



**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'*



**HEBREWS 13:8; JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME  
YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER.**

*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)*

## YESTERDAY, TODAY, FOREVER...

Hebrews 13:8; “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*”.

There are some people who see the Orthodox Church as not only very traditional but out of step with modern values and fashions - an anachronism. They are quite right. The Church, if it bears witness to anything, bears witness to the unchanging truths found in Holy Scripture and in the Living Tradition of the Holy Apostles which is life in the Holy Spirit who is the living memory of the Church. Romans 12:2; *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

“Oh you are living in the past...” I have heard it said about the Orthodox Church. Right again, because remembrance is essentially bringing to mind that which has been revealed by God and that is lived today. What are we to do? Are we meant to erase past reference points of our salvation? No, a functioning mind is built upon memories. We are to bring the holy past into the holy present. That is why so often we repeat in the Liturgical cycle... **Today!** At Christmas we say: **Today** is born of a Virgin He who holds the Creation in His hand... On Holy Friday: **Today** He is suspended upon a Tree He who suspended the earth upon the waters... At Pentecost: **Today** the celestials join with the terrestrials! As Orthodox Christians, we do not forget the past - we are not dead to it, we are alive to it and bring the past into the present moment, since Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Alpha and the Omega and therefore every moment in between. As St Paul says, we need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind - this re-newal

is achieved not by following the latest trends but by embracing eternal values.

We are not only living in the past - we are living in the **present** which is the intersection of time and eternity - the *kairos* of God. We are accused by some of being stubborn and unwilling to embrace the changing patterns of thought, practice and worship. Right again!

Indeed, to be stubborn means to possess dogged determination in the face of good reason. It was because of dogged determination that the Church councils prevailed against the assaults of early heresies. The Church would not have been established without the Apostle Paul's dogged determination to take the Gospel of Salvation into battle with the Goliath of the Roman world. Was it reasonable to take the message of freedom in Christ to a Roman system of Government based on slavery?

The Celtic saints were all stubborn... St David! St Herbert! St Columba! St Patrick!... They had to be stubborn and determined in order to plant the Church in these cold islands! They persevered in the face of tremendous obstacles and opposition; they did not live by “good reason” any more than St David the Dendrite of Thessalonica who at the same time period as the Celtic Saints lived in Northern Greece in a tree! Look at St Simeon Stylites - was it by good reason that he was moved to live on a platform on top of a pillar in the middle of the Syrian Desert? Was it reasonable for our venerable and God-bearing Father Daniel the Hermit of Voronej to shut himself in a cave for fourteen years?

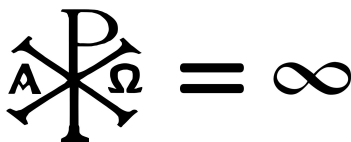
No, these saints lived out their lives by perfected faith rather than by good reason. The mystery of the God made flesh transcends all human intellectual vanity. This is why when we venerate the Mother of God in the great Akathist Hymn we sing: *Rejoice, breaker of the webs of the Athenians' logic* .

We are living in the **future**, for our Church spans Heaven and Earth because of Christ's Resurrection and His promises which have opened the gates of Paradise to those who believe and have brought life to the faithful. Sunday to Sunday, from Pascha to Pascha we live out our life as Resurrection people in that same hope and faith. In the Holy Liturgy, the priest passes through the Royal Doors between the Icon of the Incarnation and the Icon of Christ as Judge. Here then is a symbol of the Royal Priesthood of believers living and moving between these two ages - the past and the future. Indeed through νῆψις we should be in a constant state of watchfulness and preparedness for the end time. 1 Corinthians 15:2 and 58; *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain... Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Our faith like the double headed eagle of Byzantium looks to the East and the West, the sacred and the world, the past and the future. We remain persistent and steadfast and yes stubborn; moving in *kairos*, immovable in *chronos*, anchoring ourselves to the Apostolic Gospel tradition amidst the storms and tides of fashion.

Our faith like Christ is unchanging... It is as He is - the same, yesterday, today, forever... Indeed, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Fr Jonathan



## A CRUCIAL AND MIRACULOUS TRAVEL

About 10 years have passed since I lived in Lancaster. Here is a short account of some events which many may have experienced in some way once having left their home and looking for another true one in a faraway land. I'd like to share some of the developments of how this happened for me then, in that Lancaster house of the Patriarchate of Antioch, and what it has meant.

I wrote a similar article to publish in my home parish newsletter in Russia and named it as "Orthodoxy in a non-Orthodox town".

### 1. Alien

You may think me arrogant, but I didn't want to accept myself as alien. But alien environment was around - that was the point.

Yet, I liked the country. The feeling was not born in the arriving aircraft looking down out of the port-hole when first travelling to Manchester, but, perhaps, much earlier. Maybe, in school studying geography. My friends and instructors in Russia, of course, had warned me about the first difficult month of living in a far-away land. However, my stay in this beautiful country with lots of green was over eight months, but, nevertheless, I felt still alien. And, almost stray.

Once, I had to have a short walk through the university campus, when I met two students talking in my language. They invited me to join a regular Russian-speaking club of the Uni. I came there, but oddly enough, I didn't feel at home in that place. And, the club members are definitely not to blame for this. I seemed to be in my boat, yet, I doubted it. Nothing changed, and I was still just an alien.

In a couple of months, I walked the same way to the centre of the campus. Going by a news-board, my eyes suddenly rushed to it, though I tended to ignore those with cheap attractions for the coming week-ends, stuff to sell or rooms to rent. But at that moment I was looking in astonishment at the announcement with the Russian Orthodox cross on it. Much water has gone under bridges since then but I still see it very clearly. It said about regular services on Saturdays and invited everybody who was looking for an Orthodox shelter once they happened to be far from their own country.

That's it! Whatever that had seemed alien before was no longer that way now. No doubt, I found what was missing and I was looking for in vain for months.

Those three or four days before the Saturday service were much easier to live. I surely had no idea then that more services (if not most or even all of them till my departure) followed.

## 2. The right place!

Sadly, but there was no own building for Orthodox parishioners residing in Lancaster. It made us even wonder taking into account the enormous number of students from traditionally Orthodox countries studying at the Lancaster University. The issue remained to be resolved.

Though the R.C. Wing of the Religious Centre in the University campus, as the place for Orthodox services, could look somewhat unusual for most new people, I dare say, it was not an obstruction for them at all. As I came for the first liturgy, of course, I already had a certain idea of what an Orthodox church was supposed to look like. However, everything around quickly became friendly and welcoming. In no time during the service, I surely felt I was in the right place. This is an absolutely precious feeling!

It was my first experience as an Orthodox priest was a 'pater' for the Greek, 'batyushka' for the Russian, 'father' for the English, etc. There were some other things that reminded I was a newcomer but nothing could influence my confidence that the former alien world around was gone. For good.

Then, quite a common part of the service came, and that congregation was surely used to what happened next, but not me (kind reminder: I witnessed the liturgy in the Centre for the first time). Father Jonathan would bless a representative of each country present to read the Lord's Prayer in their mother tongue after the choir had sung it in English. I am positive most parishioners, and not necessarily non-English ones, remember this moment at their first liturgy there. Me? Perhaps, I began to acquire then a very good and piercing understanding of what global Orthodoxy meant. People were rather gushing than reading - no wonder, they had spoken in that langu-

age their first words in their lives! Now, it was like an ocean of languages within the Lord's Prayer. I felt so much overwhelmed that I didn't notice I was on the verge of tears...

Perhaps, I too often say 'for the first time'. This is what I mean, since, actually, I had not walked up the path of due understanding of what was going on during church services. Once later on, there was a talk between our parishioners about understanding, by the way. Then, our Greek and Cypriot friends revealed that they understood church services in their home countries with some difficulty, if compared to what they understood at the Uni services being in English, due to the difference between their present-day language and old Greek the services are held in. In Russia, we have the same problem though it does not seem so big. That is, in my country we can understand an Orthodox service better but, at the same time, I am ashamed not to be able to understand it even more...

And, still, this is always the right place!

### 3. My, and only my travel

It is rather the hugest possible travel, which, in my case, apparently began at Lancaster. But it is huge in technical terms only, if technicality is relevant as a word here. Sure, there was my first communion to take and I started this eternal and often stumbling climb in learning Orthodoxy ever endless to comprehend, while the door to Orthodoxy began to be just slightly opening but the abundant light already comes through to fill with inconceivable God's doings.

There are no two travels alike. Mine has been, perhaps, overly controversial, especially at the beginning with hunting the truth and going astray, and then, out of the blue, went through Lancaster. But for the first part of the way, could we be

able to get to the second and final parts of it and eventually to the destination?

Miraculous are Your deeds, oh Lord! You moved a deep continental dweller to the North-West of Britain not only to eliminate my nasty alien feelings but also to help me find the sense of life although there might seem no meaning!

It is thanks to His will and, what is seen on the surface, to Lancaster that I cannot imagine my life nowadays without daily reading or hearing the Word, as well as sacred processions (or, as we call them - Cross processions) through the town streets, watching others dive at Epiphany into a cross-shaped hole in lake and river ice at -20 °C or whatever temperature below zero, children Orthodox camp every summer at the church, and so on and so forth. It doesn't matter that due to circumstances I am unable to participate in these events in person. It has become part of my life filling it with significance but, what's more, it is part of the miraculous travel He designated.

*Pavel Zlobin  
Chebarkul, Russia*



*Theophany at Chebarkul, Russia*





## POEM

If your good luck ever takes you forward  
To the Great Lakes of the England's North  
And you stop by chance  
In the city of the ancient, broken stone  
There is a small percent of the possibility  
That you will encounter a Poet and a Priest  
Who will tell you of a battle call; swords and cross  
And if all this was not an occurrence fortunate enough  
He may even decide to play to you some late Corelli  
Who will never cease to remind you (from that moment on)  
How happy you were: sharing honey cakes among friends!

*Aleksandar Miljkovic  
London*



## NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Mar. 12: *Georgianna*

Mar. 19: *Metropolitan Philip of North  
America*

**MEMORY ETERNAL!**

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



## 100<sup>th</sup> EDITION GREETINGS

Every time I think of my brothers and sisters in Christ from Lancaster I cannot forget the long history of our beautiful brotherly relations between the pan-Orthodox Christian community in my lovely Lancaster and the Romanian communities I went through as an Orthodox priest over time (Pisculești and Blejoi). I bring to mind the joy of serving with Rev. Fr Jonathan Hemmings and the beautiful pilgrimages to the holy monasteries in Romania. On this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stavronian may God grant us a century of fraternal joy and build a bridge of Orthodox friendship in a world increasingly filled with temptations of secularism... May God help and bless us all!...

*Fr. Bogdan Georgescu,  
Blejoi, Romania*



*Pr. Bogdan, Fr. Jonathan, Staret Cleopa,  
Mitu and Pr. Petru*



It is with great pleasure that I congratulate the 'Stavronian' publication on celebrating its centenary this year. On this happy occasion, I convey my heartfelt greetings and congratulations on such an important and worthwhile achievement. I wish all those who are part of this auspicious team many blessed years ahead for a long and successful future. I also pray that our Pan Orthodox Christian

relations may grow stronger, and that God may give us all strength, wisdom and above all the love and patience to overcome the challenges of modern society. May God's grace be upon all of you, and may He grant you many happy years.

*Stavrophore Rev. Tosko Kazakin  
St Nedelya Cathedral, Sofia, Bulgaria*



*Fr Tosko at St Nedelya Cathedral, Sofia, Bulgaria*



Dear friends in Christ!

It would give me the utmost joy and pleasure to join you and serve at least one church service at the Lancaster University Religious Centre, especially these days. The Orthodox Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross in Lancaster has passed a serious examination of having issued one hundred Newsletters. This continuity is certainly an incontestable victory of resilience and a very big something to treasure!

My warmest and heartiest congratulations with big thanks go to the little but prolific publishing team with its Editor in Chief Fr Jonathan. I am grateful to all those who contribute to each newsletter regardless of that they, either, are pressed for time very much or have no free time

at all. I congratulate them and all readers for that the Newsletter unfailingly for years creates a home, which we quickly start missing but only till the next month comes.

Thank you, father!

*Pavel Zlobin,  
Chebarkul, Russia*



*Pavel while visiting Bath, UK*



I still remember the very first day back in 1995 when I came to Holy Cross Church. I had arrived in Lancaster for my postgraduate studies at School of English, Lancaster University, from Athens, Greece.

There are lots of warm and radiant memories from those days. The services were held in a very small space then but there was such a wonderful spirit among all of us.

Even after the liturgies over tea or coffee we'd share news from home with everyone or our feelings of homesickness or even feelings of uncertainty stemming from the academic effort. Everyone was there for us every time! Also I remember our gatherings and meals and the joyous atmosphere amongst us.

That warmth of our meetings has stayed with me all these years and I'm delighted to be reading the newsletter

that so energetically is put together for us.

I still feel the connection and the need to share with Father Jonathan news concerning professional achievements or personal moments and concerns!

I was particularly glad when at some point Father Jonathan visited Athens and I could introduce him to my parents.

Not having returned to Lancaster since then I've tried to keep the connection in various ways.

After Lancaster, I was in Norwich for my PhD studies and then I moved back to Greece after being appointed as a Faculty member at School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

So special to have met you all!! Many special thanks to all the Stavronians for their long-lasting friendship!

*Tatiani Rapatzikou,  
Thessalonica, Greece*



Hello Father,

This week is the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my father's repose in the Lord. Please remember him in your prayers. I attach two pictures of him from his days at the theology seminar in St Denis, Paris 1948.

My dad's name is Mitri Coutya (1919-2009); Mitri is an arabisation of Dimitri. He studied theology under Lossky (BA); his thesis was "The confessor and the theology of repenting". He left Tripoli, Lebanon, to settle in Lattaqia for a few years. Then in 1963 when Metropolitan Corban (a music student of my dad) took over Tripoli he invited him back to live in Tripoli, work in its schools, teach theology and Byzantine music. He remained the *protopsaltis* there until his repose in 2009. He was one of the main contributors of the renaissance of Antioch through all his work in the Orthodox Youth Movement.

You may click [here](#) for a sample of him chanting the Gospel. Thank you so much for remembering him.

*In Christ,  
Najib Coutya, London*



*Mitri Coutya is the deacon standing third from the left, while fourth from the left is Fr Sophrony Sakharov.*



*Mitri Coutya is the first on the right, fourth from left is blessed Fr Sophrony, fifth from left is Vladimir Lossky a teacher at St Denis back then, Sixth from left is Archimandrite Ephraim Kovalevsky the director of St Denis institute.*





Dear Father Jonathan,

We would like to write greetings to you and the Lancaster Orthodox community and Old Stavronians with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stavronian newsletter.

We want to say "Thank you" to the editors: Thodoris and Panos and all the authors for contributing their articles and for the nice pictures.

Especially "Thank you" to Father Jonathan for his articles, which have a wonderful signature style which you can recognize, who is the author from the first sentences.

We want to ask, please, publish more editions in future, because this is a very useful and educated newsletter and people with their busy schedule will always try to find time to read it.

We all have to send articles, pictures and news to keep it going.

All the best,

*Alla, Andrei and Masha Ganshyn,  
Okemos, Michigan, USA*



*Andrei, Alla and Masha at Taughannock Falls, NY, USA.*



Dear Father Jonathan,

Thank you so much for your prayers, greetings and invitation to contribute to the 100<sup>th</sup> Stavronian. Please find attached a photo of our family made in

Williamson park some time ago. We greet all our friends in Christ from our Lancaster parish and especially, on this occasion, the "editorial board" of the Stavronian and all its contributors!

Yours,

*Oleg Lychkovskiy,  
Moscow, Russia*



*Oleg and family at Williamson Park, Lancaster, UK.*



Dear Father Jonathan,

I congratulate you on a great event - 100<sup>th</sup> edition of your magazine! You put so much work in this edition! Your newsletters are always very interesting, written with heart. They keep in touch those living delicate and necessary links that connect us to the spirit. With all my heart I thank you for your wonderful work for all of us.

We live in Germany in the same small town near Munich. There is a relatively small Orthodox parish here, 40-50 people. On holy days comes up to 150 people.

My son Ivan now is serving in the church, helps the priest Father Feodor. The following photo was taken in our

church in Christmas time here. Ivan now is 11 years old.

My love and memories,  
*Marina Bonch,  
Munich, Germany*



*Fr. Feodor and Ivan in Munich*



Dear father,

Many greetings from Thomas (Old Stavronian, 2002-03) and Dimitra, living with God's grace happily in London. Congratulations on the 100<sup>th</sup> edition, let us know when you are in London next.

Εν Χριστώ,  
*Thomas Tziortziotis,  
London.*



I visited Lancaster the previous May. My love for the local Orthodox saints brought me there. I stayed in Lancaster no more than one week but the spiritual gifts which I have gained by my visit there will keep my soul warm forever. I had the blessing to meet father Jonathan and visit with him the blessed ancient church of Saint Patrick at Heysham, the hermitage of Saint Herbert at Derventwater and Beetham where there, in ancient times, stood a church dedicated to Saint Leoba. I thank you father Jonathan for everything. God bless you, Mrs Alexan-

dra and her family, Theodoros and Theophania and everyone else I met at my short time there.

*Christos Vasilopoulos,  
Kozani, Greece*



*Christos at Herbert's island, UK.*



My dear father Jonathan,

I would like to thank you for the love, the understanding, the concern you surround all of your spiritual children! I feel blessed for I am one of them and I pray that God will always protect you from any harm and grant you with health, life, joy and the strength to continue your holy mission.

*Ioanna Nasiopoulou,  
Athens, Greece*



Dear Father  
Dear Brothers-in-Christ

It is with great joy that I was informed of the fact that the Stavronian has reached its 100<sup>th</sup> edition!

My family and I consider it a great privilege to have an association with the Parish, Fr Jonathan and in consequence with all its Parishioners, current and past. We have found extreme kindness and love and we believe that the Truth of the Gospel is "incarnated" and exemplary here. We also feel that due to this love and in combination with its difficult circumstances, this Parish has been blessed with a special Grace from the Lord and His Holy Cross, a Grace that extends to all of us and our families.

We wish and pray that when we celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> edition, our Parish will be housed in a Church appropriate to its important and Soul-saving work!

Thank you very much for everything. You're always in our poor prayers.

*Konstantinos Voutzoulidis*  
*Holy island of Patmos, Greece*

## PARISH NEWS

We would like to extend our thanks to Kleio Kehagia, Thessaloniki, Greece, for the books on St Paisios, the contact relics which have safely found their way to us, and the holy items which she has sent for our Parish from Thessaloniki! May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!



## OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER



*The Parish with Panagiotis Georgopoulos, old Stavronian, who visited our Parish in mid February. It was a great pleasure to see him again after 1½ years!*



## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1<sup>st</sup> Mar: Sunday of Orthodoxy and St. David of Wales (†589)

2<sup>nd</sup> Mar: Our Holy fathers St Nicholas Planas & St Joachim of Ithaca and Vatopaedi

17<sup>th</sup> Mar: St Patrick, the Enlightener of Ireland (†492)

20<sup>th</sup> Mar: St Cuthbert the Wonderworker,  
Bishop of Lindisfarne (†687)

25<sup>th</sup> Mar: The Annunciation of our Holy  
Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

30<sup>th</sup> Mar: St John Climacus the righteous,  
author of the Divine Ladder of Ascent

31<sup>st</sup> Mar: St. Innocent, Enlightener of  
Siberia & Alaska

For the lives of Saints please visit the  
Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdi-  
ocese of America: [www.calendar.goarch.org](http://www.calendar.goarch.org)

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### Services during March\*

Fri. 6 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 pm	Akathist to the Theotokos in R.C.
Sat. 7 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Fri. 13 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 am	Akathist to the Theotokos in R.C.
Sat. 14 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Fri. 20 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 am	Akathist to the Theotokos in R.C.
Sat. 21 <sup>st</sup>	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Fri. 27 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 am	Akathist to the Theotokos in R.C.
Sun. 29 <sup>th</sup>	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.

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“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”  
- St. George Karslides -



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