



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

The Stavronian

Monthly magazine and newsletter publicised by the Holy Cross Synodia



*Ἐσθρονος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης.
(Φ. Κάρτογλου, 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)*

ST BRIGID AND THE VIRTUE OF HOSPITALITY

The life of St Brigid of Ireland offers us new insight into the virtue of hospitality, the cheerful, generous giving of food and shelter. We know that this virtue is praised throughout the Scriptures. The hospitality of Abraham to three young men who visited him was revealed to be offered to none other than the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to offer hospitality when He said: *For I was hungry and ye gave Me food, I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink, I was a stranger and ye took Me in* (Matthew 26:35-40).

Of course, the law of nature also urges us to generously provide for the traveller who has no place to lay his head, and so hospitality, even without the love of Christ, has become an important facet of civilized culture. In pre-Christian Ireland every freeman was required by secular law to provide hospitality to anyone of or below his own class who asked it of him. The type and quality of food and shelter he was obliged to offer varied depending on the class of his guest, but he was expected to provide well for noble and low-born alike, or be subjected to heavy fines as well as social ostracism. St Brigid took this legal and social obligation of her people and, by infusing it with the love of Christ, transformed it into a holy rule and a godly art.

Brigid was born at Faughart in County Down in 452, less than fifty years after the beginning of Saint Patrick's widespread missionary efforts among the Irish. At the time of her birth, the faith was just starting to grow great in the hearts of the Irish people. But by the end of her life, and partly through her efforts, her land would become holy Ireland, a land of saints and scholars, a land of monasteries from which missionaries would go forth to all of Europe and beyond.

As if to ensure that she would understand and care for all people both law-born and high, Brigid was born the daughter of a king and a slave. Her father was Dubtach a pagan chieftain, and her mother was his Christian bondswoman. Brigid was raised to be, as her mother, a servant and a Christian. Dubtach's wife forced him to sell Brigid's mother before the babe was born, and so Brigid was raised in the household of a

druid of Faughart. This druid had a Christian uncle who recognized and supported the piety of the young Brigid. Although she often suffered want, she was kind to both people and animals, and especially to the poor, for whom she provided as best she could from her own humble circumstances. At the age of about ten she chose to return to her father's house, where she lived well and acquired a nobility of bearing which no doubt was an asset to her in her later position of leadership, for the Irish of her time were a people acutely aware of social status.

Brigid's truest nobility, however, was in her generosity. In fact, many of the incidents of Brigid's life involve her being blessed with plenty so that she could give it away. At her father's home, she shocked the household by distributing to the poor most of the food at her disposal. Furthermore, she later decided to return to a life of slavery in order to help her mother who had become ill. Taking over her mother's work in the dairy, Brigid would divide the butter she churned into thirteen parts, one for each of the twelve apostles and one larger part of Our Lord, which she would distribute to the poor. When her druid master discovered her generosity with his goods, he came to the dairy to confront her. She welcomed him, washed his feet, and prepared food for him. The druid could see nothing amiss, yet he determined to test Brigid and commanded her to fill a great vessel with butter. Finding that she did not have enough butter to fulfill his request (because she had given so much to the needy), Brigid began to pray to Christ to bless her kitchen and receive in abundance to please him and share more freely with others in need, and abundance is indeed what she received. Through her prayers the butter multiplied in such large amounts that her druid master was brought to believe in Christ through the miracle. He freed her mother, and served Brigid for the rest of his life. He also heaped gifts upon Brigid, including the butter and all his cows, but she had prayed for abundance not for herself but for others, so she distributed her own wealth among the poor even more freely than she had distributed his.

At her time no monasteries for women existed in Ireland, and only a few for men. Women who were consecrated as nuns had to struggle to live their monastic calling while in secular households. But Brigid determined to offer

these women a place of refuge and, in the same year of her tonsure, 470, she gathered together seven other nuns and approached the local king to petition a piece of land upon which to build a monastery. It is told that, when he refused, she said that she would be content with whatever her mantle would cover. He in whose name Brigid provided for others again provided for her, causing her mantle to spread out until it covered the Curragh, a huge expanse of open, fertile land which can be seen in County Kildare to this day. There Brigid founded Kildare monastery, Ireland's first monastery for women, which became a great center of piety, learning, craftsmanship, and, of course, hospitality.

The virtue of hospitality aflame with the love of Christ was one especially important to St Brigid as Abbess of Kildare. From the 5th to the 9th century in Ireland, monasteries were not only places where men and women turned their hearts away from the world and toward the things of God. They were also centers, heart centers if you will, for both the spiritual and cultural lives of those pious people living in the world. The early Celtic Church was administered not through the Roman form of the diocese, but through the eastern form of the monastic family or parish (of course, since the Great Schism had not yet occurred, all of Christendom both western and eastern belonged to the one, holy, catholic and orthodox Church. The Celtic Church was a monastic Church. Throughout the Celtic countries were scattered monasteries, increasingly more as Christianity grew stronger, which were the center of commerce, learning, and cultural life as well as of spiritual life. The governing head of the monastery was the abbot or abbess, while sometimes an additional bishop cared for the sacramental needs of the people. Because neither cities nor hotels existed, these monasteries were important stopping places for travellers. In fact, they were usually situated on or near main routes, and so were convenient places of rest. As in a secular home the kitchen or hearth is the heart-center, where a virtuous woman offers warmth and nourishment to the weary laborer or traveller, so the monastery was a heavenly heart-center, where men and women of God received their world-weary brethren and fed them with both the food of heaven and the good things of the earth in Christ's name. The words "heart" and "hearth" are almost identical,

as are their Anglo-Saxon root words, "heart" and "heroth". The welcoming hearth of the monastery was truly the heart of Ireland in both a spiritual and a material sense. And so Mother Brigid was both nun and dairy-maid, both abbess and hostess, and is venerated today in all of these capacities.

It is said that the Lord would grant Brigid anything she would ask, and that what she desired was always the same, "to satisfy the poor, to banish every hardship, and to save every sorrowful man." It seems that in her love for others Saint Brigid truly forgot herself and allowed the loving providence of God to sustain her. Her hospitality, a giving in and of Christian charity, offered such a powerful example that it set the standard for the hospitality of the Irish people, as is reflected in the Irish Rune of Hospitality:

I saw a stranger yestreen;
I put food in the eating place,
drink in the drinking place,
music in the listening place,
and in the name of the Triune
blessed myself and my house,
my cattle and my dear ones,
and the lark said in her song
often, often, often,
goes the Christ in the stranger's guise,
often, often, often,
goes the Christ in the stranger's guise.

May we follow Saint Brigid's example and receive the Christ in the stranger's guise. Saint Brigid, pray to God for us.

Troparion, Tone 1: O holy Brigid, thou didst become sublime through thy humility and didst fly on the wings of thy longing for God. When thou didst arrive in the Eternal City and appear before thy Divine Spouse, wearing the crown of virginity, thou didst keep thy promise to remember those who have recourse to thee. Thou dost shower grace upon the world, and dost multiply miracles. Intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.

Adapted by Kleio Kechaigia. Original article by Mary Dugan Doss, from [Orthodox Christianity](#).



Often, goes the Christ in the stranger's guise

FR EPHRAIM OF ARIZONA

On Dec. 7th 2019, the much-beloved Elder Ephraim of Arizona reposed in the Lord after being ill for many years. According to reports, Elder Ephraim was aware of his impending death some days before, and despite this he would still daily go out and give his blessing to the people. His personal doctor told him to not go out Saturday evening, the day of his repose, to bless the people. Elder Ephraim was lucid on the day of his repose and partook of the Immaculate Mysteries. Then at 9 pm (Mountain Standard Time), as he was upright occupied with something, he suddenly tilted slightly to the side and died. Nurses found him practically upright, having delivered his spirit to the Lord.

Short Biography

Elder Ephraim (Moraitis) was born on June 24, 1927 in Volos, Greece. Having been born on the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Forerunner and Baptist, he was given the name John. He grew up in poverty and helped his father at work, but always tried to emulate the pious life

of his mother Victoria (whom he later tonsured a nun with the name of Theophano). Desiring the monastic life around 14 years of age, he did not get a blessing from his spiritual father to leave and become a monk until he was 19.

Once, just a month before he left the world, his friends decided to visit Elder Joseph the Hesychast. John did not have any valuable gift to send with them, so he sent a small pouch of vermicelli and wrote a note. When unpacking gifts, Elder Joseph said: "This child will become a monk here." When the friends of John returned and told him these words, he just forgot about it - he had no idea about his future monastic life and had no blessing from the spiritual father.

After Elder Joseph's repose in 1959, Elder Ephraim continued to live in asceticism for many years until he became the abbot of the Holy Monastery of Philotheou in 1973, where he was able to revive the spiritual life in a short time. Due to the reputation of Elder Ephraim, the monastery's brotherhood grew rapidly. Elder Ephraim was asked by the sacred synod of Mount Athos to revive and expand several other monasteries on Mount Athos which had a dwindling number of monks. These monasteries were Xeropotamou, Konstamonitou, and Karakallou. He was also asked to repopulate the Great Lavra but declined. These monasteries would remain under his spiritual guidance. Along with the monasteries on Mount Athos, there were several other monasteries in Greece under Elder Ephraim's spiritual guidance, including the Monastery of Saint John the Forerunner in Serres, that of Panagia the Directress in Portaria (Volos), and that of the Archangel Michael, a formal Metochion of Philotheou on the island of Thasos.

In 1979, Elder Ephraim became ill and needed a surgery. Then his spiritual children from Canada offered to do the surgery in Canada. The Elder agreed, and the operation was successful. For more than a month Elder Ephraim stayed in America and met representatives of the Greek community. He got to know that the spiritual life in the Greek circles had been disrupted, people stayed for a long time without confession with grave sins were partaking of Holy Communion totally unprepared, and did not keep the holy canons of the Church.

They forget the pious Orthodox life, Greek national traditions and were accustomed to secular life.

Fr Ephraim decided to go to America more and more often. He first visited Canada: Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and then he was invited to the United States. In the end, the synod of the Holy Mountain warned him that he cannot continue this way and must choose: either the Holy Mountain or America. The Elder began to pray and it was revealed that his place is in America. He decided to move to the U.S. - for the spiritual care of his flock and the revival of spiritual life in the Greek communities of North America.

Elder Ephraim developed a reputation of being a grace-filled confessor, a true Athonite elder, and had thousands of spiritual children around the world: monastics, clergy, and laity. He is considered by many to be the first to establish an authentic Athonite monastery on American soil. In his life, Elder Ephraim founded seventeen monasteries in the United States and Canada for women and men alike, as well as a nursing home.

Article adapted by Aikaterini Podia. Original article by [John Sanidopoulos](#). For further biographical information, please visit the official website of [St. Anthony's monastery](#).



Elder Ephraim of Arizona

DIALOGUE WITH ELDER EPHRAIM OF ARIZONA

The following conversation was recorded by monastic spiritual children from Greece of Elder Ephraim of Arizona, formerly of Philotheou, who visited him in May 2014 at the Holy Monastery of St Anthony the Great in Arizona.

Interlocutor: Elder, after so many years of struggle, what has remained within your soul?

Elder Ephraim: Everything is secondary, all is secondary. The first thing is the name of our Christ and now, over the years that have passed, I saw in action how only with love can people win. My life was labor and pain, living in poverty during the time of the Germans, hunger during the occupation, temptations and sorrows in the monasteries. A great struggle. Only the name of Christ and our Panagia brought me through. Whoever does not say daily the name of Christ and our Panagia, is not a Christian.

Interlocutor: In other words, the prayer of Christ is the greatest?

Elder Ephraim: Of course, because then we continuously have the memory of our Christ. The Holy Fathers were illumined and left us these little prayers. A few words: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us" and "Most Holy Theotokos, save us". We don't need to read encyclopedias, nor many books. With these two little prayers, all Christians are saved. Monastics who do not have worldly concerns, pray much and achieve heights. Our Panagia also helps much. It is like they are speaking into the ears of our Christ, because they are dedicated to the prayer and this is their primary work, and whoever has the gift of prayer in their heart, when they die they are not bothered by the toll-houses. Immediately after their death they go straight to Christ. There are no hindrances, because the name of Christ has power. God is fire.

Interlocutor: Elder, the world, we, are in a difficult position with all that is taking place and all that we hear about. There is fear.

Elder Ephraim: Yes, we feel things will be catastrophic and they happen daily. This is why we run to the monasteries and churches, but we

must not fear. Just think, if one order of angels became demons and did so much damage, how much help do we receive from the nine orders of angels. One time I saw Christ on His throne and next to Him was our Panagia and the orders of angels and the saints. They waited for a nod from our Christ to help humanity in this new situation. When we fill our hearts daily with Christ our faith strengthens and we face everything. Our Panagia pleads for us and intercedes constantly so that we will have strength and optimism.

Interlocutor: Many people are going through difficult trials, either due to the malice of others or their own misdeeds. It is so difficult, it's as if they are living in hell here.

Elder Ephraim: When people live hell here and give value to this situation with spiritual criteria, then when they die they will not be judged at all, but they will immediately go into the arms of Christ. But if they do not give it value with spiritual criteria, this hell will also be suffered in the next life. I wanted to say something to you about Paradise. Before I became eighty years old, I would often go to Paradise. And now also of course, but age plays a role. One time the Lord took me by the hand and said to me: "Here you made a church, here you confessed and saved a soul, here you comforted, here you admonished..." In other words, He would say to me everything and with this He gave me joy, together with His word, so much joy that I said: "My sweet Christ, I cannot take anymore. I cannot take anymore. I will explode. Return me." Then I would be in my room again.

Interlocutor: In other words Elder, many things take place from behind that we do not catch?

Elder Ephraim: Of course. This is why we must be careful from everywhere. Great caution. We will go through a fearsome trial.

Interlocutor: What is hell like?

Elder Ephraim: What's it like? Horror, horror. May even a bird never go there. Just as people drown at sea, so also they drown in the torments of hell, accompanied by demons. We must pray for the dead. It is a great act of mercy. My mother was a virtuous woman. I based my childhood on her words. Before she died she was

bedridden for two years and would say: "Father, tell God to take me. I am tired." But before she departed she battled.

Interlocutor: Who did she battle with?

Elder Ephraim: Demons.

Interlocutor: Did you see them?

Elder Ephraim: Yes, like I see people.

Interlocutor: Didn't the Archangel help her?

Elder Ephraim: He was behind her. He stood back so she could battle alone and receive a crown.

Interlocutor: Many people die suddenly.

Elder Ephraim: Yes. Every day we must have our passports in our hand. We don't know what can happen. Once I confessed someone in a hospital with nods then they died. He did something good in his life and was saved at the last moment. In my life I went through many hardships and I saw that Divine Providence directs everything for the good of man. May the memory of death never be absent from us. Read the Gerontikon, the dialogue between Saint Marcellus with the skull.

THE HOLY MONASTERY OF OSIOS LOUKAS

The famous Monastery of Osios Loukas, i.e. Blessed Luke, is the largest and best-preserved monastery complex of the Middle Byzantine period, with exceptional architecture and excellent decoration of mosaics, wall paintings and sculptures. With the Nea Moni of Chios and the Monastery of Daphni, the monastery of Osios Loukas is included in the list of world heritage monuments of UNESCO since 1990. Osios Loukas is a breath-taking Byzantine monastery in a picturesque green and golden valley full of flowering almond and olive trees, near the town of Distomo, Greece.

Further description and photos on the following link by [Orthodox City Hermit](#).





Osios Loukas Monastery, Distomo, Greece

PARISH NEWS

God willing, Jordan Emanuel will be baptised on Feb. 16th. We look forward to this joyful event. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ keep him under His protection!

SUNDAY SCHOOL PLAN

Feb. 2nd: The Meeting of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Temple. Today, children will make a standing up temple out of card paper, representing the Icon of the feast which will show all the Saints present. They will be able to decorate it using different materials of their choice. In a similar way, we will discuss how Orthodox faithful bring their new-born babies to the Church to be presented and prayed for in front of the icons and Altar.

Feb. 9th: The Publican and the Pharisee. Luke 18:10-14; “Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’”. We will break down the Parable of the Publican and

Pharisee to make it more easy for children to understand the different prayer examples portrayed in the Scripture. We will make a picture frame representing each man with a description of each man’s actions and words.

Feb. 23rd: Fasting crafts. This is the last Sunday before Cheesfare Week and the beginning of Great Lent. We will be discussing different foods and how Christ, Saints and our Church encourages us to familiarise ourselves with fasting – and also sharing (charity). We will divide A4 piece of paper to fill it in with fasting and non-fasting food stickers and pictures!

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Feb. 2: *Dimitri Coutya*

Feb. 2: *Eleni*

Feb. 21: *Pisistratos*

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 FEASTS THIS MONTH

1st Feb: *St Bridget of Kildare (†525)*

2nd Feb: *The Presentation of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Temple*

3rd Feb: *St Nicholas, Enlightener of Japan*

9th Feb: *Triodion Begins Today*

10th Feb: *Hieromartyr Charalampus*

23rd Feb: *St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna*

26th Feb: *St Photine, the Samaritan woman*

27th Feb: *St Raphael of Brooklyn (†1915)*

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: www.calendar.goarch.org

Services at St Martin's in February

Sat. 1st	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 2nd	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	12:00	"Martha's house" Sunday School
	12:30	Parish lunch
Sat. 8th	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 9th	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	12:00	"Martha's house" Sunday School
	12:30	Parish lunch
Sat. 15th	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 16th	10:00	Divine Liturgy
	11:30	Baptism of Jordan Emanuel
	12:30	Parish lunch
Sat. 22nd	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 23rd	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	12:00	"Martha's house" Sunday School
	12:30	Parish lunch

"God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith"
- St. George Karslides -



For further information please contact:

Father Jonathan Hemmings
67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ
Tel: 07951 722 877

Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk
www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk
www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk

The following blogs of Old Stavronians are available in Romanian, [Constiinta Ortodoxa](#), in English, [Orthodox city hermit](#), and in Greek, [Orthodoxy rainbow](#).

