



**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*

## LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS

*And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8)*

So often our failures and sinfulness can lower our spirits and make us dejected. As we advance on our spiritual journey, we become even more acutely aware of our shortcomings, as if a torch was shone on our sores and inner hidden diseases, on our very own demons. It is the case with many, if not all, people that our falls or even slight dips are caused by the same repeated mistakes. It is as if these sins are our comfort zone and after a few steps towards God, we take fright, like Peter walking on water and return to these. Be it laziness, bodily self-indulgence of any kind, lust, anger, all manners of addiction, despair, or discouragement.

I periodically get very discouraged by the presence of oh so many failings and sometimes I am downright despondent. I keep fighting my weaknesses and yet get back it seems to square one. As time passes and I get older, I feel that the battle is almost hopeless since time and time again I go back to the beginning. A few days ago, I heard someone say: "We are not the sum of our failings." And it struck me that that was exactly how I was looking at myself. If we constantly magnify our shortcomings in a misplaced desire for humility and focus on combating them, we might fall into dejection as I confess I do too often, but we somehow miss the point by focusing entirely on ourselves. What defines us is not the sum of our failings or even of our gifts, but it is Love. The Love which caused the world to come into being, which caused us to be born and loved and forgiven even from the Cross, which our sins have fashioned.

Christian love is not the warm fuzzy feeling we experience when we look at our family. There are many kinds of love. The ancient Greeks identified seven but there is only one which supersedes them all, agape, the love of the soul. The love which makes you nail your own self to the cross for the other. This love is grace and will at the same time. In precious moments of grace we experience this divine love which runs through us and spreads out to the others, but not being saints yet, this grace doesn't flow continuously. We have

moments when we seem to be left alone and the memory of this love has to spur our will into action. Love is not a feeling, love is action -- inner action and outer action. Inner action when we nail to the cross our slothfulness and stand up to work for the other, when we give up what we want to do in order to play a game our child wants to play, love is nailing to the cross our hunger because we know that our brothers and sisters are starving not too far away and the more we have, the less they have. When we will to love, we defeat anger and arrogance because they might hurt our brothers and sisters and thus hurt Christ.

St Nektarios asks of us: "*Christians, have we understood the great responsibility that we have taken on before God through baptism? [...] Have we thought about the fact that our hearts should be so filled with Love that it should overflow to our neighbour?*" The first step in accomplishing this great responsibility is to step out of our narrow selves towards God and our neighbour.

St John Damascene teaches us how to combat passions with virtues: "*These eight passions should be destroyed as follows : gluttony by self-control; unchastity by **desire for God** and longing for the blessings held in store; avarice by **compassion for the poor**; anger by **goodwill and love for all men**; worldly dejection by **spiritual joy**; listlessness by **patience, perseverance and offering thanks to God**; self-esteem by doing good in secret and by praying constantly with a contrite heart; and pride by **not judging or despising anyone** in the manner of the boastful Pharisee (Luke 18:11-12) and by considering oneself the least of all men"*

So rather than analyse our failings, try to expel them, let's replace them with the will to love. Love not only covers a multitude of sins, but it combats them most efficiently.

We need to take an honest look at ourselves in the mirror, but to remain staring at the mirror in horror and dismay is a form of pride and foolishness. We need to look up to the Great Love and to our brothers and sisters and busy ourselves with loving them.

St John Cassian beautifully says: "*It is by these means that we attain perfect love, through the grace and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory through all the ages. Amen*"

*Mary and Martha*

## **RICHES IN POVERTY**

I live my daily life in a state of extreme poverty, unable to do anything well or anything at all.

I cannot sing or speak well -- I never know what will come out when I open my mouth.

I cannot draw or paint -- I never know what my hand will trace on the paper.

I cannot cook – the same recipe never turns out the same.

I don't even know how to pray – will I be lifted up to the Lord or stuck to the ground?

I certainly don't know how to love...

I used to think how lucky are the people who can sing to the Lord, who can paint the beauty of creation, who can always get the food for the feast right! How fortunate the people whose prayer rises like incense and who can love without holding anything back!

But now I know that, in my extreme poverty, I am blessed. Blessed beyond measure because I can do nothing by myself and for the smallest, most trivial act, I have to call upon the Lord to help me. Lord, give me voice to sing your praise today, take my hand in yours to draw a tree, stir my children's food today and most of all, please, pray and love in me today.

## **ENCOUNTERS WITH SAINTS**

### **Saint Paraschiva of the Balkans**

Saint Filofteria was the first to arrive in my home, but the most tenacious saint was Saint Paraschiva of Iași. I feel most humble and sad about my behaviour to Saint Paraschiva. The story goes that around 10 years ago a very pious Romanian lady moved away and gave me a quantity of spiritual books and religious objects and icons. I was by then more open to icons and decided I had to find a place for them. Since I had little contact with the Romanian church, I had not actually heard of Saint Paraschiva and did not know who she was. There was a very large and imposing icon of her, which I placed in the dining room as the only room large enough to accommodate it. There it remained, but I never felt any connection with it. I found it a little frightening if anything. A few months ago, I

decided I had to make room for more icons because the saints were beginning to arrive to my home in numbers. I decided to ask of my Romanian friends if anyone could accommodate St. Paraschiva. Someone was thrilled to welcome her, and I was so humbled to see the love with which this friend took the icon. Back home I felt a little sad that I was so lacking in love and hospitality.

Since the lockdown began, I started tackling my cellar which is a little like Alladin's cave, but mostly full of old and useless things. Hidden behind a pile of books I found a very large print of St. Paraschiva! I have no idea where it came from. My heart leapt up with joy and found it very beautiful. I felt she gave me the chance to make up for my previous indifference and unkindness. I placed her icon at the centre of my icon corner, and everything felt right in the house after that. How patient and kind the Saint was!

Around the Figure of the saint there are 4 other Romanian women saints among which St Filofteria herself. I would like to think that she brought friends. I might be wrong, but I feel the arrival of these Romanian great saints is like a call from afar for me to go back in some way to my spiritual roots and discover new riches. Anyway, St Paraschiva is here to stay at the heart of my home, and I hope that through prayer we may become closer and closer.

Reading about her life was most interesting because I had thought she was a purely Romanian saint since her relics are to be found in Iași and there is such great devotion to the saint all over Romania. I remembered that two parishioners had a very lively argument about Saint Paraschevi or Paraschiva or Petka (not to be confused with St Paraskevi of Rome, 2<sup>nd</sup> century martyr) and whether she was Romanian or Greek. Both ladies must have loved her very much and wanted to claim her as their own. As a matter of fact, she is well known and greatly loved in all Orthodox countries.

I discovered that she was as most people know, born in modern day Turkey of Byzantine parents in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. As a child, she heard the words of St Mark's Gospel in church: "Whoever wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me," and was greatly moved. They awakened in her great zeal to relinquish her comfortable life and embrace asceticism. She gave away all her clothes

to the poor. As her family opposed her calling, she ran away from home to Constantinople and then to Chalcedon and then to Heraclea Pontica. The Theotokos appeared to her on many occasions. She lived a very austere life and her voyages took her to Jerusalem, where she wanted to spend the rest of her life. She entered a monastery in the Jordanian desert where she lived a greatly ascetic life. She saw an angel who asked her to return to her birthplace, where she continued her life for 2 more years as a stranger. She died at the age of 27. Her body was buried by the sea as a stranger in an unmarked place. By divine providence, her body was discovered uncorrupted and placed in the church of the Holy Apostles and great miracles were performed by the saint there. Her relics travelled all over the Balkans including Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia until, in 1641 her relics were brought to Iași in Romania. On the 26th December 1888, her relics have miraculously survived a great fire which turned to ashes everything around except the relics of the saint.

Her feast day is on the 14<sup>th</sup> October. Pilgrimage at the shrines located in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iași has become one of the major religious events in Romania. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims gather each year in Iași in the second weekend of October to commemorate St. Parascheva, while the city itself established its Celebration Days at the same time. Innumerable are her miracles and it seems whatever the problem, Saint Paraschiva will intercede successfully.

*Alexandra McCafferty*

### **Troparion of St. Paraschiva**

Tone 4

You are worthy of praise, Paraskeva. You loved the ascetic and hesychast life. You ran with longing to your Bridegroom, Christ. You accepted His good yoke in your tender years, marking yourself with the sign of the Cross. You fought against impure thoughts; through fasting, prayer and the shedding of tears you quenched the burning coal of the passions. Now in the heavenly bridal chamber of Christ, as you stand together with the wise virgins intercede for us who honor your precious memory.

### **Kontakion of St. Paraschiva**

Tone 6

Let us all piously praise all-honorable Paraskeva, the intercessor for the afflicted. She gave up her earthly life and received eternal incorruption. Therefore, she has been granted the grace to work wonders by the command of God.



*Saint Paraschiva of the Balkans*

## **CHURCH REOPENING**

After the prolonged lockdown, our church is reopening later this month. The Archdiocese is currently developing regulations to be in place when the services resume, and at the first stage only a priest, a chanter and a server will be allowed in.

Meanwhile, we continue the standard prayer practice at home:

-- Hours and Typica on Sundays at your convenience;

-- read the Lord's prayer at 12:00 every day.

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.

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*

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

Jul. 9: *Metropolitan Methodios Fougias*

### 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> July: Cosmas and Damian the Holy Unmercenaries

2<sup>nd</sup> July: St. John Maximovitch, Bishop of Shanghai & Archbishop of San Fransisco († 1966); St. Juvenal, Protomartyr of America and Alaska († 1796)

3<sup>rd</sup> July: St Germanus Bishop of the Isle of Man († 474)

4<sup>th</sup> July: St. Andrew of Crete, author of the Great Canon

7<sup>th</sup> July: Great-martyr Kyriake

11<sup>th</sup> July: Great Martyr Euphemia the Allpraised; St. Olga, equal to the Apostles, Princess of Kiev

13<sup>th</sup> July: Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel

15<sup>th</sup> July: Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Great Prince Vladimir, in Baptism Basil, Enlightener of the Russian Land

17<sup>th</sup> July: Great-Martyr Marina of Antioch and Child-Martyr Prince Kenelm

20<sup>th</sup> July: Holy Glorious Prophet Elijah

25<sup>th</sup> July: Dormition of righteous Anna, mother of the Most Holy Theotokos

26<sup>th</sup> July: Holy Martyr Paraskeve

27<sup>th</sup> July: Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon

31<sup>st</sup> July: St Joseph of Arimathea

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 July\*

<b>Wed. 1<sup>st</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sat. 4<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 5<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Sunday Orthros (4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of St. Matthew)
<b>Mon. 6<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers for St Kyriake
<b>Sat. 11<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 12<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Orthros
<b>Thru. 16<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers for St Marina of Antioch and Passion Bearers Emperor Nicholas II and His family, and Martyr and Grand Duchess Elizabeth and Nun Barbara
<b>Sat. 18<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 19<sup>th</sup></b>	tba	Holy Liturgy at St Martin's for Priest, Chanter and Server only.
	18:30	Great Vespers for the Holy Glorious Prophet Elijah

<b>Sat. 25<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 26<sup>th</sup></b>	tba	Holy Liturgy at St Martin's for Priest, Chanter and Server only.
	18:30	Great Vespers for Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon

\* The services are provisional and may be changed at short notice. Services will be in Skype unless otherwise stated. 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/>.

*“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.

