

**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'



*Ἐθρονος 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)*

NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

As the new academic year starts, we pray for those starting their University studies, that God will strengthen them in all wisdom and understanding, giving them His peace. We pray also that we too may be good stewards of Christ's kingdom in this far North West part of His Vineyard affording a spiritual home for those away from their families.



VIVE LA REVOLUTION

During times of universal deceit telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act

--- "1984", George Orwell

There is a "new speak" today by which some politicians, the media, analysts and celebrities speak words without saying anything. Avoiding answering questions directly, being biased, frivolous or "spinning" a story, which is the art of presenting information in such a way as to make a listener tend to agree with your position. There are favourite words like the preface "Clearly" - when the ensuing observation, statement or outcome is far from being clear. Others use rhetoric and language to sound impressive but the Apostle Paul warns against such vain adornment or qualification to the truth, to that which is perfect. Indeed, when writing to the Corinthians (Corinthians I, 1:17) he says that when confessing and preaching the Gospel we should speak: "*not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*"

The Gospel has a power in and of itself without us trying to add or detract from it. Indeed, the simplicity and force of the Gospel can be distorted, obscured and watered down by our use of logic, opinion, philosophy, explanation or humorous anecdote.

What words we use and how we say them says much about our character. The responses we choose, as well as the observations we make should be precise. Our Lord himself says: Matthew 5:37; *But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*

The Apostle Paul was an educated man himself having studied under Gamaliel. Here he is speaking to the Corinthians who were skilled in Rhetoric, Greek Philosophy and steeped in sophistication and their cultural traditions.

Corinthian Christians thought that if they could debate and engage in dialogue on the same level as their pagan contemporaries they would gain respectability. Remember, Christians were not living in a spiritual vacuum or void, there were many religious sects and mystery cults seeking converts and adherents. It was a multi faith society much as we live in today. The political correctness of the secular relativist society seeks to establish the lowest common denominator for all religions and rejects any claim to uniqueness.

The Apostle Paul was not willing to follow the fashion of the day and imitate popular speakers. He was not prepared to compromise on the central embarrassing and shocking truth of Christ's Crucifixion on the Cross in order to dilute the gospel and make the message more acceptable to his audience. St Paul says, Corinthians I, 1:18,22-24; "*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;*

but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

What we teach and preach will indeed make us different -out of step with the prevailing norms and fashions- it may even bring mockery and persecution but the word of God is power as read, proclaimed and preached!

St Paul makes Christ's death on the Cross central to his preaching. The vertical axis of Heaven to Earth and the horizontal axis from East to West is the symbol of the Universal message of Christianity - God sent His only son into the world that all who believe in Him will not perish but have life everlasting.

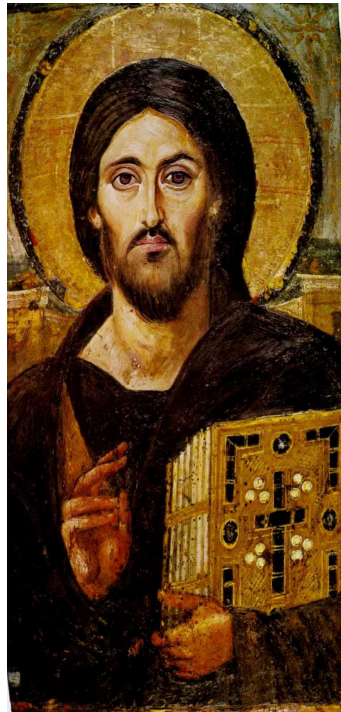
Christ's life, His Birth, His miracles and signs, His message, His Death and Resurrection, His teaching and His promises all these are revolutionary for they are decisive revelations about the Love of God. They turn the worldly understanding of power on its head and they make the weak-powerful and the wise-foolish. John 18:37-38; *Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world, **that I should bear witness to the truth.** Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “**What is truth?**”*

Was Pilate trying to be clever? Was he cynical and thought that Truth was relative? Did Pilate want to engage in philosophical debate about the nature of Truth? We will never know exactly but what we do know is that Pilate even though he pronounced Jesus innocent gave in to the popular opinion - even though he had power he was found to be weak because he did not have the strength of will to accept the Truth who stood before him.

Pilate could not hear the voice of Jesus over the baying demands of the crowd. It was politically astute for him to give in to their threats, their logic, their deceit. Corinthians 1.2:2 *“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*

So we too preach Christ crucified for this is the power and the wisdom of God!

Fr Jonathan



PARTICLES OF GLORY

Tired after a busy working day, I am having a quiet evening in my London flat. A large replica of the solemn 6th century icon of Christ in my living room habitually reminds me of a deeper meaning, peace and love that so often escapes me.

Like small particles of dust, the hustle and bustle of daily life gently floats in, settles and begins to cover up Christ's face; a regular effort is required to shake off the dust and restore the beloved image. *'I need to break away'*, rushes through my thoughts and Lancaster springs to mind as an answer!

I was lucky enough to spend my student days in close proximity of the jewel of English nature, the Lake District, and blessed to be part of the Holy Cross Orthodox Parish in Lancaster. Indeed, Lancaster is very special place for me, as it is there that I embraced Orthodoxy for the first time, despite being baptised at 7 years of age. It is made even more special by the parish that warmly welcomes numerous students who, like nomads, come and go year after year and where, at each Liturgy, the meaning of words: *'God sends his people'*, is re-lived into a more vivid understanding.

I arrived late on Friday, the eve before the Liturgy, because the Lancaster parish borrows the Catholic chapel at the university. On Saturdays, many faithful come early to help with setting up the improvised iconostasis, putting out candle stands, icons and choir books. As usual, the quiet in the Chapel, during this morning ritual, is joyful and enriching. The Liturgy is served by the efforts of nearly every one in the community and often in three or four languages. That morning Fr Jonathan preached on the Bible story about the rich young man who was seeking the Kingdom of Heaven and whom Christ called to leave everything and follow Him. As I listened, I began to reflect that for God there is no 'later' as we often like to use it; there is only 'always'. 'Always' that comes down to us from the eve of the Last Supper: *'Do this in remembrance of Me'* Luke 22:19 and as in Matthew 28:20 *'I am with you always'*. Likewise, He want us to follow Him always. What a high calling.. After the

Liturgy, we all share a meal and it is somehow very comforting that time and distance has little meaning in Orthodoxy.

My next stop is the Lake District and I jump into my car after exchanging farewells with my Orthodox family. The weather is glorious and I head for Windermere and Ambleside. There is something truly wonderful about the gentle hills, drystone walls and lush trees drooping into a clear fresh water. I sit at the end of one of the piers and watch reflections of the late afternoon sun sparkle on the water. *'What a glory, the glory of God: incomprehensible, unfathomable, and eternally the same. I cannot contain the beauty of His creation, how much less so can I contain or even begin to understand the beauty of the Creator...'* Feeling humbled by the picturesque surroundings, I have a small meal at the local restaurant and drive back, all the way thinking that this place should be filled with monasteries, so that an unceasing praise can be offered to God for the glory of His creation.

Anna Sedina
London

DISCONNECTIONS

The event of the Fall of the first humans can be seen from many varying perspectives, but the one that is probably most interesting for the 'post-modern, Western spiritual seeker' is the perspective of the primary and the secondary disconnection. I believe that the explosion of the New Age, neo-pagan philosophies and interests that we've witnessed in the last 50 or so years in the developed world, derives directly from the gross dis-balance between the acknowledgements of these respective losses.

The *Primary disconnection* has to do with Adam's and Eve's transgression and consequent loss of the intimate communion with their *Creator* through the eating of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. The *Secondary*, which inevitably follows the first, is the spiritual alienation of our first parents from their living environment.

For the Desert Fathers, Nature is the 'first Scripture' or the 'fifth Gospel'. By focusing exclusively on the effects of the primary loss, the Church, particularly in the west has gradually lost credibility in the hearts and minds of the people gathered under her protecting arm. It is vital to say, however, that the majestic riches of the Church's theological and liturgical Tradition, sanctify and transform our lives individually and as the whole society - even with the partial neglect, of the dramatic anthropological consequence of the secondary loss. The Church still faithfully fulfils her role as the 'precious guardian' of the revealed Truth, through Her living and on-going witness to the mystical Incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus from Nazareth.

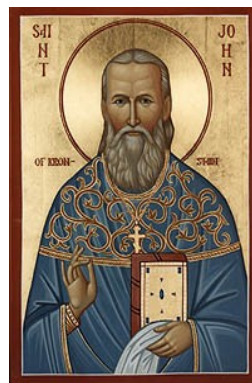
But the question that Christian theologians should ask themselves urgently is the one about the effects of the secondary loss (spiritual disconnection from the environment) on our understanding of ourselves and the world that we inhabit. One of the effects, certainly, is the current, global ecological crisis, but we don't need to stop there. History is full of often tragic examples of human deep and lasting thirst, to imagine and realise utopian communities and man-made environments, that are abundant in justice and care; work and leisure offered for everyone equally.

The New Age movement tapped into some of that 'deep thirst', and passionate interest from the part of the society that is acutely sensitive towards the 'chronic reluctance' of the traditional religious

structures to address. Unfortunately, in our psychologically dislocated, contemporary world we are distancing ourselves even further away from God as well as His Creation. In fact, we are now increasingly alienated from ourselves and also each other, to the extent that is quite unprecedented in human memory; we are now in new, terrifying, *terra incognita*. This brings us to the recognition, that focusing on the Creator exclusively contains inherited dangers; turning us bitter and judgemental. By the same token, single-minded focus on the Creation is a one-way ticket to idolatry.

So, Church has to re-focus her mission towards the recovery of the knowledge about 'that terrible mystery' of our secondary disconnection, and those who abandoned her because of this neglect -by turning towards the spiritual arbitrariness of New Age beliefs, must try to recover their primal focus: a story of a broken Communion with their Maker, and the experience of Repentance that is universal Lament for the loss of The Relationship that defines us as persons, made in divine Image and Likeness. Only then we can recover total understanding of Our Redeemer's divine legacy, and bear true fullness of His majestic harvest.

Alexandar Miljkovic
London



NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Oct. 17: *Garyfalos* – memory eternal!

Please send us the names of your departed loved ones and date of their departure in order for them to be remembered.



PARISH NEWS

Many thanks for the donation of £100 to our Parish from the donor who wishes to remain anonymous. A generous donation to the Parish was also made by Li-ying Wu, which we would like to acknowledge here. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!

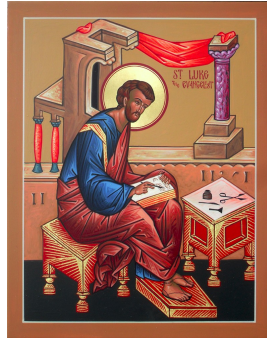
Our many thanks also go to Oleg Lychkovskiy for providing a censor stand for our Parish as well as Vera-Nina and Konstantinos Arfanis for mending Fr. Jonathan's vestments! May our Lord give the reward!



Parish lunch at the Chaplaincy Centre lounge, celebrating the feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross!

OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Tatiani Rapatzikou from Athens, Greece, is sending her greetings to the Parish. She is now back to Thessalonica getting ready for the new academic year at Aristotle University. We pray that God provide wisdom and patience in her work at the University!



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

7th Oct: **Sts Sergius & Bacchus the Great Martyrs of Syria**

10th Oct: **The 14 Holy Elders of Optina Monastery in Russia**

12th Oct: **St. Wilfrid, Bishop of York (†709)**

18th Oct: **Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke**

19th Oct: **St. John of Kronstadt**

26th Oct: **The Glorious Great Martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-bearer of Thessalonica**

28th Oct: **The Holy Protection of the Theotokos**

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



*Photograph sent by Fr Theodosios Dendrinis, Ithaca, Greece:
“Keep in your heart... peace, faith, love, hope!”*

Services during October*

Sat. 4 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 11 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 18 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 26 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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