



**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*

## HOLDING SALVATION

In the Icon of the Feast of the Meeting on February 2<sup>nd</sup> we see the righteous Simeon receiving the Lord Jesus Christ into his arms. Receiving the Light of the World is an awesome gift and the old priest Simeon had waited his whole life to see and hold the Incarnate Light. Simeon and Anna's whole spiritual inclination was of "patient watchfulness", i.e. *Nepsis*.

When we Christians receive the Light of Christ at Baptism and each Sunday we should hold on to it. So often, despite having received the Incarnate Lord into our lives, we repeatedly fall into that temptation of receiving the world's blandishments, converting them into gods. Such seeking of immediate pleasure excludes God and proves to be unrewarding and futile – yet we are slow to learn this lesson. It is as if we have never been participants in the Heavenly Kingdom. So we find ourselves vacillating between salvation which bring us moments of real joy and peace and moments of indulgence which bring false aspirations and dissatisfaction. Why can we not give ourselves entirely over to Christ? Because we want to hold on to our ideas, our opinions our will! We justify our lack of constancy by listing our other "commitments" and so we become lukewarm – and we know what Christ has to say about this state:

*"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—"* (Revelation 3:15-17)

Moreover, it is evidently clear that apostasy has replaced spiritual and mindful appreciation of the mystical union with God for a rational concern for the world's interest in a purely political agenda.

We have forgotten the need for *nepsis*, of being awake to the movement of the Holy Spirit, of opening our heart to that vital connection with Christ that can only come through the conscious experience of communion with Him. We must again teach all who wish to learn, the art of recognizing, receiving and keeping salvation.

Near the end of the Holy Liturgy, after the faithful have received the Holy Communion, the celebrant blesses them with the words: "*O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.*" The people sing in response: "***We have seen the True Light! We have received the Heavenly Spirit! We have found the True Faith! Worshiping the Undivided Trinity, Who has saved us***".

The celebrant then blesses the faithful with the Eucharistic chalice in which the Divine gifts are still present. During the removal of the consecrated gifts to the Prothesis table the people sing: "*Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise O Lord, that we may sing of Thy glory; for Thou hast made us worthy to partake of Thy Holy, Divine, Immortal and Life-creating Mysteries. Keep us in Thy holiness that all the day we may meditate upon Thy righteousness. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*"

Do we say these words in vain repetition or do we mean them? What is vital for us Christians is that we have really "*seen the True Light, received the Heavenly Spirit, found the true faith*" in the experience of the Kingdom of God at the Holy Liturgy. The question we must ask ourselves is: since we have seen the true Light, since we have received the Heavenly Spirit, since we have found the True Faith; how important is it to hold on to our salvation?

*Fr Jonathan*

## OUR HOLY MOTHER BRIGID OF KILDARE (†) 524

Her name is also spelled Brigit or Bridget (Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>); she is considered, equally with St Patrick (Mar. 17<sup>th</sup>), patron of Ireland. She was born in Ulster of a noble Irish family which had been converted by St Patrick. She was uncommonly beautiful, and her father planned to marry her to the King of Ulster. But at the age of sixteen she asked her Lord Jesus Christ to make her unattractive, so that no one would marry her and she could devote herself to Him alone. Soon she lost an eye and was allowed to enter a monastery. On the day that she took monastic vows, she was miraculously healed and her original beauty restored.

Near Dublin she built herself a cell under an oak tree, which was called Kill-dara, or Cell of the



*St Brigid of Kildare (image [source](#))*

Oak. Soon seven other young women joined her and established the monastery of Kill-dara, which in time became the cathedral city of Kildare. The monastery grew rapidly and became a double monastery with both men's and women's settlements, with the Abbess ranking above the Abbot; from it several other monasteries were planted throughout Ireland (combined men's and women's monastic communities are virtually unknown in the east, but were common in the golden age of the Irish Church).

The Saint predicted the day of her death and fell asleep in peace in 524, leaving a monastic Rule to govern all the monasteries under her care. During the Middle Ages her veneration spread throughout Europe.

## RESTING IN CHRIST

I grew up in a time and culture where financial credit did not exist. You could not take your TV home today and pay for it later or in instalments. You had to deserve your treat. First the work, the

self-denial in order to raise the money for your TV. The motto was always, first the work and at the end, the reward. Even now, in the world of instant treats, we do raise our children in the same idea. First you eat all your veg, and then you will get dessert.

I have for years instinctively applied this approach to my spiritual life as well. The idea of the reward of eternal life after all the suffering and toil of this world is mirrored in our daily, weekly, yearly struggles: first Lent and then Pascha, first the Cross and then the Resurrection, first Advent, crowned by Christmas. First we work hard for 6 days doing good deeds, braving tiredness and difficulties of all sorts, reciting our private prayers and canons and then, on Sunday, the Lord rewards us for our toil by inviting us to His feast of the Eucharist. Sunday is the day of the awaited treat, of rest after we did our duty. Like good little children, we come to the Lord to receive our gift.

I have this constant guilt of not having done enough -- I am this second Martha who wants to serve, prepare everything so that she really deserves the Sunday rest and the feast. I never feel I've earned it though. This constant obsession with ticking boxes and getting things done is often robbing me of joy. I never say enough prayers, complete enough tasks and do enough good deeds. Everything is half done and unsatisfactory. Like the biblical Martha I ask: "*Lord, why don't I get any help?*" And often, "*Why can't I do it?*" I sometimes arrive at the feast of the Eucharist frazzled, frustrated and angry. I feel I do not deserve the Lord, I haven't earned a prize this week.

Every morning I ask for the grace to complete my tasks and then I rush off, I dive into the day. Recently I encountered in a book the phrase "sit in Christ". In my merit based instinctive philosophy, you oughtn't sit until you are tired. First you must run and walk and jump and work and only afterwards sit. But suddenly I had the shocking realisation that my world view was upside down and back to front. First of all we must rest in Christ. *Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 45:11)*

In spiritual terms, "rest" ought to come before we even attempt work. It is the first thing we must "do". Sunday is not the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week when we get our reward for being good, for fasting, for enduring whatever comes our way and for growing in virtue. It is in fact the First day of

the week. It is the beginning of everything, when we, undeserving sinners, receive God. Without God we can do nothing. *He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.* (John 15:6) Everything begins with the Alpha and the Omega. Resting in God, sitting with Christ, allowing the Spirit to fill us and the Eucharist to transform us is what makes us able to walk and run and serve the following 6 days of the week. God has little need of our sacrifices as we imagine them, He asks for our presence, for our stillness in Him. *It is only necessary to seek one thing: to be with Jesus.* (St Ignatius Brachaninov) As Mary *“chose that good part which will not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:42), so must we. It is the one thing needed. We are called to be, to receive, to rejoice and to share. This is all.

In an interview at the Institute of Christian Orthodox Studies, the well-known actor David Suchet (best known for his rendition of Hercule Poirot) said: *“When I pray or when I sit in silence to be with God because that’s how I would like to live, if I live with God, if I try to live with Him, it doesn’t matter where I am or who I am with.”*

God comes to us to be with us not as a reward, but as a gift, the gift of Love. Because God loved us first, he desires us to come to Him, to sit with Him and in Him, to live with Him. The story of Creation tells us as much. In Genesis Chapter 1 we find out how God created the world and man as the crowning glory: *“So God made man: in the image of God He made him; male and female He made them. Then God blessed them.”* This took place on the sixth day of Creation. Thus man and woman’s first full day of life was the seventh day, the day of rest. Humanity begins its existence on the day of rest. God, in his mercy and goodness, made man to rejoice in Creation, to sit with Himself and behold how beautiful the world is, how good communion with the Creator is.

Through sin, man starts hiding from God, does not sit with his Maker any longer.

*“Then they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden that afternoon and Adam and his wife hid themselves within the tree in the middle of the garden from the presence of the Lord God”.*

But with unimaginable mercy God calls us all back to Himself. *“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends for all things*

*that I heard from my Father I have made known to you.”* (John 15:15) He redeems us without us being deserving. All that is required of us is to receive God’s gift joyfully, love God and be with Him. From this desire to be with God stems the desire to share Christ in every way we can. After our day of rest at the feet of Christ, like Mary, Martha’s sister, we can stand up and start walking towards our brothers and sisters to take Christ to them so they may know love and joy as we do.

*The chief end of our life is to live in communion with God. To this end the Son of God became incarnate, in order to return us to this divine communion, which was lost by the fall into sin. Through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we enter into communion with the Father and thus attain our purpose.*  
(St Teophan the Recluse)

Martha and Mary

## ATTENDING THE SERVICES AT CHURCH

Dear brothers and sisters,

COVID pandemic is in retreat in the UK. Glory to God for His mercy! From the 27th of January 2022, the Government in England scraps almost all mandatory COVID measures, except for self-isolation rules for the infected. In line with these two facts, we relax the COVID rules in our church too. **Most importantly, there is no more cap on the attendance numbers, and you DO NOT have to register for attendance anymore.** Please come to the church whenever there is a service. There is no need to notify us of your attendance in advance or provide your contact details for the NHS Test & Trace.

COVID may be retreating, but there are still many cases across the UK and in the North West of England in particular. **Therefore, the following anti-COVID measures remain in our church:**

1. We strongly encourage you to take a lateral flow test (LFT) before attending the

church. It is an easy way to ensure you are not ill and to protect the other faithful, some of whom are medically vulnerable. If you test “positive”, do not come to the church and follow the [government guidance](#) instead.

2. We **strongly encourage you to keep on wearing masks while in the church**, unless you are medically exempt. The wearing of masks in confined places is highly recommended by medical experts and in line with government guidance.
3. Windows **are to remain open at all times** during services in the Church to improve airflow in line with the expert and government guidance.

## REMINDER AND THANKSGIVING OF FAITH AND PRAYER

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.

## 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

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.



*Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee  
(image [source](#))*

## MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1<sup>st</sup> Feb: St Bridget of Kildare (†525)

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

3<sup>rd</sup> Feb: St Nicholas, Archbishop & Enlightener of Japan

10<sup>th</sup> Feb: Hieromartyr Charalampos

18<sup>th</sup> Feb: St Colman (†675)

13<sup>st</sup> Feb: Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. Triodion begins

23<sup>rd</sup> Feb: St Polycarp, the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna

24<sup>th</sup> Feb: First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist

26<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.calendar.goarch.org)

### Services at St Martin's in February (All services in Church unless otherwise stated)

Wed. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	08:30	Orthros* for Meeting of our Lord in the Temple
Sat. 5 <sup>th</sup>	16:00	Memorial and Great Vespers
Sun. 6 <sup>th</sup>	09:45	Holy Liturgy
Wed. 9 <sup>th</sup>	18:30	Vespers* for St Haralambos
Sat. 12 <sup>th</sup>	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 13 <sup>th</sup>	09:45	Holy Liturgy
Sat. 19 <sup>th</sup>	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 20 <sup>th</sup>	09:45	Holy Liturgy
Sat. 26 <sup>th</sup>	15:30	Saturday of Souls Memorial*
	16:00	Great Vespers*
Sun. 27 <sup>th</sup>	09:45	Holy Liturgy. Sunday of Meatfare: Last Judgement.

\* Services online. Please, join a Skype group <https://join.skype.com/KZt20cnwOw5f> 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.



*“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](#).

