



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

The Stavronian

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*Ἰερόθεος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης.
(Φ. Κόντογλου, 1962).*

*The Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
belongs to the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland.
The Patriarchate of Antioch is third senior of the Orthodox Churches.
The Patriarch is His Beatitude John X.*

***The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch
(Acts 11:26)***

BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD

Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Galanthophilia is the love of the snow-drop. *Galanthus nivalis*, is the small white flower which braves the end of European winters, peeping above the frozen earth with a delightful trinity of virtues: beauty, fragrance and perseverance. A little resurrection! It is so easy to overlook the courage of this glorious revival. Almost premature in timing, it is the herald and forerunner for all other flora to awaken from their winter slumber. Its manifestation is both suddenly prolific and manifold in variety. It has an intrinsic value for teaching us about hope and humility. Its flower head is inclined to the soil from whence it came, but its spotless whiteness crowned with gold speaks of purity. It does not require a liturgical prompt *Bow your heads unto the Lord* as the priest says at the Holy Liturgy for, from one year to another, it is utterly reliant on its Creator.

Our Lord also used an occasion in His ministry pointing to a humble flower in order to teach the same truth. Matthew 6:28-30: ...*“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”*

Whenever I pass and observe such strong and gentle armies of snowdrops in the hedgerow I think of Dostoyevsky's words *Beauty will save the world!* Dostoyevsky was simply restating the Orthodox belief made by Simeon the New Theologian and others of comprehension by consciousness, through the “eye of the soul” the *nous*. Matt. 6:22-23.

This saying is not hyperbole and it is more than poetry, it is prophecy. God's world is beautiful, yet by the twisted justification of greed, we presume that dominion given us by the Creator gives us the right to exploit it rather than love and care for it as responsible stewards. We buy and sell it, we plunder its life veins for fuel, we desecrate it with abuse of power, scar it by war and bargain with it for political expediency.

As an apprentice learns his trade from his master watching his every move before being trusted to hands-on application, so we as pilgrims and trustees on earth need to greatly consider our Master's fashioning of His Creation. We need to sense its glorious nature, its foundation, direction and harmony of purpose for the art of well being that it so gently invites us to participate in and for the well being of art that it glorifies- this is far more than the modern mantra of “sustainability.”

Beauty softens the human heart, it certainly embellishes life and since beauty is goodness and truth it pre-exists and will outlive all rhetoric, philosophical aggrandizements, political artificers and artificial machinations. When humans place themselves at the centre of God's creation the result is chaos and destruction when they place God at the centre of His Universe - behold beauty and order!

This little flower offers an insight into our own being and becoming (*noesis*). Such reflection is important, but reflection alone will not save the world, what will save the world is faith in action and love for God, which we may learn from this little hardy annual. The humble snowdrop has much to teach us about instinctive faith, courageous hope and pure glory!

Fr Jonathan

ROOTS

Jeremiah 17:8: *For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its **roots** by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.*

I like trees - there is something both ethereal and yet so obviously grounded about them. They are born of the soil yet they reach to the skies. The sheer beauty and strength of their trunks, their branches stretching out like arms to embrace the sun, and their ability to defy gravity has a mystical quality. This is quite apart from the great benefits of their creational and sacrificial attributes, exchanging Carbon Dioxide for Oxygen, their offer of shade in summer, their invitation of homes for birds and fauna in the spring, and gift of fruits and fuel in autumn. Even in their winter rest there is a stark skeletal form that touches ones mortality and expectations. Perhaps the one thing that you don't see is the root system hiding in the earth but so necessary for stability and growth.

Likewise even though over 25% of the population of Britain is over 60 years of age and over half of 75 year olds live alone they are hidden; spread widely but living in solitude and suffering from that most crippling of all diseases - loneliness. Yet such statistics hide the real person and purpose. Our older people are the very foundation of society. God gives a special grace to those of faith who live alone. It is the gift of poverty of spirit that knows the need and presence of God.

Many regard the elderly as a burden rather than a blessing, out of touch rather than a source of wisdom. In our society and in the Church particularly we must challenge this prevailing mindset. The Church has always had a ministry to the

poor, the elderly and the widow; the spiritual roots of this ministry are to be found at the very heart of the apostolic order within the diaconal ministry and general pastoral care of the faithful and family.

Our genetic footprint is traced through our ancestors quite literally but the measure of a caring society is how it treats its young and elderly. The elderly are the link with our past but they are the help for the present feeding the young branches of our family, offering advice, encouraging their grandchildren, helping with babysitting. They remind us of our heritage as they revisit the past with familiar stories that we have heard so many times before; yet in so doing they strengthen our memory through the living "sap" of history, reinforcing our identity so that we too may grow tall, spread out our wings, offer shade and bear fruit in due season.

1 Timothy 5: 1-5 : *Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.*

Fr. Jonathan



A MEETING, A BEAUTIFUL MIRACLE

On January 3, 2014, God and the saints of the Celtic Orthodox Church reserved a beautiful gift for me! It was my meeting with Margarita from England who is a novice-nun, and Theodoros and Theophania, members of the Parish of the Holy and Life-giving Cross, Lancaster, England. It was my love for the Celtic and British Orthodox saints that led me, step by step, into an exciting acquaintance with Fr Jonathan and the Parish of the Holy and Life-giving Cross, while Fr Jonathan's gift to me, his book "Fountains in the Desert", apart from a soul-beneficial book, became a bridge for a great spiritual experience.

Seeking myself to drink from an oasis in the desert I saw once again the providence of God in kind care towards me. In order for Fr Jonathan to send me his aforementioned book, I had to mention my home address in Greece, hence happily we discovered that Thodoris came from the same region as me. We later discovered that we also have the same spiritual father, Fr. Augoustinos, who is a monk at the Monastery of Agios Nektarios, near Kozani, Greece. So on Thodoris' return to Greece for Christmas we had the opportunity to meet. Apart from Thodoris, I met his wife Theophania who comes from Taiwan. We went all together to the local monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos at Mikrokastro, where we met Margarita; four friends, three different nationalities, two Greek, a Taiwanese and an English, all united in one family under the Holy roof of the Orthodox faith and this was the most wonderful event for me. The universality of the Orthodox faith follows one of the core teachings of Christ when he prepared his disciples to teach the joyful message of the Resurrection at the four corners of the world. Christianity is indeed universal and as our meeting

was coming to an end I believe we all received a warm feeling of realisation of our common root, our common beginning and common destination in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is a meeting that I will always remember as a spiritual experience from which my soul was greatly benefited. I hope that we will meet again soon and, if it is God's will, also meet Fr Jonathan in person; we have been communicating only via internet, yet I feel we are so close...

*Christos Vasilopoulos
Kozani, Greece*



PHOTOS OF THEOPHANY AT SERVIA, GREECE

Every year people from my small town of Servia, Greece, go to see the blessing of the waters at the Polyphytos lake nearby. This year the temperature was about 8°C, relatively warm, but still cold for the Mediterranean standards. There were 8 brave swimmers (including a girl!) willing to retrieve the holy cross from the water. After a small service, Bishop Paulos of Servia and Kozani threw the cross in the lake and immediately all dived in to retrieve it! A young man without a wet suit was the one who reached the cross

first. The Bishop gave a wonderful sermon praising the attitude of the swimmers who managed to recover the cross despite the cold weather. The cross, he said, represents the deepest values of Christianity, such as love and sacrifice, expressed vividly by the determination of each swimmer in the day of Theophany. He then went on to remind the few politicians who attended the service about their mission. Just like the swimmers' sacrifice of comfort in order to achieve the highest goal, all political figures in the country should have similar attitude, ideals and will to sacrifice their own comfort in order to do good works for the benefit of the people and the country. In times of financial and moral crisis, it is important to set up spiritual goals and indeed sacrifice our comfort to achieve the highest in our Lord Jesus Christ.



*Theodoros & Theophania Papadopoulos
Bolton, UK*

OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Andrej, Alla and Masha Ganshyn contacted Fr. Jonathan and send their best wishes to the Parish from Ithaca, USA.

Dear Father Jonathan,

Thank you very much for news and video from Lancaster. We are always very happy to get it and read.

This year, here in Ithaca, we have quite interesting weather with huge temperature fluctuations. Couple weeks ago temperature dropped from +8C down to -20C within one day and back again to +10C in a day or two. Now it drops down again and we "enjoy" a real winter with temperature below -15C.

Today, on my way to work, I made several pictures of the frozen waterfall, it is



on the territory of Cornell University and walking minutes to our place. I attached some pictures of it. We have a lot of nice waterfalls in this area; it is interesting how different they look depending on summer or winter - they look so beautiful.

With love,
Andrei, Alla and Masha



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Feb: St Bridget of Kildare (†525)

2nd Feb: The Meeting of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Temple

3rd Feb: St Nicholas, Archbishop & Enlightener of Japan

9th Feb: Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: Triodion Begins Today

10th Feb: Hieromartyr Charalampus

18th Feb: St Colman (†675)

23rd Feb: St Polycarp the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna

24th Feb: First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist

26th Feb: St Photine, the Samaritan woman

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

Services during February*

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.
Sun. 23 rd	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.



For further information please contact:

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