

**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'



*The Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
belongs to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian 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 NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Troparion (Tone 4)

Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shone to the world the Light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
Were taught by a Star to adore You,
The Sun of Righteousness,
And to know You, the Orient from on High.
O Lord, glory to You!

Kontakion (Tone 3)

Today the Virgin gives birth to the
Transcendent One,
And the earth offers a cave to the
Unapproachable One!
Angels with shepherds glorify Him!
The wise men journey with a star!
Since for our sake the Eternal God was born as
a Little Child!

~+~

*May the Light of Christ shine in our hearts
and may our hearts be the cave in which
we greet Christ!*

LIVING WATERS

Isaiah 43:19

*Behold, I will do a new thing,
Now it shall spring forth;
Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert.*

John 4:10

*Jesus answered and said to her, "If you
knew the gift of God, and who it is who
says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would
have asked Him, and He would have given
you living water."*

John 7:38

*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has
said, out of his heart will flow rivers of
living water."*

John 19:34

*But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced
his side, and forthwith came there out
blood and water.*

Listen!

A person's response to God's offer of
salvation is a matter of engaging the will,
faith and action.

Without the will there is no movement,
Without faith there is no direction,
Without action there is no reward.

To discover Living Water requires us
knowing:
Whose open Hand provides this blessing
and treasure
What is it's measure
and
Where to find it flowing?

We must start by digging for water in the
caverns of the heart.
If the ground is rocky, we must dig in
silence with the sharp adze of patience.

Listen carefully!

Do you hear something?

If our ground is hard, we must soften it
with mercy and repentance:
For the soil of pride can only be removed
through meek dependence
On God.

Listen!

Do you hear the drip of water on stone?

We must not simply remove the weeds
which are the fruits of the passions,
we must excavate each day with
persistence
since familiar habits possess a stubborn
resistance;

whereas the *humus* of humility is the place to locate compassion.

In this way, we may even lead in order to serve.

Leading the way to build a *viaduct* for the King of Glory

Order our service to others by constructing a conduit for Christ.

Dig therefore with wisdom,
Dig with discernment,
Dig with love,
Whilst guarding the heart at all times
with diligence.

Listen!

Do you hear water flowing?

Because at the time appointed,
At the opportune moment,
We who are disjointed
are healed and
Sealed with the Holy Spirit.
God opens the flood gates of our hearts
With His own master key of humility,
To become a channel of His grace.

Just listen to that sound!

The sound of Living waters;
an ocean wave, a mighty river in flood, a
cascading waterfall
a fountain of benediction;
heard by earth's sons and daughters
To become for all a Life- Giving spring,
welling up to Eternity.

Work hard then each day and dig!
Listen, work, dig deep
head bowed with sweat and tears,
extinguishing fears of death, awakening
life from sleep,
exchanging salt waters for sweet
to greet Living waters.

Many rich and powerful men would pay dearly to see the Lord or His Most Pure Mother, but God does not appear in riches, but in the humble heart... Every one of the poorest men can be humbled and come to know God. It needs neither money nor reputation to come to know God, but only humility.

---St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, I.11,21

Fr Jonathan

THE HOLY MONASTERY PANTOCRATOR TAO

Recently our Parish acquired the holy relics of the 179 Righteous Martyrs of the Monastery of Pantocrator, Penteli, Greece. They were sent to us by Hegoumenos Archimandrite Theoklitos from the Monastery of St Arsenios at Vatopaedi, Chalkidiki. Here, I have compiled a brief review of the history of the Monastery for our spiritual benefit.

The holy and venerable Monastery Pantocrator Tao was founded in the 9th century as a monastery for men. During its long history, it has experienced both looting and destruction, but periods of efflorescence as well. During the early Byzantine era, in particular, it emerged as the second monastery in the Balkans, having a brotherhood in excess of 600 monks.



The Katholikon of the Monastery

The most dramatic era in the history of the Monastery, however, was that between 1570 and 1680. In those difficult years, the Holy Monastery of Pantocrator was a spiritual cradle and source of national inspiration and social awakening not only for the much-suffering Greeks of Attica, but for the wider Greek world then suffering under the Turkish yoke.

According to tradition, the Monastery at that time followed the typicon of the renowned Monastery of Studion in its regulation of the monks' devotional and liturgical life. Specifically, in the Catholikon (Central church) of the Monastery, divine services were celebrated by the fathers around the clock. Worth noting in this connection is that today the Monastery of Pantocrator is perhaps the only Orthodox monastery that still remains an "Unsleeping Monastery" (Akoimiti Moni); its Catholikon is also the only hexagonal Byzantine church which has survived in Greece.

From about 1570, the fathers of the Monastery were distinguished by their advanced spiritual stature. On the day of the Holy Resurrection in 1680, those fathers who were living and struggling in the Monastery, one hundred seventy nine in number, sealed with their own blood their devotion to and love for the Bridegroom of their souls, our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, receiving the wreath of Martyrdom immediately after Divine Liturgy.

Three centuries after the torturous end of the 179 Holy martyric Fathers of this Monastery, the grace of our almighty Lord Jesus Christ blessed the miraculous revelation of their Holy Relics. The uncovering of these Relics was a stunning and deeply moving testimony of God's grace to the Sisterhood of the Monastery (which had since become a convent for women) as well as to myriads of pilgrims. The news of their uncovering spread through the entire Orthodox world, which

developed a deep feeling of reverence and piety towards the Martyrs of Pantocrator. At every opportunity, pilgrims from around the world -both monastics and lay people- now come to the Monastery to venerate the Holy Relics with all due respect and honour.

Ever since, these 179 Holy and Victorious Neo-martyrs of our Church have comprised a beacon of our Orthodox faith through their Holy Relics made available to tens of thousands of pilgrims, both known and unknown, providing solutions to various problems the pilgrims might have through their prayers to and miracles from our Almighty God. Hundreds of miracles have been reported to our Monastery about many kinds of illnesses that have been healed, accompanied by heartfelt acknowledgements to our Saints and glorifications of our Lord, for it is He Who blesses them with the gift of miracles, thus making them direct and unremunerated helpers and protectors of the Christian faithful.

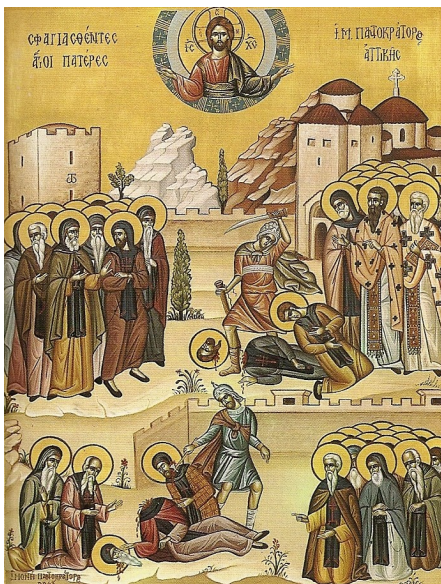
We celebrate the memory of the 179 martyred Holy Fathers who were slaughtered within the Holy Monastery of Pantocrator on Tuesday of Bright Week.

The Martyrdom of the Holy Fathers

During Holy Week in 1680, Hagarene pirates looted and ravaged the coastal areas around Rafina. Out of malice, a servant of the Monastery had conspired with the pirates to lead them to the Monastery through a secret passageway he knew of.

The Fathers, having been subjected to looting and raids many times before this, had constructed, as a final means of escape from danger, a secret emergency exit -an underground tunnel- leading all the way to Rafina. It was through this tunnel that, on the night of the Resurrection, the traitor led the pagans to the interior of the Monastery. There, the

pirates surprised the monks, who were all assembled in the Church with candles lit, chanting the last "Christ is Risen" of the Paschal Divine Liturgy. What followed was a complete sack of the Monastery and a terrible massacre of all the fathers present. A total of one hundred seventy-nine Monks found savage and gruesome deaths in the resulting carnage.



The lone survivor from among the Brotherhood was one monk who happened to be away at the time of the slaughter because he had been performing the Paschal service at another church of the Monastery, the dependency *Herosakkouli*, where the servants who toiled in the fields attended services. As this monk was returning to the Monastery the next afternoon -on Pascha Sunday- he saw from the forest the burnt-down buildings and, in a heap beside the ransacked main entrance, the slaughtered bodies of his monastic brethren. Seized by fear, he headed to the summit of the mountain whence he had just observed the environs and was able to distinguish the inlet of Rafina; noting

there the vessels of the Hagarene pirates getting ready to sail, he soon realized what had happened. The following day, Bright Monday, at daybreak, he observed the pirate ships raising anchor and sailing away onto the high seas. Immediately, he rushed to his Monastery... there to behold a truly gruesome sight.

How could one describe the tears and anguish of this lone survivor? Entering the Monastery, he wept copiously, shouting in anguish and beating his breast upon seeing the flock of Christ strewn about the ground "like sheep devoured by wolves". For it truly was a terrible and merciless slaughter the servants and Martyrs of Christ had undergone! One of the fathers had received a blow on the shoulder that had cleaved him down to the navel. Another had been sawn in half; another, with neither arms nor legs attached, resembled a stump of lifeless wood; still another had been split open from head to chest. Arms were lying about everywhere, with heads separated from torsos; there were various body parts wherever he looked, and intestines that had been spilled into the soil with the whole mixed in blood.



The crypt with several tombs of the Holy New Martyrs of Ntaou Penteli

This monk beheld venerable priestly Elders still grasping in their hands the Holy Bread despite having been brutally dishonoured, flayed, and battered; other

holy men, anguish still engraved on their faces, had their hands prayerfully crossed in humble acceptance of death. All had suffered the cruellest of tortures in shedding their blood over the blessed area of the Monastery. Yet, although their earthly bodies had been cast about in the dust, their souls had flown high up to Heaven. Prior to their bloody sacrifice, they had lived the Martyrdom of tears, but now they tasted the Martyrdom of death, thus imitating the First and Greatest Martyr, Jesus Christ. They had spent their entire lives pleasing God, praying endlessly, adorning their souls with virtues "cultivating the barren desert with streams of tears"(translation from the apolytikion/hymn to all saints). Finally, with the shedding of their blood on the night of the Resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, they had been counted worthy to enter the Heavenly Kingdom with our Risen Lord, there to be placed among the ranks of the Holy Martyrs and to stand at the throne of God our Lord, where they ever since have been praying incessantly for those of us here below.

The Finding of the Holy Relics

For centuries the grave of the 179 Holy Fathers remained unknown until September of 1965 when, while carrying out renovating construction works on the floor of the interior of the main church, graves with whole relics of monks were located.

Subsequently, more graves with relics which welled with inexpressible fragrance were discovered in other parts of the floor where construction was taking place.

The effort of finding the rest of the bodies of the Holy Fathers continued, when, after some years, more bodies were discovered in an area adjacent to the main church. Consequently, the accession of the 179 Holy Martyrs of the Holy

Monastery of Pantocrator to the *Agiologion* of the Church followed with them as of the 14th of August 1992 synodal decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchy.

Nowadays, the Holy relics are kept in a reliquary in the *Pronao* of the main church, as well as in a special place which has been erected and prepared for this purpose next to the main church building.

Source: Text was taken from three pages of the website of the Holy Monastery of Pantocrator Tao, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

*Cleio Kehagia
Thessalonica, Greece*

SAYINGS OF ST PAISIOS

When planing of the wood* begins, we must first determine the wood's grain so as not to scrape against it, lest we be the cause of splintering. If however, the grain of the wood opposes, the blade of the plane should not be greatly extended so as to proceed deeply. Moreover, scraping needs to be done on both sides; otherwise, the wood will not be evenly surfaced.

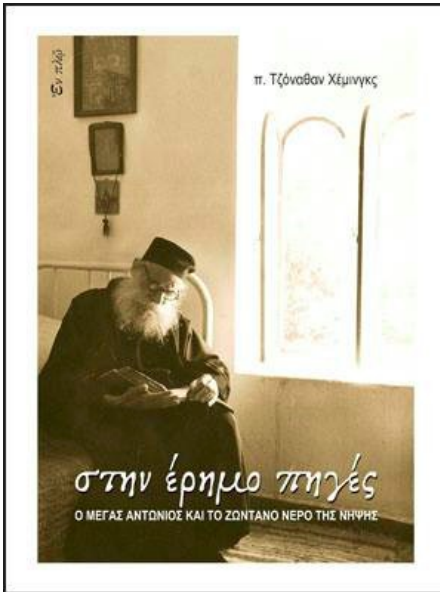
** Elder Paisios was a carpenter and knew well the technique of hewing wood. He associates this shaping technique with the method of disciplining a monk's character, wishing to demonstrate the need for discernment in the discipline of our soul, so as not to cause irreparable harm.*

--- Elder Paisios of Mount Athos; Epistles; Souroti



PARISH NEWS

Fr Jonathan's book "*Fountains in the desert*" was published in Greek by the publishing company En Plo (Εν Πλω), based in Thessalonica, Greece. Please have a look at the link [here](#) for further information.



OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Iryna Minakova from Cambridge has sent a lovely email to Fr Jonathan. You may read below:

Dear Fr. Jonathan,

I hope to find you well. How are the things with the rent of the church in Morecambe? That would be so good for the community. It would provide some continuity and ability to have more sacraments like weddings, possibly Sunday school for children, shared meal, concerts, courses and events. You could

also have both Vespers and the Liturgy and have more church feasts! Probably a category of people who tend to come 10 minutes before the end of the Liturgy will drop out but more committed ones will come even more. Students can easily get to Morecambe because there are buses that go to Morecambe from the University.

I have passed this news to Fr. Rafael and Matushka Caroline and to a Hieromonk Serafim of Romanian Patriarchate.

Last Saturday 31/11 we had such a wonderful alternative to the Halloween that I hugely dislike. There was a wonderful concert of the Orthodox choir from London in St. Giles church in Cambridge which is rented by Romanian Orthodox church every Sunday. It was one of the most impressive concerts I have been to. The singers are mostly English people but have representatives from many other nationalities of the Orthodox world. They sang, English, Irish, Scottish folk songs even using old Gaelic language. There were also songs in Greek, Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Armenian, Georgian and Romanian. It was such skilful ethnic singing observing all the pronunciation and the tradition of these countries. The proceeds of this concert go towards building the Romanian Orthodox monastery of all Celtic saints in the Isle of Mull. After the concert Hieromonk Serafim gave a presentation with the slide show about the trip to the Celtic islands and the project there. They already have 5 acres of land on the Isle of Mull and an old church. At the moment they are raising funds to repair the church roof that is nearly collapsing and towards building of the cells for the monks. PayPal donations may be made on the monastery website: www.mullmonastery.com.

Let us pray that this project works. I have asked Fr. Serafim to pray for the rent of your church as well. It is possible to contact the monastery via email at

fatherseraphim@mullmonastery.com or
ierom.serafim@yahoo.co.uk.

Best wishes to you and all the parish
from our family.
Iryna

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

4th Dec: Great Martyr Barbara

6th Dec: St. Nicholas the Wonderworker,
Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

9th Dec: The conception of the Most-Holy
Theotokos by the Righteous Anna

11th Dec: Hieromartyr Metropolitan
Seraphim (Chichagov)

12th Dec: St. Spyridon the Wonderworker,
Bishop of Tremithus

13th Dec: St. Herman of Alaska,
Wonderworker of All America

25th Dec: The Nativity according to the
flesh of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

27th Dec: Protomartyr and Archdeacon
Stephen

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

Services during December*

Sun. 6 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 13 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 20 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Thu. 24 th	6:00 pm	Christmas Eve Liturgy at RC followed by mince pies
Sun. 27 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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For Old Stavronian blogs follow the links in Romanian [here](#), in English [here](#), and in Greek [here](#).

