



**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'



*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)*

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Χριστός Ανέστη! Αληθώς Ανέστη!

Христос Воскресе! Воистину
Воскресе!

Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!

Le Christ est ressuscité! Vraiment Il est
ressuscité!

Cristo è risorto! È veramente risorto!

Cristo ressuscitou! Verdadeiramente
ressuscitou!

Cristo ha resucitado! Verdaderamente,
ha resucitado!

Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist
wahrhaftig auferstanden!

Al-Masih-Qam! Hakkan Qam!

基督復活了 他確實復活了

ハリストス復活! 実に復活!



THE MODEL OF PRAYER

Chapter 2; Who art in Heaven

The Father is enthroned above the highest dominions of the cosmos. Deut. 26:15 and 1 Kings 8:30. He is in the heavens; the word *shebashamayim* in Hebrew the word for heaven is plural not singular. God is above us. At the heart of the Lord's Prayer there is a transcendence that we must acknowledge. A main principle in our Orthodox faith is that we can know God through his energies, *energia*, but not in essence, *ousia*. In "The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church", by Vladimir Lossky he quotes St John of Damascus "all that we say positively of God manifests not his nature but the things about his nature."

In Genesis we read how "In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth..." but since God existed before all time and space and since God is spirit there is a spiritual dimension of where He is, unlimited by that which He has created. By the grace of God the heavens are maintained and preserved. Only God is without beginning and end. In Book 2 Chapter 6 on the exposition of the Orthodox Faith, St John of Damascus says concerning the heavens: "Heaven is the circumference of things created, both visible and invisible. For within the boundary are included and marked off both the mental faculties of the angels and all the world of sense. But the Deity alone is uncircumscribed, filling all things and surrounding all things, for He is above all things and has created all things."

We view the physical heavens and contemplate the vastness of the Universe but our comprehension is limited to that which is revealed and experienced; God however is omniscient and omnipresent: Isaiah 55:8; For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,

declares the Lord. **For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

We hear of St Paul speaking of someone who was caught up into the third heaven, **2 Corinthians 12:2**; *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the **third heaven**. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows."*

In St. John's Gospel Our Lord when preparing his disciples in the farewell discourse tells them, John 14:1 *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions."*

For St. Isaac the Syrian the love of God is ever present. Hell is not the absence of God nor the separation from the presence of God; it is to experience the Love of God either as something which is wonderful or terrible depending upon one's spiritual condition. Both Heaven and Hell are conditions of relationship with God either through theosis - the acquisition of the Holy Spirit or perdition which is our choice. For those who hate God it is suffering, it is self exclusion. There is no place where God is not: *God is everywhere. There is no place God is not... You cry out to Him, 'Where art Thou, my God?' And He answers, 'I am present, my child! I am always beside you.' Both inside and outside, above and below, wherever you turn, everything shouts 'God!' In Him we live and move. We breathe God, we eat God, we clothe ourselves with God. Everything praises and blesses God. All of creation shouts His praise. Everything animate and inanimate speaks wondrously and glorifies the Creator. Let every breath praise the Lord!* --- Joseph the Hesychast, 78th Letter.

Psalm 96:11; *Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad. Angels in heaven and men and women on earth are called*

to give glory to God. Indeed, the heavens themselves declare in silent witness the glory of God and proclaim through their vastness and greatness the power of their Creator.

St John Chrysostom in his Homily 19 on St Matthew's Gospel points to the fact that Christ when he teaches *Our Father in heaven* is not separating God and cutting Him off from us as a remote figure but rather so that we humans may withdraw from the earth in prayer and fix our gaze on the heavenly realms. Indeed, every Divine Liturgy is the turning of ourselves to God and an experience of the Kingdom of Heaven-the intersection of past and future, east and west, heaven and earth. Our very orientation and posture is Theocentric. In the west, for the most part, the pastor faces the people in an anthropocentric gesture, but in the East for the most part, the priest faces Godwards. This is not insignificant.

"We are convinced that during this Divine Liturgy, we have once again been transferred spiritually in three directions: toward the kingdom of heaven where the angels celebrate; toward the celebration of the liturgy through the centuries; and toward the heavenly kingdom to come." --- Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew during the Divine Liturgy on the feast of St Andrew, Nov. 30, 2006.

Indeed, during the Divine Liturgy we are called to lay aside all earthly care at the singing of the Cherubic Hymn and to mystically represent (more accurately become anikon of) the Cherubim in Heaven as we too chant the thrice holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity. We do this so that we may receive the King of all, escorted invisibly by the hosts of angels. The Church on earth is transformed and transfigured joining with and becoming one with the heavenly Church Triumphant. The church's liturgical song is coordinated with the angels' heavenly doxology, and the priest and people enter

into a radiant invisible and sacred Light. We should not be surprised if we see angels or hear them at the Holy Liturgy. 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"*.

When Christians fall asleep in the Lord and depart this life they await the Resurrection of the Dead. As Christians we believe in Resurrection not in the platonic immortality of the soul. Christians remain a vital part of the Body of Christ which spans heaven and earth. We are *"registered in heaven"* (Hebrews 12:23) with the great cloud of witnesses which surround us. Heaven is the gathering place of the Church inhabited by angels and men. Heaven does not separate the soul from the body but it is where humanity is invigorated by the Holy Spirit and where it is transfigured and perfected. *Consider how august a privilege it is, when angels are present, and archangels throng around, when cherubim and seraphim encircle with their blaze the throne, that a mortal may approach with unrestrained confidence, and converse with heaven's dread Sovereign! O, what honour was ever conferred like this? --- St John Chrysostom, On Prayer.*

Psalms 19:1; *"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork."* This then is the proclamation of the heavenly realm for the glory of God

their Creator, amplified and translated on earth by the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles. Romans 10:18; *"Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."*

God speaks and the heavens and the earth come into being, but the voice of God is not a monologue it is a dialogue with His creation. Christ who sits at the right hand of the Father and who is the Word of the Father speaks from Heaven and the Universe is full of His glory.

... To be continued.

Fr Jonathan



IS EUROPE STILL CHRISTIAN?

Recent tragic events and the general political crisis on European soil, prompted me to reflect more upon its Christian roots and the role it had -and still does- on the formation of our common identity. Christ-ian theology, our own understanding of our faith, has often relied on the be-lie-ver's acceptance of the presence of *anti-nomies* or *paradoxes*; both, in dogmatic definitions and the spiritual formation. For example; Christ is fully divine and fully human, Mary is both Virgin and Mother, and God is at the same time One and Three. All great Orthodox theologians, from the **Cappadocian Fathers** up until 20th century Russian thinkers like **Fr. Pavel Florensky** and **Vladimir**

Lossky, affirmed that this is the safest way of 'theologising' for the Christians – the way that will help them avoid the pitfall of 'conceptual idolatry': the temptation to construct our own 'supreme knowledge of the divine realities' simply through the use of everyday human logic. Antinomies are therefore important, to remind us that God is far beyond our immediate comprehension, and they should have a powerful effect of humbling minds and hearts in the face of eternal and the most holy mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption.

This reflective tension that defines all Christian theology should also be present, I believe, in the correct interpretation of the Holy Scriptures as well as their implementation in our daily lives. In the Bible in general, and in the New Testament in particular, there is a strong sense of God's desire for human -or Israel's- *self-affirmation* and *self-expression*, as a sign of His infinite love and inexhaustible mercy for us. At the same time we are also very much aware of the ever-increasing need for *self-giving*, almost to the point of the total *self-denial*. An example given by Christ is more than sufficient to inform us, how serious we must take God's commandment regarding the love for our neighbour, and shockingly, even for our enemies! At this point, you may naturally ask: what has all this has to do with the Christian roots of the common European values and OUR way of life (I made an assumption that such a thing exists, as a more or less unifying factor, but you may still disagree). The paradox of co-existing *affirmative* and *expressive* drives in the Christian story, side by side with the *giving* and *sacrificial* side of it, has left, in my view, a permanent mark on 'European soul', shaping forever her spiritual character and giving the flavour to her way of understanding the universe and its meaning for us.

The secular European project, which had deserted and purposefully forgotten the Christian faith of the forefathers - still couldn't fully escape its life-giving influence. Beneath the agnostic sediment of *human rights* and *freedom of expression* type of rhetoric, there is still hidden something of the Christ's *divine empathy* and the *acceptance of the sinner*. His gracious forgiveness and His respect for uniqueness of the person, however deprived they are, resonates down the ages and it can still be faintly detected in the individual-centred attitudes of post-Enlightenment, European intelligentsia. However, the Russian Orthodox 19th century writer, **Fyodor M. Dostoevsky**, reminded us of the dire consequences that 'God-amnesia' has upon the individual and the society as a whole.

Even before the hyper-secular 20th century, he prophesised in his novels that godless ideologies lead to utter confusion and eventually to perdition of civilisation. Even when encouraging human creativity through politics, science and arts, by ignoring the religious nature of the Person; they are unwittingly creating the cultural vacuum that will be filled with destructive and anti-human forces. In their delusion and blindness, even when offering the power to the individual to determine herself: in the long term, without fully internalising Christ's corrective of self-emptying and free Gift -it will all fail as a victim of one-sided Humanism; one that finds its freedom in this world, and not in the Kingdom of Heaven. Europe will rediscover her neglected 'soul' once again through the divine antinomies/paradoxes of Christ's Godmanhood; of the One who *affirms* in Giving and *expresses* by Letting Go - of all that is not God's will and joy. Europe will then, once again, find her true calling.

Aleksandar Miljkovic
London

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

May 26: *Paraskeui*

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

Crista Morgan has kindly offered to take Sunday School on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. Crista is a Primary-Junior School teacher and so is amply qualified to take charge of our little ones. The Sunday School will begin at 10.30 a.m. and be for 45 minutes until 11.15 a.m. on these Sundays; they will then join the rest of the Congregation at the Holy Liturgy for Holy Communion. They will be meeting in the Vestry; it may be a good idea to bring a cushion! This is the practice at our Cathedral of St George in London when Samira brings out about 40 children from Sunday School to receive the Holy Mysteries. We ask God's blessing. Matthew 19:14 ; *But Jesus said, Let the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

We thank Tony Plater for his lovely work for God, constructing our new Readers Stand as well as for the embellishments above the Holy Doors and framework for the *Platytera* Banner. The

Cross will be replaced eventually with an Icon of the Mystical Supper that Pater Eustathios from Cyprus has promised us. Photos of the Readers stand and the iconostasis follow.



We also thank Kostas Papaconstantinou from Cyprus for the parcel of the incense, charcoal and Easter prayer cards, Ioanna Nassiopoulou from Athens for the Liturgical books in both English and Greek, the candles, incense and candle holders, Nikolaos Georgopoulos from Athens and Christodoulos Skempes and Konstantinos Voutzoulides from Patmos for the box of candles and incense, and Apostolos and Kleio Kechagia from Thessalonica for the beautiful Icon of St Paisios, the case for the Saint's relics and stand as well as the lovely Persian carpets

for the church. Finally our thanks go to the choir from Thessalonica for enhancing with such beauty our Paschal worship. We give thanks to God for all gifts!



STAVRONIAN CORNER

Dear Father Jonathan,

We hope you are doing well. We would like to send greetings to Lancaster Orthodox community and share some pictures, may be you will like them. We had snow last weekend (April 9 and 10) and some frost; temperature was -6 C at night and -4 C at day in Michigan, instead of spring flowers and sunshine. It is good that fruit trees are not blossomed yet, so possibly we can have apples, peaches and famous Michigan cherries at summer. Now we have sunshine and they promise warm weather this week. I attached some pictures.

Thank you for your prayers, kindness, support.

With love,
Alla, Andrei and Masha



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st May: Great and Holy Pascha

2nd May: St George the Great Martyr and Triumphant

8th May: St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenius the Great

11th May: Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Equal-to-the Apostles

21st May: St. Constantine and Helen Equal-to-the Apostles

23rd May: The retrieval of the relics of St. Joachim of Ithaca



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 May*

Sun. 1st	15:00	Holy Pascha – Vespers of Love
Sat. 7th	13:00	Confessions and Synaxarion
	14:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 8th	10:00	Hours
	10:30	Holy Liturgy
Sat. 14th	13:00	Confessions and Synaxarion
	14:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 15th	10:00	Hours
	10:30	Holy Liturgy
Sat. 21st	13:00	Confessions and Synaxarion
	14:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 22nd	10:00	Hours
	10:30	Holy Liturgy
Sat. 28th	13:00	Confessions and Synaxarion
	14:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 29th	10:00	Hours
	10:30	Holy Liturgy

*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, [Orthodoxo rainbow](#).

