

**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

FEAR AND LOVE

We live in a world where Fear is prevalent. Today more than ever people are anxious and afraid. We have all experienced fear and anxiety from our childhood to our old age: fear of the dark, of loneliness, of being told off as children; later on fear of being unloved by the persons we love, fear of failure, of being ill, of losing someone dear to us or of dying. We have experienced unreasonable anxiety as well, when for instance walking alone in the dark on a deserted street. What we need to remember is that in all our fears, trials and tribulations, we are not alone. The Lord is always walking ahead of us. The medicine for fear is Faith, Trust and Love. What more clear message to allay our fears than the words of our Saviour:

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on.[...] Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?[...] Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” Matthew 6:25-34

Fear is part of our life from the moment sin entered the world. After Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit and covered their bodies in shame, they hid from the Lord. When the Creator called Adam and said “Adam, where are you?”, he replied:

“I heard Your voice as You were walking in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” Genesis 3:10

Before this first moment of separation and fear, there had been only Love and Unity in creation. Adam and Eve had looked the Lord in the Face, had loved each other and had never experienced fear. With Sin also Fear and Shame enter the world to the point where we cannot look our Father in the Face, we keep hiding and feeling ashamed, we keep worrying about our bodies and everything around us. But our Father does not abandon us, but sends His only Son, that we may look him in the Face without being scorched, that we may not be afraid, but love once again as children do: simply and totally. The message of the Gospels is clear -- there is nothing to be afraid of. We are exhorted again and again *“Do not be afraid!”* Some mathematically minded people say

this exhortation appears in the Bible 365 times, once for each day of the year.

St Anthony of Optina says: *“You should be afraid not of cholera, but of serious sin, for the scythe of death mows a person down like grass even without cholera. Therefore, place all your hope in the Lord God, without Whose will even the birds do not die, much less a person.”* How appropriate for these times of fear and anxiety!

When we love God and our neighbour with all our heart, we dispel the fear that surrounds us. When we trust God with our person, our family and our world, when we embrace the Cross, we are freed from fear. St Andrew said *“If I feared the cross, I should not be preaching the Cross.”* Our only fear should be not loving enough, not trusting enough and falling into temptation. But even in these serious instances, we appeal to our Lord and He rescues us. When we have such a loving and mighty Father what is there to fear?

Martha and Mary

HOW CAN THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC BIRTH GOD WITHIN US?

In so many ways... Let us explore here just one, with the help of Elder Aimilianos of blessed memory, should we eventually catch coronavirus despite our best efforts to protect ourselves and our beloved ones:

“We get sick and we suffer for different reasons, but often it’s because we have sinned, voluntary or involuntary, or because we have wandered away from God. But, if you are sick, don’t be afraid and don’t worry because sickness is a great gift from God. The sick are God’s special children.

The sick are under God’s special protection. They have God’s special blessing. They have God’s love. They are in His embrace, whereas someone who has health might not be.

The sick person, the suffering person, the person with illness is in a privileged place, or a potentially privileged place, with respect to God. Those who have never known sickness, and those who have never known suffering, often have a lack of empathy; and often their heart is narrow and small and restricted, and not able to open up

and embrace the suffering of others because they just don't know it.

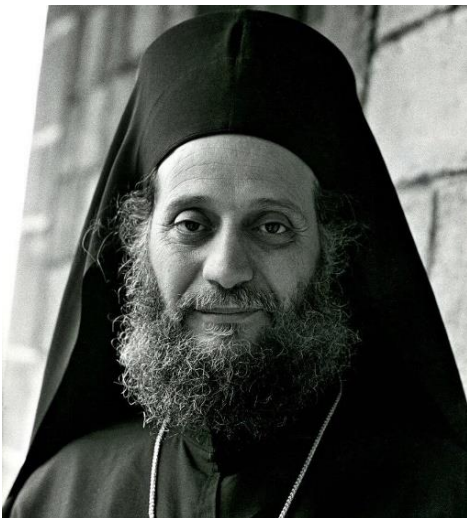
The sick, on the other hand, are often the most loving and understanding and compassionate people that you will ever meet, and they are the ones who will have boldness before God in their prayers for others.

So don't be afraid of your illness. Leave it to God. Do what the doctors tell you. When you take your medication, you receive Christ. It's not bad, or a sign of a lack of faith, to take your medication. When you take your medication, you are receiving a blessing, you are receiving Christ Himself.

Do what the doctors say, take your medications, go for your tests, but have no anxiety. Sometimes what's worse than being sick is being afraid of getting sick. Leave it to God. Whatever God gives you is best for you. God never gives you a Cross without first weighing and measuring it very carefully to make sure that the Cross will result in your spiritual growth.

So don't think it's random, don't think it's chance, don't think it's too much. It's been very carefully weighed and very carefully measured, so that it will result in spiritual growth and spiritual benefit.

As much as the body wastes away, that much is our life in God renewed. God cannot be born within us without birth pangs. And the suffering that we experience, whether it's emotional suffering or physical suffering, these are the birth pangs, the travail, the suffering in our life that will enable God to be born and to grow within us.



So we should feel pity for the person who has not tasted involuntary pain because that person is not likely to impose upon himself a sufficient amount of voluntary pain. So feel pity for the person who does not know involuntary pain because they're not going to inflict it on themselves. They're going to want to stay in their comfortable place, their comfort-zone, and they're going to resist all kinds of change.

Sickness is a visitation from God, a divine visitation. Sickness humbles us, it teaches us, it reshapes us, it awakens us to reality, it enables us to see what is truly important and of value. It is not a punishment, but a divine visitation for our correction and education.

*Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra Monastery.
[From a lecture "Blessed are the Pure in Heart:
Reflections on the Spiritual Nature of Suffering,"
by Father Maximos Constas,
Patristic Nectar Publications (2017).]*

ON ISOLATION AND BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

At this time of unprecedented world-wide events, isolation has become a daily experience for most of us, except those in the front line who put their own health at risk in hospitals by caring for others. What can possibly be good in a world where we are deprived of each other's company, of the things we took for granted, of Church and the Holy Sacraments?

A little while ago, the two of us were feeling disheartened about our constant failure to fast properly. Social pressure, convenience and temptation were constantly overturning our determination to fast. Alone, we seemed unable to consistently refrain from food and kept asking the Lord for help. Help came in the unlikely guise of stomach problems in one case and a tooth extraction in another. Whether this discomfort and pain was given us to help or whether the Lord took this little pain and turned it to good purpose, the effect was that fasting became easy. Glory to God for health troubles!

This little incident reminded us of the children's book **Pollyanna**, where the little girl plays the "Glad Game", which consists of finding

something to be glad about in every situation, no matter how sad or painful it may be. What therefore can we possibly find to be glad about, to be thankful for in isolation? If we think about it, quite a lot. We have, most of us, a good home where we can isolate, some of us with the people who are nearest to us, our family. In the mad rush of our daily life of work and chores we had little time to listen to them and just be with them. This is a wonderful opportunity, if we allow it, to give them the time and love we couldn't before we became house bound. It is also a time to experience what being housebound is like for our friends and family who have to live like this all the time through poor health and old age. It is a time where we can pray for them and remember them more as well.

It is common knowledge and yet we forget so often, that we truly appreciate something when we lose it and while we have a gift, we become blasé about it and take it for granted. Only 2 weeks ago all we longed for was solitude and a rest from the mad rush of daily life and people. After only 3 days in isolation, we desperately long for our friends, work colleagues, for strangers and for Church. Suddenly, having coffee with a friend and exchanging news, hugging someone in church has become a high treat. It is a reminder how tightly we are bound as people to each other, what joy there is in fellowship and human contact. Communion with each other and with the Lord especially in the Holy Sacraments, a wondrous gift from God is now forbidden. How starved of it we will be by the end of our isolation, how hungry for each other and for God! How we will run to Church and how joyous we will be to wake up early to do so on a Sunday morning! *"O God, my God, I rise early to be with You; my soul thirsts for You. How often my flesh thirsts for You in a desolate, impassable and waterless land. So in the Holy place I appear before You, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your mercy is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You in my life; I will lift up my hands in Your name."* Psalm 62

This time of isolation and reflection on all the gifts we take for granted is also a wonderful opportunity for prayer, so needed for all our friends and family, for those truly alone, for those who are suffering with the virus and any illness, for those who risk their lives to care for them, for those who are dying, who have passed away and

for the whole of God's wonderful Creation which is now resting from the human ravages of pollution and greed.

At this present time, our homes have become our churches, the only place, where, like the first disciples, behind closed doors, we worship, supplicating for those in danger and in need, giving glory and thanks to the Lord for all the things which are and which have been taken away from us, so that we may truly appreciate them. Now we have time to be still in the Presence of the Lord. Physical barriers do not stop the spirit. The Lord comes to us when we invite Him with earnest entreaties in the seclusion which we live in, just as He did for the first Christians.

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them: "Peace be with you." John 20:19

But Thomas who was not there, did not believe; therefore so that he may believe too, in His infinite mercy, the Lord returned *"And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you." John 20:26* And again at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended and *"filled the whole house where they were sitting". Acts 2:2*

So, at this time of physical isolation, let us transcend the barriers of closed doors in united prayer of praise, thanksgiving and supplication, looking forward to the day when we can meet again in flesh and partake together of the Holy Mysteries. Let us long for each other and thirst for God.

Marta and Mary

CHURCH SERVICES GO ONLINE TEMPORARILY

Due to the coronavirus, all services in our Church have been suspended by the Archdiocese, until a further notice. Meanwhile, we continue the standard prayer practice at home:

-- Vespers on Saturdays;

-- Hours and Typica on Sundays at your convenience;

-- read the Lord's prayer at 12:00 every day. Some of these services will be delivered online in Skype. To join them, please follow instruction on the link <https://join.skype.com/KZt20cnwQw5f>, or add orthodox.lancaster@gmail.com to the list of your Skype contacts. It is worth switching off your microphone and camera during the services to suppress noise, but you will be able to see and hear the chapel service.

In addition, many parishioners have already signed for the Vigil Prayer [online](#), so that the non-stopping prayer is maintained by the faithful all over the world continuously for 24 hours, until the pandemic surrenders.

Lastly, please light a candle or lamp in your window in the evening at 7.00 p.m. to pray for those who work for the NHS in our hospitals for our Doctors, Nurses, those who care for the sick and all key workers.

Fr Jonathan



A little Chapel at home, full of light



During the Akathist to the Mother of God

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Apr. 8: *Evangelos*

Apr. 14: *Jeanne*

Apr. 16: *Aristides*

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

2nd Apr: **5th Thursday of Lent: The Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete**

4th Apr: **5th Saturday of Lent: The Akathist Hymn**

5th Apr: **Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt**

11th Apr: **Lazarus Saturday**

12th Apr: **Palm Sunday**

19th Apr: **Great and Holy Pascha**

23rd Apr: **St. George the Great Martyr and Triumphant**

24th Apr: **Theotokos of the Life-giving Spirit**

25th Apr: **Mark the Apostle & Evangelist**

26th Apr: **Thomas Sunday**

30th Apr: **James the Apostle & brother of St. John the Theologian**

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 April (online*)

Fri. 3rd	18:30	Akathist to the Mother of God
Sat. 4th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 5th	09:30	Hours and Typica
Sat. 11th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 12th	09:30	Matins (Orthros) for Palm Sunday
Mon. 13th	18:30	<u>Great Monday Evening</u> Matins for Tuesday
Tue. 14th	18:30	<u>Great Tuesday Evening</u> Matins for Wednesday
Wed. 15th	18:30	<u>Efchelaion Service</u> <u>Blessing of oils</u>
Thu. 16th	18:30	Great Thursday, The Twelve Gospels
Fri. 17th	13:00	Great Vespers
	18:30	Matins, Lamentations, and Procession of Epitaphion
Sat. 18th	22:00	<u>Great and Holy Saturday</u> Orthros Matins of the Resurrection followed by receiving of the Holy Light and Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection, followed by refreshments to break the fast at home
Sun. 19th	15:00	Vespers of Love Great and Holy Pascha
Sat. 25th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 26nd	09:30	Hours and Typica

* Please, click on the link <https://join.skype.com/KZt20cnwQw5f> to join the Skype group call, or alternatively, add orthodox.lancaster@gmail.com to the list of your Skype contacts. All services are subject to change or non-transmission because of internet connection.

The Paschal Greeting in various languages*

English	Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!
Arabic	المسيح قام ! حقا قام! (El-Mesiyah qhama! Haqqan qaam!)
German	Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaft auferstanden!
Greek	Χριστός ανέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη! (Christos anesti! Alithos anesti!)
Romanian	Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!
Bulgarian	Христос възкресе! Наистина възкресе! (Khristos vzkrese! Naistina vzkrese!)
Russian	Христос воскрес! Воистину воскрес! (Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese!)
Polish	Chrystus zmartwychwstał! Prawdziwie zmartwychwstał! (Křystus zmertvykh-vstau! Pradzıvie zmertvikh-vstau!)
Latvian	Kristus (ir) augšamcēlies! Patiesi viņš ir augšamcēlies! (Kristus (ir) aughsham-elias! Patiesi vin ir aughsham-elias!)
Chinese (Mandarin)	基督復活了！他確實復活了！ (Titu fuhuola! Ha-tieshi fuhuola!)

*Underlined letters indicate the emphasis in pronunciation

“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.

