

**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)*

THE GATES OF PARADISE

In the Paschal canon we sing: Ode 6; *Thou didst arise, O Christ, and yet the tomb remained sealed, as at Thy birth the Virgin's womb remained unharmed; and Thou hast opened for us the gates of paradise.*

Doors play an important part in our lives –we open them - we lock them– we access our private and social space and safeguard our property and family through them. Through them we meet our friends and strangers; we experience all kinds of interiors and atmospheres. But doors are held to the frame by hinges. The spiritual door into Life is held to the frame of our Christian faith through the hinges of Pascha and the Resurrection; Christ said: John 10:7; *I am the gate for the sheep.*

No less in our sacred space in Church references to doors are manifested by the building and in the Liturgy. The deacon or priest before the proclamation of the Creed -The Symbol of Faith- says out loud: *The doors the doors, in wisdom Let us attend.* This point in the Holy Liturgy marks the transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Holy Mysteries. Christians in Roman times could forfeit their lives if they were caught celebrating the Lord's Supper. The door keeper would then close the doors to the Church separating and protecting the faithful from those who would do them harm.

The Iconostasis physically and symbolically separates the Nave (literally the Ship of Faithful) containing the assembly of the Holy Laity journeying to Salvation, from the Holy of Holies, the altar. The Iconostasis has three doors: The Royal Doors through which Christ comes from Heaven and returns and through which only the Bishop or Priest may pass or appear, blessing the faithful, carrying the

Gospel book at the Little Entrance and the Chalice and Discos at the Great Entrance. These doors usually have an Icon of the Annunciation and/or a depiction of the Four Evangelists.

On the North side of the Iconostasis is a door with the Icon of Holy Archangel Michael often depicted with a sword or a lance guarding the door. This liturgically speaking is the exit from the altar - thus Archangel Michael guards the door to Paradise.

On the South side of the Iconostasis is a door which is the liturgical entrance to the altar area. This door has the Icon of the Archangel Gabriel, whose announcement to the Theotokos marks the beginning of the Incarnation which also marks our entrance to the heavenly realm.



At Paschal matins in the Syrian practice, following the Gospel reading, the priest beats on the door three times and takes part in a dialogue with a door keeper inside the church doors, crying out with the words of Psalm 23 (24): *Lift up your gates, O you princes; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting gates and the King of Glory shall enter in.* The doorkeeper says: *Who is the King of glory?* The Priest answers: *The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in war.*

A second time this is asked with the same response.

On the third exchange of dialogue the Priest answers: *The Lord of hosts He is the King of Glory.* The doors are opened and the faithful re-enter. The church is

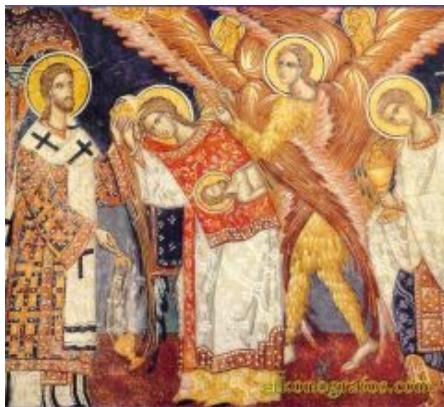
brightly lit with candles and adorned with flowers. It is the heavenly bride and the symbol of the empty tomb.

Easter is the hinge upon which hangs our Life in Christ. So, may we guard the entrance to our heart, so that at the Resurrection we may open the gates and let Christ, the Risen King of Glory enter in.

Fr Jonathan

What wings on those angels, my child!!!

--Elder Iakovos Tsalikis



Elder Iakovos said: *People are blind and don't see what takes place in church during the Divine Liturgy. Once I was serving and I couldn't make the Great Entrance because of what I saw. I suddenly felt someone pushing me by my shoulder and guiding me toward the holy prothesis. I thought it was the chanter, and said to myself: "The blessed one, such irreverence? He entered through the Beautiful Gate and is pushing me?" I turned around and saw a huge wing that the archangel had laid on my shoulder, and that he was guiding me to make the Great Entrance. What amazing things take place in the altar during the Divine Liturgy!*

RESURRECTION

'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it'; St. John 1:5. The apostle John had known the greatest darkness of the apostles' lives when they knew only of the Crucifixion and not yet of the Resurrection. The believers in the centuries after the first Pascha know the truth of the Resurrection. It is impossible to appreciate the power of the darkness for those first disciples, during those days when they knew only Christ was in the tomb and not that He would rise from it.

Metropolitan Anthony in his 'Meditations on a theme' wrote powerfully about that time when all hope seemed lost.' If it were possible for Christ, with all that he represented, to die upon the cross, this meant that human hatred was stronger than divine love; human hatred had managed to banish him from the habitations of man, had rejected him and killed him on Calvary.' The darkness was so great that when the women came and told the disciples the good news 'their words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them'; St. Luke 24:11.

The Orthodox icon tradition, faithful to the Holy Scriptures and Church Tradition, has no icon to show how Christ rose from the dead. The two icons of the myrrh bearing women and the descent into Hades instead depict the meaning of the Resurrection as they show what happened before and after it. In 2011 there was an unexpected experience for me when the power of the Resurrection shone out from an icon of the descent into Hades. I was travelling with a secular tour entitled a visit to Istanbul. We visited the former Chora church, now the Kariye Camii mosque.. The fourteenth century frescoes adorning the church are now set aside in a museum attached to the church. We went into part of the

museum that was formerly the funerary chapel but now an overcrowded tourist destination. However, I was able to return in some free time at the end of the visit and amazingly found myself alone, without other people, for a few minutes before the Resurrection icon of the descent into Hell. The church had been lost as a place for services to worship Christ. But the power of the Resurrection leapt forth from the icon of Christ, filled with radiant light, overcoming the darkness of Hell as He tramples down Hell's doors. The experience before the icon has remained the most significant and memorable of that year.

Today, much darkness threatens our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. It is not possible for us to enter into the reality of the dark threats symbolised by the black flags replacing the light of the crosses on the top of the churches. We cannot enter the difficulty of echoing the prayer of Christ on the Cross 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'. We may ask to take on more of Christ as we pray for our fellow Christians knowing that 'The light shines in darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.'

*Gladys Bland
London*



FRAGMENTS OF GLORY

Isaiah 60:13; *“The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the cypress together to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.”*

Fragments of glory are dispersed but whole
For "Grace remains entire with every part"
The Cross an imprint for a wounded soul,
Three types of wood for a pierced heart:

*These substances were grown for Thee
The Fir, the Pine, the Cypress tree*

The splendour of Lebanon came to Him,
And by invitation comes to set free
Unworthy ones, to beautify their lives
With the dust of His earthly sanctuary:

*These substances were shaped by Thee
The Fir, the Pine, the Cypress Tree*

Take and venerate these earthly remains
Righteous remnants that Lot* watered in the Law.
Three trees grew together for His holy pains
To construct the frame of the New Temple's door:

*These substances were met in Thee
The Fir, the Pine, the Cypress Tree.*

“Why? For what purpose did these trees meet?”
Truth to tell...
To make glorious His holy feet!

“For any other reason?” do I hear you ask,
“This meeting of the Threefold Tree?”
With tears I dare to whisper... yes... for me!

* There is a tradition that the three trees from which the True Cross was constructed grew together in one place. A [traditional Orthodox icon](#) depicts Lot, the nephew of Abraham, watering these trees.

Fr Jonathan



COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Observing the Holy Liturgy this week I found myself admiring the beauty of our little community in Christ and all of a sudden my heart was filled with gratitude for what we have. I could not help but feel very privileged I am able to attend the Holy Liturgy and call myself and my family members of our fellowship. I believe we are all rather lucky to be blessed with a place of worship, a priest who looks after us all so lovingly and rather selflessly, a number of people who give up their time to prepare the church (and put things back afterwards), sing, serve, donate and keep our community running. All this is done with a deep sense of commitment, dedication, love and charity. One cannot help themselves but be moved by just how simply, yet with results that are so precious, the combined efforts of a few people are translated to spiritual nourishment, continuing encouragement, a helping hand, a friendly hug and perhaps a million more things for each and every one of us. Separately but also communally.

It is a strong motivation for the rest of us to do as much as we can do to help keep this beautiful thing going. Some of us are new to such an experience, others have been here a while, all of us though perhaps realize just how unique our little community is, not only amongst church life, but in life in general too. People from all over the world, united under God with the sole purpose of attending the Holy Liturgy as often as we can, helping as much as our individual circumstances allow. Like the first church was, it is the people who make it what it is, through the grace, love and blessing of our Lord. There is no permanent building, there is no guaranteed income stream, no professional singers, and even the size of the

congregation is an unknown each week. Nevertheless, with hard work from Father Jonathan and a few of the faithful we all are afforded a place of worship that has become well established, and has gained international reputation as a fountain of spiritual nourishment (I use this expression again as I feel quite strongly about it), ecclesiastical warmth and theological knowledge.

I urge you to give it a try. Come early on a Saturday morning, and give a hand to Fr Jonathan and whoever happens to be there that day to set up the church. Ask the blessing to bake the prosphora. Give it a go at serving or singing. Sitting at the congregation watching these people do what they do every week makes me want to step forward and join in. Alas, my young daughter and baby son beg to differ, and make it clear to me I need to stay with them and hold her hand, or feed him his milk. Soon though, they will be old enough to join me in resuming my small role in doing as much as I can to support this beautiful work carried out by others at the moment.

With Easter fast approaching, those of us who have experienced it here before know what is expecting us and can barely contain our excitement and emotions in anticipation. For those of you reading and have not had the chance to be here before, I have only one thing to say: nothing has prepared you for what you are about to see, feel, smell, taste and experience. If there was such a thing as a 'bucket list' (for those of you who know the movie) Easter in Holy Cross Lancaster should definitely feature. It is one of these things in life that once you become part of, never leaves you. I am looking forward to seeing you all soon. If you are coming back from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, or anywhere else you can get hold of anything useful for our little church (candles, charcoal, candle cups etc)

please throw some in your suitcase. They will be greatly appreciated. For those who are here, we usually get our supplies from St George Orthodox Information Service. They have a website (please click [here](#)) which we use to order whatever we need. Speak to Father Jonathan if you would like to help.

*Konstantinos Arfanis
Lancaster*



WHAT IS A CULTURE?

An American sociologist once defined culture as ‘what human beings make out of the world’. This stands as a very broad definition, but I think it’s worth ‘unpacking’ it.

For Orthodox Christians, of course, defining ‘culture’ can only make sense from the perspective of the Biblical narrative. The process of cultivation must be, in a very essential way, the cultivation of something, namely of Nature; of a human nature in the first instance, but also a cultivation of the Environment (non-human nature).

Since human nature was affected and damaged (but not completely extinguished beyond repair) with the event of

ancestral sin (Genesis -1), we are in a position to establish the link between the deeper purpose of ‘world cultivation’ and the human predicament. For the first human beings, Adam and Eve, place of their exile is quite un-natural; in a sense that it betrays their ‘Eden –based’ habits and expectation – in other words, it is incredibly hostile.

What they in their fallen state cannot see: is that their (and their off-springs) actions has a direct effect on the hostility of the surrounding environment (God talks to Cain after murdering Abel ‘Why have you done this terrible thing? You killed your brother, and his blood flowed on to the ground. Now his blood is calling out for me to punish you’ – Genesis 4, verse 10). It is interesting to notice that this event took place before the Ten Commandments explicitly forbade killing – it is almost as if the environment itself, and not any ethical/moral regression, is calling out for Divine intervention.

If the world has degenerated to its lowest possible point by the time of Noah, what we see after the Great Deluge is the world that is already ‘half-redeemed’. God’s promise to Noah is a first, smaller (Annunciation being the greater one) moment of God’s salvific commitment to the Mankind.

With this in mind, we can conclude that cultivation or ‘culture-making’ is an actualisation of the deep human need to experience ‘of being-in Eden’, only here and now. If we think of easy accessibility of food, heat and shelter, together with the instant communications, as relatively recent improvements in our, civilizational lifestyle – we are probably suffering from the (pre)historical amnesia.

Some will point out that these are mere survival tools – and in some respect they are right; but what is more difficult to explain is the human intense and irrepressible desire to go far beyond this

basic existence – and towards the higher culture. By insisting and endlessly fighting for the establishment of ‘civilisation of plenitude’, we open ourselves (with the much higher degree of determination) to the invigorated pursuit of ‘re-creation of Eden’ through Arts and Religion. This is the culture of the Transcendent; our way of reaching to and of incarnating the Invisible, and then, through man-made symbols - awakening our senses to its Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

The arrival of Christ on the world scene is a moment when this man-made Culture is abruptly summoned and then judged by God. When Jesus invites us to be ‘salt of the Earth’, He calls us to bring His Spirit into contemporary culture. This will sometimes require the destruction of obsolete, sin-infested structures and customs, but we knew that ‘sword’ at the gates of Paradise was always part of the deal. It is now essential to discern what is right from what is wrong, and then hurry into realisation and the restoration of His vision. What once was a recollection of our ‘golden past’, through Christ became a Transfiguration of ‘an eternal present’ – the culture of the Kingdom.

*Aleksandar Miljkovic
London*

PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM

The Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist is organising a conference and a Pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Mother of God of Walsingham (England's Nazareth) in July 3-5. Please let us know if you would like to attend as perhaps we could arrange a car or mini bus for the trip. His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos will be speaking, which would be a double

blessing! Our Parish may be able to help a little with funding for students who wish to go! Please contact Fr Jonathan! For further information click [here](#).



PARISH NEWS

Following our little tradition, God willing we will once again hold an Easter Feast after Holy Saturday's midnight Liturgy. It is customary that people indicate whether they can attend, as well as letting each other know of what they can contribute (if anything, it is not compulsory). Konstantinos will once again be preparing some lamb. To let us know whether you will be attending, and to indicate what you might be able to help with (either by preparing something on your own, or by contributing at the *Easter Feast Fund* please email eat.at.easter@gmail.com. The earlier we know the better, as there is quite a logistic exercise. So you get an idea as to what you might be able to help with, here is a small (but not exhaustive) list:

- Plastic cutlery and crockery
- Drinks
- Salads
- Side dishes
- Red eggs
- Soup

You are always welcome to contribute via a small donation for the purchase of the above plus the main course (leg of lamb).



Parish members during Parish lunch on Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt, March 29. We welcome Stella Kyriakidou from Limassol, Cyprus.

OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

We are so happy to let you know that we have been given an Icon of St. Panteleimon from an anonymous donor in London! We thank God for this gift and ask His blessing upon our kind benefactor.

We also thank Tatiani Rapatzikou from Thessaloniki, Greece, for the

candles, wicks, incense and charcoal she sent to the Parish.

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Apr: St. Mary of Egypt

4th Apr: Lazarus Saturday

5th Apr: Palm Sunday

10th Apr: Holy Friday

11th Apr: Holy Saturday

12th Apr: **Great and Holy Pascha**

17th Apr: Theotokos of the Life-Giving

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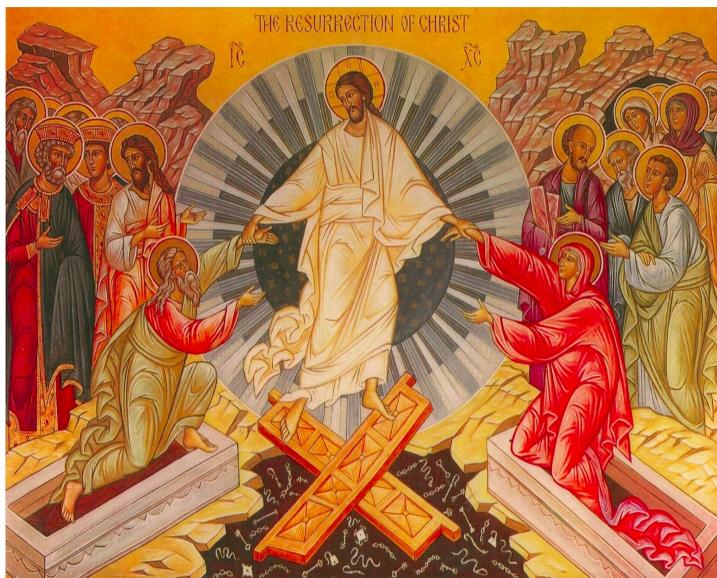
19th Apr: Thomas Sunday

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*

Sun. 5th	10:00 am	<u>Palm Sunday</u> : Holy Liturgy in Q.R.
Wed. 8th	6:30 pm	<u>Holy Wednesday</u> : Holy Anointing in R.C.
Thurs. 9th	6:30 pm	<u>Holy Thursday</u> : 12 Gospels in R.C.
Fri. 10th	10:00 am	<u>Holy Friday</u> : Royal Hours in R.C.
	11:00 am	Preparation of the Epitaphion & Confessions in R.C.
	1:00 pm	Vespers and Deposition in R.C.
	6:30 pm	Matins & Burial Procession in R.C.
Sat. 11th	10:00 am	<u>Holy Saturday</u> - Liturgy of St Basil in R.C.
	10:00 pm	Midnight Office (Holy Light) in R.C.
	10:30 pm	Holy Liturgy of the Resurrection in R.C. followed by Paschal meal.
Sun. 12th	3:00 pm	Vespers of Love 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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