



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

The Stavronian

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*Ἰσθρονος 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)***

CHRIST THE GATE: AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

John 10:7; *I am the gate of the sheepfold*

Gates or doors both protect and provide access. We push the button on the train and the door slides open, we put the key in the lock and gain entrance to our homes, we turn the handle and we find ourselves in another room. Christ is the Gate to the Sheepfold protecting His sheep from those who would do harm and allowing His flock ingress and egress for safe pasture. The sheep pen pictured by St John the Evangelist in the Gospel is a simple enclosure made of piled rocks with thorns on the top of the rock walls to protect the sheep from wild animals. The shepherd himself sleeps at the entrance to the sheepfold providing a living door.

At the Holy Liturgy, the recitation of the Symbol of Faith is heralded by the prgoisoiestly command: *"The doors the doors in wisdom let us attend..."* The doors refer to the doors of the Temple (the Church building) so that only those who have confessed the Creed at their Baptism and Chrismation may recite the saving truths of their faith. Each person confesses for him and for her self in the first person singular- I believe! It was the job of the doorkeeper, an ancient office in the Church, to seal and guard the doors whilst the sacred statements were recited. This was not to maintain a secret society but to proclaim belief and protect the faith amongst the believers against persecution.

We recall how the disciples after the crucifixion found themselves in the upper room and though the door was locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood amongst them. (John 20:19) No key was needed, for Christ is the Key to Life- the One who comes amongst us as the Good

Shepherd so that we may be safe under His care.

We do well to protect our Orthodox faith and in apostolic obedience to follow the Good Shepherd fulfilling that which was prophesied by King David: Psalms 121:8; *The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in: from this time forth and even for evermore.*

Fr Jonathan



A CRYING TIME

‘Oh, it’s crying time again...’ goes the old blues classic, sung with mournful joy by Ray Charles. Perhaps, this is an appropriate ‘pop’ equivalent to the Orthodox Lenten hymns – we are truly entering the season of deep reflection, self-examination, soul searching and (hopefully) tears of repentance. Many of us, who will glimpse self-image passingly in the mirror, will think yet once again: ‘another year gone... but my heart’s still made of stone’.

So, what is repentance to us? Much was written on the subject; not the least by the Desert Fathers and Mothers, whose whole ascetic endeavour was one passionate and prolonged sob of purifying, life-enhancing repentance. For our (post) modern sensibilities it’s maybe hard to understand how this level of self-renunciation could ever be possible for the average human being. We are perhaps secretly scared that this may be an unhealthy and obscured exaggeration with sinfulness and fallen-ness, and there is hardly a shortage of ‘contemporary psychology’ books to confirm these carefully concealed suspicions.

Orthodox theology comes in help to resolve this apparent contradiction by pointing out that the act of repentance is not purely and exclusively ‘self-goaled’ process. To clarify even more: we are indeed repenting in front of the God, and we are truly repenting for our constant failings and for the offenses we provoked – but our words and feelings are much more than a plea for a forgiveness of the past and a strength for the future. However noble and sincere this is, we are still in danger of being so ‘pre-occupied’ with our individual introspections, that we could reach (without having the ‘rare’ advantage of the guidance by experienced spiritual mother or father) the point of discouragement or even the despair. We

are there-fore ‘called’ to look deeper to find the meaning.

For the Church Fathers, repentance is primarily a creative act, which slowly renders us closer to our original, unfallen nature – our likeness to Christ. That is why repentance can take innumerable forms – it is not confined only to perceived ‘pious’ acts and activities. Although confession, fasting and alms-giving are important and very often necessary part of the ‘repertoire’ of repentance – we are given divine freedom to repent with the imagination. True to our inherited dignity as God-imaged, imaginative creatures, it could be seen as ungrateful not to fulfil the true vocation of this unique honour. We could almost be so bold to ask if any truly creative, imaginative act has an element of repentance present in it in some way. But, this is beyond the scope of this article...

This brings us back to that, other, less obvious, ‘purpose’ of repentance. The Gospel teaches us that Christ’s sacrificial, earthly life was at the same time supremely creative and meaningful. We know that this is so through His stories, parables and His miracles. With this in mind, is it not possible that both: the tax collector and the prodigal son are examples of repentance as a creative, sacrificial acts, enacted with a real effect on the whole of humanity. Through repentance, they are not only justified and sanctified -they also (if only slightly) managed to transfigure God’s creation- in the Holy Spirit, for the benefit of all those who will come after them.

In His unmeasurable Wisdom, Christ ‘delegates’ redeeming light to everyone who desires to follow Him. He encourages us, by giving us examples of creative, manifold ways of reaching Him and becoming like Him. In doing this, we are also secretly ‘repairing’ the consequence of The Fall, through our own modest sacrificial acts. Christ’s salvific offering on

the Cross was sufficient for all the times, but His mercy has left us with the everlasting provisional margin - to communicate, and to cascade His grace through the working of the Holy Spirit in ourselves, right until the end of the times.

In conclusion, 'a crying time', the tears of the repentance - are the precious gift from God, one that cannot be willed or rightly deserved by any human being. However, we should carry on seeking after them with all of our hearts, and in any creative manner available. Hopefully, we will manage quiet understanding, that nothing that can't be seen now is ever lost in the memory of God, Who is without beginning or the end, and Who communicates His eternal Wisdom in a merciful and timely way - for us to catch up and learn. Our discoveries in Spirit are only just beginning...

*Aleksandar Miljkovic
London*



PARISH NEWS

On Forgiveness Sunday, Fr. Jonathan met with some of his spiritual children and Old Stavronians at St. George's Cathedral in London. A couple of photos follow:



OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

We thank Nikolaos Georgopoulos for sending Paschal white candles for the Parish. We pray that we all may have a blessed struggle and fruitful reward as we journey towards the centre of our faith!

Panagiotis Georgopoulos has sent a few photos from the Church of St Demetrios in Zürich, Switzerland. Part of his email follows below:

Today on Sunday of Orthodoxy, we had "unity" vespers here in Zürich, with fathers and parishioners from all Orthodox traditions (Greek, Russian, Romanian, Serbian and German). Many parts of it were heard in different languages, as in the vespers of love at Easter.





MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Apr: St. Mary of Egypt

12th Apr: Lazarus Saturday

13th Apr: Palm Sunday

18th Apr: Holy Friday

19th Apr: Holy Saturday

20th Apr: **Great and Holy Pascha**

23rd Apr: St. George the Great Martyr & Triumphant

25th Apr: Mark the Apostle & Evangelist

30th Apr: James the Apostle & brother of St. John the Theologian

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

Services during April*

Fri. 4th	6:30 pm	Akathist in R.C.
Sat. 5th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 13th	10:00 am	Palm Sunday in Q.R.
Wed. 16th	6:30 pm	Holy Anointing in R.C.
Thurs. 17th	6:30 pm	The Twelve Gospels in R.C.
Fri. 18th	10:00 am	Royal Hours in R.C.
	12:00 pm	Preparation of Epitaphion & Confessions in R.C.
	1:00 pm	Vespers & Deposition in R.C.
	6:30 pm	Mattins & Burial Procession in R.C.
Sat. 19th	10:00 am	Liturgy of St. Basil in R.C.
	10:00 pm	Midnight Office in R.C.
	10:30 <u>pm</u>	<u>Liturgy of the Resurrection in R.C.</u>
	12:30 <u>am</u>	Paschal Meal in lounge
Sun. 20th	3:00 pm	Holy Pascha - Pascal Vespers of Love
Sat. 26th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy 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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