancaster University. The title of her thesis is 'Loose Policy and Local Adaptation: A Comparative Study of Master Degrees in the Context of the Bologna Process'. We wish her the best in Christ for her future endeavours!

It was good to see Alexander and Genovefa again on the 4th February after the Liturgy battling their way through snow to visit us in Lancaster!

PARISH NEWS

The book of St. Joachim of Ithaca and Vatopaedi, that was translated by members of our Community, has been printed with the help of our Old Stavronians, Sophocles and Angeliki Ioulianou. There were overall 4 boxes shipped from Cyprus to Fr. Jonathan at Lancaster and Fr. Theodosios Dendrinis at Ithaca, Greece. The books were boxed by the publisher: 15Kg, 66 books per box. They arrived safely to Fr. Jonathan's door and so we are filled with joy. All 30 kilos of them! It took two people to carry them from the Royal Mail van.

The angels of God have been very thorough in their swift and safe transferal to us. All the hard work has born fruit and for this we give thanks to God. On Forgiveness Sunday we distributed some of them to the faithful of Holy Cross.

We would like to extend our grateful thanks to Panagiotis Ioulianou and to the Church and Printing company of the Transfiguration Centre in Nicosia, Cyprus, for their kind and generous work for the Lord. We hope that English speaking

audience throughout the world will learn more of our Orthodox faith through the prayers of our Saint Papoulakis!

With our love and prayers as we have entered into the stadium for Great Lent.



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Mar: St. David of Wales

2nd Mar: Our Holy fathers St Nicholas Planas & St Joachim of Ithaca and Vatopaedi

4th Mar: Sunday of Orthodoxy

17th Mar: St Patrick, the Enlightener of Ireland

20th Mar: St Cuthbert the Wonderworker, Bishop of Lindisfarne

25th Mar: The Annunciation of our Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

30th Mar: St John Climacus the righteous,
author of the Divine Ladder of Ascent
31st Mar: St. Innocent, Enlightener of
Siberia & Alaska

For the lives of Saints please visit the
Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdi-
ocese of America: www.calendar.goarch.org



Services during March*

Fri. 2nd	6.30pm	Akathist in R.C.
Sun. 4th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in Q.R.
Fri. 9th	6.30pm	Akathist in R.C.
Sun. 11th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in Q.R.
Fri. 16th	6.30pm	Akathist in R.C.
Sat. 17th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Fri. 23rd	6.30pm	Akathist in R.C.
Sun. 25th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Fri. 30th	6.30pm	Akathist in R.C.

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

“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”
- St. George Karslides -



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