



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. Κόνιτς, 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)*

ECCLESIASTICAL NEW YEAR SEPTEMBER 1st

Christ our God, Your kingdom is an everlasting one and Your lordship is over all. You have made all things with wisdom and have established proper times and seasons for our lives. We give thanks to You in all circumstances and for all things. Lord, bless the beginning of our Church year with Your goodness. Grant that this liturgical year be for all of us a year of grace. Make us worthy with purity of heart always to praise you. Lord, glory to You!

Bless, O Lord, the crown of the year with Your goodness!



THE MODEL OF PRAYER

Chapter 6; And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

The traditional word trespasses is probably more accurately translated in St. Matthew's Gospel as "debts" (τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν). St. Luke records trespasses as "sins" (τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν). Debts are not simply to do with financial matters although provision was made in the Old Testament for a person to be forgiven their financial obligations in the Jubilee year (Leviticus 25:9-12). The Jubilee occurred every 50 years when all outstanding debts were cancelled, slaves were set free from bondage to their masters and any land that had been

appropriated as collateral restored. In the reconciling providence of God, provision is made for cancelling debt and sin. God is generous. He does not exact the justice and punishment which is due, but there is a reciprocity required in God's leniency. We too have to exercise the same generosity of spirit by relinquishing that which may be due to us. To be reconciled with God, we must be reconciled with others through forgiveness.

The Parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:21-35) is a response to Peter's question: "*Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?*" Jesus said to him, "*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*" Our Lord goes on to relate the parable of a servant, who having been forgiven a large debt by his Master fails to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a small amount. Forgiveness, Christ goes on to say, must be from the heart. What we owe to others may be more than money. Indeed, the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 13:8; "*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another...*"

Sin (ἁμαρτία), as used in St Luke's Gospel is to miss the mark used in ancient Greek Literature to describe archers who missed or fell short of the target. Within the Christian understanding therefore it is to fall short of the perfection which is demanded by the Father in heaven and which is to be found in Christ: Matt. 5:48; "*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*"

The difference in translation may be explained by the fact that Aramaic, the dialect of Hebrew that Our Lord spoke and that is still spoken in our Orthodox Antiochian Monastery in Maaloula, Syria, uses the same word for sin and debt, *chobayn*; indeed it is a play on words. We

ask God to forgive our sins as we forgive our debtors. In this sense our sins are not merely transgressions of specific commandments (of which trespass may be considered an example) they are omissions by thought, word and deed ...that which we have left undone and that which we owe to others. A spiritual son reminded me recently that I owed him something. When I asked what it was, he said *"You owe me your prayers, father!"*

Whether it be by the breaking of God's laws or by the falling short of His perfection we find the way of reconciliation through forgiveness and repentance. *May I also find the way through repentance* is an expression that we find in the Orthodox funeral service. Our forgiveness is conditional upon our repentance and how we forgive others.

This is probably the most difficult of all the stanzas in the Lord's Prayer to pray. How hard it is to let go of those who have offended and hurt us and who have spoken evil against us, who have broken trust and deceived us? How difficult we find it to let go of those lingering injustices that have been committed against us, those grievances that are played over and over again in our head like a scratched vinyl record. How alien it is to forgive those who have hurt our children, our friends and those we love? However, such bitternesses and resentments destroy our peace of mind, cloud our judgements and seriously endanger our immortal soul. Many lives have been lost and destroyed through the passions desire for retribution even if this remains a thought and not acted upon. The spiral of feeling sorry for oneself, self pity, becomes a kind of inverted pride and eventually a self-obsession which leads to isolation which is a state of hell.

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.

---St. John of Kronstadt

This request is like a mirror for our hearts. We begin to see the loving forgiveness and mercies of God who is Judge of all when we forgive others and God's forgiveness for us is dependant upon us forgiving others. This is at the heart of the new contract - the new covenant, the New Testament. James 1:22-24; *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

Our only recourse in such times is to God alone and to repent of our own wrong doings and to recognise our own sins. How easy it is to see the fault in others, how easy it is to justify our own faults. Sin warps our sensitivity to others and turns us inward, shrivelling our souls in a poisonous concoction of jealousy, pride and mistrust which blinds us to our own perilous state. However, we should distinguish being sorry for our sins from repenting them. Sorrow is not the same as repentance. We may say "I am sorry" because of a wrong or an offence has been discovered; but even when this sorrow is genuine and accompanied by tears it is an emotional response. What is required is a change of mind (repentance) to address the causes of our misdemeanours and offences. Being sorry may bring about a temporary catharsis but repentance addresses the underlying triggers and causes and leads to a long term

solution whereby our minds are confronted with the truth about ourselves.

There is a story about St Augustine of Hippo who became angry with a person who day after day seemed to thwart everything that he wanted to do. One day, totally at a loss as what to do about this troublesome man who had been particularly irritating, St Augustine fell to his knees in exasperation and prayed *"Please God remove this monster!"* He heard a voice from heaven asking: *"Which one?"*

We must cultivate an honest and true self appraisal. We should guard our vulnerability and take care not to let ourselves be offended. If we encounter those who are a vexation to our spirit we should quietly withdraw so that we do not allow anger its full rein and so fall into judgement of others and ourselves.

St Anthony the Great in his letters wrote: *"He who knows himself has known God..."* Certainly we must know ourselves before we can know others and if we cannot forgive others then we our knowledge is actually a pride or a prejudice. *"We do not have any genuine knowledge of those whom we hate."* ---Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way. St Isaac the Syrian writes in his second homily: *"There is no sin which cannot be pardoned except that one which lacks repentance, and there is no gift which is not augmented save that which remains without acknowledgement. For the portion of the fool is small in his eyes."*

We must pray for those who offend against us in love. Should our prayers and forgiveness extend even to the devil and his fallen angels? Elder Paisios, now the newly glorified St Paisios, once fasted and prayed for two weeks for the eternal salvation of the devil. Whilst praying he saw a dog's head sticking his tongue out and mocking him. Paisios concluded from this incident that *"God is ready to accept*

the demons provided they repent, but they themselves do not want their salvation." His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos Ware in his book *The Inner Kingdom* pp 202-203 writes: *"Yet, even though it is not for us to pray for the devil, we have no right to assume that he is totally and irrevocably excluded from the scope of God's mercy."* Satan, even though he is a creature of God to whom God extends His love, is the father of pride.

Repentance is the renewal of baptism. Repentance is a contract with God for a second life. A penitent is a buyer of humility. Repentance is constant distrust of bodily comfort. Repentance is self-condemning reflection, and carefree self-care. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. A penitent is an undisgraced convict. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the sins. Repentance is purification of conscience. Repentance is the voluntary endurance of all afflictions. A penitent is the inflicter of his own punishments. Repentance is a mighty persecution of the stomach, and a striking of the soul into vigorous awareness. ---St John Climacus

... To be continued
Fr Jonathan

WHY SUFFERING?

Why does the good Lord permit assaults and sufferings on the True Faith while He permits the pleasure of tranquillity to heresies and paganism? Why? St. John Chrysostom asks and immediately replies: *"So that you would recognise their weakness when you see that they disintegrate on their own without any disturbance and also to be convinced in the power of faith*

which endures misfortunes and even multiplies through its adversaries."

St. Isaac the Syrian says: *"The wondrous love of God toward man is recognised when man is in misfortunes that are destroying his hope. Here, God manifests His power for his [man's] salvation. For man never recognises the power of God in tranquillity and freedom."*

Fr Jonathan

THE DIASPORA AND MISSION

I often hear the word "diaspora", "dispersed" to describe those Orthodox Christians worshipping outside their homelands or canonically defined jurisdictions. Originally used in connection with the Jewish people who were forced into exile outside Israel (Deuteronomy 28:25), it has come to be used for those Orthodox Christians falling outside their traditional cultural nascent homelands and living in countries where multiple jurisdictions appertain as in the USA, Australia or Western Europe. Assignment of the "disapora" according to the interpretation of Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council was granted to New Rome-Constantinople to take pastoral oversight over the "Barbarian" lands.

The reposed Metropolitan Philip of North America of thrice memory said: "I believe that Canon 28, historically, is a contextual canon and not a dogmatic one; it gave the city of Constantinople certain rights as the New Rome for secular, political reasons because it was the seat of the emperor."

If we look to the Apostolic age we see in the Acts of the Apostles that it was the Patriarchate of Antioch that established mission to the "Gentiles" through St Paul the Apostle. All three of his missionary

journeys were launched from Antioch. It was His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatios IVth who saw that the manner of living the catholicity of the Church is in full freedom in the Holy Spirit and not in blind adherence to the letter of the canons; because, "the canons were made for the Church and not the Church for the canons." With spiritual courage, he maintained that "nothing prevents the modification of old and obsolete canons. We must search diligently for the realization of the Church in her present and given historical context, otherwise we die and we become nothing more than a museum filled with mummies."

I am not part of any "diaspora," I am an Orthodox Priest born in the United Kingdom and I am an adopted son of Antioch. There are many Orthodox Christians whose parents were from different jurisdictions who were born here and are baptised into the Orthodox Church which may or may not be part of their "national" jurisdiction. Practically all of our Antiochian Parishes in Britain and Ireland are Pan-Orthodox in their demography. Glory to God!

The Church as we say in the Creed is **One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic**. Those who do not see mission as important are not true Orthodox Christians. Complacency and self regard emanate from empty vessels, veiling themselves with the masks of actors and national flags. Whilst less common the "older brother" syndrome sadly still persists in some circles towards so called "converts." The Parable of the Prodigal son (who he was guilty of many sins-Luke 15:11-32) is also a Parable about the Older son whose character is painted as pompous, aloof, resentful, self righteous, grudging, sullen, angry, complaining and jealous. One can do all the right things but with the wrong spirit!

From the very beginning the Church was **One** - she expressed herself at a local

level but the faith and doctrine she proclaimed as being held in unity. We hold the faith as **Holy** - as those called to imitate Christ and to separate ourselves from sin, not from one another on the basis of ethnic identity. The Church is **Catholic** that is “universal”; a proclamation which we make on the Sunday of Orthodoxy: ***This is the Faith of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the Faith which has established the Universe.*** And the Church is **Apostolic** based on the teaching, preaching and tradition of the Apostles and by nature “sent out” to preach the Saving Gospel to all nations. From the start, the Church was apostolic and evangelistic in her calling and command. Ethnic pride is simply a form of pharisaism and the very antithesis of Our Lord’s last command: Matthew 28:19-20; ***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.***

Certainly there are those waiting to hear the word of salvation, but there is no such thing as “the diaspora” -quite the opposite- only those called and gathered (the **ekklesia** - the total body of believers belonging to the Lord who are called out from the world) into the Kingdom of God. Luke 13:29; ***And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.***

So we have much to do - because for to those who have been given much, much is expected. We rejoice with those returning to the Orthodox Church. We weep with those who find themselves exiled from their lands. We are warmed by the fact that so many of our parishes are microcosms of Pentecost with faithful

being welcomed from all over the world regardless of nationality. We thank God that we witness strength of faith and growth in His Church and we ask empowerment for the apostolic mission set before us to bring God’s love to a hungry world.

The glory of God is revealed in joy. The mercy of God is experienced in suffering. The grace of God is discovered in fellowship. The power of God is realised in miracles. The love of God is manifested in mission.

Fr Jonathan

RELEASE THE RELICS!

Such fragments of dust charged by bliss
Are containers of the Father’s love;
Buried in the fertile soil discovered,
Absorbing truth, exuding faith
Transforming earth through a heavenly kiss:

Retrieve the Relics.

Whose is their face, their image, seal?
Where the provenance for holy bones?
Who lie beneath false moons, fake stars and Creations’ groans;
Christ is their home, their being and their source
To sing His grace in symphonic tones.

Relocate the relics!

Those precious ones who acquired the Light, hard won;
“He that has the Son has life” we read.
The blind and lame find their way home following
The plough, that turns the turf to the Sun;
Revive the seeds, reform the rebellious ones.

Reilluminate the Relics

“Can these bones live?” asked God to his exiled flock
Lifeless in the war strewn sand, upon a human threshing floor
Prodigal flesh awakes when ground is dug
“He was lost and is found” in a Father’s hug
Time to rewind the mortal clock!

Reinstate the Relics

Today we seek Elisha’s bones, to find his power,
Iridescent in poor cloth and marrow veiled to
Smell the fragrant scent;
Share that which imbues a holy residue
Who could resist such a sweet scented flower?

Redistribute the Relics

A double portion of Elijah’s spirit clings to those who seek
The Incarnation and the promise of the Christ.
No frame to hold yet by Spirit borne,

These bones yet live
and grant new structures to the weak:

Restore the Relics

Collect the dust! The Lord it was who shaped us men
Dried up are we, bleached white by the scorching sun
Open the door and let Christ in
And our bones will live again!
Your bones will live again!

Resurrect the Relics

Fr Jonathan

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Sept. 1: *Pericles*

Sept. 29: *Georgios*

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

Our Community is blessed in having an imprint of the Burning Bush on stone from Mount Sinai. It was caused by the Uncreated Light of God and is unique to Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. For further information on the Burning Bush and Mount Sinai, please click [here](#).

It is with great pleasure to announce that Barnabas Dickinson is soon to be awarded the Légion d'Honneur by the

French Government as a Normandy Veteran. We give thanks to God that such a distinguished honour would be awarded to such a noble, virtuous and deserving man. Of course with due humility he said *"I can't imagine why they would want to give it to me."* May God grant our beloved Barnabas many years!



Barnabas in his home at Chorley.



Parish photo after the Holy Liturgy celebrating the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour! The blessing of the grapes occurred at the end of the Liturgy.



Fr Jonathan after the blessing of the grapes at the end of the Holy Liturgy.

STAVRONIAN CORNER

We are so very grateful to those who remember us in their prayers and show their love as generous benefactors of our Parish. First of all, we would like to thank Marina Bontch from Germany, for the lovely Icon of the Mother of God Eleousa which arrived safely on the Feast of the Transfiguration (New Julian Calendar). We would like to thank Patricia Chiracu and her parents from Romania for the beautiful hand embroidered cloths from Romania for our temple. We also thank Ioana Plater for cleaning the holy priestly vestments and liturgical cloths. May God give the reward and bless all of you for your kindness!

We say farewell to Patricia Chiracu and to Dimitri and Ekaterina Ismaguilov who move on from Lancaster University. They have been very much a part of our Parish and contributed so much to our services and Orthodox Community. They will continue to be in our prayers and our hearts and we wish them well in their life journey in Christ.



A lovely picture from Adamos Papadopoulos from Cyprus, with his mother and grandfather priest!

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Sept: The Ecclesiastical New Year
8th Sept: The Nativity of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary
9th Sept: The Holy & Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna
11th Sept: St. Euphrosynus the Cook
14th Sept: The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross
16th Sept: The Great Martyr Euphemia the All-praised
17th Sept: Martyr Sophia and her three daughters, Pistis (Faith, Vera), Elpis (Hope, Nadezhda) and Agape (Love, Lyubov)
19th Sept: St. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury

24th Sept: St. Silouan the Athonite

25th Sept: St. Sergius, Abbot and
Wonderworker of Radonezh

28th Sept: St. Lioba of Wimborne, Abbess
of Bischofsheim (†782)

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

Services at St Martin's in September*

Sat. 3 rd	13:00	Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 4 th	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 10 th	13:00	Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 11 th	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Tue. 13 th	18:30	Great Vespers followed by fasting meal celebrating the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Sat. 17 th	13:00	Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 18 th	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 24 th	13:00	Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 25 th	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy followed by Parish lunch

*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 -



For further information please contact:

Father Jonathan Hemmings

67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ

Tel: +44 1524 840759, +44 1524 580600

Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk

www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk

www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk

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



Top and bottom sketches are created at the Holy Monastery of "The Annunciation of the Theotokos" Chios, Greece, courtesy of Fr Theodosios Dendrinis, Ithaca, Greece.
The sketch of Christ by Photis Kontoglou was scanned from the Orthodox calendar of the Apatoulaki Diakonia of the Church of Greece.