

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

***The Stavronian***

*Monthly magazine and newsletter publicised by the Holy Cross Synodia*



*Βῆθρονος 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)***

## PUTTING ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD - A PRIEST'S VESTMENTS

*Ephesians 6:11-18; Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*

Recently, I received a gift of a set of beautiful blue Priestly Vestments from Greece. They were sent via an Old Stavro-nian, Anastasia Stamatelatou by the niece of Fr. Chrysostom (of blessed memory) who was a devout Parish Priest in Kefalonia and whose Vestments they were. As I take my holidays "holy-days", often in Sami, Kefalonia and attend the Church there, this lady, mindful and generous of spirit, wanted me to have his apparel. What a beautiful thought, what a treasured gift and what a devout privilege to wear the Eucharistic clothes of a holy cleric who has received the gift of the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of priesthood. Such "second hand" raiments when worn by holy priests become endowed, imbued and invested with divine

authority and power and they become "secondary" living relics.

Vesting prayers are said when the priest puts on each of the Liturgical garment.

**1. The Sticharion:** Usually white or ivory, this is a full length, long sleeved garment with an embroidered cross on the back. This vestment represents the tunic which the soldiers put on Christ before His crucifixion (Matt 27:27-28). It also commemorates the white raiment of the angel who announced the Lord's Resurrection at the tomb to the women (Matt 28:3). It reminds the priest also of the spotless nature of the Church and how he should possess purity of soul especially when he celebrates the Holy Liturgy. The prayer which he says is "*My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, for He has clothed me with the garment of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of joy. He has set a crown on my head like a bridegroom, and like a bride, has He adorned me with ornaments*" (Isaiah 61:10).

**2. The Epitrachelion (Stole):** A full length embroidered cloth which is worn over the shoulders and encircles the neck (epi-trachelion=upon the neck) and which symbolises the priestly authority and responsibility. It signifies the yoke of the priestly office to forgive sins and to carry the weight of pastoral care. It is usually made of brocade with seven embroidered or appliquéd crosses, one at the back of the neck and three down each side. The *epitrachelion* is the only required vestment whenever a priest is conducting an Orthodox service; without it, he is unable to perform the service. The priest wears it whenever serving as a priest. It is said that the fringes represent the prayers said by the priest for the faithful. The prayer said when putting the epitrachelion on is "*Blessed is God who pours out His grace upon His priests; it is as ointment upon the head, that runs*

down to the beard, even the beard of Aaron; that runs down to the fringe of his clothing” (Psalm 133:2).

**3. The Zone (Belt):** Worn around the waist to facilitate movement the priest wears this to gird himself for the task of sacred ministry “*having girded your waist with truth*” in administering the Holy Mystery. It is a sign of Divine empowerment as the priest recites the prayer: “*Blessed is God Who girds me with strength, and makes my way blameless: Who strengthens my feet as hinds’ feet, and sets me upon high places*” (Psalm 18:32-33).

**4. The Epimanekia (Cuffs):** These are fastened upon the wrists and bound with a cord over the Sticharion sleeves. They signify firstly the chains with which the soldiers bound the arms of Christ and secondly they represent the efficacious power of God. As the priest puts the right cuff on he says: “*The right hand O Lord, has been glorified in strength; Thy right hand has broken enemies and in the abundance of Thy glory hast crushed Thy adversaries*” (Exodus 15:6-7). As the priest puts on the left cuff he reflects on the work of God as Creator and Lawgiver: “*Thy hands have made me and moulded me; instruct me that I may learn Thy commandments*” (Psalm 119:73).

**5. The Epigonation:** A lozenge shaped garment suspended from the shoulders and that hangs upon the knee. The wearing of this is an honour bestowed by the Bishop. It signifies the sword of the Spirit, it is granted to those priests to hear confessions and may also symbolise the purses carried by the apostles to give to the poor. “*Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh O Might One, in Thy splendour and in Thy beauty, and go forth and prosper and reign in the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness, and Thy right hand shall guide Thee wondrously*” (Psalm 45:3-5)

**6. The Phelonion:** A richly adorned cloak type garment worn over the other vestments denoting the cloak which Christ wore before Pilate (Matt 27:28). It also denotes the cloak the Apostles wore on their journeys (2 Timothy 4:15). There are different [Liturgical colours](#) worn for the appropriate Feast or Season. As the priest completes his vesting putting on the Phelonion he recites: “*Thy priests O Lord shall clothe themselves with righteousness and Thy saints shall rejoice*” (Psalm 132:9).

**7. The Pectoral Cross:** In the Greek tradition the bestowal by the Bishop of the wearing of the Pectoral Cross for the priest is an honour not a right. If the priest has the dignity of the pectoral cross he puts it on saying: “*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, always now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen*”.

Thus the priest is vested. Thanks be to God who raises up His priests in every age to serve the people of God. Thus, the priest is made worthy by the grace and mercy of God and vested to reflect the glory of God. I am grateful to God that the living proof of the Apostolic Tradition can be witnessed by such transmission of holy Vestments, as one priest passes his precious Eucharistic clothes to another priest in order to serve Christ and the faithful who are called to the Mystical Supper. May your memory be eternal our dear brother and priest Pater Chrysostomos.

*Fr Jonathan*



## ELDER AIMILIANOS

One of the most beloved and revered elders of the Holy Mountain, and all Orthodox, Archimandrite Aimilianos (Vafiadis), who long served as the abbot of Simenopetra Monastery, one of the 20 ruling monasteries on Mt. Athos, reposed in the Lord on May 9<sup>th</sup>, after 23 years of illness and silence in the Sacred Convent of the Annunciation of the Mother of God, Ormylia, Chalkidiki – a large monastic community with over 120 nuns from various nations and a dependency of the Monastery of Simenopetra.

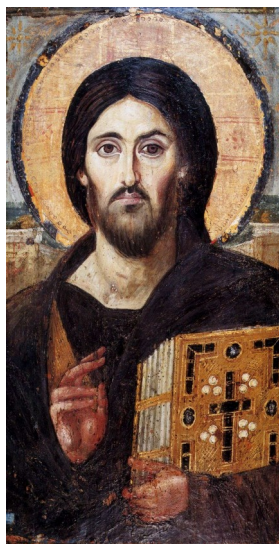
Please have a look at the eyes of the Elder in the following photograph (feels like an icon) how much they resemble Christ's 'different' eyes and left vs right features in that famous Sinai icon\*. Isn't this a striking similarity? Fr Jonathan pointed it out to me. A Gentle, compassionate, Peaceful, yet Stern too.



Photograph of Archimandrite Aimilianos

The following passage is an *antidoron* from his many teachings available in print due to the tireless efforts of the Ormylia nuns for the last 23 years after Gerondas receded into silence\*\*: “Unforeseen things turn up constantly in our way because we have our will and our desires. Those unforeseen things are contrary to our will and desires; this is why they appear unforeseen

to us, although they really are not. Because the person who loves God expects whatever may come, saying always “your will be done!” Rain will come, a storm, hail, thunder? “Blessed be the name of the Lord!” These are unforeseen because they come in contact with our ‘fleshy’ way of being. Therefore, in order not to be unsettled every time and to be upset, not to fret and succumb to anxiety, you have to expect all, and bear whatever may come. You must always say: “Welcome, illness, welcome, failure, welcome, suffering!” This will bring about meekness, without which there cannot exist a spiritual life.”



The icon of Christ Pantocrator, Mt Sinai

The following is the story that Elder Aimilianos told of his own mystical experience, but he told it in the third person: *Permit me to tell you [runs the story] about a certain monk I once knew. Just as all of us have moments of difficulty, he too was passing through a very critical period of his life. The devil had cast fire into his brain, and wanted to strip him of his monastic dignity, and make him a miserable seeker of alleged truth. His soul roared like*

breaking waves, and he sought deliverance from his distress. From time to time, he remembered the Prayer of the Heart, but it resounded only weakly within him, because he had no faith in it. His immediate surroundings were of no help. Everything was negative. His heart was about to break. How wretched man becomes when he is beset by problems! And who among us has not known such terrible days, such dark nights, and agonizing trials?

Our monk did not know what to do. Walks did nothing for him. The night stifled him. And one night, gasping for air, he threw open the window of his cell in order to take a deep breath. It was dark – about three o'clock in the morning. In his great weariness, he was about to close the window, hoping to get at least a few moments of rest. At that very moment, however, it was as if everything around him – even the darkness outside – had become light! He looked to see where such light might be coming from, but it was coming from nowhere. The darkness, which has no existence of its own, had become light, although his heart remained in the dark. And when he turned around, he saw that his cell had also become light! He examined the lamp to see if the light was coming from there, but that one, small oil lamp could not become light itself, neither could it make all things light.

Although his heart was not yet illumined, he did have a certain hope. Overcome with surprise and moved by this hope, but without being fully aware of what he was doing, he went out into the black courtyard of the monastery, which had often seemed to him like hell. He went out into the silence, into the night. Everything was clear as day. Nothing was hidden in the darkness. Everything was in the light: the wooden beams and the windows, the church, the ground he walked on, the sky, the spring of water which flowed continuously, the crickets, the fire-

flies, the birds of the night – everything was visible, every-thing! And the stars came down and the sky lowered itself, and it seemed to him that everything, earth and sky, had become like heaven! And everything together was chanting the prayer [i.e. of the heart], everything was saying the prayer. And his heart strangely opened and began to dance; it began to beat and take part involuntarily in the same prayer; his feet barely touched the ground. He did not know how he opened the door and entered the church, or when he had vested; he did not know when the other monks arrived, or when the Liturgy began. What exactly happened he did not know. Gone was the ordinary connection of things, and he knew only that he was standing before the altar, before the invisibly present God, celebrating the Liturgy. And striking, as it were, the keys of both his heart and the altar, his voice resounded above, to the altar beyond the heavens. The Liturgy continued. The Gospel was read. The light was no longer all around him, but had built its nest within his heart. The Liturgy ended, but the song that had begun in his heart was endless. In his ecstasy, he saw that heaven and earth sing this prayer without ceasing, and that the monk truly lives only when he is animated by it. For this to happen, he needs only to cease living for himself.

Kleio Kechagia

\* This icon is said to represent the dual nature of Christ, illustrating traits of both man and God, perhaps influenced by the aftermath of the ecumenical councils of the previous century at Ephesus and Chalcedon. Christ's features on his left side (the viewer's right) are supposed to represent the qualities of his human nature, while his right side (the viewer's left) represents his divinity.

\*\* More would have survived had not Elder Aimilianos set fire on his own manuscripts decades ago in an act of self-effacing humility before the horrified eyes of his disciples.

## PARISH NEWS

Sayedna Silouan has given his blessing to Fr Chrysostom from our Poole Parish to produce pocket-sized daily prayer books with the title “St Theodore Prayer Book”. Fr Jonathan has ordered fifty, priced only £1. Please ask Fr Jonathan for details.

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 Panos Kanellopoulos for the candles which he donated to the Church. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!

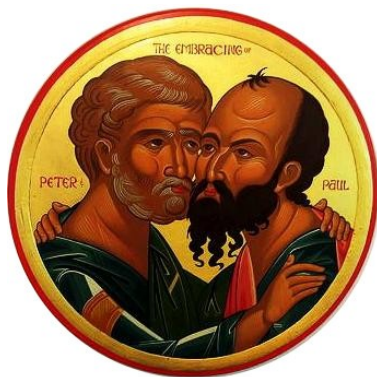
## NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

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)

6<sup>th</sup> June: The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ

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

11<sup>th</sup> June: The Holy Chinese Martyrs of the Boxer Revolution (†1900)

16<sup>th</sup> June: Holy Pentecost – Trinity Sunday

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. 1 <sup>st</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Wed. 5 <sup>th</sup>	18:30	Great Vespers for the Ascension of Christ
Sat. 8 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 9 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 15 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 16 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 29 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 30 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy followed by Parish Lunch

\*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 Dendrinis, Ithaca, Greece.  
The sketch of Christ by Photis Koutoglou was scanned from the Orthodox calendar of the Apatoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece.