

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

***The Stavronian***

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



*Ἐθρονος 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)***

## ECCLESIASTICAL NEW YEAR, SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>

The first of September marks the beginning of the Church Year when we pray for the Crowning of the new year; that the Lord will forgive our transgressions in the past year, that He will guide us in the way of righteousness, that He will provide us with temperate seasons, that He will give peace to the world and enlarge the Church.

*O Word of the Father from before the ages,  
Who, being in the form of God, broughtest  
creation into being out of nothing; Thou  
Who hast put the times and seasons in  
Thine own power: Bless the crown of the  
year with Thy goodness; give peace unto  
Thy churches, victory unto Thy faithful  
hierarchs, fruitfulness unto the earth, and  
Great Mercy unto us.*



*Slavonic fresco depicting Christ blessing the Creation*

## THE BLESSING OF HOSPITALITY

To receive guests is a great gift, to be hospitable is a virtue and a great blessing. We know from experience how exciting it is to receive our family, friends and colleagues into our homes. It is a source of joy, which we have witnessed from childhood. In fact, on every important occasion, we invite people to share in our special celebrations in our home like our nameday or birthday, but we also invite people on those days when we need or want to give consolation to others, like funeral wakes. Therefore hospitality is a blessing, a sharing of and part-taking in each other's lives for joy or for sorrow; it enriches us in warmth and love.

Hospitality is also a self-sacrifice for the other, it is giving up and sharing of our 'personal space', it is the letting in of the other, fully, and with love into our home. There is a beautiful Polish saying: "Guest in the house, God in the house". It is in our nature to be hospitable and welcoming – let us remember the hospitality of Abraham, when he received the Lord (Genesis 18:1-5). This is depicted on the famous Icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrei Rublev, which we all know so well. Saint Amphilochios Makris bids us to "love giving hospitality, my child, for it opens the gates of Paradise. In this you also offer hospitality to Angels".

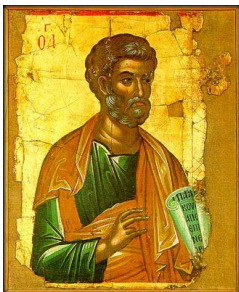
On the evening of the Nativity of our Lord, it is in the Russian tradition to have a spare place at the table and a dish prepared to welcome anyone, any person or a stranger that may enter therein.

*"Every family should have a room where Christ is welcome in the person of the hungry and thirsty stranger".* We should strive to make it our daily practise and welcome all, those who bring good tidings, those who come for consolation, those who come hungry or in need, rich

and poor, to all, let us open the doors of our hearts and our homes “*as you have done it to one of the least of these brethren, you have done it unto Me*”; Matthew 25:40. I once saw a beautiful sign in a house where I was a guest “*Receive every guest as if they were Christ Himself*”. Hospitality is not limited to sharing of food, sometimes it may seem, that we have nothing to offer the other person, we should give them our love, encouragement and a cheerful word; we can give ourselves. In the complementarity of Martha and Mary we see the beauty of hospitality - Martha busies herself to provide for the material needs of the Guest, while Mary, more importantly, sits with the Lord and listens, giving him her undivided attention.

Our guests may cause us to interrupt our day, our routines, even our prayer time. It may be viewed as a distraction from our responsibilities and chores, however, we should remember the words of our Saint Paul 15:1-7 “*Welcome one another therefore as Christ has welcomed you for the Glory of God*”. We read in Scriptures that our Lord welcomed all interruptions, with patience and love. Let us therefore welcome the interruption of hospitality with joy and love as St Peter urges us to do: “*And above all things have fervent love for one another for love will cover a multitude of sins. Be hospitable without grumbling. Amen*”; 1 Peter 4:8-9.

*Martha and Mary*



## BUILDING AN ORTHODOX PARISH

A large part of the problem with some Orthodox parishes (at least of my acquaintance) is not lack of money or lack of a nice building (nice as money and good buildings are), but the fact that they have not been built upon a proper foundation. The Scriptures have lots to say about the value of a good foundation, and the Lord teaches us that if the foundation has not been properly laid, the whole edifice built upon it is in danger of being swept away (Matthew 7:24-27), if not literally, then certainly spiritually.

I know of a number of parishes which have been thus swept away—not that they no longer exist as parishes, but that they no longer exist as true temples of God. Some have become spiritually toxic, and are more accurately described as synagogues of Satan (compare Revelation 2:9). To be a truly Orthodox temple of God, the community must first have in place a solid foundation. And as St. Paul reminds us, “no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). One can try to lay other foundations, setting in place the wood, hay, and straw foundations of ego and the cult of personality. But Jesus Christ is the only real and lasting foundation, either for a parish or an individual’s life. How can a one build on this foundation to become a truly Orthodox community? I suggest five ways.

First of all, the priest of the parish must dedicate himself to his people and to washing their feet, as the Lord Himself gave both example and command (John 13:1f). Too often young priests assume they are entitled to respect simply because they wear a cassock. It is true that all persons should be treated with respect and courtesy, but it is also true that respect must be earned. The priest’s ordina-

tion does not entitle him to respect so much as it gives him the opportunity among his people to earn it. And he earns it by selflessly serving them, counselling them, loving them, weeping with them, sharing their burdens, and being accessible to them at all times. By doing so he earns credibility, so that he will be cut some slack when he errs or makes unpopular decisions. But it takes time to earn such credibility, as some young clergy have learned to their cost.

Secondly, the priest must preach Jesus Christ, and nothing else. What else, you may ask, would a priest preach? Alas, there is a long list of possible alternatives. He might preach simple moralism (“Let us be loving and nice”); he might preach the glories of his ethnic heritage. I remember a very nice Greek bishop enthusing at a church’s dedication about “our beautiful religion”, by which he almost certainly meant his beautiful Greek religion. Better to enthuse about our beautiful Saviour, for to enthuse about our religion is another way of enthusing about ourselves.

And one might preach Orthodoxy—the subtlest of all snares. That is, one might describe the glories of the Orthodox Faith, its sound doctrines, its wonderful sacraments, its glorious icons—and how Orthodoxy is a superior faith to all the other faiths on the market. In other words, one might preach about our beautiful religion, shorn of its ethnic components, which is still a way of preaching ourselves. The apostles preached Jesus Christ as Lord, God, and Saviour, and how one could live in obedience to Him and become transformed. Orthodoxy is not the content of our Faith, but the mode of its reception. We serve the Christ preached by the Orthodox Church, not the Christ preached by (say) the Mormons. But Christ remains the content of our preaching.

Thirdly, the parish council must be united in standing behind and supporting their priest. Too often parish councils become the sites of a tug of war, a struggle for power, with the priest pulling in one direction and his council pulling in the other. In this struggle, no one wins, especially not the supposed winner. The council must have the same goal as the priest—i.e. not to collect and retain power, but to serve Christ and His flock, and they must support their priest because he is in the forefront of fulfilling this common goal. He is not their employee, but their papa, and should be treated as such.

Fourthly, the community must make love their aim—that is, the creation of genuine community. This is impossible to do without eating together and working together, and to this end all Sunday Liturgies must have a time of eating appended to it so that the people can eat, talk, and share together. All the Pauline epistles presuppose the presence of a close community, and without it Christianity remains a mere cultic experience, lacking its crucial social component.

One church I knew of always had a meal afterward, but they charged for the food, so that the social time functioned as a fundraiser. Not surprisingly many skipped this meal and left right after the Liturgy, especially those with large families who could not afford to pay \$10 a head for perogies and borscht. When I suggested that they have a free pot-luck meal instead, they were aghast at the possible loss to their budget. They valued income over the creation of community—and over church growth. They have their reward.

Finally, the community must be eschatologically oriented. That is, they must regard themselves not primarily as citizens of this world or as Americans or Canadians or as citizens of any other country, but as citizens of the Kingdom. Patriotism is wonderful, but the good

must not be allowed to become the enemy of the best, and the Church stands under the Cross, not under any national flag. To make the flag paramount is idolatry. Through his preaching the priest must encourage his flock to see themselves as sojourners in this age, with their eyes fixed on the horizon to behold the blessed hope of the Second Coming with the cry of “Maranatha!” in their hearts.

Living this out consistently will mean that the society around them will increasingly regard them as aliens, as unwelcome intruders, and as disturbers of the secular status quo. We all know where the front line of this battle is being drawn, and we must not flinch or compromise. Our Lord’s words to the apostles, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:18-19) have lost none of their relevance. The priest must preach and the people must accept that to become an Orthodox Christian is to leave one moral universe and to enter a different one. And they must read the fine print before making this decision—that of inevitable conflict with the world and of possible persecution.

These are the principles and the foundation upon which new missions should be built and already established churches should conform. Conforming to them does not require changes in the congregation’s constitution and bylaws, but only humility of heart and a desire to grow. In the end it comes down to vision: does one have a vision of one’s church as a place of counter-cultural transforming truth and a laboratory of love, or simply as a place to go to in order to fulfil one’s spiritual needs? If the latter, then you should know that God cares less than nothing about your spiritual needs. He cares about you and your transformation. And that transformation is only possible if

you catch the vision of your church as a place of uncomfortable truth, and of healing love.

*Fr. Lawrence Farley*

Taken from the [Ancient Faith Blog](#)

## 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.



## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1<sup>st</sup> Sept: **The Ecclesiastical New Year**

8<sup>th</sup> Sept: **The Nativity of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary**

9<sup>th</sup> Sept: **The Holy & Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna**

11<sup>th</sup> Sept: **St. Euphrosynos the Cook**

14<sup>th</sup> Sept: **The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross**

16<sup>th</sup> Sept: **The Great Martyr Euphemia the All-praised**

17<sup>th</sup> Sept: **Martyr Sophia and her three daughters, Faith (Pistis, Vera), Hope (Elpis, Nadezhda) and Love (Agape, Lyubov)**

19<sup>th</sup> Sept: **St. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury**

24<sup>th</sup> Sept: St. Silouan the Athonite

25<sup>th</sup> Sept: St. Sergius, Abbot and Wonderworker of Radonezh

26<sup>th</sup> Sept: The Falling Asleep of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian

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

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 September\*

Sun. 1 <sup>st</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 7 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 8 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of the Theotokos
Sat. 14 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy for the Exaltation of the Precious and Life Giving Cross
Sun. 15 <sup>th</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 21 <sup>st</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	09:30	Matins and Divine Liturgy
Sat. 28 <sup>th</sup>	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 29 <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](#).

