



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

The Stavronian

Monthly magazine and newsletter published by the Holy Cross Synodia



*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

CAN ANY BIOGRAPHY BECOME A HAGIOGRAPHY?

Part III

In the first part of the article¹, I outlined the ingredients of a holy life as seen by the Orthodox Church: **repentance, confession of faith, love, humility, patience, courage, and perseverance**. I also spoke of monasticism as a fully authentic path of a holy life, in which the experience and manifestation of the above ingredients are the most apparent. Finally, I illustrated this point with the life story of our great local saint, St. Herbert of Derwentwater, who lived in the 8th century. In the second part of the article, I discussed what looks like a very different life story. I spoke about the Royal Passion-Bearers of Russia, the last Tsar of Russian Nicholas II and his family, who were martyred on the 17th of July 1918 by the Bolsheviks. Their glorification is still disputed by many in the Orthodox Church because their lives, at first glance, do not resemble the common view of what a holy life is. But I argue that both life stories are examples of a holy life, and the Royal Passion-Bearers are rightfully considered saints in the Orthodox Church. I showed that the story of the last year of the Tsar and his family demonstrates all the ingredients of holiness.

But, what if the accusations against the Tsar are true? Why does the Church treat equally the man who spent his life in solitude, repentance, and prayer on the tiny island and the man who spent most of his life in luxury and is possibly guilty of many wrongdoings against the people? Does the turn to a holy life make void the transgressions? The Church answers positively to the last question. Because our God is merciful and loves mankind, there are no incorrigible sinners and villains for Him. Christ proves this by granting salvation to one of the thieves who were executed along with Him: *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:43). The penitent thief, the criminal who was crucified of severe wrongdoings, became the decisive example of holiness. The verse in the Synaxarion for the Great Friday reads: "Eden's locked gates the Thief has opened wide, by putting in the key, "Remember me." All the ingredients of a holy life

manifested within minutes, in the actions and words of that man.

The good thief began with **repentance** when he rebuked the second criminal who has been blaspheming Christ: *"We indeed [are crucified] justly for we receive the due reward of our deeds"* (Luke 23:41). He also demonstrated **love** and **compassion** towards Christ who suffers unjustly: *"but this Man has done nothing wrong"* (Luke 23:41). He then **confessed** faith in Christ and His Resurrection: *"Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom"* (Luke 23:42). This simple and **humble** petition is a powerful testimony of the belief in the fact that God forgives sins, and that despite He is now crucified on the cross, He will return to His Kingdom. The good thief also demonstrated **courage**, daring to face, and speak directly to God no matter how badly he thought of himself at that moment. The penitent thief **persevered** with faith the cross torment and was welcomed by God in Paradise.

The example of the penitent thief shows that a turn to a holy life indeed voids the transgressions. Previous experience, even if it was full of awful deeds, does not prevent a person from re-entering into communion with God. Nevertheless, the biography of the person determines the unique circumstances in which he or she finds God. It, in turn, leads to different paths to holiness. The difference here is not in the ingredients of a holy life, but in the sacrifices, each person makes along the way. The Lord says: *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* (Matthew 16:25). Ascetics are not called to give up their life for Christ, but they sacrifice it through illnesses and other daily sorrows in the constant internal struggle with the evil one. While for the martyrs and passion bearers, who may not have practiced asceticism, the sacrifice takes a very intensive and concentrated form: they give up their lives in the confirmation of their adherence to a holy life.

Conclusion

Holiness is not the same as being a good person or living a good life. Holiness is the gift of God, and those who accept it by practising the necessary ingredients of a holy life are saved and

¹ See June 2021 edition of the Stavronian

reunited with Him. The Mercy and Love of our God are infinite. His willingness to forgive and accept us back to Him is unconditional. He does not make the difference between a hermit and a Tsar, between a righteous man and a repentant sinner. Therefore, every biography can become a hagiography. Leaders of the Church do not merely analyse and compare life stories of potential saints, but instead, they search for the presence of particular facts – the ingredients of a holy life. Each saint has a different path to holiness subject to specific life circumstances, but every path to holiness includes the seven necessary ingredients of a holy life.²

Dmitry Ismagilov

CLAY POTS

Living as we do in a consumer society, where everything is disposable and usually in surplus, we tend to part easily with old and damaged items. In fact, we are told it is unhealthy to drink or eat from chipped vessels or cups. Moreover, we want all our crockery and pots to not only be serviceable, but also look beautiful. Bags of unwanted cups and saucers with hairline cracks or little chips or just old fashioned and unwanted, line the shelves of charity shops. Looking at all these mugs and cups in the charity shop window, I remembered seeing a documentary about a school in Africa where all the children shared one mug to have a drink of water at lunch time. I was saddened by this thought of how some of us have so much more than we need, while others have nothing, but I was also reminded of the importance of vessels. We need vessels to contain our food and drink and washing water, and from the oldest time people made beautiful or serviceable pots and vessels: simple cheap clay ones or expensive golden ones, depending on their resources and the intended use. But no generation in the history of the world has been as wasteful as the present one. The drive for perfection in all material things and the contemporary idea that one is entitled to the best of everything (“Because I’m worth it”), have led to the current general frame of mind, where as soon as something is no longer

new and perfect, we dispose of it and simply get a new item to replace the old one. This way of looking at things has strangely permeated our attitude towards everything surrounding us: as soon as a relationship is not new and exciting, people feel entitled to leave it behind and start a new one; as soon as a job presents difficulties people often decide to embark on a new and exciting career; as our planet is now polluted and overpopulated, people are looking for other planets to colonize. It seems people have forgotten how to mend things or simply how to accept imperfections. It is otherwise with God. He, the Perfect One, never tires of mending and refashioning all the things we chip and crack or smash. Like a patient parent, he keeps picking up the broken pieces and sticking them together, making them into a more beautiful vessel than the initial one. All we need to do is ask and trust and He will touch our relationships, our world and ourselves with His healing power.

In Jeremiah, we hear the beautiful story of the potter who refashions the failed pot.

The word that came from the LORD to Jeremiah, saying “Arise and go down to the potter’s house. There you shall hear my words.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and behold he was forming something of wet clay upon the stones. The vessel he formed in his hands failed. So he again made himself another vessel as it pleased him to do. Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying “Surely as this potter, am I not able to form you, O house of Israel? Behold, you are as the clay of the potter in my hands.” (Jeremiah 18:1-6)

We are told we are our God’s clay pots. He has formed us with His own hands so He may use us for His work:

But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:21)

The beauty of this relationship between the Great

² The list of references is available [here](#)

Potter and us vessels is that He fashions us very different from each other, fit for different uses. Some are little tea pots, other wine jugs, stew pots, others wash basins. Not all equal, not all beautiful but all designed with a purpose in mind. All fit for the Lord's work. St. Paul tells us not to complain about the way we were fashioned:

But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to Him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?" (Romans 9:21)

If I were to ask myself what kind of vessel I am, I can certainly say that if such a pot as myself were to ever be found in my cupboard, I would certainly replace it with a new one. Too chipped, cracked and plain. Comparing oneself in this situation with a gold pot is very damaging spiritually. We see people who were so naturally endowed with all virtues and qualities, but we must always remember that we are loved just as we are and we have our very own work to do. Fortunately, the Lord looks upon us with eyes of love and loyalty. He does not dispose of imperfect pots. Who then would survive? Most often He is not even concerned with the appearance of the pots, He allows us to continue to be ugly, cracked, chipped, but he performs in each of us the miracle of Cana. He blesses the water of our being and turns it into rich wine. In other words, He fills these poor old pots with divine grace.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:7-12)

The Lord is asking of us to trust that He will love us, poor, plain, unworthy and will fill us with His Spirit, so we may become vessels of Glory. But to allow God to fill us, one thing is imperative and this we must choose to do. We must empty ourselves of ourselves to make room for God since he cannot pour His grace into pots filled up with self.

"If a vessel is to be filled, it must first be empty. So cast all evil away from you, that you may be filled to the brim." (St Augustine)

Martha and Mary

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 August you have to sign-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. 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

Aug. 14: *Paulina*
Aug. 29: *Angelos*

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

6th Aug: The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

13th Aug: St. Tikhon, Bishop of Voronezh, Wonderworker of Zadonsk and All Russia

15th Aug: The Dormition of our Most-Holy Theotokos

16th Aug: St. Gerasimus, Wonderworker of Cephalonia

20th Aug: St. Oswin, King and Martyr († 651)

22nd Aug: St. Sigfrid, Abbot of Wearmouth († 688)

24th Aug: St. Cosmas of Aetolia, equal-to-the-Apostles

27th Aug: Martyr Phanourios

29th Aug: Beheading of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

31st Aug: The Placing of the Cincture of the Most Holy Theotokos in the Church of Chalkoprateia. St. Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne († 651).

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 August (*online**)

Sun. 1st	09:45	Holy Liturgy in Church**. 6 th Sunday after Pentecost: Procession of the Life-Giving Cross
Wed. 4th	18:30	Paraklesis and Canon to the Mother of God
Fri. 6th	08:30	Orthros for the Transfiguration of Our Lord
Sat. 7th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 8th	09:45	Holy Liturgy in Church**. 7 th Sunday after Pentecost
Wed. 11th	18:30	Paraklesis and Canon to the Mother of God
Fri. 13th	18:30	Paraklesis and Canon to the Mother of God
Sat. 14th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 15th	09:45	Holy Liturgy in Church**. 8 th Sunday after Pentecost: The Dormition of the Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary
Sat. 21st	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 22nd	09:45	Holy Liturgy in Church**. 9 th Sunday after Pentecost
Sat. 28th	18:30	Great Vespers
Sun. 29th	09:45	Holy Liturgy in Church**. 10 th Sunday after Pentecost: The Beheading of John the Baptist

* 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 –



For further information please contact:

Father Jonathan Hemmings
67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ

Tel: 07951 722 877

Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk

www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk

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.

