

# 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*

## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPARROWS

*"And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."* How much Love is hidden in this laconic, "modest" statement in *Genesis 1:2*! *"And suddenly a sound came like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And all began to speak in other tongues, other doctrines, other teachings, of the Holy Spirit."* (Great Vespers of Pentecost). How lofty is the Holy Spirit's descent in fiery tongues at the foundation of the Church! How different Pentecost is to Creation, and yet, it is the same vital outpouring of the Holy Spirit from the Lord, the Giver of Life.

*"Beside them will the birds of the heaven lodge, from the midst of the rocks will they give voice."* (Psalm 103:12) Oh, and what a voice! Our balcony is perched on the 5th floor of a neighbourhood full of plane trees. I am lulled to sleep to the trill of nightingales when all other birds shush; I wake up to the chirping of swallows, warblers, swifts, sobre tits, collared doves, chickadees, titmice and crows ... even if in a city. Branches reach out to our balcony handrail and literally hug our oleanders, jasmine and honeysuckle. I have always loved birds, any bird really, but I have always had a special fondness for sparrows.

*"There will the sparrows make their nests; the house of the heron is chief among them."* (Psalm 103:17) Recently, while in lockdown, I made up my mind to seek "company" in our neighbourhood. I placed a feeding dish on the floor of our balcony and put seed, grains and rice on its ledge. I also put another dish by its side, full of water, as Greek spring tends to get too hot and dry. A large pot of fully-grown oleander was strategically placed by their side. And I waited ...

*"All things wait on Thee, to give them their food in due season; when Thou givest it them, they will gather it."* (Psalm 103:27). To my disappointment, the first week or so nothing happened. Absolutely nothing, as if my plates were invisible even to branches that outreached towards them, touched them. But then, soon enough, a first visitor arrived, only to bring another one and another ... To my excitement, my visitors were mostly sparrows, as this corner is a bit narrow for any bigger bird really to squeeze in. How moving was it to see the response of the sparrows to my care and how fast did they bring others to the feast! Just like the All-Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to

bring others to the Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, was it not *"the Holy Spirit [himself which] descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him"*? (Luke 3:22).

*"When Thou openest Thy hand, all things shall be filled with goodness"* (Psalm 103: 28) Soon, I would work on my laptop but could not resist, now and then, to peep out, across our living room french doors: my tiny feathered friends outside were joyfully eating, jumping from one oleander branch to another, playing and bathing. How much did they enjoy the sunshine, how care-free were they and what a musical noise did they always make! In no less than another week, those tiny creatures, which were too tiny even for the palm of my hand, began to depend on me for their food, and I felt responsible for them. I noticed that whenever absorbed in my papers, I forgot to replenish their food, they would still arrive and sit in the middle of their empty plate and stare at me in disappointment.

*"Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."* (Psalm 103:30) My heart melts with joy just to watch them no doubt sing praises to our Lord. If I, sinful as I am, have such love and compassion for those tiny creatures, how much more does our Lord care for them? *"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care."* Amazing! And what a joy and comfort to hear from our Lord's infallible lips that *"even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."* (Matthew 10:29-31)

*"Likewise the Spirit also helps our weakness: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* (Romans 8:26). I have always felt the Holy Spirit a bit elusive and enigmatic as the third person of the Holy Trinity. So essential, so powerful, and yet so mysterious! St. Seraphim of Sarov revealed to Motovilov that the true aim of our Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. As for fasts, and vigils, and prayer, and almsgiving, and every good deed done because of Christ, they are only means of acquiring the Holy Spirit.

*"Did ye receive the Holy Spirit?"* (Acts 19:2) What a question that of Paul to the Ephesian

disciples to answer! Isn't it really asked of every one of us? Is it enough to answer: I have received the mystery or sacrament of the Spirit after my Baptism, when I was anointed with the Holy Chrism? Or does all this go deeper? Lev Gillet thinks that the real question we have to answer is whether and how this seed of the Spirit has been afterwards developed within the soul.

*"Heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth, ... O treasury of every good thing and Bestower of life"* Such a vital outpouring of the Holy Spirit from the Lord, the Giver of Life, even for ... sparrows. The Holy Spirit is a breath a wind, may this breath direct us where He wills. *"Come and dwell in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One. Amen"*

*Clio Kehagia*

## ENCOUNTERS WITH SAINTS

I grew up in a house where we did not have icons, none that I can remember, and where we did not talk much about God, the Theotokos or saints. My grandmothers taught me to say a few prayers and took me to church on a couple of occasions.

As I grew up, icons started to enter our house, but by then I was a very rebellious teenager so did not make any friends among the saints. When I moved to Lancaster, although I always had faith, I brought no icons with me. In fact, I felt a strange opposition to having traditional icons in my room or in my house later on. A streak of rebellion and ignorance in fact made me hide away in a drawer the icons which I received for my wedding. It is very painful to remember this and the fact I actually damaged one of them by accident. A friend told me then to make sure I keep the icons because when the time was right, I would treasure them.

A few years later, I started feeling guilty about having the icons hidden away and put a couple up in my bedroom. I was still unsure about it, but it started feeling wrong to have them in a drawer. They were just one of Christ and the Theotokos.

Then... the saints started arriving. And I discovered that saints are tenacious and come into your home uninvited. If you refuse to welcome them, they will knock again and again. And every time I had a slightly unkind thought about a Saint,

they came to befriend me. I am a constantly reluctant and continuously repentant friend of saints as the few stories which follow will tell. I felt that, being such an unworthy and sinful lover of Saints, I had to talk about them, so other people might come to know them a little better and love them a little more and I would like to hear other people's stories of saints, so my circle of holy friends may grow.

### Saint Filofteia

First came Saint Filofteia (or Philothea). I had never heard of her and did not invite her. It was a gift from Father Bogdan when he visited Lancaster about 13 years ago. I myself thought it was an unusual icon to be bringing, but it immediately struck a chord with me because Filofteia was the name of my grandmother who first talked to me about God and Christ and taught me to say a prayer before bed. So many times in my childhood and growing up, I thought it was a very strange name. It seemed to me at the time old and old fashioned, from a different era and I had often thought that I had never met anyone else by that name and mused on how her parents had come up with it. And how foolish I was, since her name means lover of God in Greek.

As the icon of Saint Filofteia arrived and was temporarily placed in the kitchen, where it still is, overlooking the hub of activity of the house, I started reading about the Saint. Another thing which resonated with me was the fact that her relics are to be found in Romania at the monastery Curtea de Argeş, where my other grandmother always wanted us to go on a trip. Sadly, we never made it because she passed away. But Saint Filofteia makes me remember my two grandmothers with great affection and gratitude for the seeds of faith they planted when I was a child. But beyond that, as I read about her brief life, I felt such love for the little saint who lived at the beginning of the XIII century in Trnovo modern day Bulgaria. She was born in a family of peasants. Filofteia's mother was a pious woman and taught her to read the Scriptures, fast and pray. She often went to church. Sadly, her mother died when she was only young and her father remarried. Her stepmother disliked the child and her pioussness, but Filofteia continued in her Christian upbringing, despite constant beatings and scoldings. She had a very compassionate heart and gave everything away to the poor and the hungry. One of her

daily duties was to take her father's lunch to him in the fields where he was working. But on the way, she saw some hungry children and, as was her habit, gave them some of her father's lunch. Her father saw her and became so angry that in a fit of rage he threw his axe at her and killed her on the spot. She was 12 years old. Immediately repentant, he tried to lift the body but was unable to move it and he was further terrified by the fact it shone with a white light. He ran to the city and came back with the local archbishop and many people. They all marvelled at how the body shone and read prayers and glorified God.

It is not entirely clear when her relics arrived in Romania, but most likely they were taken over the Danube for protection during the Turkish invasion of Bulgaria around 1393. The saint is revered both in Romania and Bulgaria and her feast day is the 7<sup>th</sup> of December. She is the protectress of abused children and children in general and many are the miracles attributed to her, especially for the sick.

*Alexandra McCafferty*



*Saint Philothea of Thrace,  
Protectress of Romania*

### **Troparion of St. Philothea**

Tone 8

*The blessed Philothea cries out to her Lord with great love, offering to Him the martyrdom which she endured for Him. She was buried with Him in Baptism that she might rise with Him, so, by her sufferings, she died that she might live in Him. Having given the pure oblation of her life to Christ, now she reigns with Him in glory. By her prayers, O Christ God, in Thy mercy, save our souls.*

### **Kontakion of St. Philothea**

Tone 8

*O blessed Philothea, from your youth you offered yourself, because of your great virtue, as a pure and spotless sacrifice unto God, Who truly knew you before your birth. You were an adornment of virgins and of the inhabitants of the Bridal Chamber; worthy of praise. Therefore, we cry to you: Hail, ever-memorable virgin.*

From [oca.org](http://oca.org)

## **BEING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT**

Time, how precious, irreversible and irreplaceable it is! How complicated everything becomes when we look at the past and the future. We all, at some point, fall into constantly looking backwards, pondering our childhoods, particular events that have taken place or experiences that have somehow changed our lives. On the other hand, there is the future, the dreams and plans, that we have made in our heads or hearts. We think of places we might go, people we might meet, we worry over our jobs, pensions, even homework. How often are we living and are focused on what is happening in the present? How often can we hear that clock ticking in the background, feel the rays of sunshine, the noises surrounding us, the changing light of the evening?

In the Gospel we hear the voice of our Lord, *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”* (Matthew 6:34). We would be less anxious if we could let God take care of our future and if we asked him to forgive our past. This way, joy would take the place of anxiousness. Our brains and minds are constantly filled with new information and knowledge, to the point that we become fidgety when the flow gets cut off. What is needed and necessary to live with God, is the present moment. We can only seek Him now, when the thoughts about the future and the past are extinguished and put away. As Christians, let us first *“seek the Kingdom of God”* (Matthew 6:33). We can only commune with Him through prayer in the present, through short phrases of unceasing prayer and sighs of gratitude for the blessings of the day. Don’t wait for the right time, because that may never come, but as we know and say in the Trisagion prayers He is *“everywhere present”* and at all times available to answer our call.

*Martha and Mary*

## **PENTECOST – THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

### **The Holy Spirit - Born by the power of God**

St. Paul called this Spirit the Spirit of adoption and the Spirit of grace, inasmuch as in the waters of the baptismal font we are born again of water and the Spirit, and are adopted as [God’s] children. In the same way, the Lord said to Nicodemus: *‘Unless people are born of water and of the Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God’*.

So, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption and the Spirit of grace, since grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, for those who have been born by the power of God.

Moreover, the Spirit is called the Comforter, because He’s also our advocate with the Father. And not only is He with the Father, but He’s always with us, too, as a gift.

*St John Chrysostom*

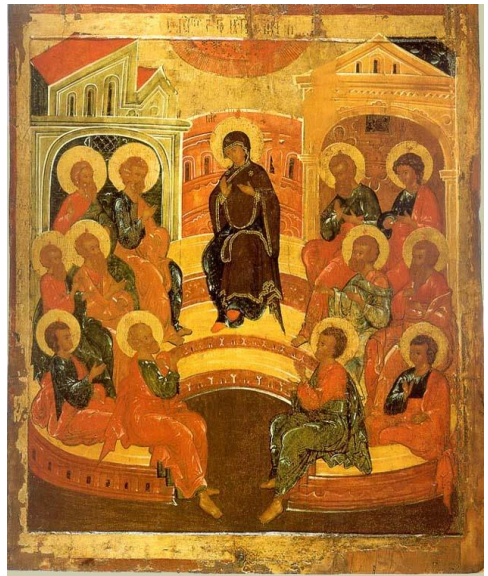
### **The Holy Spirit -- Becoming what we are!**

The ministry of the Holy Spirit extends to each member of the Body of Christ not only when they are in Church, but also at home and at work throughout the day and night. We are to be full of the Holy Spirit throughout our lives.

Metropolitan Kallistos and others use the phrase *“becoming what we are”*. What then are we? We are children of God. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We are partakers of divine grace. We are (being) saved. In the Homilies of St. Macarius we are told, *“Each of you has been anointed with heavenly Chrism, and has become a Christ by grace; each is a king and prophet of the holy mysteries”*.

But the *“becoming”* is much harder. Metropolitan Kallistos writes: *“As pilgrims on the Way, then, it is our purpose to advance from the stage where the grace of the Spirit is present and active within us in a hidden way, to the point of conscious awareness when we know the Spirit’s power openly, directly, with the full perception of our heart ... the Pentecostal spark of the Spirit, existing in each one of us from Baptism is to be kindled into a living flame. We are to become what we are”*.

*Archpriest Michael Harper*



## THANK YOU!

Thank you to all the parishioners, donors and benefactors who have supported our Parish financially in this last month by their philanthropic donations. We are truly grateful for your prayers, thoughtfulness and generous spirit. May God give the reward of His blessing upon you all for your warm-hearts and kindness.

*Fr Jonathan*

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

Jun. 5: *Vasileios*

Jun. 22: *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

5<sup>th</sup> June: Hieromartyr Boniface of Crediton, Archbishop of Mainz († 754)

7<sup>th</sup> June: Holy Pentecost

8<sup>th</sup> June: Monday of the Holy Spirit

9<sup>th</sup> June: St. Columba of Iona, Enlightener of Scotland († 597)

14<sup>th</sup> June: The Sunday of All Saints

16<sup>th</sup> June: St Tychon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Amathus († 425)

17<sup>th</sup> June: St. Botolph, Abbot of the Monastery of Ikanhoe († 680)

19<sup>th</sup> June: Thaddeus (Jude) the Apostle and Brother of Our Lord († 80)

22<sup>nd</sup> June: St. Alban, Protomartyr of Britain († 304)

24<sup>th</sup> June: Nativity of the Forerunner and Baptist John

26<sup>th</sup> June: Appearance of the Icon of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos of Tikhvin

29<sup>th</sup> June: Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles

30<sup>th</sup> June: Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles

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 June (*online\**)

<b>Fri. 5<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorial for Vasilis
<b>Sat. 6<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Saturday of Souls Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 7<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Sunday Orthros
	18:30	Great Vespers and Kneeling Prayers
<b>Wed. 10<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Vespers for Apostles Bartholomew and Barnabas
<b>Sat. 13<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 14<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Sunday Orthros of All Saints
<b>Thru. 18<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Vespers for Apostle Jude
<b>Sat. 20<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 21<sup>st</sup></b>	09:00	Sunday Orthros for All Saints of Russia, Britain, Romania, America, Mt Athos, Palestine and Patmos
<b>Wed. 24<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Matins (Orthros). Nativity of the Holy Glorious Prophet Forerunner and Baptist John
<b>Sat. 27<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 28<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Sunday Orthros for the New Martyrs and Confessors of Bulgaria
<b>Mon. 29<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Matins (Orthros) for the Holy Glorious and All praised leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul

\* Please, join a Skype group <https://join.skype.com/KZt20cnwQw5f> to obtain the link to a current service. The live services are also available on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/126074338184/>. All services are subject to change or non-transmission because of internet connection.

*“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.

