

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

The Stavronian

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*Ἐπιθρονος 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)*

Often, goes the Christ in the stranger's guise

SAINT JOSEPH THE HESYCHAST (1897 -1959)

*Glorified by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on
October 20, 2019*

Saint Joseph the Hesychast (1898-1959) was a charismatic personality of 20th century's Orthodox spirituality. He became a monk in Mt Athos at a young age and finally he was a top teacher of Jesus' prayer. Like many gifted monks, he had many out-of-body experiences and visions, and he as well felt his end coming. From his monastic group ("Synodeia") came many famous abbots and spiritual fathers.

Early in his life, he was granted a vision of the uncreated light, and the gift of ceaseless prayer was given to him.

"At once I was completely changed and forgot myself. I was filled with light in my heart and outside and everywhere, not being aware that I even had a body. The prayer began to say itself within me..."

For details on the Elder's life and struggles, go to St. Anthony's monastery official [webpage](#) .

His epistles' corpus was collected and edited in Greek and after in English, in *Monastic Wisdom; The Letters of Elder Joseph the Hesychast*, a real gem! Recipients vary, as the holy father addressed clergy, monasteries, laity, both in Greece and abroad. In his writings he explains many issues about the Jesus' prayer, the faithful's struggle for Heaven, and the right way to love God.

The book epitomizes the very essence of spiritual fatherhood and offers Elder's experience from his battles with the demons, witness his difficult trials and his profound visions and spiritual guidance, his martyric endurance in illnesses and finally his holy repose. In the grey atmosphere of New Age movements, it gives a taste of a true meeting with the Holy Spirit and a Baptism in Fire.

What makes this book a true treasure is the wisdom and sweetness of the Elder's words. He epitomizes the very essence of spiritual fatherhood. It comes as no surprise to learn that Elder Joseph's spiritual children and grandchildren number in the thousands, and that his blessed memory lives on in all of their hearts.

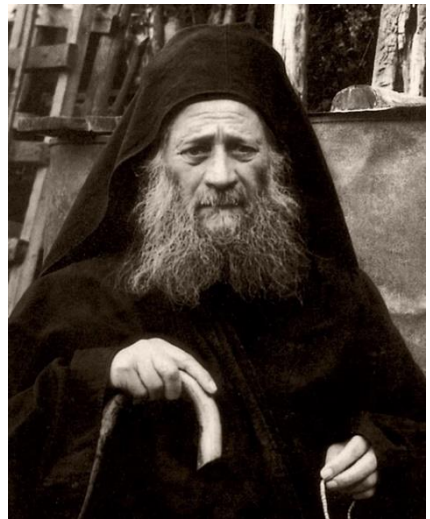
What a sensitive heart full of paternal

affection and love did he possess, a love that melts even the hardest and coarsest of hearts.

In one letter he writes: "Love of my soul, my son whom I begot through the Holy Spirit: I received your letter, my beloved son. When I saw your news I wept bitterly..."

In another letter he writes, "Come, my child, come let us make peace, so you can come to your senses. Like a physician, I am able to cure your passion of agitation and grief which now has laid a strong hold of you. Come and see that I shall change the tune. We shall chant plagal of the first tone which is joyous. I shall slay the fatted calf and we shall make merry. I am full of love and forgiveness. As a loving father, I shall receive you in my arms, like the son in the parable..."

In another letter we again see the affectionate Father confessing, "My soul grieves and a heavy cloud covers my heart. My mind stops; my tongue is silent, and my hand grows numb for you... Oh, my child, if you could only see my pain and the tears that I shed for you! How much I worry until I hear that you have risen and slapped the adversary!... So take courage, my child, and rise from your fall... Don't despair. These things happen to everyone. It is a war of the tempter that will pass."



Because his love is boundless, he takes upon himself the problems of his spiritual children: "As for me, I am constantly ill. I am like a paralytic. I can't take ten steps. Because of this and everything else, I am dead tired. Please, I ask that you pray for me, because I have many souls that

seek my help. And believe me, my fathers and brethren, for every single soul that is helped, I go through the warfare he has. This is also why your elder is constantly ill.”

Saint Joseph, pray for us!

Dr. Kleio Kehagia

Our Parish has a secondary relic of the newly glorified saint Joseph the Hesychast, that being a small portion of his walking stick which most photos of him features.

Fr. Jonathan

ON PRAYER

“As a bird without wings, as a soldier without arms, so is a Christian without prayer.” St Tikhon of Zadonsk.

Indeed prayer is the basis of Christian life. If we do not pray, if we do not talk to the Lord, our Creator and Father, if we do not listen to Him in the quiet of our hearts and in the Gospels, we do not have a relationship with Him. We are disarmed as Christians and become useless, lifeless. It is as if our “umbilical cords” are severed and we have become unplugged from the Source of all Love, Energy and Life.

Prayer is at once very complex and very simple. It is as simple as “Our Father...”. Jesus urges us not to complicate things, but to pray simply from the heart:

“ when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathens do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.” Matthew 6:6

During our prayers we have a chance to detach ourselves from our personal circumstances and anxieties and to focus on the Divine. Through prayer, if it is pleasing to God and beneficial to the person praying, all earthly things can be changed, more importantly, our hearts, in times of trouble prayer is one of the arms that we need to take up

to defend ourselves, this alongside Holy Mysteries will grant us strength.

“So I say to you ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks, finds and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Luke 11:9-10

As a child looks to his father and says please, so we supplicate our Father, like children we must entrust ourselves completely in faith to Him. Because heart felt prayer is always heard. The Lord is waiting for you to ask, and commune with Him throughout the day, with praise and gratitude. Like children and the one Leprous man from the Gospels, let us come back to Him with our thanks. Let us connect our day with the Lord in short prayerful phrases and stay in contact with Him in all emotions.

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His mercy endures forever.” Psalm 117

But prayer is also extremely complex because it is an unfathomable mystery. It is the Creator entering into a relationship of love with the created one. How can the infinite and the very finite meet in a relationship of love? How can they commune and dwell together? And yet with God all things are possible. *“God will not despise a humbled and a broken heart”* Psalm 50 – Let us remember to approach Him in humility and He in His great love for us will bestow blessings.

Abba Agathon says “If we do not find prayer difficult, perhaps it is because we have not really started to pray.” Real prayer is revelation. It is ourselves, wretched sinners coming before the Lord in our nakedness, as we really are. We must reveal ourselves to him as we truly are: weak, sinful, imperfect and await that the Lord in His rich mercy can begin to reveal His will, His might and His splendour to us. Only when we fully reveal ourselves to Him (and how painful this is!), He can begin to transform us by His Love.

HOUSE BLESSING AND SHUT DOORS

What a great joy it was to receive Father Jonathan to bless our houses during the Feast of Theophany! We opened every door in our house to welcome the Holy and life giving water and the light of Christ in every corner of our house. This “visitation” brings peace and joy to every Christian home.

But the evening preceding the visit, during the frantic tidying, cleaning and baking in preparation, I found myself designating places where the door could remain shut to hide the mess or slightly embarrassing items, not to be seen. It dawned on me that this is a habitual act, which many Christians might relate to.

In the home of my being I keep piling shameful and messy items in dark and secret corners of my being, hoping that Christ might not see them. I lock the doors of these little dark cupboards and try to forget where I put the key, or worse I open the cupboards when I am all alone in hiding. How can I be filled with the Light of Christ if I do not open all the doors, if I hold back? Christ is waiting to bring His Light, Himself in every single, dirty, dusty, embarrassing corner of my being, which He knows anyway. He is waiting for me to open every door ,(I once saw an image of Christ holding a lamp and knocking on a door with no handle because the handle is on the inside of the door. Unless we open, He will not come in.)

On the Feast of the Presentation of Christ to the Temple, let us sweep clean every corner of the Temple of our home and of our being and open every door, so that the Meeting with our Saviour is a complete one, let us not hold back on anything, but let go of our fear and anxiety and let Christ shine his light in every corner to dispel the darkness.

Martha and Mary

BLESSED ELDER AMVROSIOS LAZARIS THE ATHONITE AND THE DREAD JUDGEMENT DAY

“The Dread Judgement “Day” will last as long as the Six Psalms last, a few minutes. At this time, while we will be judged, the Angels will

chant the Six psalms. ...

All the people who will be alive at this moment, they will instantly experience death and then be immediately resurrected. Our bodies will be immaterial, space-less. We will be able to see each other’s body and we will all be 33 years old. Our Lord will hold the Book of Life, the Gospel, open, and immediately, each one of us will go on our own either to the right or to the left, because we will know in our hearts whether we are for Paradise or not.

This is exactly why in the Bishop’s throne, the Book in the icon of Christ is open and there is no candle over this icon–this indicates that there will be no Mercy in the Second Coming. While in the Iconostasis, the Book which Christ is holding is closed and there is a candle lit over the icon because there is still Mercy. “

† Blessed Elder Amvrosios Lazaris the Athonite (21/12/1912 – 02/12/2006)

The Hieromonk Amvrosios (born Spyridon Lazaridis) departed this life on 2 December 2006 (New Calendar), at the age of 92. He was the spiritual father of the Holy Monastery of Our Most Holy Lady Gavriotissa, Dadi, and of thousands of Christians from all over Greece.

During a chat, I [Archimandrite Ephraim, Abbot of the Vatopaidi Monastery] once had with the late Elder, he told me that after his military service, he wanted to go to the Holy Mountain, but he didn’t know how or where to go. Then a young man of about 25 appeared and told him: “I know the place, come with me”. And so he went.

They set off together, went down to the harbour and embarked on a boat. “He gave me bread, as well”, he said, “and we ate together all the days I was with him. He didn’t tell me his name, though, and I didn’t ask. So we arrived at Dafni and from there walked on, further up the Holy Mountain.

When I was with him, I felt very safe. As we went along, he showed me the Monastery of Xiropotamou, where they honour the Forty Martyrs. He asked if I would like to pay my respects and I agreed to do so. We went into the katholiko, the main church of the Monastery, and when I kissed the icon, forty men appeared and surrounded us. The young man turned to me and said: “They’re the Forty Martyrs and they’re

happy that you're going to be a monk".

From there we continued on our way and reached Karyes, and from there went to the Holy Monastery of Koutloumousi. The young man stopped, pointed out the monastery to me and said: "You'll stay here, Spyro. You'll become a monk. You'll be patient and obedient to the Elder". And he disappeared.

It would seem that this was an angel of the Lord, Spyridon's guardian angel. Spyridon remained at this monastery as a novice, and, at the age of 25, became a monk with the name of Hariton.



... Elder Amvrosios was always in communion with the Saints. Once, "When I was in bed, in pain, I [Elder Amvrosios himself says] could see the chapel of the Holy Unmercenary Doctors opposite, and I asked them to help me. Two doctors appeared in white smocks and they tried to set my leg. 'Pull, Kosmas' said one. 'Hold it here, Damianos', said the other. In five minutes, the pain had gone and I was well again". When the brethren in the monastery saw him completely well, they praised God and the Holy Unmercenary Doctors.

Dr Kleio Kehagia

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE THEOTOKOS

"Christ's conception in the womb of the Panagia took place at the moment of the Angel's salutation: the moment he came and proclaimed the joyous news that she would become the Mother of Christ and would bring to the world the Saviour of humanity. For us, the 'conception' of the Grace of Christ happened at the time of our holy baptism. That's when Christ was conceived in our souls and has been carried within us ever since. He is conceived in the womb of obedience, of the carrying out of the commandments of God. For some people, the 'pregnancy' lasts a long time -- that is, a lot of time has to pass until fruit is borne from this gestation of Christ and for there to be a spiritual birth -- while for others, this goes more quickly, depending on the depth of each soul's response. The humbler one is and the more he imitates the Panagia in humility, the easier will be the gestation and the spiritual birth, the bearing of fruit."

*Blessed Elder Kragiopoulos,
reproduced by Dr Kleio Kehagia*



YOUR THOUGHTS HAVE A MIND OF THEIR OWN

Men often prefer their own personal ideas and theories rather than sound doctrines and Divine revelations.

Proverbs 3:7

*Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and depart from evil.*

Isaiah 5:21

*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own sight.*

To a foolish mind, its own thoughts appear the most intelligent and superior to others. All matters are measured relatively against its own ideology or philosophy. So too, people come to enquire about faith, but often carrying their own baggage of theories, preferences, predispositions and agendas; but this brings a distortion of truth; it is a vanity of indulgence and a lack of obedience. When we entertain our own thoughts and reasoning then we construct a wall which separates us from spiritual enlightenment. We must pray for the spirit of discernment and the virtue of watchfulness lest these disturbing thoughts descend to the heart and are captivated by the heat of the passions.

Timothy 6:3-4

³If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

The wise man does not regard his own thoughts in this way. It is precisely when he feels convinced that they are true and the sole wisdom that he most distrusts his own judgement and finds recourse to the Holy Fathers, the Holy Tradition of the Church, Holy Scripture and spiritual counsel. He makes elders the judges of his thoughts and arguments – lest he should run, or may have run, in vain (cf. Gal. 2:2).

*Fr Jonathan,
Based on the sayings of
Saint Maximos the Confessor*

OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Dear Father Jonathan,
Greetings from Moscow!

Thank you for publishing the interview with the Elder Ephraim. It is always encouraging to be aware that our contemporaries are living a high spiritual life.

Thanks to God, we are doing well. I am busy with my work, Liuba and Liza - with their studies, Natasha - with taking care of all of us. Please pass our greeting to the Parish.

Yours, Oleg

Dear Father Jonathan and Parish,

We hope you're well and thank you for the Stavronian. You are doing a marvellous job. This is the case when somethings done with our hearts!

Wishing you a happy and prosperous 2020. May all your troubles find solutions (especially regarding the church), and the Parish in general.

We'd like you to know that you are thought of and prayers are extended to the Almighty Father and Christ for your wellbeing and the fruition of your struggles to keep our church alive and productive.

We hear quite often from Dr. Kehagia. It's always a pleasure. Please pass on our regards to everyone in your fine team. May God and St Joachim keep you all under Their protective wings.

*With the Love of God, f. Theodosios, Louiza,
Parishioners, my immediate family who met and
admire your kindness and efforts*



PARISH NEWS

We look forward with great joy to having Kleio Kechagia and Dmitry Ismagilov with us for Great and Holy Week (April 13th -- 19th April).

God willing, **His Eminence Bishop Silouan** is coming to our Parish on the weekend **March 21st/22nd**, which is the Sunday of the Holy Cross. We will make a programme for his visit and if you want him to make a special visit to your home please let me know. All suggestions welcome. Please put this date in your diary and make every effort to attend.

Fr Jonathan

SUNDAY SCHOOL PLAN

Mar. 15th: Second Sunday of Great Lent, Saint Gregory Palamas. Today we will be making paper prayer ropes for children. They will be able to view an ordinary prayer rope and we will bring the Jesus Prayer closer to our children by explaining what they are used for and how did Saints use it. Saint Gregory Palamas is known for hesychia, this is something we can remember him by and we are encouraged to pray in this way too!

Mar. 22nd: Third Sunday of Great Lent. Veneration of the Cross. This Sunday, we have prepared an exciting craft for children, we will make cross magnets and children will use colourful sand in order to complete it, they can be put on the fridge at home in remembrance of the importance of veneration of the Holy and Life Giving Cross.

Mar. 29th: Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. Saint John Climacus of Sinai. We are making a beautiful ladder out of wooden sticks and there will be a number of craft materials to decorate it. We will make it into a hanging decoration and on the ladder we will write virtues and mark the weeks of Lent showing our journey to Pascha and Christ.

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Mar. 4: Nikolaos

Mar. 12: Georgianna

Mar. 18: Fr. Thomas Hopko

Mar. 19: Metropolitan Philip of North America, and Fr. Georgios Myrou

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

1st Mar: Forgiveness Sunday. St. David of Wales (+589)

2nd Mar: Clean Monday; Lent starts today. Our Holy fathers St Nicholas Planas & St Joachim of Ithaca and Vatopaedi

8th Mar: Sunday of Orthodoxy

17th Mar: St Patrick, the Enlightener of Ireland (+492)

20th Mar: St Cuthbert the Wonderworker, Bishop of Lindisfarne (+687)

25th Mar: The Annunciation of our Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

30th Mar: St John Climacus the righteous, author of the Divine Ladder of Ascent

31st Mar: St. Innocent, Enlightener of Siberia & Alaska

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 March

Sun. 1st	09:30	Matins
	10:30	Divine Liturgy
	12:00	"Martha's house" Sunday School
	12:30	Parish lunch

Fri. 6th	18:30	Akathist to the Mother of God
Sat. 7th	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 8th	09:30 10:30 12:00 12:30	Matins Divine Liturgy “Martha’s house” Sunday School Parish lunch
Fri. 13th	18:30	Akathist to the Mother of God
Sat. 14th	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 15th	09:30 10:30 12:00 12:30	Matins Divine Liturgy “Martha’s house” Sunday School Parish lunch
Fri. 20th	18:30	Akathist to the Mother of God
Sat. 21st	15:00	Great Vespers with His Eminence Silouan
Sun. 22nd	09:30 10:30 12:00 12:30	Matins Hierarchical Liturgy with His Eminence Silouan “Martha’s house” Sunday School Parish lunch
Tue. 24th	18:30	Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Annunciation
Fri. 27th	18:30	Akathist to the Mother of God
Sat. 28th	15:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 29th	09:30 10:30 12:00 12:30	Matins Divine Liturgy “Martha’s house” Sunday School Parish lunch

“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.

