



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

The Stavronian

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*Ἰσθρονος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης.
(Φ. Κόντογλου, 1962).*

*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)*

WHEN YOU ARE PRAYING ALONE...

When you are praying alone, and your spirit is dejected, and you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that God the Trinity looks upon you with eyes brighter than the sun; also all the angels, your own Guardian Angel, and all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for they are all one in God, and where God is, there are they also. Where the sun is, thither also are directed all its rays. Try to understand what this means.

The enemy of our salvation especially strives to draw our heart and mind away from God when we are about to serve Him, and endeavours to adulterously attach our heart to something irrelevant. Be always, every moment, with God, especially when you pray to Him. If you are inconstant, you will fall away from life, and will cast yourself into sorrow and straitness.

Do not be despondent when fighting against the incorporeal enemy, but even in the midst of your afflictions and oppression praise the Lord, Who has found you worthy to suffer for Him, by struggling against the subtlety of the serpent, and to be wounded for Him at every hour; for had you not lived piously, and endeavoured to become united to God, the enemy would not have attacked and tormented you.

Do not fear the conflict, and do not flee from it; where there is no struggle, there is no virtue. Our faith, trust, and love are proved and revealed in adversities, that is, in difficult and grievous outward and inward circumstances, during sickness, sorrow, and privations.

Prayer for others is very beneficial to the man himself who prays; it purifies the heart, strengthens faith and hope in God,

and arouses love for God and our neighbour.

St. John of Kronstadt



THE MODEL OF PRAYER

The Literary and Cultural frame

The Lord's Prayer as all of the New Testament was written in *koine* Greek since Greek was the lingua franca of the Eastern Roman Empire. In order to disseminate the good news it was very useful to have a common language. But it is doubtful that Our Lord Jesus taught this to His disciples in Greek. It is almost certain that, he would have taught in the Galilean Aramaic dialect of Hebrew amongst the people - and taught in Hebrew in the synagogues. We know that our Lord gave readings from the Torah and Prophetic readings in the synagogues

as at the beginning of His ministry in Luke Chapter 4:16. We read in the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 26 that the risen and ascended Lord Jesus also revealed himself to Saul on the Road to Damascus in the Hebrew language: *"I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me.'"*

Even though the New Testament is written in Greek and Greek culture shaped the ancient world, it is a basic truth that the Hebrew Law of Moses, the Prophets and Writings informed the New Testament writers and that is the basis for their translations. We must not forget that before we had the written text, we had the spoken message, the *kerygma* - the preaching of the Apostles, and that all the apostles of Our Lord were Jews whose main language was Hebrew or its dialect Aramaic. The New Testament requires a detailed knowledge of the Old Testament; indeed it presumes an understanding of the unfolding purposes of God. There are so many geographical locations mentioned and Old Testament characters referred to, so many prophecies that come to fruition in the Life and Teaching of Christ that one could not fully comprehend the New Testament without the Old Testament background and its historical, spiritual and cultural environment. Indeed, from within the text itself, even the overt Jewish geographical and topological names indicate a Jewish readership. Papias of Hierapolis living in the second century says as much in His Ecclesiastical History (III, XXXIX, 16) *"Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language."*

This is corroborated in the Babylonian Talmud as well as the *Tosefta* and later by Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate.

It is therefore necessary to construct the Lord's Prayer as far as possible from its original context in order to understand

the full meaning that Our Lord invests in it.

The Law came and the people transgressed the laws, the Prophets came and the people did not listen, the Writings instructed yet they did not learn. The Messiah came with grace and truth and seeing His authority his disciples listened to Him and asked Him to teach them.

In the realm of faith: *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* (Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7). With fear of God, like the first disciples we ask in faith... *teach us how to pray!* Christ is our Teacher; we are His disciples... Teach us Lord!

Chapter 1; Our Father

The Lord's Prayer begins with Our Father: in Hebrew "Avinu." It is for this reason that the Lord's Prayer has often been called the family prayer because it is a corporate expression of the whole family of God's adopted children. Christ the Son of the Father grants us the privilege of calling God, Father. St Paul in his letter to the Galatians expresses this relationship. Galatians 4:4-7; *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

We are sons and daughters of the Most High by adoption. A young boy found himself being bullied at school because he was adopted. On finding this out, his adoptive parents went to the school and spoke to the children in his class. *"You see"* they said *"we wanted to*

give a home to a little baby, so we chose him to be our son." We are chosen, this means that by the favour of God we are brothers and sisters of his only begotten Son.

The personal pronoun "our" is so important: it is not merely an expression of universality but of the saving relationship we as Christians have in and through the Holy Trinity. An anonymous poet once wrote:

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer
And even once say "I"

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer
And even once say "my".

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer
And not include another.

You cannot ask for daily bread
And not include a brother.

For others are included in each and every plea
And from the beginning to the end
It never once says "Me"!

The gap between the Triune Holy God and sinful man has been bridged by the coming of Christ into the World. Within the Holy Liturgy it is with humility but also with *boldness and without condemnation* that we are called upon to address God as Father. God in His humility stoops down to raise up mankind with His hand to become brothers and sisters of Christ by adoption and grace. This is nowhere more fully and beautifully expressed than in the first two words of the Lord's Prayer "Our Father". If we had nothing more than these two words, then we would still have more than we deserve and more than is necessary for our salvation.

1 Corinthians 12:3; "... no one can say, *"Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. And no one can call God Father except through the Lord Jesus.* We are bound to one another no longer by the chains of Adam's sin but by the promise of Sonship, and the inheritance of the Kingdom of God through a personal

relationship with God as Father. "Our" is a statement of our calling and intention. It is not exclusive but inclusive; it is at the same time an expression of family and prophetic in terms of its all encompassing vision. Our Lord says that *"I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, so there shall be one flock, one Shepherd."*; [John 10:16](#).

Our Father, our Lord, our Shepherd expresses our belonging and unity.

We are not alone, there will be others yet to come who, through Christ's saving work on the Cross, will claim the right to be called children of the same Heavenly Father. The isolation of Adam has been replaced by a welcome in Christ.

The Cross is an important symbol, it is the I crossed out and so every time we say Our Father in the Holy Liturgy we make the sign of the Cross, for *"it is no longer I that lives but Christ who lives in me."*



The Psalmist in Psalm 22 could say *"My God, My God why have you forsaken me"* repeated by Our Lord Jesus Christ himself on the Cross at His Crucifixion.

Thomas, after witnessing for himself the Risen Lord fell down before him with the words, *"My Lord and my God."* We should own the prayer in the first person singular but we must share the prayer in the first person plural. In the Nicene Creed we say *"I believe in God"* as a testimony of our personal faith confessed at Baptism but in the original declaration of faith this is the belief of the Church Fathers collectively. We need to take care, for we may fall into error by saying *"My God."* It can so easily become a swear word or a vain oath, an aberration of direct contact with the Divine or even worse, a justification for division and persecution of others, the *"My God - Your God!"* syndrome.

Often we want to call God Father but we would rather do so without any peers- we want God without any "competition;" no brothers and sisters, no rivals to share our selfish exclusive claims on Him. 1 John 4:20; *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*

We can't have Fatherhood without brotherhood. What we have in the opening words of the Lord's Prayer is a confession that we are creatures of the same loving God and we are all made in His image.

Just as we are born physically we are born from above (John 3:1 ff.) and the Holy Spirit joins with our own breath to call God Father. Whilst the Lord's Prayer is personal in its sense of relationship to God, it belongs to the Christian community because each of us is a child of God. We call God "Abba" which may be translated as Daddy. Our Lord addresses His father on the cross as Abba - when he says *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."* It is common in many languages and cultures for babies to utter this sound, to call mummy 'amma' and daddy 'abba'. Indeed, priests in our own

Antiochian Church are called Abouna - the Arabic equivalent. This affectionate title is also expressed by the Greek Pappas which is less formal than Pater and the word Papoulakis which is even more tender and said by spiritual children when they greatly love their spiritual father.

We find the Fatherhood of God implicitly presented in the Old Testament. God's love for his children can be seen plainly in the revelation of the prophet Hosea who compares God to a loving father who cares for his children:

Hosea 11 ; God's Love for Israel

- 1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
3 It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.
4 I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love;
I lifted the yoke from their neck
and bent down to feed them.*

This illustration is so beautiful and tender with God teaching his people Israel to walk by holding them up with children's reins (cords of compassion). To the prophet Hosea is revealed the Personhood of God. How lovely it is to see a toddler taking its first faltering steps, upheld by the parent to avoid the child falling. In the Old testament, we have God spoken of as the Most High, the Almighty, the Everlasting God, the Creator, the Shield of Abraham etc. but the Prophet and King David writes in the Psalms 103:13-14; *As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.*

Of course human fathers too are frail and may fail their children, they may be

unjust or cruel and fall far short of that perfection which is the characteristic of our Heavenly Father, Matthew 5:48; *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Nevertheless, Our Lord constantly makes reference to His Father before His disciples and prays to His Father throughout his ministry, bringing to the word a new content, depth and breadth. Our Lord wanted to show that relationship is an ongoing gift that is for eternity. It is not an entitlement of birth but a promise and gift, a rebirth through Baptism and Chrismation. It is not then a matter of our age or when we receive the gift, what matters is how we make use of that gift and the growth and maturity the dynamic bond yields within this loving relationship. 2 Peter 3:8; *But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

Not making use of the gift of the Holy Spirit is like the man who, on receiving a cheque for £100,000 keeps the cheque in his top pocket. He fails to put it into the bank and invest it, so he can not make use of the money. Or it is like the person who had a beautiful book case full of the most expensive books but never opened them. The display was simply for show- it was for the semblance of intelligence without substance. Often it is like that with the Bible which is God's Love letter to the world- if only we read more that which would bring us joy. It is easy to be a nominal Christian without any commitment, without any content-but the deposit of faith must bear fruit and increase through the dynamic of prayer that cannot help but flow into action. C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Four Loves* "To love is to be vulnerable." It is to step outside our little comforts to others in their discomfort. God can make use of our vulnerability, he cannot and will not make use of our independence.

As we grow we begin to understand and acknowledge the temptations that beset us and ask: *From my youth have many passions warred against me, but do Thou Thyself defend and save me, O Saviour.* --- Hymns of Ascents, Fourth Tone.

The lives of the saints recognises the need for repentance and so at every point in our lives our Heavenly Father pays attention to the most intimate details that concern his children. The Father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son runs to meet his son! The same Heavenly Father knows the number of hairs on our head (Matt.10.30) and what things we need before we ask Him (Matt 6:8). Our Father's greatness is transcendent in its almighty power and His love imminent in its relevance to our own particular need.

How wonderful it is then that Christ allows, indeed instructs us to call God Father, the Creator of the Universe, the author of time and place. God is not some philosophical theory, or psychological compensation for an emotional void. He is Person, *Hypostasis* (Greek ὑπόστασις).



We have a Person at the heart of the Universe and He is our Father. Indeed, Christ makes it known to His disciples in John's Gospel that He has come from the

Father and is going back to the Father. John 14:8-11; Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

The Father of Our lord Jesus Christ is our father too.

... To be continued

Fr Jonathan

THE ORIGIN OF @

Ecclesiastes 1:9; *That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.*

It is an interesting fact that the earliest yet discovered reference to the @ symbol is a religious one. It features in a Bulgarian translation of a Greek chronicle published by [Constantinos Manasses](#) in 1345. Held today in the [Vatican Apostolic Library](#), it features the @ symbol in place of the capital letter alpha "Α" in the word Amen. Why it was used in this context is still a mystery.



NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Apr. 8: Evangelos

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

Dear Rev. Father God Bless.

Thank you for emailing us a photo of the icon of St Joachim of Ithaca hand-painted by Dimitrios Hakim in the Antiochian tradition with Arabic writing! What wonderful things you create! How wonderful that St. Joachim's holy name is spreading...

May the good Lord provide you and your good company (people) with strength and perseverance, with spirit and love to continue with HIS work.

We thank you once again.
Louiza & Fr. Theodosios



Lord, help those I love to be always well... and if they have to be far away, You keep them in Your hug instead of me.

~ + ~

We are blessed to welcome the Byzantine St Anysia Choir from Thessaloniki for Pascha. The Choir came again last year to embellish our worship with their beautiful singing.

We are doubly blessed to receive at Great and Holy Week an icon of the Saviour, a comb and a prayer rope, all hand-crafted by St Paisios as well as a reliquary containing these holy relics. This has been a most blessed donation by a spiritual child of the Saint, who wishes to remain anonymous. We will also have on loan for Holy Week a piece of his clothing from Mikrokastro Monastery, Kastoria, Greece. In addition, Ramy Boutros who has visited Mavrovouni Monastery of Agios Georgios in Cyprus, has requested from the Elder Archimandrite Symeon relics of the Saints for our Parish with his blessing. Our Parish will be given three Primary relics:

1. A relic of Agios Avvakoum of Cyprus, a lay man and martyr from the 10th century.
2. A relic of Agios Georgios the New Martyr of Ephesus, who fell asleep in the Lord in 1801; Feast day, Apr. 5th.
3. A relic of Agios Arsenios the Cappadocian (1840-1924). He is the God-father and spiritual father of St Paisios. His feast day is Nov. 10th. It is truly wonderful that since his God-son and spiritual son St Paisios' relics are coming to our Parish at Pascha, that his God father and spiritual Father wants to be present with him here too in Lancaster. Apart from these Primary relics, we will also be given two secondary relics; a stone from the tomb of St Lazarus in Cyprus and a piece of the coffin from Blessed Seraphim Rose.

I cannot begin to say how humbled, honoured and privileged we are to be receiving these treasures of Grace. Very

few Orthodox Parish Churches, even Cathedrals, in the UK have such blessings of relics. God is truly glorified in His Saints!

Those from other Orthodox Parishes who wish to come and venerate these holy relics should contact Fr. Jonathan so that we may offer appropriate hospitality.

We once more thank Fr Igor for an additional Sticharion, that he sent us from Moscow via Dmitry Ismagilov. Fr Eustathios Savvidis from Cyprus asked an iconographer to hand-paint the icon of the Mystical Supper for above the Royal Doors for our Church. May our Lord and Saviour give the reward!



Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 20th, at St Martin's church.



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STAVRONIAN CORNER

We would like to extend out thanks to Thomas, Dimitra and little Irene-Michaela Tziortziotis, for the gift of candles which were sent to us from London to be used in out new Church.

1st Apr: **St. Mary of Egypt**
3rd Apr: **Sunday of the Holy Cross**
23rd Apr: **Lazarus Saturday and St George the Great Martyr & Triumphant**
24th Apr: **Palm Sunday**
29th Apr: **Holy Friday**
30th Apr: **Holy Saturday**
1st May: **Great and Holy Pascha**

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

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

Services at St Martin's during April*

Fri. 1st	18:30	3 rd Akathist to the Theotokos - <i>Chairetismoi</i>
Sat. 2nd	12:00	Hours followed by Memorial Service
	14:00	Vespers
Sun. 3rd	10:00	Hours followed by the Holy Liturgy of St Basil
Fri. 8th	18:30	4 th Akathist to the Theotokos - <i>Chairetismoi</i>
Sat. 9th	12:00	Hours
	14:00	Vespers
Sun. 10th	10:00	Hours followed by the Holy Liturgy of St Basil
Fri. 15th	18:30	5 th Akathist to the Theotokos - <i>Chairetismoi</i>
Sat. 16th	12:00	Hours
	14:00	Vespers
Sun. 17th	10:00	Hours followed by the Holy Liturgy of St Basil
Sat. 23rd	12:00	Hours
	14:00	Vespers
Sun. 24th	10:00	Hours followed by the Holy Liturgy and Procession
Wed. 27th	18:30	Holy and Great Wednesday; Holy Anointing - <i>Euchelaion</i>
Thu. 28th	10:30	Holy and Great Thursday; Holy Liturgy of St Basil
	18:30	Matins and Twelve Gospels
Fri. 29th	10:00	Holy and Great Friday; Royal Hours
	11:00	Preparation of the Epitaph and Confessions
	13:00	Vespers and Deposition - <i>Apokathelosis</i>
	18:30	Matins, Lamentations and Burial Procession
Sat. 30th	10:30	Holy and Great Saturday; Holy Liturgy of St Basil
	22:00	Midnight Office
	22:30	Holy Liturgy of the Resurrection followed by Paschal meal
Sun. 1st	15:00	Holy Pascha; Vespers of Love

*Help setting up the church is greatly appreciated and starts from 9:30 a.m.



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



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The following blogs of Old Stavronians are available in Romanian, [Constiinta Ortodoxa](#), in English, [Orthodox city hermit](#), and in Greek, [Orthodoxy rainbow](#).

