

**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

WHAT WILL YOU ASK FOR?

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'⁶ Solomon answered, 'You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.'⁷ Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?'¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.¹¹ So God said to him, 'Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice,¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.¹³ Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for – both wealth and honour – so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.¹⁴ And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.'¹⁵ (Kingdoms 3:4-13)

I was reflecting on this wonderful passage about King Solomon and started wondering what I would wish for if the Lord appeared to me in a dream and asked me. I suddenly remembered all the times when I had asked for things, for help and the Lord answered me. And if I asked for a crumb, He gave a whole loaf, just like in King's Solomon's story. And I hadn't even asked for something worthy!

I remember being a very bad teenager in 10th grade and skiving school. My least favourite lesson (because it was hard and the teacher was strict) was Latin. I never went to church and was

not in any way good. The situation got so bad at school and I had missed so many lessons that the Latin teacher said I would have to repeat the year unless I turned up, had an oral exam and got a pass mark. I was terrified and knew absolutely nothing. The night before the fatidic exam I crammed as much vocab and grammar as possible, but to no avail because the task was insurmountable. I would have to read a passage from the classics and translate it out loud on the spot and answer questions on the grammar. There was nowhere to turn, so I turned to God and asked for a miracle. As I sat waiting for the teacher, I prayed fervently and desperately that the Lord would enlighten my mind to be able to get the pass mark of 5 out of 10. Lo and behold my turn came, I was handed a passage, I opened my mouth and forth poured all the right answers like in a trance. I got 10 out of 10 and the teacher asked me if I was interested in taking part in the Latin Olympiad. Knowing myself to be a fraud and also not wanting to test the Lord's patience, I declined politely.

Another time, I felt really troubled spiritually and wanted to go to confession but couldn't because I hadn't prepared at all and was still in the midst of battle. On my way to church I prayed, "Lord, please, if it is your will that I should go to confession, please let Father be at the door when I arrive to church." And he was!

Another time, I was very sad for a friend in trouble and I prayed with tears for the Lord to help her find a job. I felt in prayer that I had to make a sacrifice and I wondered what it could be. I then made "a bargain" with the Lord and gave up coffee for 6 weeks. How ludicrous and paltry was my giving! That very same day, a job was granted.

On one particular weekend, on Saturday evening and Sunday morning I have wrestled with myself about partaking of the Holy Communion. My main reasoning against, was my sinfulness, unworthiness and lack of true repentance. At the same time I knew my obedience to my spiritual father and even what he would say to me, nevertheless I have bothered him very early in the morning. Afterwards I have still battled with the thoughts but at least I have talked myself out of eating breakfast! Hoping for God's illumination and mercy on the way to Church. During the journey with tears I spoke to God, firmly resolving that I would amend my ways, if only the Lord will forgive me, grant courage and let me partake of this awesome Mystery. Once we have arrived, we

have experienced a beautiful Liturgy and the children were well behaved. When the time came to receive the Holy Gifts, I was needed for encouragement to our son, I carried him towards the Chalice, thinking I will partake at the same time. The priest gave him Holy Communion but omitted me, lifting up the Chalice for me only to kiss (In the Russian tradition, one kisses the chalice after receiving the Eucharist, often mothers kiss it instead of their children as they forget and run away). There was I open mouthed and omitted. The priest must have mistaken my intentions, or I have not been clear – aren't we often not clear enough and misunderstood in our life? Because we do not shout loud and clear with courage, like those in the Scriptures – "Son of David, have mercy on me!". Thoughts rushed in: was it the Lord's Providence? He knew my lack of preparation. Nevertheless, putting thoughts aside, I asked for courage and resolved not to lose heart and try again. I stood again in the queue, this time last, almost trembling from the struggle within. Approaching the Chalice, I crossed myself, uttered a cry of prayer. When my turn came, the priest was already waiting for me with a piece of Eucharist on the spoon, as he was saying the prayer, he looked at me and dipped the spoon again into the Chalice scooping another piece on the spoon. It was full, if not overflowing with the double portion. I could not believe my eyes, afterwards I trembled more because of His great mercy, he filled me with uncontainable joy and wonder. It was a glorious and magnificent feast!

What jumped at me from all these recollections is that no matter how sinful we are, how pathetic is our sacrifice or offering, how silly our request, the Lord hears our prayer and gives generously when the prayer is sincere from the heart. Moreover, the Lord asks us every day

What do you want Me to do for you?
(Mark 10:36, 51)

He invites us to ask. But we need to be careful what we ask for. Because, if we are to please the Lord like Solomon, we should ask humbly, wisely and selflessly. Solomon asks for wisdom for himself, but for the benefit of the people. The selflessness of the request brings upon Solomon many blessings. He asks for wisdom and receives not only discernment but also wealth, honour and long life. How generous and gracious is the Lord!

Therefore, let us ponder deeply and answer worthily to the questions Christ asks of us in the Gospels:

What do you seek? (John 1:38)

Why did you seek Me? (Luke 2:49)

What do you want Me to do for you? (Mark 10:51)

Martha and Mary

CONFESSION

As night draws in, my Lord,
and yet another day is coming to its close,
I come to sit with Thee and bring a gift.

I bring a soiled body and a foolish mind,
A heart so proud and stony that it hardly beats,
I bring the day's vain labours and its endless care.

I also have with me a score of people,
Those whom I have neglected and forgotten
And those whom I have hurt and judged.

I also offer Thee the prayers left unuttered,
And all the work you set for me
Hardly begun or left undone.

Please take my offering, O Lord,
For I have nothing else to give.
To Thee my Lord I bring all that I am.

In faith I ask that Thou may touch it all.
Thy Mercy and Thy Love can right my wrongs,
So that at dawn I may begin anew.

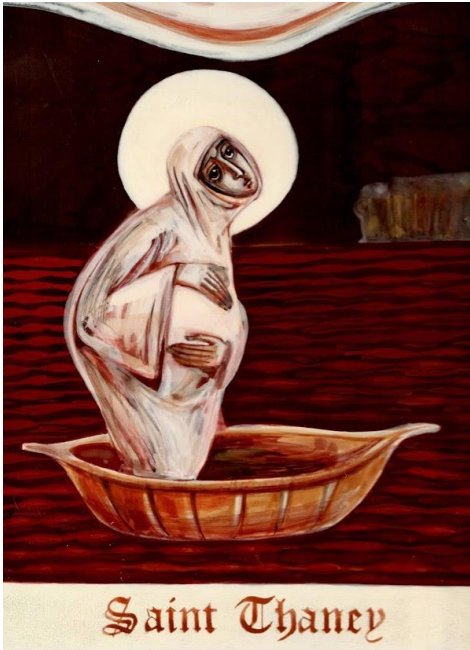
I pray Thee, change this offering of mine
Take Thee my body and cleanse it white,
My foolishness turn into wisdom.

Please touch the stony heart inside my chest
And fill it to the brim with love and mercy
And all my foolish cares replace with Peace.

Please, Lord, remain with me tomorrow
So any pain and labour may not be in vain again
But fruitful, joyous and a real gift to Thee and others.

ENCOUNTERS WITH SAINTS

This particular encounter begins with a rather mundane search for a gift. Together with my friend Marta, we were looking for a special gift for a friend. After much debating, we remembered that there was a rather new orthodox monastery (Monastery of all Celtic Saints) on the Isle of Mull, selling various artefacts and books on line. Browsing through the online shop, we were both arrested and unsettled by the following image of a saint we had never heard of, St Thaney.



The image itself was so intriguing and so haunting that we went straight away to find out about her life. Saint Thaney (also known as St Teneu, Thenew, Thanca), commemorated on the 18th July is joint patron saint of the city of Glasgow. She lived in the 6th century and was a Brittonic princess in the kingdom of Gododdin. She was raped by the Welsh prince Owain mab Urien, who gained access to her dressed as a woman and convinced her that the abuse which took place was the normal way in which a grown up woman shows affection to girls. Thaney was so young (by some accounts around the age of 12) and innocent that she did not understand what had

happened to her and believed her abuser. Months later, when she was discovered to be expecting a baby, she was sentenced to death by her father, King Lleuddun and thrown over the edge of Traprain Law. The young girl miraculously survived the fall. She found a coracle (an extremely small and light boat) on the shore and sailed away. This is the moment captured in the image. A scared and abused little girl, carrying a baby in her womb, unloved and rejected by all, adrift on the sea in the tiniest of boats, surrounded by darkness. But her boat landed in Culross, where the monastic community of Saint Serf welcomed the girl and cared for her. She gave birth in the monastery to a son called Kentigern and nicknamed by St. Serf himself Mungo, meaning “very dear one”.



St Mungo (Keningern)

Mungo or Keningern laboured tirelessly for Christ all his life. He evangelised many on the site of modern Glasgow. He was a holy priest and became the first bishop of Glasgow. He preached, founded churches, lived a holy ascetic life and performed miracles not only in the Glasgow area, but also in Wales, Cumbria and Dumfries and Galloway (Scotland). He knew both St. Columba

and St. David. St Mungo is depicted on the coat of arms of the city of Glasgow along with four symbols of the miracles he performed there: a robin, a tree, a bell and a fish. The first one relates to the time St Mungo was a boy and was treated very unkindly by his classmates who killed St. Serf's pet robin and accused Mungo of having done it. Saint Mungo brought the robin back to life. He is remembered in the Orthodox church on the 14th January and is joint patron saint (with his mother) of the city of Glasgow. St Mungo is the patron saint of the bullied and of those unjustly accused, while his mother Thaney is the intercessor of all victims of abuse, rape and of single mothers.

I feel so very close to these two saints even though the world they lived in 1500 years ago is so far removed from my daily existence. They remind me of God's amazing love. There is no shame, no trauma and no pain that cannot be redeemed by Christ. St. Thaney, lost and traumatised in a dark night of the soul, adrift and seemingly alone in the world, is gently guided by Christ to the one place where she will be welcomed with the love of Christ, where her child will be loved and protected, where they will both encounter not only the opportunity for salvation, but for holiness. I also find it wonderful how one holy person awakens the desire for God in others and effectively is Christ's instrument in making more saints. Through the love and holiness of St Serf, both Thaney and Kentigern became saints themselves. In the darkest hours, when we feel adrift with no place for refuge may we remember St Thaney and ask for her intercession.

Alexandra McCafferty



Wonderful flowers courtesy to Alla Ganshina

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Sept. 1: *Pericles*

Sept. 29: *Georgios*

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 Sept: **The Ecclesiastical New Year**

8th Sept: **The Nativity of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary**

9th Sept: **The Holy & Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna**

14th Sept: **The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross**

17th Sept: **Martyr Sophia and her three daughters, Faith (Pistis, Vera), Hope (Elpis, Nadezhda) and Love (Agape, Lyubov)**

19th Sept: **St. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury**

24th Sept: **St. Silouan the Athonite**

25th Sept: **St. Sergius, Abbot and Wonderworker of Radonezh**

26th Sept: **The Falling Asleep of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian**

28th Sept: **St. Lioba of Wimborne, Abbess of Bischofsheim (†782)**

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 September*

Sat. 5th	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 6th	10:00	Hours and Typika**
Mon. 7th	18:30	Vespers for the Nativity of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary
Sat. 12th	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 13th	10:00	Hours and Typika**
Mon. 14th	9:00	Orthros for the Exaltation of the Precious and Life--Giving Cross
Sat. 19th	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 20th	10:00	Hours and Typika**
Sat. 26th	10:00	Memorial
	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 27th	10:00	Hours and Typika**

* 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/>.

** Services at the St Martin's church. These may change subject to a short email notice.

“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*.

