



**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

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

“Let us be convinced that nothing can happen to us apart from the providence of God” (St Dorotheos)

Every day we say to our Father *“Thy will be done”* and if we can accept that whatever comes to us is part of God’s plan for each of us, we are still faced with the dilemma of what is expected of us to do in certain situations. Many times in confession I asked *How do I know God’s will? How do I know the right thing to do in a dilemma? What is God asking me to do?* Discerning between God’s will, my own will and temptations is a minefield. Especially in latter years I asked God to help me take the right step but I was always puzzled as to where to read His answer or how to read the answer. It often felt as if I couldn’t read it because I didn’t understand the language of holiness being myself so undeserving. Many faithful and wise people ask of their spiritual father the answer, because he can understand this language better and has the discernment between the spirits to advise along the right path. I felt awkward to ask my spiritual father about every detail of my life and it is in fact impossible because if I were to ask him about every step, he would in fact have to be by my side every minute of every day. But fortunately for us, we have helpers every minute of every day: our guardian angel, the saints and Christ Himself are by our side every second of our life.

Over the last 2 months, I have come to understand only a fraction better that in order to receive an answer 3 things are needed: faith, complete abandonment to God’s will and patience. I have found myself geographically far from my spiritual father, far from friends and family and completely lost in novel situations where I had no idea what to do. My first instinct as ever was to do something ...anything, to deal with the situation, to sort things out. But I found myself like a fish stranded on the beach, helplessly trying to reach the water by writhing and thrashing about. To no avail. At other times, I felt as if I was tied up in knots and the more I tried to untangle myself, the more entangled I was. Only when I accepted and abandoned myself and recognised my helplessness, God intervened and the knots became loose and answers to my problems arrived by themselves. It is very difficult to act and yet to be abandoned to God. I became on the lookout and

a more intense listener. I noticed that sometimes I got an inner conviction that I had to go along a certain path, hard or easy. I tried to allow myself to have no will in the matter and suddenly I knew with conviction what I had to do.

At other times, unfortunately, I used my own resources and decided a particular phone call had to be made. It felt somehow not right but I went ahead and made the call only to accept a week or so later that all my efforts in that direction had been useless. When I was anxiously waiting for something to happen, I decided instead of fretting, to pray, not necessarily asking for an answer, but only opening up my heart to the Theotokos, admitting my inability to see any way out of my predicament. Many times, just as I finished praying the phone rang with an answer. Waiting for an answer is a very difficult thing, especially when you feel you ought to act, busy yourself, but if you pray and wait, if you accept the situation and ask God to take matters into his hands, so often things become clear and the way straight and you can see the light at the end of the tunnel or at least comfort in accepting matters. You still have to act, but you become aware of what it is you have to do. As St Paisios of Mt Athos said: *“For God there are no difficult problems and no difficult solutions. To God everything is simple”* No matter how desperate a situation may seem to us, God is in charge.

Things turn out not for the best when we take matters in our own hands, when we think our own ideas and actions are the key to our problems. St John of Kronostadt *“How is it that all nature and everything in nature is so wisely arranged, and moves in such wonderful order? It is because the creator Himself directs it and governs it. How is it that in the nature of man- the crown of creation- there is so much disorder? Why there are so many irregularities and deformities in his life? Because he took upon himself to direct and govern himself, against the will and wisdom of his Creator.”*

Therefore, if we are looking for an answer, let us be accepting and obedient, let us pray and wait for the answer which might come from our spiritual father, as an inner strength in our heart, through a person, in a word, heard or read or simply as divine providence which can remove all obstacles in ways we have never dreamt of.

St Theophan the recluse *“Lord! Thou knowest all things. Do with me as Thou willest!”*

Martha and Mary

CAN ANY BIOGRAPHY BECOME A HAGIOGRAPHY?

A Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.

-- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

The Church officially ascribes the title “saint” or “holy” to the people, who most clearly showed with their experience what is a holy life. Orthodox Christians consider glorified saints as the examples of holy life, and intercessors for humanity before God. Yet, the glorification of some of the saints has led at times to harsh debates. Typically, the opponents of glorification tend to emphasise the mundane biographic facts, the absence of refined piety and asceticism in the lives of the saints. Are the leaders of the Church systematically biased in their decisions about the glorification? Do they fail to consider the biographies of the potential saints appropriately, or do the opponents of the glorification misunderstand what holiness and holy life are?

In this essay, I argue that the misunderstanding of holiness and holy life often leads people to dispute the glorification of saints. The embarrassment about holiness is widespread both within and outside the Church. Those who misunderstand the idea of holiness and holy life are more concerned with the world. They associate holiness with a vague, misleading, and inaccurate notion of a “good person”, and holy life with that of a “good life”. But, in the Orthodox view, the necessary ingredients of a holy life are **repentance, confession of faith, love, humility, patience, courage, and perseverance**. These ingredients manifest themselves differently in the lives of various saints. But, the combined work of these ingredients always makes void their transgressions and brings them back to holiness - the participation in the Holiness of the alone truly Holy God.

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Holiness is the Gift of God (Romans 6:23). Only God alone is truly Holy, but He invites all people to share in His Holiness: “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). To be holy is to receive and participate in the Holiness of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Holiness, being God’s

Gift, is not acquired by a person as a reward. On the contrary, holiness was given to humanity at the moment of creation, when God made men in His image (Genesis 2:7). Each person receives it through the grace of the Holy Spirit at the Sacrament of Baptism. Therefore, a holy life should be better seen not as a process of acquiring holiness, but instead as the process of preserving and restoring it, preserving and restoring the precious gift of unity with God. The completion of a holy life on the earth is salvation, which is eternal life in unity with God (Romans 6:22). The end of a holy life in the world is the beginning of the closer relationship with and in Christ.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, on several occasions, reveals the necessary ingredients of a holy life. The first is **repentance**: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17). The second is the **confession of faith in God**: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). The third is **love**: “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength <...> You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31). The fourth is **humility**, to empty yourself for God and become obedient to His will: “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29). The fifth is **courage**, to be bold and firm in the faith in front of any challenge: “Do not be afraid; only believe” (Mark 6:3). The sixth is **patience**, to calmly endure sufferings whether physical or spiritual: “Although He was ill-treated, He opened not His mouth. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before his shearers, so He opens not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Finally, the seventh is **perseverance**, the sustained effort and determination to live according to God’s Commandments even when faced with hardships: “But he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:20).

Monasticism is the fully authentic path of a holy life (Florovsky, 1987, p. 18). It is authentic because our Lord has Himself set a precedent, choosing the desert as the site for the spiritual combat (Matthew 4:1-11). The ‘desert’ – the place, which puts a person physically and

spiritually into a state of aloneness – “is a place where spiritual reality is intensified” (Florovsky, 1987). In the ‘desert’ the experience of the fruits of a holy life and the evil forces are amplified. A man or a woman in the desert devotes oneself to the ceaseless spiritual combat, which implies the continuous practice of repentance, confession of faith, love, humility. It requires persistent demonstration of courage, patience, and perseverance.

The life of saint Herbert of Derwentwater is a good illustration of the above point. Saint Herbert was an Anglo-Saxon hermit, who lived in the 7th century on the tiny island in the middle of the lake Derwentwater in the North West of England. Little is known about his life. But a short note about him in saint Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of England* (2011) is sufficient enough to see that saint Herbert lived a holy life. Living in complete solitude on the island with almost no edible vegetation, surrounded by the cold waters of the lake Derwentwater, and having just a handmade cave as a shelter in the harsh North climate requires great **courage and perseverance**. Yet saint Herbert did not merely isolate himself on the island, but made that island a place of constant worship, **repenting, confessing, and praising God**.

Saint Herbert was a disciple of the famous bishop, saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. The two had long been united to each other in the “bonds of spiritual friendship” (Bede, 2011, p. 350). Being in the constant communion through prayer, they used to meet in person only once a year, for saint Herbert to receive from his spiritual father “the teaching of everlasting salvation” (Bede, 2011, p. 350). Saint Herbert demonstrated great **humility** by strictly obeying his spiritual father and thereby subducing his will to the will of God:

For you know that I have always endeavored to live according to the words of your lips, and likewise whatsoever faults I have committed <...> I have instantly sought to amend according to the judgment of your will (Bede, 2011, p. 350).

When the two met in the year 758, saint Cuthbert told his disciple that this is their last meeting, because God revealed to him his imminent departure from this world. Sorrowed by the news

saint Herbert fell at the feet of his beloved spiritual father in tears. He so **loved** saint Cuthbert that the only he wished was to depart from this life together with him. Saint Cuthbert immediately prayed and then told his disciple that the Merciful God accepted their desire. The two saints never again saw one another, but the prophecy of saint Cuthbert was fulfilled. They both passed away on the 20th of March 759. During the last year of his life saint Herbert **patiently endured** through a long-continued infirmity preparing himself for the meeting with God ... (*To be continued*)¹

Dmitry Ismagilov

VIGIL PRAYERS

During the pandemic, we continue the standard prayer practice at home, including the reading of 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.

ATTENDING THE SERVICES AT CHURCH

To attend the in-Church services during June you have to sing-up using this [form](#). We want to ensure that as many people as possible can attend at least one service over the weekend. So please rank them based on which of the available dates you prefer more. Allocation of the places depends on the volume of requests, and we cannot guarantee that you will be able to attend all services. The places are allocated on the “first come, first served” basis. At present, only 20 people are allowed to attend the worship, including the priest, the server, the chanter and the COVID officer.

Please note that if you are planning on attending the service as a family, you need to register each family member separately using the form.

¹ References are available [here](#)

This is because each person, even from a single family, counts towards the maximum allowed number. You will be notified about attendance in due time, and the full protocols concerning attendance will be issued. Please check your email regularly to get the confirmation emails, as well as to be aware of any changes and updates regarding the online and in-Church services.

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

5th June: Hieromartyr Boniface of Crediton, Archbishop of Mainz († 754)

6th June: The Sunday of the Blind Man

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

10th June: The Holy Ascension

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

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

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

20th June: **Holy Pentecost**

21st June: Monday of the Holy Spirit

22nd June: St. Alban, Protomartyr of Britain († 304)

24th June: Nativity of the Forerunner and Baptist John

26th June: Appearance of the Icon of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos of Tikhvin

27th June: The Sunday of All Saints

29th June: Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles

30th 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



Holy Pentecost (image [source](#))

Services at St Martin's in May (online*)

Thu. 3 rd	18:30	Vespers for SS Martha and Mary
Sat. 5 th	10:00	Memorial for Vasilis Christophi in Churchyard
	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 6 th	09:45	Hours and the Holy Liturgy**. Sunday of the Blind Man
Wed. 9 th	18:30	Great Vespers for the Ascension

Sat. 12th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 13th	09:45	Hours and the Holy Liturgy**. Fathers of the 1 st Ecumenical Council.
Sat. 19th	10:00	Memorial. Saturday of Souls
	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 20th	09:45	Holy Liturgy** for Holy Pentecost followed by kneeling Prayers
Wed. 23rd	18:30	Vespers for the Nativity of St John the Baptist
Sat. 26th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 27th	09:45	Hours and the Holy Liturgy**. Sunday of All Saints
Mon. 28th	18:30	Great Vespers for the All-Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Apostles SS 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 or availability.
 ** Services in 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.

