



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

The Stavronian

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*Έθρονος 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

Христос Воскресе! Воистину Воскресе!

Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!

Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!

Cristo è risorto! È veramente risorto!

Le Christ est ressuscité! Vraiment Il est ressuscité!

Cristo ressuscitou! Verdaderamente ressuscitou!

Cristo ha resucitado! Verdaderamente, ha resucitado!

Al-Masih-Qam! Hakkan Qam!

基督復活了 他確實復活了

ハリストス復活! 実に復活!



Myrrh-Bearing Women (image [source](#))

MYRRH BEARERS

I am always struck by the similarity of the Icons of Our Lord's Nativity and the Icon of the visitation to the tomb of the Myrrh-Bearing women. A dark cave -- a dark tomb – angels are present at both events – women attend the birth – women attend the burial, there are swaddling clothes at the Nativity -- there are burial clothes which had bound the body of our Lord in the Tomb.

Traditionally, eight women are identified as the myrrh-bearers who had come to anoint the body of our Lord Jesus Christ: (i) Mary, the Theotokos, (ii) Mary Magdalene, (iii) Joanna, (iv) Salome, (v) Mary, the wife of Cleopas, (vi) Susanna, (vii) Mary of Bethany, and (viii) Martha of Bethany.

On the second Sunday after Pascha we remember, and we celebrate, the Holy Myrrh-Bearing Women, as well as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. They exemplify for the followers of Christ **perfect love in action, courage of the will** and **devoted faithfulness**. When other disciples fled and hid, they put themselves in harm's way,

they were proactive, they went to fulfil the funerary rites, shunning fear and the threat of persecution.

However, in their brave action we encounter a holy mystery, not just an empty tomb. Those who had come to anoint a body were anointed with the truth of the Resurrection and they would bring this sweet smelling fragrance of the gospel to the Church.

Indeed, is this not confirmed still in our day by the holy relics of our saints and the icons in our churches exuding a heavenly, sweet-smelling myrrh? This is a true and tangible reminder of God's sustaining grace in every age.

The priest anoints the newly illumined at Chrismation with the oil of *myron*. Furthermore, all Christians are called to “anoint” others in evangelistic mission. By action, such as we find with St Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and the Myrrh-Bearing women we acquire the spiritual myrrh of the Resurrection. The ointment bearing women came to anoint a dead body and found the Living God. Who will anoint our bodies with the Resurrection? The same risen Lord Jesus Christ! As St John Chrysostom says in his Catechetical Paschal homily: “*Hades was embittered [...] It*

took a body and lo it discovered God. It took earth and lo it discovered Heaven!"

Kontakion

You did command the myrrh-bearers to rejoice, O Christ! By Your Resurrection, You did stop the lamentation of Eve, O God! You did command Your apostles to preach: The Saviour is Risen!

Indeed, He is Risen!

Fr Jonathan

MARTHA AND MARY REVISITED

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving and she approached Him and said "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

And Jesus answered and said to her "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

It is now a few years since we started writing our little Stavronia contributions under the aegis of St Mary and St Martha. As time went on, our friendship has evolved into a real sisterhood, where we are comfortable and secure in our love of each other to talk about everything and even disagree just as the sisters in the Gospels did. We felt it was right to look back to where we began and reflect anew on the sisters of Lazarus.

A long time ago when I was bemoaning being such a Martha, always busying myself with chores instead of listening to Christ and spending more time in prayer, a friend reminded me that not only Mary is a saint, but her sister Martha as well. It is true that we each of us have our own gifts and vocations, our nature which shapes the way we worship God, some in prayer, some in action.

There is so much to learn from this Gospel

story! It is not a simple case of prayer and contemplation is more pleasing to God than action. That would be reducing the meaning of the gospel words and even distorting them. Prayer does and must come first! If we do not listen to God, we can do nothing good or worthy. But Martha also shows Christian virtues pleasing to God, the first of them being hospitality: she welcomes the Lord into her home, she tires herself for her guest with many preparations and "serving". These are all things pleasing to God and indeed we are all called to welcome people and serve them. The trouble comes not in the what but the how.

Our Lord who can see inside our souls sees that Martha is not serving with love and joy, but is resentful about not getting help, she grumbles and furthermore, tells God what to do! "tell her to help me!". How often we do this ourselves! We complain to the Lord and tell Him what He should do. We complain things are not fair or that our lot is too hard. What the Lord asks us to do is do our small things lovingly and joyfully; He asks us to bring to His feet our troubles, sit at his feet like Mary and not fret and worry and grumble like Martha. "Let go and let God", as the saying goes.

The Lord is also reproaching Martha that by worrying about so many small things, she disregards the important ones. How true of modern life, so filled with trifles which we worry about and magnify, starting with our daily meals, our children's education, our performance at work, the paperwork we need to submit, where to shop that week, whom to invite for the birthday party and the list goes on endlessly. These are all necessary things but they need putting in their place. Christ at the centre, everything else at the periphery. At Pascha and Christmas it is particularly obvious how alike Martha many of us are: we worry so much about cleaning and decorating the house, where and when to shop (the lack of an ingredient in the shop assumes the proportions of a catastrophe), what and when to cook, whom to invite, that we often forget what it's all about. We shout at our husbands and children for not helping or for wearing clothes which are not smart enough and forget that Christ took flesh for us, died for us, rose from the dead for us and calls us to Himself as we huff and puff about boiling eggs, baking sweet breads and roasting legs of lamb. It is tragic and even almost comical in its absurdity.

The Christian author Adrien Candiard writes on the subject of Martha: “Jesus reproaches Martha [...] for having her mind filled with cups of tea, paper tissues, canapés, pastries, deliveries, dirty dishes, toilet cleanliness, the temperature of the sitting room -- in a word all the things which will contribute to the comfort of the guest -- but actually spending no time with the guest. The guest is not a body to feed and place in a comfortable seat at a pleasant room temperature: he is a person to encounter. [...] The essence of our Christian life is neither action or contemplation, it is the encounter and the life with Christ.”

If we allow Christ to enter our life, He will be with us in the kitchen as we cook, in the garden as we weed and even in Sainsbury's as we shop. Such is His love that He humbles Himself to meet us in our lowliness and smallness if only we invite him and want to spend time with Him.

Martha and Mary

MISSING THE RESURRECTION

St. Thomas has been called doubting because he doubted Christ had risen. Yet it was not only St. Thomas who doubted. The message of the two Marys to the disciples “*seemed to them an idle tale*”; Luke 24:11. Even when Christ appeared in the middle of the disciples they too wanted physical proof and did not believe until He ate fish; Luke 24:43. It seems unfair to select St. Thomas alone to be called doubting!

St. Thomas' problem arose because he was missing when Christ appeared to the other disciples; John 20:19-26. We are not told why St. Thomas was missing but we are told he then remained with the disciples and so did not miss the next Resurrection appearance. The compassionate Christ came knowing St. Thomas would be present and gave him faith...

Alexander Schmemmann wrote “there was no physical imperative to recognise Him... to enter into the joy of His presence to be with Him, meant the conversion to another reality.” St. Thomas, the one who was earlier missing, now is not only present but enters into the reality of the Resurrection when he cries “*My Lord and My God!*”.

The story has both warning and thankfully consolation for us now. We can miss the reality of the Resurrection for many reasons, perhaps by giving only an intellectual assent. Christ comes to us, if we have weak faith, with compassion, as He did to St. Thomas. He only needs our willingness to wait so He may restore what is missing in our experience, even speaking of a special blessing for us future believers: “*blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.*”

*Gladys Bland,
Cambridge*

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.

- Windows **are to remain open at all times** during services in the Church to improve airflow in line with the expert and government guidance.

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.

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

May 26: *Paraskeui*

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 May: Thomas Sunday

8th May: Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women. Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, and St. Arsenius the Great

10th May: Simon the Zealot & Apostle

11th May: Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Equal-to-the Apostles

15th May: Sunday of the Paralytic. St. Pachomius the Great Martyr

21st May: Constantine and Helen, Equal-to-the Apostles

22nd May: Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

23th May: The retrieval of the relics of St. Joachim of Ithaca

25th May: Third Finding of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist

29th May: Sunday of the Blind Man

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 May

Sun. 1 st	09:45	St Thomas Sunday: Holy Liturgy of St John Chrysostom
Sat. 7 th	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 8 th	09:45	3 rd Sunday of Pascha, Holy Myrrh-Bearing Women: Holy Liturgy
Sat. 14 th	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 15 th	09:45	4 th Sunday of Pascha: Holy Liturgy
Sat. 21 st	09:45	Saints Constantine and Helen: Holy Liturgy
Sun. 22 nd	09:45	5 th Sunday of Pascha, The Samaritan Woman (St Phteini): Holy Liturgy
Sat. 28 th	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 29 th	09:45	6 th Sunday of Pascha, The Blind Man: Holy Liturgy

“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](#).

