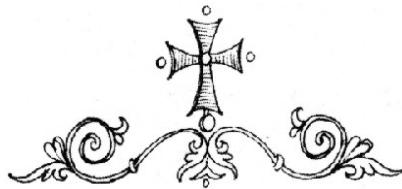


No. 152

July 2019



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

## *The Stavronian*

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



Γερμανος Λαζαρος Ζωοδότης.  
(Φ. Κόρτουγλου, 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)*

## THE BIRDS OF THE AIR

Matthew 6:26; Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Birds play a small but important part throughout the Books of the Old and New Testament and within the Holy Tradition and teaching of the Church. They are used in simile and metaphor to express the human condition by the Psalmist and are symbols of promise, of care, of peace, of hope, of power and of the presence of God. Here are just a few extracts and verses:

- *They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.*
- *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.*
- *Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!*
- *And again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive-leaf plucked off; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.*
- *And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*

Often when we arrive at the car park at St Martin's for worship on Sunday morning, there is a chorus of birds already singing Matins in the hedgerow – a veritable hidden but most vocal choir. There is also, more often than not, a large and sometimes a smaller Seagull or Raven surmounted upon the Cross on the Church. I have given them each names – *Stavros*,

*Stavroula* and *Elias*. *Stavros* because he sits on the Cross, *Stavroula* the smaller Seagull and *Elias* after the bird that God sent to the Prophet Elijah in order to feed him: I Kings 17:2-4; And the word of the Lord came to him: ‘Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.’

Indeed, this verse visited me directly many years ago on the feast day of Elijah the Prophet in the Church of St Marina at Marathonas when I was looking at the Icon. It was one of those moments when God speaks through the Icon and when secret things are revealed: “turn Eastward” ... “I have commanded the ravens (the ones dressed in black) to feed you.” Shortly after this experience, I found my way to the Orthodox Christian faith to be spiritually nourished by Orthodox priests.

St John of Damascus has something very profound and illuminating to say about such an experience: “All images reveal and make perceptible those things which are hidden. For example, a man does not have immediate knowledge of invisible things, since the soul is veiled by the body. Nor can man have immediate knowledge of things which are distant from each other or separated by place, because he himself is limited by place and time. Therefore the icon was devised that he might advance in knowledge, and that secret things might be revealed and made perceptible. Therefore, icons are a source of profit, help, and salvation for all, since they make things so obviously manifest, enabling us to perceive hidden things. Thus, we are encouraged to desire and imitate what is good and to shun and hate what is evil.”

Perhaps we humans who have been given responsibility over God’s creation need to be more observant and to learn from the birds of the air who wait upon God for their food.

*"The soul of the Christian needs to be refined and sensitive, to have sensibility and wings, to be constantly in flight and to live in dreams, to fly through infinity, among the stars, amidst the greatness of God, amid silence."* --- Saint Porphyrios

*Fr Jonathan*



*Surrounded by the Uncreated Light—St. John Maximovich Serving in Tunis, 1952*

## **THE DOVE OF ST JOHN MAXIMOVITCH**

Once, on the particular feast day of the Baptism of the Lord, I chanced to be in St. Tikhon's Orphanage<sup>1</sup> for the Blessing of Water. The service was performed in the little courtyard right under the kitchen window, which had a separate gate from the street through which I had entered. To my great surprise, as St. John was blessing the water, a dove flew right out into the courtyard. It flapped its wings and soared over the basin of holy water, while all of us vigorously sang: "When

*Thou, O Lord, wast baptised in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness unto Thee, calling Thee the beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed His word as sure and steadfast ..."* I was amazed, as I had never seen such a service with a live dove hovering over this holiness.

The sight was unforgettable. St. John stood there with lifted hands, holding a huge golden Cross high above his mitred head, and the bird flew high about the building next door, and then with a swift, graceful glide descended upon the Saint and sat on his shoulder. Then, loudly flapping its wings, it flew way up into the air, only to descend again, to the utter joy of all there, and it did this several times. St. John, apparently oblivious to the bird's spectacular manoeuvres, continued deep in prayer. It seemed so natural as if it were all a standard part of the holy ceremony. A similar event occurred in the life of St. Basil the Great when a dove was seen by St. Ephraim the Syrian to be whispering holy words into St. Basil's ear.

After the service, I learned the following touching story of Archbishop John's "heavenly bird": Once Archbishop John came home to discover that a pigeon was hurt, his wing was damaged, and was sitting outside the window. He opened the window and let it in. The bird could barely flutter, and Archbishop John bound its wing and fed it. That was enough to make it feel adopted. The bird stayed around, especially when the Saint would arrive and would feed it. Actually, it remained a mystery how both of them conversed. But one thing we knew, the pigeon reacted to the words of St. John as if it understood what he said. I was told that both of them would sit facing each other, the man softly speaking and the bird making its pigeon sounds in agreement and peacefully walking to and fro as if memorising what it was taught.

This company, Archbishop John kept for a long time, until his death. The pigeon lived on that window ledge and would often fly around in the kitchen and the main visiting room, and in the little corner office and would often eat from St. John's hands.

We could all feel there was some mystical contact between the dove of the Baptism of the Lord, and John its "baptist" - the altar boys confirmed that, by sprinkling the bird during the blessing of the water, Archbishop John had baptised the pigeon, and that it was a "baptised" bird! It never flew too far from the house and never chased other birds, as if its little heart sought warmth from people; and it had no greater joy than to fly into the house and sit quietly on some corner of an armchair. Often when Archbishop John would drink coffee in the kitchen, the bird would knock at the window pane begging to be let in and then it would sit on the Saint's shoulder and watch his hands as he blessed the bird. The bird appeared in the Saint's life when he endured the greatest of his earthly trials<sup>2</sup> and forebode his ascent to the other world. That little feathered creature of God was sent as a consolation to the sorrowing man of God, rendering him greater solace than men could do, who at that time were inflicting upon him his greatest pain. That dove was truly a God-sent consoler and a little window through which the Saint gazed into heaven.

When the death knell announced the earthly end of Archbishop John, the bird was frantic. It fluttered in agony, missing the Saint, and its little heart also stopped a few months afterwards, to our deep sorrow."

*Aikaterini Podia*

*Edited from the original article that was published at the [Orthodox Word](#) No. 191*

1. In San Francisco. St. Tikhon's Orphanage was founded by Saint John Maximovitch and

run by his long-time assistant, Mrs. Maria Alexandrovna Shakhmatova (†1967). The orphanage was no longer a place where children were sheltered. Within its walls was Archbishop John's tiny office, which was so small that even a bed would not fit, where he both lived and had his prayer-room and office.

2. Cf. "The San Francisco affair", a court trial in 1963 over alleged mismanagement of church funds, which split the Russian community there. St. John himself was accused at this trial.

## FISH AND LOAVES PROGRAMME

While living in Atlanta, USA, back in 2011, I was blessed to attend the Liturgy at St John's church, which was the first church in the world dedicated to St John Maximovitch. Fr Jacob Myers of blessed memory (†2013), who was the Parish priest at that time and my baptist to the Orthodox Faith, was always happy to share the numerous accounts of miracles performed by St John. One of them is the "[Fish and Loaves](#)" Programme at St John's church, which started about 20 years ago with minimal resources, but was soon able to grow large enough to feed 50 homeless people per day in Atlanta! This would not have been possible without St John's support and guidance. It is a true testimony that with prayer and hard work in the Lord anything is possible!

*Theophania Papadopoulos*



## ANOTHER STORY ABOUT ST JOHN MAXIMOVITCH

When the priests from Britain on the “Pilgrimage to Orthodoxy” went to Paris in July 2014 to meet the then Patriarch Ignatius IV of thrice blessed memory, we asked the prayers of St John Maximovitch to help us achieve success in the meeting. We received a most warm reception from His Beatitude with the words “welcome home.” St John Maximovitch helped us through his intercessions. It should be noted that Vladika was based for several years in Paris in the 1950’s before going to the USA. It was commented whilst he was in Paris “if you want to see proof of a present-day Saint, you should consider John the barefoot. Vladika was called this because of his asceticism. Through the prayers of our holy father John of Shanghai and San Francisco.

*Fr Jonathan*

## SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS

Holiness is not simply righteousness, for which the righteous merit the enjoyment of blessedness in the Kingdom of God, but rather such a height of righteousness that men are filled with the grace of God to the extent that it flows from them upon those who associate with them. Great is their blessedness; it proceeds from personal experience of the Glory of God. Being filled also with love for men, which proceeds from love of God, they are responsive to men’s needs, and upon their supplication they appear also as intercessors and defenders for them before God.

--- *St. John Maximovitch of Shanghai and San Francisco*



## WHY SUNDAY SCHOOL?

Proverbs 22:6; *Train up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it.*

As parents and teachers, we all want to help our children to learn and develop new skills, to observe, explore and discover the world surrounding them. We want to plant many seeds: good manners, kindness, compassion, love of learning, language skills, love of Creation, anything good that may help them in the future. But the most important seed of all and the source of all goodness is the love of God. This particular seed will help them grow through life into eternal life. How can you truly love God “*with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.*” (Matthew 22:37) if you do not know Him? In the words of St. Clement: “*The primary lesson for life must be implanted in the soul from the earliest age. The primary lesson for children is to know*

*the eternal God, the One who gives everlasting life.”*

The role of Sunday School is therefore essential in the development of a child, as it teaches the most important lesson of all from a very young age as a complement to parental home teaching. We bring our children to church to immerse them in the love and grace of God, to give them sustenance through Holy Communion, but also to give them instruction, so that they come to the knowledge of God not only through their heart and spirit, but also through their mind. Very young children have an instinctive love of God, but as they get older it is important that their understanding is nourished with the love of God and his Saints, with the understanding of the Gospels and the Church. Sunday School gives children the opportunity to continue the Holy Liturgy after the Holy Liturgy. It is a chance for the little ones to become even more familiar with our Church, its feasts and its Saints, to form beautiful and joyful memories. It is a moment we can look back on and talk about our Faith and God, we can strengthen them in the Faith of the Church and send them out into the world armed and girded ready to withstand the assaults of the modern world. Sunday school is instrumental in giving children a sense of identity, of where they belong and to Whom they belong in the multicultural and multi faith society we live in.

And if along the way, as they get older, they may stray from the path and get lost, the seed which was planted there in early childhood will live on. Often in adulthood we revisit the memories of our childhood. We understand more the guidance of our parents, what they wanted to teach us and pass onto us. Similarly, we too desire to inspire our children, to create sweet memories that they will come back to. This is the chance to plant and pass on our faith. We must not miss the

opportunity to paint the image of God on the souls of our children. “*A young child is like a board prepared for icon painting. Whatever the iconographer paints on it, honourable or dishonourable, holy or sinful, an angel or a demon, it remains forever. The same applies to a young child: that upbringing which he is given, those manners he is taught shall be part of him for the rest of his life.*” --- St Dimitri of Rostov (1709).

*Martha and Mary*

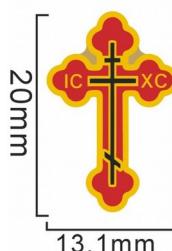
## PARISH NEWS

Fr Jonathan has ordered 100 lapel crosses, which are very similar in design to those which we had many years ago. You may have a look at the design below. They were ordered from the USA and are expected to be delivered by the end of June. They will be on sale for £2.50 each. Please see 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 ... for ... May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!

### Front Side

■ RAISED METAL  
■ RECESSED METAL  
■ BLACK  
■ PMS 186



### Back Side

■ RAISED METAL



*The design of lapel crosses ordered by Fr Jonathan. They are on sale for £2.50 each*

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

July 9: *Metropolitan Methodios Fougias*

### 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

1<sup>st</sup> July: Cosmas and Damian the Holy Unmercenaries

2<sup>nd</sup> July: St. John Maximovitch, Bishop of Shanghai & Archbishop of San Francisco

(†1966); St. Juvenal, Protomartyr of America and Alaska (†1796)

3<sup>rd</sup> July: St Germanus Bishop of the Isle of Man (†474)

4<sup>th</sup> July: St. Andrew of Crete, author of the Great Canon

7<sup>th</sup> July: Great-martyr Kyriake

11<sup>th</sup> July: Great Martyr Euphemia the All-praised; St. Olga, equal to the Apostles, Princess of Kiev

13<sup>th</sup> July: Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel

15<sup>th</sup> July: Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Great Prince Vladimir, in Baptism Basil, Enlightener of the Russian Land

17<sup>th</sup> July: Great-Martyr Marina of Antioch and Child-Martyr Prince Kenelm

20<sup>th</sup> July: Holy Glorious Prophet Elijah

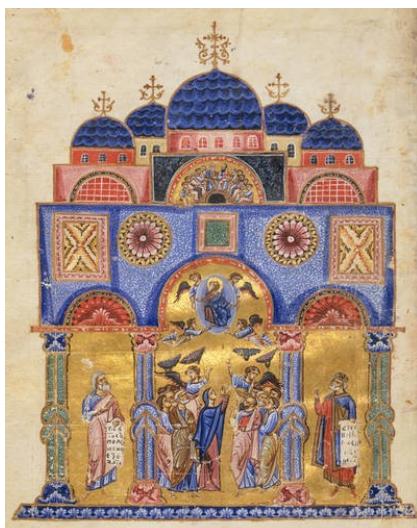
25<sup>th</sup> July: Dormition of righteous Anna, mother of the Most Holy Theotokos

26<sup>th</sup> July: Holy Martyr Paraskeue

27<sup>th</sup> July: Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon

31<sup>st</sup> July: St Joseph of Arimathea

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 July\*

Sun. 7 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 13 <sup>rd</sup>	10:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 14 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 20 <sup>th</sup>	10:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 21 <sup>st</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 27 <sup>th</sup>	10:00	Great Vespers, Memorial, Confessions and Catechism
Sun. 28 <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, [Constitinta 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 Dendrinios, Ithaca, Greece.  
The sketch of Christ by Photis Kontoglou was scanned from the Orthodox calendar of the Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece.