



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

The Stavronian

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*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)*

THE GOSPEL OF CREATION

Make the most of beautiful moments. Beautiful moments predispose the soul to prayer, they make it refined, noble and poetic.

--Elder Porphyrios

God's creation has much to teach us and we need to attune ourselves to the mystery and beauty of His world. We must become sensitive to it, embrace the variety of God's gifts and listen to the good news of that which surrounds us.

A man from a rural village was visiting a friend who lived in the centre of London. He was walking down a busy street one summer's day when he stopped, paused and said "I hear a grasshopper." On a nearby window sill there was indeed a grasshopper. "How did you hear that with all the noise of the traffic?" his friend asked. "Because my ears are used to that sound", he replied. "Watch this!" He took a coin from his pocket and dropped it on to the pavement. Without a moments hesitation every passer by turned in the direction of the sound, looked to the pavement and started checking their own pockets and purses. "You see!" he said picking up his own coin "we all hear what we train ourselves to hear."

Elder Porphyrios also wrote: "For a person to become a Christian he must have a poetic soul. He must become a poet. Christ does not wish insensitive souls in His company. A Christian albeit only when he loves is a poet and lives amid poetry. Poetic hearts embrace love and sense it deeply" — On Creation "Wounded by Love", p. 218.

Fr. Jonathan



TWO GIFTS

Genesis 3:21; "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them".

In the writings of the great Romanian theologian Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, the whole of our world is seen as God's gift humanity. This unique gift is to be gratefully received, transformed and transfigured through the action of the Holy Spirit in us, and then humbly offered back to the Creator.

And indeed, great saints of the Church live their life exactly in such a way: treating everyone and everything as God's personal gift to them - offering praise and thanksgiving on behalf of us all. With all this in mind, it is still good to remember that in the Bible, God only ever gives two special gifts to a Man. These gifts are: 'Garments of Skin' and His only Son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

A lot was written on the topic of 'Christ as a Gift to Humanity', and talking and thinking about God's most precious and divine Mercy, as a part of our daily Worship. A fasting period before the Holy Nativity seems to me like the appropriate time to concentrate on this Mystery most intensely.

However, precious little was ever said about the meaning and the purpose of the first and the lesser gift that our Creator kindly and mercifully gave to us. For the Fathers, it was controversial and a difficult topic, and their views often differ from each other. Also, because of the negative connotation associated with the fall of Man – after which they were given to us; 'garments of skin' are seen more as a punishment - in a worst case, or as some kind of 'divine band aid'- in the best case scenario.

Still, 'garments of skin' are God's gift and they are to be treated as such. But, the question remains - what are they and what is their significance for the human race? My view is that 'garments of skin' are impossible to point out to or define, but they are intimately connected to human sensuality and a certain aesthetic sensitivity. In other words, they are something uniquely ours; one step from a mere animal-like survival - to become the 'creatures of civilisation'.

Fundamentalists of all kinds, often dismiss historical 'build up' to God's revelation, as something irrelevant; almost a footnote in His providential plan for us. I believe that such an approach is flawed and eventually destructive. Simply, humanity needed civilisation in order to have the Theotokos.

Old Testament stories about the Great Flood, the Tower of Babel and the destruction of Nineveh are stark but heartening reminders that God cares deeply about what kind of civilisation we are creating for our posterity. Great, pre-Christian philosophers and ascetics like Plato and Lao-Tse are the examples of the highly advanced 'refining' of the 'garments of skin'. Without having the benefit of God's revelation, they were nevertheless using His first gift in order to make themselves sensitive, open and receptive for the Divine Being they knew intuitively, through the image of God buried deeply in them.

When we receive the greater gift from someone we love, we do not return back or completely neglect their first, lesser present. We simply praise the Giver for His infinite wisdom and generosity and we keep our gifts together in the great gratitude. But, the real birth of 'Civilisation of Love' is impossible without Christ and the Christians. As we watch the great destruction of every civilised value on the media and all around us, we

become increasingly aware of the fragility of our world.

Waiting for the Kingdom of God is not in opposition or contradiction to re-creating and re-building the lost Garden, here on Earth! God gave us the 'tools', Christ showed us how, and Spirit is offering helping hand. Only time is slowly running out...

*Alexandar Miljkovic
London*



GOD IS GLORIFIED IN HIS CREATION

A certain philosopher questioned holy Anthony, "How can you be content, father, without the comfort of books?" he replied, "My book, O philosopher, is the nature of created things and whenever I wish to read the words of God, it is in my hand."

There was an anchorite who was gazing with the antelopes and who prayed to God, saying, "Lord, teach me something more." And a voice came to him, saying, "Go into this monastery and do whatever they tell you." He went there and remained in the monastery, but he did not know the work of the brothers. The young monks began to teach him how to work and they would say to him, "Do this, you idiot," and "Do that, you fool." When he had borne it, he

prayed to God, saying, "I do not know the work of men; send me back to the antelopes." And having been freed by God, he went back into the country to graze with the antelopes.

The Oak and Elm, the Spruce and Pine
Larch and Yew have nurtured time.
Garlanded by the meadow flower
That knows its own appointed hour.
Attended by the humble herb
Whose fragrances installed to kerb
Human passions' wilder powers.
No lecture, just a whispered hint
From wise sage, basil, thyme and mint.

God is glorified in His Creation

Where mountains reach the speckled dome
Swift and eagle find their home.
Yawning valleys greet the dawn
And gaping caves in darkness spawn
Spiders, flatworms, snails and bats.
The nettle, bee and tiny gnats
Bite and sting our mortal pride.
Thick forest hides reclusive deer
Retreat of wolf, wild boar and bear.

God is glorified in His Creation

No fabricated holy fable
Framed the mouse, the grouse and sable.
Great creatures swarming in the sea
Were caused like you and me, to be.
The Artist of the Universe
The Poet of the Book and verse
Shares His nature in the world
Let creatures all His name endorse
And Heaven and earth declare the source.

God is glorified in His Creation

Fr. Jonathan



NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Jan. 6: Archpriest Michael Harper

Jan. 16: Fr. Jacob Myers

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

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Jan: St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Ceasarea in Cappadocia

6th Jan: The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

9th Jan: St. Adrian and St. Brithwald, Archbishops of Canterbury (†710 and †731 A.D.)

17th Jan: St. Anthony the Great

18th Jan: St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria

20th Jan: Righteous Euthymius the Great

24th Jan: St. Xenia, the Fool-for-Christ of St. Petersburg (†1803)

25th Jan: St. Gregory the Theologian

28th Jan: St. Ephraim the Syrian

30th Jan: Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian & John Chrysostom

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

Home blessing at Theophany! Please contact Fr. Jonathan

Services during January

Sat. 3 rd	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 10 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 17 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 25 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in Q.R. followed by Parish lunch
Sat. 31 st	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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