

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

***The Stavronian***

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*Έθρονος 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*

## ENCOUNTERS WITH SAINTS

### St Cuthbert the Wonderworker

Ever since I started to get to know the saints of the British Isles, I discovered in my heart a great love for Saint Cuthbert, whose feast day is 20th March. Visiting Holy Island (Lindisfarne) in Northumbria on a cold day in summer and gazing out on the island where St. Cuthbert was a hermit and on the very same sea where his eyes rested, made me feel even closer to him.

St Cuthbert was born in Northumbria around the year 634. The story of his call to holiness begins in his early childhood, when the Lord indicated on more than one occasion that He had chosen little Cuthbert for great things, just as He had for Samuel, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and many others. When the saint was a little boy, he used to play boisterous and silly games as most boys do. He was very athletic and was at the heart of most games. One day, a much younger boy started crying and lamenting asking Cuthbert why he was behaving in an unbecoming way for his dignity of “prelate and priest”. The boy also told him that the Lord had chosen him for great things. This was a turning point in the child’s life, as he became more serious and mindful of holy things. Also in his youth, he was miraculously healed from lameness by an angel. Later on, as he was keeping watch over a flock of sheep in a field, he saw a light appear from the sky and choirs of angels come down and carry a soul up to heaven. He found out later that at that very hour, Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne had passed away. There is a wonderful providence in this particular vision since after entering the monastery at Melrose, under the guidance of Saint Boisil, moving then to Ripon, then back to Melrose with Saint Eata, Saint Cuthbert became the prior of Lindisfarne and then Bishop himself, just as St Aidan had been. This story has echoes of the old testament story of the prophet Elijah being taken up to heaven. As his spiritual son Elisha watches, he picks up Elijah’s cloak and the spirit of Elijah comes to rest on him. Just so, saint Cuthbert watches the soul of Saint Aidan being taken up to heaven and then follows in his footsteps.

The first thing to say about St. Cuthbert is that there is so much to learn and marvel at in the life and miracles of this saint, that it is impossible to do justice to such holy richness in a short article.

So, I thought of speaking of only a few of his miracles, which particularly struck me.

When I first came to hear about the saint, I was very moved by the story of his spiritual friendship with St Herbert of Derwentwater. It seemed so beautiful that two men who loved God so much that they would give anything up and had no earthly ties, would yet love each other so that they would ask of the Lord the special gift of departing this life at the same time, so that they would meet the Lord together. In his wonderful book *The Life of Saint Cuthbert*, written not long after the saint’s death, St Bede records the last meeting of the two saints in Carlisle. When Cuthbert, who had the gift of foresight, told Herbert this was to be their last meeting in this world, Herbert shed tears and asked his spiritual brother not to leave him alone. Cuthbert kneeled down and prayed and when he rose to his feet he said: “Get up my brother and don’t cry. Be happy because your prayer has been answered.” And indeed, how merciful the Lord is, both men departed this life in their two cells, on their islands at the same time on the 20th March 687 AD.

St Cuthbert was granted so many gifts by the Lord! He could prophesy, he performed countless healings, he had the gift of preaching, converting



*St Cuthbert the Wonderworker*

or recalling thousands to the right way of life and he had a wonderful gift of patience and gentleness in the way he looked after his monks. He certainly had the gift of prayer and his energy for the work of the Lord and even physical work was inexhaustible. St Bede writes: "He was a man with a special gift of patience, and could put up with any opposition that might appear, whether mental or physical. At the same time, he had a cheerful expression, however bad things got, which showed that he was comforted, in times of trouble, by the Holy Spirit".

A wonderful and uplifting feature of Cuthbert's life was how the more he grew in holiness, the more in tune with nature he became. Hearing stories about his life sends us back to the first days of Creation when man was in perfect harmony with the rest of nature. There are beautiful stories, the most famous of which is probably the one about the otters sometimes depicted in his icon. It was the saint's habit to go out alone at night and spend the entire night in prayer and vigils. One night, one of the monks seeing him go out, followed him to see where he was going. He saw Cuthbert go to the seashore and wade into the water up to his neck and thus pray all night. As dawn arrived, he came out of the water and finished his prayer on his knees on the beach. Two otters came out of the sea and warmed the saint's feet with their breath as well as dried them. Cuthbert gave them a blessing and they returned to the sea as he himself rushed off to church for common prayers.

There are also countless stories about how Cuthbert never took provisions with him on his journeys preaching or visiting monasteries. He always trusted the Lord to provide food, which the Lord always did. Once, when stranded on an island, he finds pieces of dolphin meat ready cut, another time, he finds fresh bread in an abandoned hut, another time, an eagle brings a fish to him. How reminiscent of Elijah being fed by the ravens! What I find particularly moving is that Saint Cuthbert always remembers to give nature its due. He shares the bread with his horse and gives half of the fish back to the eagle.

Saint Cuthbert was also so enthusiastic about prayer, and so scornful of sleep, that sometimes he went for three or four nights without sleeping at all. His vigils and fasting, his modest way of life inspired the entire monastic community and the simple folk of Northumbria as well. Despite

carrying a great weight of responsibility as abbot and later on as bishop, he was still entirely connected to nature, silence and solitude. He built a small hermitage on the island of Inner Farne, within sight of Lindisfarne itself, where he retired to perfect himself in ascetic struggles and contemplative prayer. On this small island he passed away to the Lord on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 687 at the same time as his spiritual brother, Saint Herbert gave his soul to the Lord on his island on Derwent water.

There are countless stories of miracles after St. Cuthbert's death through his intercession. His relics are kept in Durham Cathedral, as well as St. Bede's relics. Let us pray for the saint's intercession, so we may advance on our own modest endeavours to please the Lord through prayer, fasting and love.

*Alexandra McCafferty*

## **SILENCE AND STILLNESS**

Lately I have been wondering how, as a little child, I perceived silence and stillness as negative. I grew anxious when I remained still, I was certainly restless. Now I understand that, like most children I couldn't or didn't know how to reflect. In my early twenties, I developed a health anxiety and hence stillness and silence became even more unbearable, more of an obstacle and a kind of enemy, a source of stress feeding my fears.

Now I am reassured that the Lord can change all things and so, in my adulthood, by the intercession of the Church, Saints and spiritual father, I have grown to love and treasure silence and stillness. Like maturing fruit, one has to go through stages of spiritual understanding and growth. Reflection and contemplation as a type of prayer, have the sisters of silence and stillness as its root. "*Be still and know that I am God*" (Psalm 45:11). In our modern times, we are constantly running out of time, there comes one task after another, and there is little space left for silence and reflection. We are always ahead of our present time, looking forward to the next day, next Sunday, Christmas, birthday, or we do the opposite and give our attention to our past or imagine ourselves in a different dimension. This puts us as Christians in a vulnerable position, where spiritual progress is slowed and usually at

a standstill. We often want to escape what we need to face. Contemplative reflection has the grace to take us out of this position, and to enable us to live life to the fullness of the Glory of God, every day. Saint Theophan describes this type of prayer as standing before God and waiting on God.

Silence and stillness are the beginnings of the knowledge of ourselves, our passions and weaknesses. It is difficult to engage in inward Christian struggle voluntarily and willingly when we don't know ourselves. All people will face outer circumstances which cause difficulties and crosses in life, but that what is within, often only God sees, and we might get a glimpse of it, if we are willing to give ourselves to the Lord, wholly as we are. God will slowly show us our passions and only as much as we are strong enough to see. Stillness is a blessing, like a mirror, it will reveal the secrets of the heart to us. It should be seen as an opportunity to seek the shelter and the refuge in our Lord. He will help us cope with our fears and to Him we have an opportunity to give thanks for our joys. In one of the YouTube videos of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, he shares a story with the audience about a man who spent a long time in Church every day. When the man was questioned about his doings by his friends, he answered saying "I just sit and look at God, and God sits and looks at me".

If we are honest and courageous to see ourselves as we are, then the first fruits of peace, repentance and acceptance will come forth. Metropolitan Anthony Bloom in his book "Courage to Pray" reminds us that "*God cannot save the imaginary person that we try to present to him, or to others, or to ourselves*" but He can save us, as we are.

*Martha and Mary*

## **ON WEARING MASKS**

A few weeks ago, I glanced around the church and realised that despite the sadness of the situation we find ourselves in during this pandemic, there is a strong element of comedy. People were very still and solemn, but wearing masks. I couldn't stop thinking of illustrations in children's books where robbers are always depicted wearing a mask. It looked like a bunch of robbers had broken into the church and had been suddenly transformed into

pious folk.

Joke aside, there is something very sad about having to wear a mask and keeping away from our friends and family. It is heart breaking for some Christians not to be able to light candles or go to confession in the traditional way or to kiss icons. Wearing a mask in particular is difficult to accept for many. Not seeing people smile or talk feels like such a deprivation of fellowship sometimes, not to mention the fact that it is very uncomfortable.

As COVID officer and mere parishioner at the same time, I asked myself if all this was really necessary and pondered on all the changes which make our churches a little strange and so different from the past. On a practical level, unfortunately all these measures are absolutely necessary in order to keep the church open. If any of the measures were flouted, our church would be in breach of regulations and liable for a fine and could be shut. I have to keep reminding myself also that these measures are there in order to protect the most vulnerable and the thought of inflicting pain and illness on anybody because I disliked wearing a mask is a thought I cannot bear.

On a spiritual level, the first thing to remember is that "this too shall pass" and for now it is allowed by God. We must therefore practise the Christian orthodox virtues of patience, humility and obedience. Ultimately, whatever our thoughts or feelings on the matter, we are to bow our head not only to regulations issued by the government, but most importantly to the request of our Metropolitan and our own spiritual father. Wearing a mask or shield is therefore an obedience, and if it goes against our will, even more value to the obedience then. It is all sad and uncomfortable, but the Cross is not comfortable in the least. And the more I thought on the matter the more I saw how much there is to rejoice in. When we can gather together to give thanks and praise our Father, the Creator of Heaven and earth, when we can partake of the Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and be renewed by the Holy Spirit, what does it matter if we have to wear a mask. When we are allowed to gaze together upon such wondrous mysteries and are offered such overwhelming and undeserved gifts, let us run to Christ and forget about the small discomforts and sadnesses and rejoice that we have the freedom to worship in body and spirit.

## POEM CORNER

I search for Thee,  
O Father of mercy and peace.  
Every time I come closer to Thee  
Storm begins to foam within.  
Silence and stillness are my refuge.  
Ignore the flame of temptations,  
Settle me in the palm of your hand,  
Encourage to bring about your plan,  
Carry me on and calm me down,  
Inspire to fully become your man.  
The uproar of waves are beating against.  
Make the mind wonder far away,  
Take hold of me, correct me.  
I call upon Thee.

*Anonymous Parishioner*

## IN THE STEPS OF THE SAINTS

November has as its principal feast the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple (21st November). When this feast was introduced is not known, although there exists a homily on the celebration by St. Gregory of Nyssa, which dates back to the fourth century. The feast brings out the significance and importance of the Old Testament for Orthodox Christians. The Old Testament must be seen as a period of preparation for the Incarnation; the Temple, the priesthood and rituals are a foreshadowing of the New Testament Church. The Mother of God then is seen then as the culmination of this preparation and she becomes the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We see her first childhood steps towards God in this feast; her own preparation by her entry into the Temple. Her later response to the Archangel Gabriel, "*Be it unto me according to thy word*" (Luke 1:38) is no mere casual assent but a freely given consent and an act of humility. God does not impose His will upon people. Rather, He invites us to participate in His Divine Plan of Salvation. To think otherwise would be to assume that God uses people and abuses their freewill, the very personhood that He has created in them.

An indication that Our Saviour's Nativity is approaching is the beginning of the Nativity Fast

which lasts forty days and begins on 15<sup>th</sup> November.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of the month we remember St. Nektarios of Pentapolis whose sacred relics are enshrined in the Convent of the Holy Trinity which he founded on the island of Aegina. This meek and gentle father, who suffered much in his lifetime from slanderers and others whose malice had been incited by the evil one, reposed in the Lord in 1920. Nektarios was firm in his Orthodoxy and was an ascetic who struggled with prayer but one in whom the fruit of prayer was manifest as love for others. He was mild and gentle, and these virtues draw many pilgrims to his shrine today.

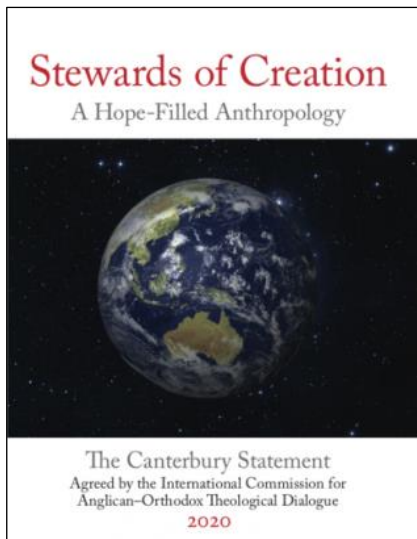
St Catherine of Alexandria (25<sup>th</sup> November) possessed of an uncommon beauty and intellect, Catherine received a most splendid of educations, having studied the works of the finest philosophers and teachers of antiquity. Young men from the most worthy families of the empire sought the hand of the beautiful Catherine, but none of them was chosen. She declared to her parents that she would be agreeable to enter into marriage only with someone who surpassed her in illustriousness, wealth, comeliness, and wisdom. Catherine's mother, a secret Christian, sent her for advice to her own spiritual father -- a saintly elder who lived in solitude in a cave not far from the city. Having listened to Catherine, the elder said that he knew of a youth who surpassed her in everything, such that "His beauty was more radiant than the shining of the sun, his wisdom governed all creation, his riches were spread throughout all the world -- this however did not diminish but rather added to the inexpressible loftiness of his lineage." The image of the heavenly Bridegroom produced in the soul of the holy maiden an ardent desire to see him. She was granted a vision of our Lord and of the Most Holy Virgin. In parting, the elder handed Catherine an icon of the Mother of God with the God-Child Jesus on her arm and bid her to pray with faith to the Queen of Heaven -- the Mother of the Heavenly Bridegroom -- for the bestowing of the vision of Her Son.

So many of the Saints like the Most Holy Mother of God, made their first steps to Christ in childhood. May we who have chosen the path of Salvation be given perseverance, courage, and wisdom to continue in Christ who is the Way the Truth and the Life.

# STEWARDS OF CREATION: A HOPE-FILLED ECOLOGY

## The Canterbury Statement

An important Agreed Statement on ecology was published by the Anglican Communion and the Orthodox Churches on Monday 18 October. This is the work of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD), which brings together theologians from around the world from both families of Churches. The text was completed in a meeting at Canterbury Cathedral.



*Stewards of Creation: A Hope-Filled Ecology* sets out a distinctive way to speak of our place in the created order. It builds on the Commission's previous work, *In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*, and considers the implications of the Christian understanding of the human person for how we should live as part of creation. This report speaks an important message at a time of great urgency. The environmental crisis deepens, and there is a deep need for everyone to enrich their sense of the givenness and beauty of God's world.

The Rt Revd Richard Clarke is Co-Chair of the Commission and Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium (Ecumenical Patriarchate) is the Ortho-

dox Co-Chair. Together they said, 'In this statement we call on all people, in the light of our agreement, to be filled with wonder and gratitude to God for the gift of creation, and to exercise true restraint in our use of the power that God gives to humanity, so that we may properly and reverently safeguard God's creation.'

*The synopsis and the cover image have been adapted from [ecupatria.org](http://ecupatria.org). The book is available for purchase [online](#).*

## SUNDAY SCHOOL PLAN

### 1<sup>st</sup> of November – Sts Damian and Cosmas

Today is a feast of the holy Wonderworkers and Unmercenararies Damian and Cosmas. They are "healer" Saints of our Church therefore it would be wonderful to make a poster which will portray them but also other Saints who are known for helping and healing the faithful. On your chosen colour of paper, stick icons of healer Saints, you may want to include Saint Panteleimon, St Luke the Surgeon, St Nikiforos the Leper, St Artemius of Antioch, Sts Cyrus and John, St Hermione, St Matrona. There are many to choose from, print an Icon of those whom you chose and glue it onto your poster paper, write the name below.

### 8<sup>th</sup> of November – Synaxis of the Archangels and the Bodiless Powers of Heaven

This Sunday's focus is on the Angels. We will try to find out more about them, their ranks, roles and names. We hope to answer the following questions: How are the angels portrayed on the icons? Do they have different roles? Which day of the week has a special dedication to the Bodiless Powers of Heaven? Do you know the prayer to your Guardian Angel? We will make an angel craft using handprints.

### 15<sup>th</sup> of November – Beginning of the Nativity

#### Fast

Today we are going to complete a craft which will help the children understand the meaning of fasting in the Orthodox Church. The craft idea is taken from the Orthodox Pebbles website and it will help us to answer the following questions about fasting – what does it mean to fast, why fasting periods of our Church cycles are special? What do you think is different in your home

during fasting periods – does your mummy and daddy eat different foods and perhaps use less of the gadgets? What follows a fast – it is usually something very exciting, a big feast!

### 22<sup>nd</sup> of November – The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos to the Temple

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November we celebrate the feast of Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos to the Temple. To help the children understand the feast and why it is a celebration some background has to be explained to them. Consider the following: The promise of Joachim and Anna, why they made a promise and the fulfilment of it, how old was the Theotokos when she entered the Temple, do you know anyone this age? What did the Theotokos do in the Temple, and why do we go to Church? Whilst answering and explaining this to your child, help them make the Temple for the Theotokos out of cardboard or card paper, make it as big or as small as you like!

### 29<sup>th</sup> of November – The Rich Young Man, Luke 18:18-27

*At that time, a ruler came to Jesus and asked him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.' " And he said, "All these I have observed from my youth." And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God".*

There is an exciting solution in helping your child understand this parable and it involves making an obstacle course in your home! It is also an opportunity to mention the Ten Commandments, their importance and source.

Marta Radford

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

Nov. 11: *Eleonora*

Nov. 12: *Sir John Tavener*

Nov. 29: *Ioanna*

### 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> Nov: Sts Cosmas and Damian, the Holy Unmercenarys

8<sup>th</sup> Nov: Synaxis of Archangel Michael and Gabriel and the other Bodiless Powers

9<sup>th</sup> Nov: St. Nectarios the wonderworker, Metropolitan of Pentapolis

10<sup>th</sup> Nov: St. Arsenius of Cappadocia

11<sup>th</sup> Nov: St. Martin of Tours (†397)

13<sup>th</sup> Nov: St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

14<sup>th</sup> Nov: St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

15<sup>th</sup> Nov: Beginning of the Nativity fast

16<sup>th</sup> Nov: Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew

17<sup>th</sup> Nov: St. Hilda, Abbess of Whitby (†680)

21<sup>st</sup> Nov: The Entry of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos into the Temple

23<sup>rd</sup> Nov: St. Alexander Nevsky

25<sup>th</sup> Nov: Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria

30<sup>th</sup> Nov: Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called

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 November\*

<b>Sun. 1<sup>st</sup></b>	10:00	Holy Liturgy in Church
<b>Sat. 7<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorials
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 8<sup>th</sup></b>	08:30	Orthros
<b>Tue. 10<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers for St Martin the Merciful of Tours
<b>Sat. 14<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorials
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 15<sup>th</sup></b>	08:30	Orthros (Beginning of the Nativity Fast)
<b>Mon. 16<sup>th</sup></b>	09:00	Orthros for Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew
<b>Sat. 21<sup>st</sup></b>	10:00	Memorials
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	08:30	Orthros. Afterfeast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple
<b>Tue. 24<sup>th</sup></b>	18:30	Great Vespers for Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria
<b>Sat. 28<sup>th</sup></b>	10:00	Memorials
	18:30	Great Vespers
<b>Sun. 29<sup>th</sup></b>	08:30	Orthros

\* The services are provisional and may be changed at short notice. Services will take place in Skype unless otherwise stated. Please, join a [Skype group](#) to watch or participate in a current service. The live services are also broadcasted simultaneously in the [Facebook group](#) of the Church.

*“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”*

- St. George Karslides –



*For further information please contact:*

Father Jonathan Hemmings

67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ

Tel: 07951 722 877

Email: [frjah@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:frjah@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk](http://www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk)

[www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk](http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk)

The following blogs of Old Stavronians are available in Romanian, *Constiinta Ortodoxa*, in English, *Orthodox city hermit*, and in Greek, *Orthodoxy rainbow*.

