

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

## ***The Stavronian***

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*Ἐσθρωνος 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.  
Our Metropolitan is His Eminence Bishop Silouan.  
Our Patriarch is His Beatitude John X.*

*The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch  
(Acts 11:26)*

## BLESSED “SWIMMING” IN 2020!

In Theophany, there is the tradition in the Church of the swim for the Cross in the sea or lake. All over the world, in seaside or lakeside areas, Orthodox priests are throwing a special cross into the water, and men and women of all ages defy the snow, brave the freezing water and jump in the water to recover it. It is believed that the person who captures the cross and returns it to the priest will be blessed for the whole year.



“In the Church, everyone will go for a swim; there’s no other way. It won’t be with a little boat. Everyone will swim, they’ll see the waves, the whales, they’ll see the sharks. No one will escape this swim. But it’s one thing for one to go completely alone into the sea, because God has tossed you there – and God know why – and something completely else if you have a boat next to you. And the rule is this: at whatever moment a shark lunges, they take you and place you in the boat, and it can’t do a thing to you.”

--- Elder Symeon Kragiopoulos

Indeed, aren’t we all swimming for Christ throughout our life and sometimes find ourselves amongst “sharks”? Yet, Christ is there to rescue us. Not from the storm, but in the storm. Matthew 14:28-33; “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the

boat worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Blessed be the New Year 2020, and blessed be all our “swimming” at home and work in this yet one more year. May such swimming not scare us or weary us away from His Church.

Ekaterini Podia

## CHURCH - THE GATHERED COMMUNITY

We continue this series examining the Lord’s Prayer phrase by phrase, using Matthew’s version of the Prayer rather than Luke’s. We will begin by working from the archaic version of the text as commonly prayed in our liturgical tradition, e.g. “*Our Father who art in heaven*”, rather than “*Our Father in heaven*”, because this is the version familiar to most people. But differences found in the original Greek text will be noted and mined for meaning.

We note at the outset the corporate nature of the prayer: the Lord taught us to say “*our Father*”, not “*my Father*” so that even when we say this prayer on our own with no one else around, we still pray as part of a family. The Lord did not act as a one-on-one mentor to individuals, but as a Master to a group of disciples, and His commands to us presuppose that each person is part of a larger group. He was not offering a course in spirituality to individuals who might be interested, but forming a *qahal*, a gathering, an *ekklesia*, a church. As such, when He was asked by this group for instruction on prayer (Luke 11:1), he offered a model prayer which presupposed prayer in a group.

The Christian faith in fact presupposes membership in this group, this *ekklesia*, and its spirituality is relentlessly corporate throughout. All the images of salvation are corporate: we are branches on a larger vine (John 15:1f), sheep in a sheepfold (John 10:1f), part of a city (Galatians 4:26, Revelation 21:2f), members of a single body. As far as our salvation is concerned, Christ is inseparable from His body—in fact when St. Paul referred to the church being a body with many members, he called the church “Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12). The church is thus inseparable from Christ—it is His “fullness” (Ephesians 1:22-23). One cannot even become a Christian

without the Church... If one wants to become a Christian, one must present oneself to the gathered ekklesia and be baptised by one of them. Even then one cannot even baptise oneself—the act of triple immersion must be performed by someone else. And of course having become a Christian through the baptismal actions of others, one *remains* a Christian by receiving Holy Communion, which is also a corporate act.

This radical identification of Christ with His gathered Body the Church means that if we depart from the Church, we thereby depart from Christ, and to the extent that we draw near to the Church in faith, we draw near to Christ. The “our” in the opening clause of the Lord’s Prayer reminds that that we need each other to be saved.

Based on the article “[The Lord’s Prayer: ‘Our Father who art in heaven’ – No Other Foundation](#)”, by Fr. Lawrence Farley

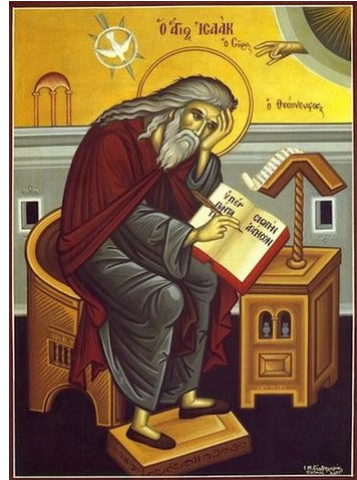
## HUMILITY

A humble man is never rash, hasty or perturbed, never has any hot and volatile thoughts, but at all times remains calm. Even if heaven were to fall and cleave to the earth, the humble man would not be dismayed. Not every quiet man is humble, but every humble man is quiet. There is no humble man who is not self-constrained; but you will find many who are self-constrained without being humble. This is also what the meek humble Lord meant when He said, “*Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*” (Matt 11:29) For the humble man is always at rest, because there is nothing which can agitate or shake his mind. Just as no one can frighten a mountain, so the mind of a humble man cannot be frightened. If it be permissible and not incongruous, I should say that the humble man is not of this world. For he is not troubled and altered by sorrows, nor amazed and enthused by joys, but all his gladness and his real rejoicing are in the things of his Master. Humility is accompanied by modesty and self-collectedness: that is, chastity of the senses; a moderate voice; mean speech; self-belittlement; poor raiment; a gait that is not pompous; a gaze directed towards the earth; superabundant mercy; easily flowing tears; a solitary soul; a contrite heart; imperturbability to anger; undistributed senses;

few possessions; moderation in every need; endurance; patience; fearlessness; manliness of heart born of a hatred of this temporal life; patient endurance of trials; deliberations that are ponderous, not light, extinction of thoughts; guarding of the mysteries of chastity; modesty, reverence; and above all, continually to be still and always to claim ignorance.

*St. Isaac the Syrian*

Homily 72: “On the Vision of the Nature of Incorporeal Beings, in Questions and Answers,” [Ascetical Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian](#).



## BLESS, AND CURSE NOT (Romans 12:14)

The more we bless, the more we are blessed. Similarly, complaining invites more complaining, true are the words of Saint Paisios of Mount Athos “*Grumbling is caused by misery and it can be put aside by doxology (giving praise). Grumbling begets grumbling and doxology begets doxology*”. It is often up to us, to see and realise how we view the circumstances we are in, and occurring events in our daily life. We can bless and receive the double portion or we can complain about any difficulty and burden we meet on our spiritual road.

How many times are the faithful blessed during the Divine Liturgy? The priest is an icon of Christ, and in a mystical way, the blessing is bestowed upon us by our Lord, not once, but

continually, His Mercy and Grace is poured upon His people. This is where the blessing begins, we receive it and are able to bless everyone around us throughout the week.

During the feast of Theophany, our houses are blessed, as Christians we want not only our souls to be sanctified, but also our bodies, to become the Temples of the Holy Spirit, yet this extends further, we also want our homes to be the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, our children, animals, plants and all that is within, to receive sanctification, to be protected from harm, misfortune and disease. Sanctification is for the whole Creation *“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God”*.

In our daily lives, we can make the sign of the Cross upon ourselves, over our food and drink, upon our children, before and after activity, to disperse negative thoughts; we are encouraged to do this by the example of Saints. The blessing is contained within the Cross, granting strength and protection and endurance in trials.



### **A true, modern story from Essex Monastery:**

A clerk at her wits' ends sought Elder Zacharias' guidance about her new line manager who was giving her a very hard time. He kept annoying, contradicting, frustrating, humiliating and provoking her all the time, as if he wanted to spite her. Nothing she had tried had worked and she could simply not go on. The Elder advised her to humbly accept God's Providence and start "blessing" this young man in any way she could, in her thoughts, words and actions, through prayer, not accepting a single negative thought about him in her heart, let alone allowing resentment to fester or bitter words to wound. Trying to find something good to praise in such a toxic situation was quite a challenge, as her asceticism was to humbly discover and say something positive, certainly not fake it or flatter him. But with the Elder's blessing, she set her heart on this "game" and started surprising her new line manager. It was not easy, as he kept on provoking, insulting and belittling her nonetheless but she was

determined to stick to her obedience no matter what and kept on "blessing" him to his face, to everybody, and more importantly in her heart. A month passed by, and one morning this new line manager looked her in the eyes across the office and banged his hand on his desk: "Either you are 100% right", another bang of his hand on the desk, "Or, I am 100% wrong"(!). God is glorified in His Saints and may we start "playing this holy game" in our families, work and parish.

*Sisters of St Etheldreda*

## **ST GREGORY THEOLOGIAN, POEM TO HIS OWN SOUL**

You have a job to do, soul, and a great one, if you like: examine yourself, what it is you are and how you act, where you come from, and where you're going to end, and whether to live is this very life you're living, or something else besides.

You have a job to do, soul; by these things cleanse your life. Make me to know God and God's mysteries. What was there before this universe, and why is this universe here for you? Where has it come from, and where is it going?

You have a job to do, soul, by these things cleanse your life. How does God guide and turn the universe: or why are some things permanent, while other things flow away, and us especially, in this changing life?

You have a job to do, soul: look to God alone. What was my former glory, what is this present arrogance? What will be my crown, and what the end of my life? Of these things inform me, and check the mind from wandering.

A job you have to do, soul: lest you suffer in deep trouble.

*Poem 2.1.78, Ad suam animam (PG 37, 1425-1426) ('On God and Man: The theological poetry of St Gregory of Nazianzus', Trans. P. Gilbert, SVS Press, 2001)*

## FURTHER POEMS BY ST GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN

### Poem 2.1.90 On his own and his parents' death (PG 37, 1445-1446)

First it was Caesarius, our common sorrow; then Gorgonia; after this, my beloved Dad; and not long afterward, Mom. O mournful hand and bitter writing of Gregory! I shall write my own death, too, though last of all.

### Poem 2.1.98 Another (PG 37, 1450-1451)

From childhood God called me by dreams of the night. I arrived at the boundaries of wisdom. For the Word I hallowed flesh and heart. Naked I fled the world's flame. I stood in Aaron's order with Gregory my father.

### Poem 2.1.99 Another (PG 37, 1451-1452)

Brilliant angels in your measureless circle round and round attending the one light of thrice-shining Godhead: receive Gregory, unworthy, but a priest.

Source: [De unione ecclesiarum blog](#)

## SUNDAY SCHOOL PLAN

**Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>:** The Holy Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To prepare children for one of our greatest Church feasts – Theophany. We will make a simple display, where children will place, the words of God the Father, Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit present in the format of symbolic dove in the correct way – copying the Icon of the feast. This will introduce them to the great revelation of the Holy Trinity to the world. We will also discuss the use of water in our daily lives, how life-giving it is, but even more so, the Holy Water. We will decorate bottles ready to be filled with the Holy Water for each child to have at home, encouraging them to make a holy habit of drinking it daily.

**Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>:** The Kingdom of God is Here. Today, Sunday School will focus on the Gospel reading and its meaning, we will talk about light and dark, and how we are sometimes confused and unsure what we are asked to do, perhaps at school, or by our parents, until it has been re-

peated and clarified, when our minds not only hear but also understand. There will be a print out to colour or decorate.

**Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>:** Sunday of the Ten Lepers - Thankfulness. *"At that time, as Jesus entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus's feet, giving him thanks."* Luke 17:12-19. Together with children, we will look at these words of the Gospel and to bring them closer, we will inspect the image representing this scene. We will speak about one of the words we learn in our first years of life – thank you, what it is to be thankful and how thankfulness brings us happiness and joy.

**Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>:** Zacchaeus Sunday. *At that time, Jesus was passing through Jericho. And there was a man named Zacchaios; he was a chief collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaios, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today. Luke 19:1-10.* Today our task will be to look at the example of Zacchaeus and to also see it in ourselves, when we, especially in our childhood want something, we make sure that our parents and everyone knows about it. We try to achieve our goal, and this is what Zacchaeus did. We will explore the ways in which we could imitate Zacchaeus and become more zealous for Christ our Saviour.

Marta Radford

## PARISH NEWS

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 [Patricia Chiracu](#) from Romania for the gifts she sent to the church. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!



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

Jan. 6: *Fr. Michael Harper*

Jan. 14: *Nina*

Jan. 16: *Fr. Jacob Myers*

Jan. 30: *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

1<sup>st</sup> Jan: St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of  
Cesarea in Cappadocia

6<sup>th</sup> Jan: The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour  
Jesus Christ

9<sup>th</sup> Jan: St. Adrian and St. Brithwald,  
Archbishops of Canterbury (†710 and †731  
A.D.)

17<sup>th</sup> Jan: St. Anthony the Great

18<sup>th</sup> Jan: St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria

20<sup>th</sup> Jan: Righteous Euthymius the Great

24<sup>th</sup> Jan: St. Xenia, the Fool-for-Christ of St.  
Petersbourg (†1803)

25<sup>th</sup> Jan: St. Gregory the Theologian

28<sup>th</sup> Jan: St. Ephraim the Syrian

30<sup>th</sup> Jan: Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs: Basil  
the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John  
Chrysostom

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)

*Home blessing at Theophany!*  
*Please contact Fr. Jonathan*



## Services at St Martin's in January

<b>Sat. 4<sup>th</sup></b>	15:00	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 5<sup>th</sup></b>	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	<b>12:00</b>	<b>Great Blessing of Waters in Church</b>
	12:15	Parish lunch
<b>Sat. 11<sup>th</sup></b>	15:00	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 12<sup>th</sup></b>	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	12:00	"Martha's house" Sunday School
	12:15	Parish lunch
<b>Sat. 18<sup>th</sup></b>	15:00	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 19<sup>th</sup></b>	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	12:00	"Martha's house" Sunday School
	12:15	Parish lunch
<b>Sat. 25<sup>th</sup></b>	15:00	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 26<sup>th</sup></b>	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	12:00	"Martha's house" Sunday School
	12:15	Parish lunch

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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](#).

