



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

The Stavronian

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*Έπιθρονος 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

DISABILITY

Today I was watching children play in the park. There was a small group, in the midst of which there was a much taller, older girl, playing with the little ones. I have known this girl from birth as she has always lived in on my street. She has a marked intellectual disability and although a teenager in body, almost a grown up, she is a small child in mind. I have watched her parents wrestle the many difficulties of having a mentally disabled child. I have heard them worry about what would happen to the girl when they are too old to look after her or they pass away, I have seen them battle with systems to get a diagnosis and help or a place in a special school, I have seen them squirm with embarrassment as their daughter does or says inappropriate things, I have seen them constantly on alert that she might run into the road because she has no sense of danger. And I have heard them wonder Why? I was forcefully reminded of the question asked of Jesus about the blind man from birth.

His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. (John 9:2-4)

Coming from a society where a disabled child is the worst punishment a parent can get, where people used to abandon or hide disabled children as shameful, guilty secrets, today I watched the children play and thought how happy and beautiful they all looked. The girl I mentioned was at the centre of the little group, running joyously and care free, then comforting with a simple hug a smaller child who was sad. It struck me that this girl always smiles and never forgets a face. Even if I haven seen her in a whole year, she will spot me at a distance and run to give me a hug. To her parents' dismay she does this to a lot of people, some almost strangers.

I also remembered the most beautiful wedding I ever attended was a friend of mine's who had met her husband in a home for mentally disabled people, where they both volunteered. Half the guests at the wedding were their clients from the home. The simplicity of their joy, the

openness of their faith was very humbling and of course, slightly awkward for the mentally able.

As all these thoughts and memories flooded back, I was musing on how the parents of these children suffered and carried this daily cross, how they had wondered why and only the Lord had the answer, but ultimately how joyous and loving their children were. So much more than the able children with their reserves and their independence and complex questioning. I suddenly started wondering if it is not the people with quick and sharp minds and complex thoughts, with social skills who are not in some measure disabled. It is a strange sort of spiritual disability, that of the inability to love and show one's feelings, the inability to trust and love unconditionally and show it by hugging every person you meet. The young girl in the park and countless others like her do not know how to judge, exclude or hide behind polite facades. They just receive love and give it, simply and openly. And how much easier it is therefore for them to reach out to the Lord to accept His love and return it.

At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. (Matthew 11:25)

But disability comes in many forms. Jesus loved and healed so many physically disabled and marginalised people. Many have been healed miraculously since then by the intercession of the saints. My sister-in-law is physically disabled by a genetic disorder and told me an interesting story about her childhood. Her parents, greatly pained by her physical disability and the exclusion it brought with it (she was never invited to parties like her siblings, she couldn't go to school locally, etc.) took her on a pilgrimage and prayed fervently for her to be healed. She remembers as a little girl being hurt by this desire of her parents to change her condition because she wanted them to love her and be happy with her as she was. So she kept praying to God not to heal her. She felt she wouldn't be herself if she could suddenly walk. As a little girl who could not walk, she relied on her brothers and sisters to carry her and take her along wherever they went adventuring, which they did. Now she relies on her husband to do the same. What a beautiful bond of love and

trust! What a good spiritual school it is to rely on others to led you places. Just like the 4 friends took their paralysed friend to Our Lord to be healed and lowered him through the roof. If we are dependent on others, if we learn to trust and rely on others, if we learn to suffer, how much easier it will be to trust in God, to allow Him to lead us along the path, how much easier to acknowledge out weakness and our need for divine help.

I therefore came to think that although disability of any sort can be a heavy cross, we, able, independent people should watch and learn the simplicity of love and the beauty of trust and humility from those to whom it was given from birth.

Martha and Mary

ENCOUNTERS WITH SAINTS

St Tryphon the Holy Unmercenary

The story of this encounter started one fine night. I dreamt I was talking to friends and among them was somebody I didn't know. I cannot remember whether he introduced himself or whether one of the friends told me it was Saint Tryphon. I was awe struck in the dream, filled with reverence and also surprise that the saint would talk to me. I woke up with a peaceful happy feeling like one gets after particularly pleasant dream. But I was puzzled because I did not know if there was a Saint Tryphon or not. And if he did exist, I didn't know who he was.

I therefore googled him first thing in the morning and upon seeing his icon, I remembered seeing it before and maybe even reading about him before. But I am in equal measure ignorant and forgetful, so it is no great wonder.

There is no great moral or message in this story, other than the joy and awe I felt in the dream and then when I awoke. I never dreamt of any other saint. Dreaming of one I knew nothing about, means I certainly have to ask for his intercessions and write about him too.

His feast day is 1st February. This is a great day in Romania. It is the day the vineyards and orchards are blessed since St. Tryphon is the protector of fruit trees and vineyards against pests



St Tryphon the Holy Unmercenary

and illness, against draught and fruitlessness. Traditionally, the owners of the orchards and vineyards would fast all day and call the priest to bless them. They would prune them and bless them with holy water and would end the day with a feast in their home.

This year I will keep the tradition and will prune and bless my 2 minuscule apple trees on the 1st February. Sadly no vineyard... so will just have to bless the garden. Thinking of it now, maybe the saint saw how much I stood in need of his help in the garden and came to show me I can ask for his intercessions.

In Russia, St Tryphon is the patron saint of birds and is often depicted holding a falcon, which is a reference to the miracle he performed in response to the fervent plea of the falconer Tryphon Patrikeiev, who had lost Tsar Ivan the Terrible's favourite falcon. The falconer was granted 3 days in which to find the falcon and thus save his life. After wandering through the woods for 3 days in search of the bird fruitlessly, he lay down to rest and prayed to his patron saint St. Tryphon. In his dream, he saw the saint on a white horse holding the falcon. When he awoke, he found the falcon in a tree near by. He returned the



St Tryphon the Holy Unmercenary (source)

bird and built a chapel in thanksgiving on the spot where the saint had appeared to him.

Saint Tryphon (or Trifon) was born in Campsada, in Phrygia (modern day Turkey) in the 3rd century. He was a goose herder and received the gift of healing and casting out demons at a young age. He turned back through his prayers a swarm of locusts which were devastating the fields around his village and thus saved the villagers from starvation. He healed people and animals alike.

He became known especially after he cast out an evil spirit from the daughter of emperor Gordian. The emperor was thankful that his daughter was freed from the demon, but asked the saint to see the demon. St Tryphon fasted and prayed for seven days after which he asked the demon to show itself to the emperor. The emperor saw with his own eyes a fierce black beast.

In exchange for his numerous healings, the saint asked only for people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Under emperor Decius, when a terrible persecution against Christians arose, Saint Tryphon was arrested, interrogated and suffered bravely numerous tortures: he was beaten with

clubs, had nails hammered into his feet, was dragged behind a horse, he was scorched and his flesh was torn with iron hooks. He endured all without complaint and prayed for his torturers to the end, when he gave his soul to the Lord just as the executioner was preparing to behead him. His martyrdom took place in Nicaea in the year 250. Christians took his body to bury it in the place of his martyrdom, but the saint appeared to them in a dream and asked them to be buried in his native Campsada.

Saint Tryphon, intercede for us that we may grow stronger and more fruitful in our faith. Pray that our gardens may be blessed and bring good fruit that we may share with others.

Alexandra McCafferty

Troparion of St Tryphon

Your holy martyr Tryphon, O Lord, through his suffering has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God. For having Your strength, he laid low his adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons. Through his intercessions, save our souls!

Kontakion of St Tryphon

By the power of the Trinity you destroyed polytheism to the ends of the earth, and you were honored by Christ, all-glorious Tryphon; having conquered tyrants through Christ the Savior, you received your crown of martyrdom and the gift of divine healing, for you are invincible.

THE SHAPE OF COMMITMENT

During the sermon at the blessing of the waters, a particular word jumped out at me. Father said that in the Lord's baptism, God shows His **Commitment** to His Creation. Our Saviour comes to sanctify that which has fallen, to redeem that which has been lost. Through His Birth, Life, Theophany, Death and Resurrection, He comes to reclaim Creation.

Our God is committed to His creation, He

does not give up on it. He does not give up on his people. Again and again, He rescues unfaithful Israel, the chosen people from their distress. The story of our Lord's redemptive work is told over and over in the Old Testament. Psalm 104 speaks of all the Lord's miracles performed for the sake of His people as they wander in the desert:

"He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.

He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river.

For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness."

But He also extends His commitment to the entire humanity in the advent of Jesus Christ. The Lord's commitment takes the form of grace which He bestows on us, of the helping hand which lifts us when we fall again and again, of the blessing of all things for the good of the people. It also takes the shape of complete giving and sacrifice. It is the shape of the Cross.

How about us? Are we committed to the Lord? What shape does our commitment take? *"If you love me, keep my commandments."* (John 14:15) says our Lord. Loving God is doing His will and keeping His law. Commitment is not giving up, not slipping away from God through discouragement, disappointment or hardship. It is doing what is right in God's eyes even when we really don't feel like it.

Commitment is carrying on walking, although we feel sad, hungry, thirsty or tired. Commitment involves one's whole self and no half measures. It is uniting our feeble Yes to the resounding Yes of our lady Theotokos to begin with, and then it means saying yes again and again every minute of our life through and despite persecution, loss, grief, unworthiness, sinfulness.

We learn commitment from Abraham taking his only son, Isaac to sacrifice him on the altar of the Lord (Genesis 22). From Moses asking for the Lord's mercy on his people although they have all turned against him, even his own sister Miriam (Numbers 12). From Saint Hilda caring tirelessly

for her monastic community although she was ill with a fever for 7 years. From St. Stephen praying for those who are stoning him to death (including Saul), not giving up on them. We learn commitment from each and every saint in different ways.

More close to home, commitment means giving God His due share of time although we are tired and would rather sleep or watch a movie, it means praying when we feel uninspired and grumpy and fidgety, it means going to church every Sunday without fail. Commitment to God is helping whoever needs it, listening to the person who would like to talk, but we find difficult or not very interesting, going day in day out to do our job because we are needed even when it is hard, standing up for what is right even when it makes us look odd. Commitment is not an easy, comfortable ride of self satisfaction, it is often going against our own will, needs and desires in order to fulfil God's will. And of course, it involves endless failures and falls. It often takes the shape of a cross on which we nail all our pride, wilfulness and selfishness in order to unite ourselves with our Lord on His Cross.

Martha and Mary

SUNDAY SCHOOL PLAN

7th of February - Sunday of Talents

Talents are given to us by God as gifts, we all have them, please help your child realise this and discover their own. If they divert their attention to others – what talents can they spot in them? Make two small bags, they can be paper ones, small party bags or see-through ones, and help your child to discover and write their talents on pieces of paper which look like treasure coins. In one bag include your child's talents and in the other bag help them write the talents of others, it will help them understand and appreciate the diversity in people, family and friends. Talents are like a discovered treasure used to glorify God. You may wish to use the coins for a game of treasure hunt at home.

14th February – Sunday of the Canaanite Woman & Faith

The Sunday of the Canaanite Woman can be explained to our children as an expression of faith

that reaches beyond our own weaknesses and the opinions of others. In the moments of doubt and confusion, it is faith that pushes us onwards, that puts belief in our heart, not only that we can do something, but rather that God stands by our side ready to help and encourage us in our lives.

21st of February – Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

The focus of this Sunday will be to spot the difference between the Publican and the Pharisee. What makes each of them stand out, which is the right approach and how we can learn from them in our life. How do we behave in comparison and do we realise/pay attention to our own behaviour? Let's prepare a drawing or colour in a printout of the Publican and the Pharisee, connecting the behaviours to each one. Humility versus pride. How can we be humble? Examples provided to suit children.

28th of February – Sunday of the Prodigal Son

The parable of the Prodigal Son is the most beautiful, loving and forgiving one. Read or retell the parable to your children, explain that God is like a loving, patient and forgiving father spoken of in the parable. We will complete a craft from Orthodox Pebbles, let your child look at the scenes from the parable and put it in the right order. There is also a wonderful scene available to create with an interactive Father and the Son.

Marta Radford

CHURCHES REMAIN CLOSED IN FEBRUARY

His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan has made it known to the clergy that the Churches are to remain closed during February. This closure policy is in line with the Greek Orthodox Church in this country:

[...] February is to keep all churches in our Archdiocese strictly closed and stream services online from your home if possible, but not from the church [...]

This will be reviewed during February for March.

Please encourage others to join us over Skype. The services are recorded on Facebook for those unable to "attend" the Skype worship times.

Fr. Jonathan

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Feb. 2: *Dimitri*

Feb. 2: *Eleni*

Feb. 21: *Pisistratos*

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 Feb: St Brigid of Kildare (†525)

2nd Feb: The Meeting of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Temple

3rd Feb: St Nicholas, Archbishop & Enlightener of Japan

10th Feb: Hieromartyr Charalampos

18th Feb: St Colman (†675)

21st Feb: Triodion begins

23rd Feb: St Polycarp, the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna

24th Feb: First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist

26th Feb: St Photine, the Samaritan woman

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 February*

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|-----------------------------|-------|--|
| Mon. 1st | 18:30 | Vespers for meeting of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple |
| Wed. 3rd | 19:00 | Little Paraklesis to the Mother of God |
| Sat. 6th | 10:00 | Memorial |
| | 18:30 | Great Vespers |
| Sun. 7th | 08:30 | Orthros |
| Wed. 10th | 19:00 | Little Paraklesis to the Mother of God |
| Sat. 13th | 10:00 | Memorial |
| | 18:30 | Great Vespers |
| Sun. 14th | 08:30 | Orthros |
| Wed. 17th | 19:00 | Little Paraklesis to the Mother of God |
| Sat. 20th | 10:00 | Memorial |
| | 18:30 | Great Vespers |
| Sun. 21st | 08:30 | Orthros |
| Tue. 23rd | 18:30 | Vespers for the Finding of the Head of St John the Baptist |
| Wed. 24th | 19:00 | Little Paraklesis to the Mother of God |
| Sat. 27th | 10:00 | Memorial |
| | 18:30 | Great Vespers |
| Sun. 28th | 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 –



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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](#).

