

**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

LIGHT

Just picture yourself lost in the woods at night time. You stumble blindly between trees, getting scratched by bramble bushes. You have lost your bearings, you have no idea where you are going, but fear or blind panic spurs you to run on. Every shadow becomes an evil spirit in your mind, every sound spells danger. Suddenly, you find yourself on the edge of the forest and you see a little lamp shining in the window of a cottage just a few meters away. This little ray of light from a human habitation brings a wave of relief and hope which washes over you. Finally, danger has receded, fear subsides and the path is clear, you know where you are heading.

All human beings are attracted to light as well as most creatures of the animal realm. Light gives joy, warmth, safety. Our desire for light is but an echo of our need and yearning for God. From the darkness of our souls, the dark forest of temptation and sin, we welcome the saving Light of God with joy and relief,

"I have passed my life ever in night for the night of sin has been to me thick fog and darkness; but make me, O Saviour, a son of the day" (Canon of Saint Andrew)

Our Lord and God is Light. He is the author of Light. On the very first page of the Bible we read *"And God said "Let there be light" and there was light" (Genesis 1:3)* Then the Lord appears as light and fire to Moses: *"So he (Moses) saw the bush burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2)*. The children of Israel encounter the Lord in the desert *"The sight of the Lord's glory was like a burning fire on the top of the mountain before the children of Israel" (Exodus 24:17)*

The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ is heralded by a bright star which the wise men follow and by pure light to the shepherds: *"the glory of the Lord shone around them"*.

Peter, James and John witnessed the Transfiguration of the Lord, when *"His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light."* (Matthew 17:2)

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us simply and conclusively *"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12)* and also exhorts us *"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works" (Matthew 5:16)*

But what light have we to shine upon the world? Each of us bears the Light of Christ in ourselves. In every act and every look, in every smile we must let the Light of Christ shine through. We must kindle the fire of holiness inside us. *"Our faith is light" (St Nikolai Velimirovic)*

"Just as the vigil lamp cannot be lit without our hand, so too, our heart, our inward vigil lamp cannot be lit without the holy fire of God's grace, even if it were to be filled with all the virtues. All these virtues of ours are after all like combustible material, but the fire which ignites them precedes from God." (St Nikolai Velimirovic)

God alone is the author and source of Light, Light itself. We can only reflect His light to the world, sharing rays of joy and hope.

Icon writing is a very moving and difficult process. An icon is a window open towards Heaven; the process of writing it is a gradual opening of the soul towards God. In writing an icon we bring an offering to God, an offering of ourselves: our hands and skill no matter how small, of wood for the board and chalk and pigments (all natural made of minerals and animals). The process starts with tracing and then adding dark shades of ochre and blue and red. The board is an image of ourselves at this point, of our humanity fashioned from dust, dark and shapeless. But every moment that we write, we pray. The Lord listens to our prayer and his grace touches the writer and the icon. We then begin to add to our darkness lighter and lighter shades, very gradually and patiently. One shade on top of the other, lighter and lighter. Finally, the light shines through, reflecting the glory of God. Painting an icon is a journey from darkness to light through prayer. Just the same way, our soul, our life, our whole person must become gradually lighter and lighter, perfected by the grace of God.

Let us allow God to transform us into sons and daughters of Light, into reflections of the Divine Light here on Earth!

Martha and Mary

HOLY THEOPHANY

My dear friends in Christ we have come to this holy festival of Our Lord's Baptism. At Theophany we celebrate the revelation of the Three Persons of the Holy and undivided Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For at this feast we see God in His fullness manifest before men and women.

As St. John Chrysostom says in his sermon on the feast, it is necessary to say that there is not one Theophany, but two: the one actual, which already has occurred, and the second in future, which will happen with glory at the end of the world. St. Paul, who in conversing with Titus, speaks thus about the present: "The grace of God hath revealed itself, having saved all mankind, decreeing, that we reject iniquity and worldly desires, and dwell in the present age in prudence and in righteousness and piety" -- and about the future: "awaiting the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:11-13).

Today, on which Christ was baptized by John even though Our Lord was without sin He sanctified the nature of water. On this day the waters having been infused by the power of the same all Holy Spirit, having obtained the waters we will carry it home and keep it all year, since today the waters are sanctified; and an obvious phenomenon occurs: these waters in their essence do not spoil with the passage of time, but obtained today last for our sanctification, our healing and as a blessing for our homes.

I recall, over 25 years ago, when the first group of converts were being catechized by holy priests from America; some fellow pilgrims to Orthodoxy were seated listening at the feet of Fr. Michael Keiser of blessed memory. He was teaching us about the feasts and came to Theophany. He told the story of one of his parishioners who dutifully came with her empty bottle year by year to receive the Holy Water of Theophany- on going to bless her home the lady beckoned to Father to come and see something. She opened a cupboard under the stairs and there to his amazement was row upon row of bottles dating back fifteen years of Holy Water rather like a rack of fine vintage wines. He mildly upbraided her pointing out that they should be used, for anointing for drinking and for sprinkling of the home and for the making of proskphora.

God in his gracious mercy and love gives us these mysteries for our use. It is a gift which we should receive and enjoy.

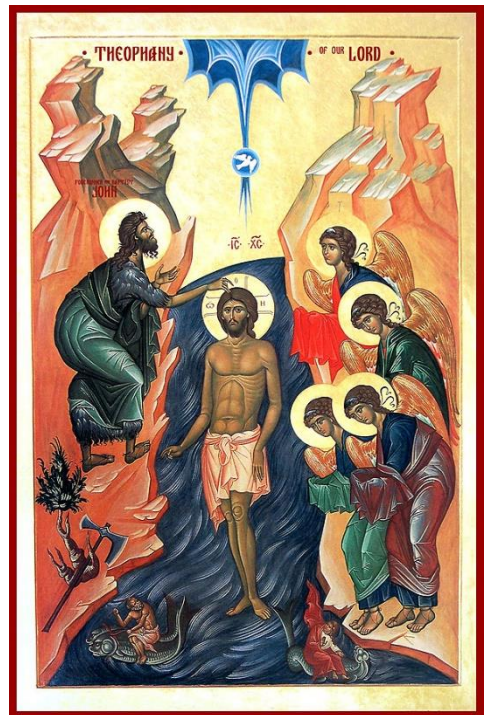
In this feast we hear the voice of the Father testifying to the divine nature of Christ:

"You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased."

At this feast we have the Son, Who, content for our salvation, sanctifies the waters and indeed all creation, for He is the Word that caused it to come into being, restoring it to its original condition through union with Him.

On this feast we see the Holy Spirit descending in bodily form in the form of a dove upon Christ.

"God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory." (St Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:16)



*Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
(Image taken from oca.org)*

This new birth is connected with purification and illumination. St Gregory the Theologian says, "Where there is purification there is illumination, for without the former the latter is not given."

This important event of the Baptism in the Life of Christ and therefore in the Church is recorded in all four gospels. Here, we see the confession that the Son and Word of God is "one of the Holy Trinity" who became man to save the human race from sin, the devil and death. Christ had no sin but since humans are sinful we confess and are baptised by water and the Spirit.

In the patristic writings the Baptism of Christ is seen in terms of the earlier type connected with the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites. In God's mercy we see salvation in operation in history, firstly in the act of saving His chosen people through His servant Moses and in the fullness of time the divine economy by which the whole of the human race is reshaped in Christ.

St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite says that in order to reshape a vessel a potter needs water for moulding the clay and fire to heat the moulded clay into a vessel. God, the divine potter wants to reshape us into holy vessels. The water is created and blessed; the fire is the uncreated fire of the Holy Spirit. Thus, through Holy Baptism which is the introductory Mystery we are admitted into the Church, just as Christ's saving work began with His Baptism.

Let God reshape us who are created in His image into holy vessels by water and the Holy Spirit.

Christ gave the commandments to His disciples to make disciples of every nation:

"baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19-20)

We are to live with that divine promise given at our Baptism avoiding the death of sin so that we may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. However, St Gregory of Nyssa reminds us that when the Grace of Baptism is clouded by sin then the baptism of repentance and tears must follow. "Even one tear of repentance is equivalent to the water of Baptism, and a painful groan brings back the grace which had departed for a while."

When we have asked the All Holy Spirit to sanctify the waters today it is for our sanctification and healing. Take it home, place it in your icon corner drink of it often first thing in your morning

prayers, use it for healing for it is of that same Life-giving spring that wells up in you to eternal life as we await the second Theophany -- Christ's coming in glory.

Fr Jonathan

ATTENDING THE SERVICES AT CHURCH

To attend the in-Church services during January you have to sign up using this [online 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, a maximum of 30 people including children, servers, chanter, and the COVID officer, are allowed in the Church.

Most importantly, please **Do Not** come to the Church if you experience any of the main COVID symptoms, which are now: **headache, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, loss of smell and/or taste, fever, and a new, continuous cough**. For the care, consideration and protection of our community, please also take a lateral flow test (LFT) before attending the church. If you test "positive" do not come to the Church and follow the government guidance. Please read [the list of Do's and Don't when in the Church](#) (available in English, Greek and Romanian). As emphasized by His Eminence Sayedna Silouan, **mask-wearing in churches is now legally required**.

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.

THANKSGIVING PROJECT

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our Dean, Father Gregory, has requested us to share his concerns regarding financial matters in the diocese. Over the last year the expenses in the Diocese have been greater than the income. Our parish has contributed 15 percent of our income which amounted to over £800 but this is a small sum which does not allow the Diocese to undertake any training of new priests or pay wages for current priests. He encourages most parishes to join the Thanksgiving project, which involves pledging a weekly fixed sum of money by each parishioner at the beginning of the year. I know that for many of you the budget is tight and also that some of you have set up a monthly direct debit which is very helpful for the church being able to estimate the income of the following month and budget accordingly. In other words it is easier to know that we can pay the rent and our giving to the Diocese. If more people would consider pledging a fixed sum it would help both the parish and the diocese. If you consider doing this by direct debit, the details are on the website. Many thanks for your generosity.

Treasurer and Parish Priest

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Jan. 6: *Fr. Michael Harper*

Jan. 14: *Nina*

Jan. 16: *Fr. Jacob Myers*

Jan. 30: *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

1st Jan: St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia

6th Jan: The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

9th Jan: St. Adrian and St. Brithwald, Archbishops of Canterbury (☩ 710 and ☩ 731 A.D.)

17th Jan: St. Anthony the Great

18th Jan: St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria

20th Jan: Righteous Euthymius the Great

24th Jan: St. Xenia, the Fool-for-Christ of St.

Petersburg (☩ 1803)

25th Jan: St. Gregory the Theologian

28th Jan: St. Ephraim the Syrian

30th Jan: Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: www.calendar.goarch.org



Synaxis of the Ecumenical Teachers and Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom

(image source: oca.org)

Services at St Martin's in January

Sat. 1 st	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St. Basil for the Feast of Circumcision of Christ and for Basil the Great
Sun. 2 nd	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Wed. 5 th	18:30	Blessing of the Waters
Sat. 8 th	18:30	Great Vespers*
Sun. 9 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Sat. 15 th	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 16 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Sat. 22 nd	18:30	Great Vespers*
Sun. 23 rd	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Thurs. 27 th	18:30	Vespers for St Ephraim the Syrian*
Sat. 29 th	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sat. 30 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs

* Services online. Please, join a Skype group <https://join.skype.com/KZt20cnwQw5f> to join 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.

House blessings for Theophany and Confessions by appointment. Please arrange with Fr Jonathan COVID rules permitting.



“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](#).

