



**The Orthodox Parish  
of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,  
Lancaster, UK.**

***The Stavronian***

*a monthly magazine & newsletter publicised 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)*

## EASTER PILGRIMAGE 2018

*Paschal Holy Dances in Attica, Aegina and Euboia - Musings from a Bright Week pilgrimage*

This Bright Week<sup>1</sup> pilgrimage was appropriately the brightest I have ever participated in! It felt like the fulfilment of St. John's of Damascus Mystical Pascha captured in his Paschal Canon! To be sure, any trip to Greece in springtime straight from a foggy, misty, rainy England is bound to feel full of light! Especially if to Athens and the islands!

Still, the Light which nearly blinded all of us during this Bright Week pilgrimage must have contained a tiny ray of Christ's Light<sup>2</sup>! A palpable, tangible Trans-

figuration Light dancing in all pilgrims' eyes, on the bus and in all the monasteries we visited. The atmosphere felt so light as if we were all to collectively Ascend to Heavens. The sheer exuberance of "Christ is Risen" chanted 99 times every single day during Resurrection Day and All Bright Week made our hearts leap with joy! And our Lord's greeting "Rejoice!" in all the 11 Resurrectional Matins (Eothina) Gospels reverberated in our hearts. And as we were soon to find out, we were about to meet lots of literally dancing and leaping holy men and women.

That was another discovery of that week: how many Paschal verses indeed contain this image of "leaping":

- 1 Bright week begins with the Sunday of Pascha, and comes to a close on Bright Saturday, at Vespers. One may actually argue that Bright week comes to a close before the ninth hour (which precedes vespers), since the royal doors and deacons' doors, which have been wide open all week, are closed. This is a sad and significant moment. Just like our forefathers Adam and Eve, we cannot remain in paradise in this life, because of our sins. Ours is a life of struggle against our passions, which hold us back from full realization of paradise in this life. 'How many days are in Bright week?' There are TWO correct answers! According to the sun's rising and setting, Bright week is seven days, (Sunday through Saturday) but to the church, liturgically, it is one day - the "eighth day".
- 2 Cf. Lev Gillet's notes on the theme of light in the Byzantine liturgical year. 'Come, take light from the Light that has no evening, and glorify Christ, risen from the dead.' On the Sunday Pascha, the celebrant stands at the royal doors of the iconostasion and holds a lighted candle in his hand. "Once more, the eastern Church represents the Christian mystery in terms of the mystery of light; this Light, whose birth was marked by the star of Bethlehem, has been shining among us with growing intensity; the darkness of Golgotha could not extinguish it. Now it reappears among us, and all the candles which the congregation hold in their hands, and that they now light, proclaim its triumph. In this way, the deeply spiritual meaning of Easter is indicated. The physical Resurrection of Jesus would be without value to us if the divine light did not shine at the same time among us, within us. We cannot worthily celebrate the Resurrection of Christ if, in our soul, the light brought by the Saviour has not completely overcome the darkness of our sins." [The Uncreated Light] on Easter



*Pantokratoros Monastery in Ntaou Penteli*

night triumphs over the darkness; at Pentecost it reaches its full zenith. Pentecost is the 'midday flame'. (The Year of the Grace of the Lord by a Monk of the Eastern Church, p177 and p215 respectively).

## The Paschal Canon

### Ode 4

David, the forefather of our divine Lord,  
*leapt and danced* before the symbolical  
Ark of the Covenant.

### Ode 5

When they who were held by the chains  
of hell beheld Thy boundless compassion,  
O Christ, they hastened to the Light with  
*joyful feet*, exalting the eternal Pascha.

### Ode 7

We celebrate the death of death, the de-  
struction of hell, the beginning of eternal  
life. And *leaping for joy*, we celebrate the  
Cause, the only blessed and most glorious  
God of our fathers.

## The Paschal Stichera In Tone Five

Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and *leap for joy*, in  
that thou beholdest Christ the King like a  
bridegroom come forth from the grave.

Everybody in our mixed company on the bus was exhausted even before starting out! Doctors, reeling after long shifts, having barely slept for more than 3-4 hours in 3-4 days in a row; parents struggling with noisy, boisterous, excited young children; senior high-school and university students in distress, studying for their final exams ...on the bus! All were desperately trying to get some sleep... But the most exhausted of us all was our accompanying priest, Hieromonk Synesios, after a rigorous monastic Great Lent and Holy Week, on top of all his other duties. St Arsenios, as in all past pilgrimages, was at the front seat of the bus. The pilgrimage was brief but packed and hectic, so let me simply offer a few Paschal, mostly “leaping/dancing” vignettes which made the greatest impression to me:



## Bright Tuesday

Morning Holy Liturgy at the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St Dionysios of Olympus: I can literally feel the 179 Martyrs presence on me, as Fr Jonathan had insisted that I carry them during this pilgrimage, especially on their Feast Day<sup>3</sup>. Of course, the truth is the other way round: it is always the Saints who are carrying us. Archimandrite Theoklitos had offered a tiny fragment of the 179 Martyrs' relics to our Holy Cross parish, which is displayed for veneration in the Holy Liturgy, and will later in the day return to ‘their own’ monastery to be ‘reunited’ with their brethren on their feast day.

Holy Monastery of Saint Ephraim of Nea Makri, the Wonderworker and Newly-Revealed: A strange spectacle is awaiting us at the monastery gates: a leaping and dancing Resurrectional priest, a modern St Seraphim of Sarov figure, who greets all who enter the monastery with a kiss, and the words of the

3 The 179 Holy Martyrs were massacred by pirates into the katholikon, on Pascha 1680, during the midnight service, after the final "Christ is Risen!" was joyfully chanted by the fathers following the Divine Liturgy. Similarly, Saints Raphael, Nikolaos and Eirini were tortured from Holy Thursday until Bright Tuesday when they were eventually martyred on April 9, 1463. St Ephraim of Nea Makri was himself too martyred by the Turks on Tuesday May 5, 1426.

Paschal greeting: "*Christ is Risen!*" He is literally leaping with joy and greeting all pilgrims in a 'dance routine'!

Pantokratoros Monastery in Ntaou Penteli: Vespers and a Holy Procession of the 179 Martyrs. During the Procession, Abbess Styliani's face is lit and transfigured in ecstasy. Together with all the nuns, she too is dancing the Resurrection dance. She is also blessing all pilgrims with a large pectoral Cross.

### Bright Wednesday

St. Nektarios the Wonderworker's monastery, Agia Triada (The Holy Trinity) in Aegina: Packed with pilgrims from all corners of the world. We offer our poor prayers, light our candles and kneel at his tomb to receive his blessing. Will we hear his footsteps? Clack, clack, clack. Tap, tap, tap... God is glorified in His Saints! Not only his footsteps but the sound of a solid wooden walking stick too! And lots of other movement, a slower dance beneath, but a dance it was! We are all holding our breaths.



*Pantokratoros Monastery in Ntaou Penteli: Vespers and Holy Procession of the icon of 179 Martyrs.*

### Bright Thursday

New Prokopion on the Greek Island of Evia – Holy Confessor John the Russian's<sup>4</sup> incorruptible<sup>5</sup> relics: Endless queues of pilgrims here too. His relics stun us with the Life and Holiness they emanate. While venerating, we are reminded of a 'dialogue' between this Saint and St Iakovos Tsalikis:

*– "People think that I am sleeping, I am dead, and they pay no attention. But I am*

4 A famous incident in St John the Russian's life is the 'teleporting' of a plate of pilaf to his master with the power of the Holy Spirit: "One day, the officer left Prokopion and went to Mecca on pilgrimage. A few days later, his wife gave a banquet and invited her husband's friends and relatives, asking them to pray for her husband's safe return. Saint John served at the table, and he put down a dish of pilaf, his master's favorite food. The hostess said, "How much pleasure your master would have if he could be here to eat this pilaf with us." Saint John asked for a dish of pilaf, saying that he would send it to his master in Mecca. The guests laughed when they heard his words. The mistress, however, ordered the cook to give him a dish of pilaf, thinking he would eat it himself, or give it to some poor family. Taking the dish, Saint John went into the stable and prayed that God would send it to his master. He had no doubt that God would send the pilaf to his master in a supernatural manner. The plate disappeared before his eyes, and he went into the house to tell his mistress that he had sent the pilaf to his master. After some time, the master returned home with the copper plate which had held the pilaf. He told his household that on a certain day (the very day of the banquet), he returned from the mosque to the home where he was staying. Although the room was locked, he found a plate of steaming pilaf on the table. Unable to explain who had brought the food, or how anyone could enter the locked room, the officer examined the plate. To his amazement, he saw his own name engraved on the copper plate. In spite of his confusion, he ate the meal with great relish. When the officer's family heard this story, they marveled. His wife told him of how John had asked for a plate of pilaf to send to his master in Mecca, and how they all laughed when John came back and said that it had been sent. Now they saw that what the saint had said was true." (Compare the story of Habakkuk, who miraculously brought a dish of pottage to Daniel in the lions' den [Dan. 14:33-39], in the Septuagint).

5 "Undeteriorated relics are, in our tradition, the indisputable evidence of theosis, or in other words the fulfillment of the Church's ascetic therapy." - Fr. John Romanides

alive. I see everybody. My body is inside, but I often depart from my shrine. I run to people to help them. Great is the pain. They do not see me, but I see them and I hear what they say. And then, I come back and enter again my shrine. But listen carefully to me, Father, to what I will tell you: great is the sin in the world, great is the impiety and irreverence, and great is the unbelief.”

– “But why do you say these things my Saint?” I replied. “Don’t you see how many people come here and venerate you?”

– “Many are those that come, Fr Iakovos, but few are my spiritual children... For great is the sin in the world.”



*The Cell of St. Porphyrios at the Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ, Milies*

## Bright Friday

Monastery of Transfiguration near Rovies, island of Evia, constructed by St David,

and served by the recently canonised St. Iakovos Tsalikis<sup>6</sup>:

We spend the night at its guests’ dorm. Our room is right above the chicken’s coop and we spend an unforgettable night in the company of ducks, hens, cocks, and peacocks mysteriously engaged in a boisterous all night vigil. In the morning, we participate at the Holy Liturgy for the the Feast of the Life Giving Spring. St. Iakovos Tsalikis’, “O Me Synchoreite”, or “The ‘Forgive me’”, presence is palpable everywhere. It was typical of him that, when he spoke, every now and again he’d say: ‘Forgive me’, hence the ‘nickname’ “O Me Synchoreite”, i.e. “The ‘Forgive me’”. He was forever asking people’s forgiveness, a sign of his humble<sup>7</sup> outlook.

## Epilogue

One young convert, radiant after experiencing his first Pascha in the wilderness, was asked by Fr Seraphim: “Well, how did you like the Feast?” “It was wonderful!” replied the elated pilgrim. “Don’t waste what you’ve been given,” Fr Seraphim said, echoing the words of Bishop Nektary. “Don’t spill the grace. Keep it there!” As he said this, Fr Seraphim tapped the young man’s chest, right on his heart<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Recently canonised by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on November 27, 2017

<sup>7</sup> His humility, which was legendary and inspiring, was his main characteristic. The demons which were in the possessed people who went to the monastery cursed him and said: ‘We want to destroy you, to neutralize you, to exterminate you, but we can’t because of your humility’. He always highlighted his lack of education, his inadequacies and his humbleness. Once, when he was invited to visit the Monastery of Saint George Armas, where the abbot was the late Fr. George Kapsanis, he replied: ‘Fathers, I’m a dead dog. What will I do if I come to see you? Pollute the air?’ He always had the sense that he was a mere nothing.

<sup>8</sup> [Iconandlight blog: “Don’t spill the grace; keep it there” by Fr Seraphim Rose](#)



Does not any holiday in Greece conjure up images of idyllic islands, long sandy beaches, sun-bleached ruins and turquoise blue sea? Yet nothing had prepared me for the sheer explosion of so much sun and light and the big blue of the sky and the sea! How have I ever got used here at the UK to take such bleakness and darkness for normal? ... “If you deconstruct Greece, you will in the end see an olive tree, a grapevine, and a boat. That is, with as much, you reconstruct her.” (Odysseas Elytis) Indeed. But sun too in this equation! Sun indeed is the bright constant in Greece as the Son is the Bright constant in Bright Week!

*Kleio Kechagia*



*St Iakovos Tsalikis' grave at the Monastery of Transfiguration, known also as the Monastery of St David, island of Evia*

## PARISH NEWS

It was a blessing for members of our Church to be present at the Archdiocesan Conference even though His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan was unable to attend. We raised £218 for Church funds with the sale of ecclesiastical items: Icons, Incense, Shrouds, Crosses, Komboskini etc.

We are so very grateful to those who remember us in their prayers and show their love as generous benefactors of our Parish. We would like to thank Dmitry Ismagilov, and Miroslav Barabash for the kind donation of candles for our church. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!

## OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Alla Ganshyna from Michigan, USA, sent the following email to Fr Jonathan along with greetings to the Parish.

Dear Fr Jonathan,

I hope you are doing well. On Saturday, Masha and I had a wonderful trip to the Romanian Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God, Rivers Junction, MI. There were ladies from three Churches, from the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity (we are attending this Church), from St. Andrew's Orthodox Church, East Lansing, and from St. Joseph Melkite, Greek Catholic Church. We visited the Monastery with our friends from Lebanon; one of their daughter is Masha's age and they are in the same class.

We went there early and attended the Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service. We then had a tour of the Monastery and had lunch with delicious food and wine in the Dining Hall (Trapeza).

I had the opportunity to speak with Mother Gabriella and Fr John (he is priest in the Monastery). I passed on your thanks for the lovely icon and mentioned the story of your visit to Tismana and meeting for Fr Ioanichie Balan. I passed on your request and asked them if they would like you to send them a few copies of your book "Fountains in the Desert" in English and Romanian. Mother Gabriella said, that it would be a blessing to have your book as a present, and I left your email to them in case they would like to contact you. You can find information about the Monastery and address on their website.

This is the second time I visited the Monastery. We had heavy rain especially in the morning and during the tour we were mostly inside. And again when I left the Monastery I felt like light inside of me (if I can describe it like this), and I was happy that I performed your request.

Please, send best wishes from us to Lancaster Orthodox Community. Thank you for your prayers, support and kindness.

With love,  
Alla, Andrei and Masha.



*The Monastery of St Nektarios in Aegina*

## NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE RE- MEMBERED THIS MONTH

Jun. 5: *Vasileios*

Jun. 22: *Ioannis*

MEMORY ETERNAL!

Please send us the names of your departed loved ones and date of their departure in order for them to be remembered.



## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

5<sup>th</sup> June: Hieromartyr Boniface of Crediton, Archbishop of Mainz (†754)

9<sup>th</sup> June: St. Columba of Iona, Enlightener of Scotland (†597)

16<sup>th</sup> June: St Tychon the Wonderworker

17<sup>th</sup> June: St. Botolph, Abbot of the Monastery of Ikanhoe (†680)

22<sup>nd</sup> June: St. Alban, Protomartyr of Britain (†304)

24<sup>th</sup> June: Nativity of the Forerunner and Baptist John

26<sup>th</sup> June: Appearance of the Icon of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos of Tikhvin

29<sup>th</sup> June: Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles

30<sup>th</sup> June: Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: [www.calendar.goarch.org](http://www.calendar.goarch.org)



### Services at St Martin's in June\*

Sat. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 9 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 10 <sup>th</sup>	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 16 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 17 <sup>th</sup>	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers
Sun. 24 <sup>th</sup>	10:00	Hours and Holy Liturgy
Sat. 30 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Memorial, Confessions, Synaxarion and Great Vespers

\*Help setting up the church is greatly appreciated and starts half an hour before the service.

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“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](#).



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