

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

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)***

FOUNTAINS IN THE DESERT

3. PLEASING GOD OR PLEASING YOURSELF

Someone asked Abba Anthony, "What must one do in order to please God?" The old man replied, "Pay attention to what I tell you: whoever you may be, always have God before your eyes, whatever you do, do it according to the testimony of the holy Scriptures; in whatever place you live, do not easily leave it. Keep these three precepts and you will be saved."

Clarity and pragmatism are the hallmarks of the unstained gold of Desert wisdom. If we love God we will want to please him, because God loves us He wants the best for us. In three simple steps Abba Antony shows how we can do that which will be for our spiritual benefit.

The **first** step is to put ourselves into the presence of God. If we want to prepare food we go to the kitchen. If we want to play the piano we exercise at the keyboard following musical notation- we put theory into practice. If we want to prepare ourselves for heaven we have to place ourselves consciously before Christ. We meet Christ in the Liturgy at Church but we also meet Him in the poor and the hungry and in our prayers in the icon corner at home.

One woman who had a problem with prayer went to her spiritual father and expressed her frustration and lack of peace. The spiritual father asked her what her favourite recreation was. She answered "knitting". "Then go and knit in your icon corner." She obeyed her spiritual father and went home. As she started knitting before the holy icons she suddenly became aware of Christ's presence such that she stopped knitting and sat in silence with awe and tears before Christ, His Mother and the Saints. Prayer is essentially allowing the Holy Spirit to enter

into our heart. When we remove ourselves from Christ - we choose darkness rather than the Light. The Sun still shines but it is clouded by our wilfulness to give in to temptation. We also shut God out of our lives through busyness, distractions and anxiety. In the Gospel of St Luke 10:40-42 we read how Martha is "distracted by much serving" and our Lord points to anxiety as the source of her discontent: *"And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."*

Martha's service is commendable but work itself can become a goal, a pride and obsession which steals our time, alters our perspective and damages our health. We must not allow work to divert our eyes and ears from the true source of wealth. Like Mary what we need is to listen to Christ and to hear His words. As the good and loving Father of mankind, God wants His children to be with Him. The Lord of heaven and earth is accessible any time, any place and any where. There is no place where He is not:

Psalm 139:7-8

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, **You are there**

The **second** instruction of Abba Antony points us to the scripture as the handbook for Life and God's Love letter to the world. *"...whatever you do, do it according to the testimony of the holy Scriptures."* A testimony is a "statement of witness." The Prophets, Forefathers, Evangelists, Apostles, Confessors and Martyrs are the instruments and witnesses to the Truth of God's plan of salvation for the world. The Bible is the foremost jewel in the crown which adorns the Royal Priesthood of

believers. St Paul's advice to his spiritual son Timothy makes the application of this testimony of scripture clear: 2 Timothy 3:15-16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

If we follow our Creator's instructions then like any manual we may discern how things are put together, what things are wrong and how to put them right!

St Theophan the Recluse gives us a rule for reading scripture:

Before reading you should empty your soul of everything.

Arouse the desire to know about what is being read.

Turn prayerfully to God.

Follow what you are reading with attention and place everything in your open heart.

If something did not reach the heart, stay with it until it reaches.

You should of course read quite slowly.

Stop reading when the soul no longer wants to nourish itself with reading. That means it is full. If the soul finds one passage utterly stunning, stop there and read no more.

The best time for reading the Word of God is in the morning. Lives of saints after the mid-day meal, and Holy Fathers before going to sleep. Thus you can take up a little bit each day.

The Path to Salvation

The **third** practical instruction is to remain in one place. Moving from one location to another is not good for our equilibrium. We need a still centre and constantly moving location will not bring us peace. We are to face our problems not run away from them.

We have a proverb; "A rolling stone gathers no moss." In this metaphor a rolling stone refers to a wanderer, unable to settle to any job or lifestyle and is therefore characterised as feckless and unfruitful.

St Benedict the founder of Western Monasticism in the 6th C. established the rule of stability for monks: *Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset* (The Rule of St Benedict, Prologue 48).

Indeed St Benedict saw the necessity of stability for the harnessing of the will of the individual which abdicating responsibility and obedience serves its own whim or pleasure. *Fourth and finally, there are the monks called gyrovagues*, who spend their entire lives drifting from region to region, staying as guests for three or four days in different monasteries. Always on the move, they never settle down, and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites. In every way they are worse than the sarabaites.*⁺ The Rule of St Benedict, 1.10-11

Living in peace with our Creator therefore requires from us three things: feeling the sense of His presence; making sense of His word and possessing a sense of stability.

This is the **common sense** or wisdom of the Desert Fathers.

Fr. Jonathan

* Gyrovagues were wandering or itinerant monks without fixed residence or leadership.

+ Sarabaites acknowledged no monastic superior, obeyed no definite rule, and disposed individually of the product of their manual labour.

PRAYER FOR ONE'S SPIRITUAL CHILDREN AT CHRISTMAS TIME

O Almighty Master, Lord our God: when Thou wast born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judaea, creation was enlightened with trembling and the world rejoiced at Thy nativity. O Thou Who created man according to Thine image and Thy likeness, and gavest him baptism unto repentance, Who hast brought Thy servants unto these all-honourable days, unto abstinence from the passions and hope of resurrection, guiding them to the truth of Thy divinity: open their hearts and minds, that they may know Thee to be the Son of God Who takest away the sins of the whole world. O Master, Who lovest mankind, receive Thy servant _____, as Thou didst receive Peter when he was drowning in the sea, who also denied Thee thrice, yet wept bitterly, and was again received by Thee; and do Thou now accept also, O Master, the tears, sighs and repentance of Thy servants, as Thou didst the sighing of the publican, and the harlot who wept, and bathed Thy feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair. O Thou Who in Thy mercy didst take with Thyself to paradise the thief who cried out to Thee on the Cross: Remember me, O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom! to whom Thou didst say: Today shalt thou be with me in paradise!: we have heard a voice speaking, when the magi brought gifts to do Thee homage, while shepherds piped and angels chanted: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will

among men; though Herod was troubled that God had appeared in the flesh for the salvation of the race of man. Thee, O Master, Who lovest mankind, doth all creation now hymn, saying: Christ is born, give ye glory! Christ is on earth, be ye exalted! The assemblies of the angels now rejoice, and the choirs of the martyrs are filled with gladness, beholding Thy glorious and honoured nativity, that we may all praise Thee with heart and lips as is meet. And now, O good Lord, Who lovest mankind, receive these Thy servants _____, who repent of their sins, voluntary and involuntary; and in Thy wonted love for mankind accept the bending of their knees and the fasting of Thy servants _____, that, having kept Thy commandments and attained now unto Thy holy and honourable nativity, they may be pure and blameless partakers of Thine all-pure Body and Thy precious Blood. For unto Thee is due glory, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Trebnik, Vol. II, pp. 6b-8a

Translation by Reader Isacc Lambertson

GLOSSARY OF ORTHODOX TERMS: -O-

OLD MAN One not transformed by the Holy Spirit, still a slave to sin and death (Rom. 6:5 7; Eph. 4:20 24).

ORDINATION The sacramental act setting a man apart for the ministry of the Church by the laying on of hands of a bishop. The original meaning of ordination includes both election and imposing of hands (see article,

"Ordination," at Acts 14; Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; 1 Tim. 4:14).

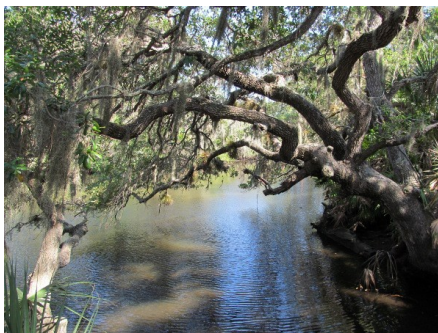
ORIGINAL SIN The fact that every person born comes into the world stained with the consequences of the sins of Adam and Eve and of their other ancestors. These consequences are chiefly: (1) mortality, (2) a tendency to sin, and (3) alienation from God and from other people. Original sin does not carry guilt, however, for a person is guilty only of his or her own sins, not of those of Adam. Therefore, the Orthodox Church does not believe that a baby who dies unbaptized is condemned to hell. See Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 5:12-16.

Original text taken from [here](#).

OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

It was lovely to see some of our Old Stavronians on a recent visit to London. We thank Thomas Tziortziotis for the candles for the Church. Only the day before, Panagiotis and Seraphim had commented on the need for some! It was a blessing and joy to share a meal with Anna Sedina, Aleksandar Miljkovic and Georgios Niotakis and with some other spiritual children after the Holy Liturgy at St Botolph's. Others could not make it on this occasion but the London branch of the Old Stavronians is very much alive and still a part of our extended family. God save and protect them!

Andrei, Alla and Masha Ganshin are sending their warm greetings from Ithaca, U.S.A. along with photos from their trip to Sarasota, Florida. We send back our best wishes in Christ as we approach the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

4th Dec: Great Martyr Barbara

6th Dec: St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

9th Dec: The conception of the Most-Holy Theotokos by the Righteous Anna

11th Dec: Hieromartyr Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov)

12th Dec: St. Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Tremithus

13th Dec: St. Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker of All America

20th Dec: The repose of St. John of Kronstadt

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

27th 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

Services during December*

Sat. 1 st	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 8 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 15 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 22 nd	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 30 th	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.

“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”

- St. George Karslides -



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