

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

The Stavronian

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*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

GOLDEN THREADS

*“Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.”
(Luke 24:31)*

The Sun shone from the Holy Place
Pouring forth streams of iridescent beauty
From behind the curtain of the Holy Doors;
The smoke of incense rising to the throne
Of the thrice Holy one
Took on an ethereal form of many layered
Clouds curling upwards to the heavens.

Sweet chanting rose from the Choir
To meet the morning Light and Risen Lord.
Vibrant and yet calm
Dynamic passivity and active peace
Came upon the place to still
The storms of earthly life
Of those gathered together in worship

The child was lifted to venerate the Icon
Of The Most Holy Virgin.
A natural and most precious gift from
The innocent soul of this little one.
An exchange of love from a child to a mother
This natural expression of holy joy found
A resonance in the old woman’s smile.

The Liturgy worked its heavenly way to
God’s time of The Most Holy Gifts.
Eternity broke in to the present and lifted the Veil
Of a Holy God and sinful man.
The Mystery of Christ under Salem’s type
Drew the faithful nearer to their God
In taking, making them Icons of their Lord.

The worn, dirty and shabby wedding garments
Were transformed by sparkling golden threads
That wove themselves into the very fabric of the
lives
Of those gathered in silent contemplation.
Five senses of humanity having received divinity
Showered with blessings upon their heads
They made their way glowing into the world.

Fr Jonathan

*When you are praying alone, and your
spirit is dejected, and you
are wearied and oppressed by your
loneliness, remember then, as
always, that God the Trinity looks upon
you with eyes brighter
than the sun; also all the angels, your
own Guardian Angel, and
all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for
they are all one in God,
and where God is, there are they also.
Where the sun is, thither
also are directed all its rays. Try to
understand what this means.*

St. John of Kronstadt

SMELLS AND BELLS

“In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations.” (Malachi 1:11)

My earliest memories in childhood in terms of smells and bells were rather secular and mundane. The smells consisted of the fish and chip shop which fried chips in beef fat which my parents treated me to every Friday evening. Actually, it was my first encounter with the Orthodox because the fish and chip shop was owned by a lovely Cypriot family. Freshly baked bread from my grandmother’s oven, beef dinner with roast potatoes and Yorkshire pudding at home after Church on a Sunday remain thoughts that give rise to both nostalgia and salivation. Not unusually therefore for a growing boy my earliest sense of smell was related to the sense of taste! Flavours and savours often work to established cultural principles; for instance the combination of garlic, tomatoes and olive oil with a sprinkling of basil is identifiably Italian.

My reminiscences of Church (not Orthodox in my young days) was a strange and complex mixture of damp prayer books, oil central heating and lavender polish. If ever I smell lavender polish, I am whisked back to a 12 year old chorister in a rather cold, damp church. My earliest recollection of bells was that of school, particularly joyful was the one that signalled the

end of lessons; a sound that has accompanied me for most of my life from schoolboy through nearly forty years of school teaching. Bells are a heralding of church services and a call to prayer, and a sign for change and completion in school.

Sounds, but particularly aromas can transport one to a certain place and time; they have the power to stir memories, to deepen attention and empower our focus, whether that is in a secular or sacred setting. This olfactory stimulation has the strength to capture feelings and retrieve emotions because the sense of smell is located and generated in the same place of the brain as memory and emotion. My 97 year old aunt who has dementia is whisked back to her youth when I spray her with her favourite perfume. Women generally outperform men in olfactory abilities and tend to have more sensitive palates having more receptive cells in the olfactory part of the brain.

The loss of smell and taste with Long Covid has been a reminder to us all how these senses bring meaning and fullness to our life. I heard on the World Service recently on the Outlook programme first broadcast in 2019 how a barber called Lenny White known as Lenny the Barber goes to cut the hair of dementia patients in care homes in Northern Ireland. He creates the atmosphere for his clients with smells of hair oil and sprays used in the 1950s and 1960s.

The dynamic of memory and emotion is most eloquently expressed in Kenneth Grahame's charming book for children "Wind in the Willows":

We others, who have long lost the more subtle of the physical senses, have not even proper terms to express an animal's inter-communications with his surroundings, living or otherwise, and have only the word 'smell,' for instance, to include the whole range of delicate thrills which murmur in the nose of the animal night and day, summoning, warning, inciting, repelling. It was one of these mysterious fairy calls from out the void that suddenly reached Mole in the darkness, making him tingle through and through with its very familiar appeal, even while yet he could not clearly remember what it was. He stopped dead in his tracks, his nose searching hither and thither in its efforts to recapture the fine filament, the telegraphic current, that had so strongly moved him. A moment, and he had caught it again; and with it this time came recollection in fullest

flood.....

Poor Mole stood alone in the road, his heart torn asunder, and a big sob gathering, gathering, somewhere low down inside him, to leap up to the surface presently, he knew, in passionate escape. But even under such a test as this his loyalty to his friend stood firm. Never for a moment did he dream of abandoning him. Meanwhile, the wafts from his old home pleaded, whispered, conjured, and finally claimed him imperiously. He dared not tarry longer within their magic circle. With a wrench that tore his very heartstrings he set his face down the road and followed submissively in the track of the Rat, while faint, thin little smells, still dogging his retreating nose, reproached him for his new friendship and his callous forgetfulness.

Incense

Incense is made up of oils, resins and gums from trees. It is mentioned in the Bible 146 times; it is a fragrance made from things of the earth, blessed and offered to the Creator. The making and burning of incense goes back a long time, maybe 4000 years, to pre-Christian and even pre-Judaic times. Found in China, Babylonia, Persia and other places, it offered a practical purpose to cover foul stench and a provided a symbol of prayers rising upwards. In churches it is burned on charcoal.

In the Old Testament we find an altar of incense next to the Ark of the Covenant and later in the Temple of Solomon, in accordance with the instructions of God to Moses recorded in Exodus Chapter 30. King David could express in Psalm 141:2: "Let my prayer be counted as incense before you and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice." Ritual enshrines a symbolism which powerfully expresses the deepest needs, hopes, aspirations and feelings of humans. Symbolism is extremely important in everyday life. In the Orthodox Church, symbols from the Greek word *symbolon* with means to "throw with". Symbols are signs enshrined in rituals which extend or throw out or deepest feelings. Yet, we can easily lose or forget the meaning behind the symbol.

The earliest Christians were expected to put a pinch of incense on coals in front of a statue of Caesar in order to recognise him as a god, which they refused to do and for which they were martyred. So strong was their opposition to this

requirement that it seems there was a certain reluctance to use incense in the early Church. Not until the time of Emperor Justinian I (May 11, 483 – November 13/14, 565) do we hear of 36 gold jewel encrusted stationary bowls of incense being used in the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople.

Of course when our Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, the Magi came from the East and worshipped Him as the incarnate God bringing gifts of gold for kingship, frankincense for holiness and myrrh for suffering.

“And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11)

We read in the early part of St Luke’s Gospel how the father of St John the Baptist and Forerunner was offering incense in the Temple:

“⁸Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.” (Luke 1:8-10)

Today the Church burns incense in a censer that is held or swung. The thurible or “thumiatos” in Greek, can be small and used at home by Orthodox Christians in their Icon Corner and to cense the house or large as is used in Church. There is in fact a third type of censer used mainly in monasteries during Great week and fasting periods called a Katsion which is basically a larger hand censer with bells.

The ones used in Churches are composed of a lower bowl in which is placed the lighted charcoal connected to an upper bowl surmounted usually by a cross. These are connected to the handle by three outer chains and one inner chain which lifts the upper bowl from the lower one. Each chain has three bells so 12 in all. The lower bowl, which is earth, making the offering of sweet smelling prayer is connected to the upper bowl which represents heaven. The Four Chains represent the four Evangelists and the twelve bells are the twelve apostles which ring out proclaiming

the Gospel.

The priest blesses the incense with these words:

“Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Incense we offer unto Thee, O Christ our God, as an aroma of spiritual sweetness which do Thou receive upon Thy most heavenly altar and send down upon us in return the grace of Thine All Holy Spirit.”

All things are censed, the holy veils covering the Holy gifts of bread and wine, the holy table, the altar area, the holy Icons, water for baptism, kolliva for Memorials, graves for the departed. The people present in church are censed, for they are made in the image of God, their bodies being the temple of the Holy Spirit and vessels of grace. Indeed, there is almost no service without incense in the Orthodox Church.

Practical, symbolical and mystical there is a problem with the use of incense which pervades the western mind. Many of our Churches are still rented from non-Orthodox traditions. When we were looking to rent a Church some years ago we were told in no uncertain terms by three different denominations that we could not burn incense. They said it was because of the fire alarms or burn candles because of fire hazard, but I suspect a deeper cultural caution. When we did manage to share a building however we did on one occasion set off the fire alarm which brought bells of a completely different magnitude into the experience of worship. One Christmas, a resident in the University Chaplaincy Centre in Lancaster awaking from sleep recounted his dream in which he thought Santa Clause had visited because he heard sleigh bells whilst we were serving an early Holy Liturgy.

The experience of Incense

The first time I went into an Orthodox Church my senses were suffused with sanctity. I fell in love with the whole ambient atmosphere and the tactile nature of the place. The beauty of holiness became real, it wasn’t just an abstract concept it could be seen, smelled, tasted, touched and heard. “So this is what heaven is like !” I reflected.

We read in the book of Revelation:

“³And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the

throne, ⁴and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.” (Revelation 8:3-4)

A priest once remarked to an interested enquirer into Orthodoxy who was questioning the use of incense. *“Well you have this for eternity so you may as well get used to it now!”* There is a smell to holiness. The husband of one of my parishioners says to his wife: *“Ah my dear, you have been to Church, I detect the bouquet of incense.”*

Glorification or sanctification is incremental in nature and is most often to be found, seen, and experienced in the humble things of this life.

Despite the fact that I possess a fine mobile phone and several new Liturgikons I revert in the services of the Church to the broken-spined, torn, repaired, twice bound trusted friend I acquired nearly twenty eight years ago. I have become accustomed to the olive oil stains from lighting the lamps before prayer, the wax from the candles at the Resurrection services and the Holy Water marks in the Blessing of Waters and Theophany section and the imbued smell of age and incense acquired through years of dutiful service! The yellowing faded glory of the book has taken on the hue of gold dust, the brown edged dog-eared edges from fingers finding their way through the Holy Liturgy are now welcome signposts and milestones in prayer. I have learned to see such accretions not as blemishes but blessings. The work of God leaves its marks!

The holy book has itself become holy, not because of time but because it has been usefully employed in the worship of God.

In a similar manner the lingering fragrance of incense in a Church is a tangible reminder of a mystical communion made earlier. The flickering lamps, the smell of olive oil and beeswax candles are expressive of other offerings -- even the carbon darkened walls speak of the work of the faithful; soaked, as they are, with their accumulated prayers. The saints depicted in the frescoes would find it wholly consistent with their earthly life to be covered by dust, smoke and dirt -- they knew only too well about work and prayer.

“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” (Luke 19:40)

The stones of this temple are holy because they are soaked in prayer as are the living stones present who worship here.

Nothing is lost in Christ, even the ashes from the censer are put on the soil for plants to be blessed and grow. In Morecambe, in the far North west of England, we planted an Olive tree four years ago. A few of our people said “it will never fruit!” We feed it with the ashes from the censer each week; this year it fruited black olives. Even when spent, incense blesses! As St John Chrysostom teaches:

Just as incense is good and fragrant even on its own, our souls like incense when burned in the fire of the Holy Spirit become an acceptable offering.

Tradition has a vital dynamic, beyond the antiquarian outward token and nostalgic sentiment; beneath the grime of human worship is the living relationship between God and humankind. Indeed the grime is the human evidence of this mystical encounter, synthesis and synergy.

I have a towel from Romania which was wrapped around a candle at the tonsuring of a nun in the Monastery of Pissiota back in 2004! It has been used for all kinds of practical cleaning duties since and has been washed countless times. It is almost threadbare, but therein is to be found its function, purpose and story. Likewise we humans are made for prayer and service sacrificing ourselves, like candles, like incense, burning ourselves up in and for Christ.

Smell is the most evocative of the senses.

I could say more about the fragrance from relics or from the myron from St Demetrios tomb in Thessaloniki but that is for another time. I will end recalling what one of my Greek Parishioners wrote back in 2007 after discovering an Orthodox Church in Lancaster and rediscovering his Orthodox faith: “I smelled the incense and it took me back to my 15 year old self again serving in the altar.”

May this poor offering be like incense to the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Fr Jonathan



ORTHODOX MONASTICISM IN FRANCE

During my last visit to France, I was greatly surprised to discover how many orthodox monasteries there are and what a wonderful variety of gifts and charismas each of them have. If poor in numbers compared to Romanian or Russian or Greek monasteries, they are rich in spirit and good works and have a very important mission to fulfil. I have chosen just a few to talk about briefly.

In Eastern France, in the Rhone-Alpes region, nestled at the bottom of the deep valley of Combe-Laval, in the depths of a fairy tale wood, with moss dripping off the trees, almost entirely hidden from the sun, lies the orthodox monastery of Saint-Antoine-Le-Grand.



The monastery is a dependence (metochia) of Simonos Petra on mount Athos, founded in 1978 by Father Placide Desailles and Father Seraphin, spiritual brothers, sent together with Father Elie by Elder Aimilianos of Simonos Petra to found orthodox monasteries in France. The church, dedicated to St Silouan and painted by the russian iconographer Iaroslav Dobrynine and by his wife Galina is of a breath taking beauty and majesty. The gift shop of the monastery is a small jewell where you can find any object of worship and many wonderful works by the Holy Fathers and by elders of mount Athos. The monastery survives

from the sale of the books they publish and hospitality.

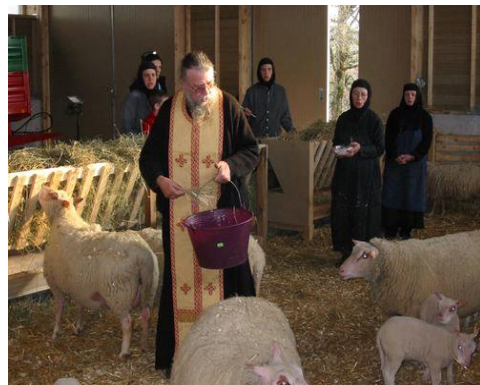


The Monastery at Solan (Monastery of the Protection of the Mother of God), which is the second metochia of Simonos Petra was founded by Fr Placide when women came knocking at the door of St Antoine monastery asking to be received. Father Placide started thus the monastery of Solan in 1985. Steeped in the same atmosphere of prayer, the monastery of Solan has nonetheless a very different feel, basking in the sun, at the centre of acres of cultivated land. There are 17 nuns at Solan from 9 different countries. The liturgical language is French just like at St Antoine's. The nuns' main obedience and main means of subsistence is agriculture. Their love of Creation permeates their entire life and work. The nuns believe that man ought to behave as a choir master of a Creation made to sing praises to its Author. Solan is a Paradise, governed wisely and modestly by its curators who understand the necessity to return to a simple and more respectful relationship with nature, to an entirely organic way of growing, producing and preparing food.





and sell walnut paste but also raise sheep. There is a lovely image of the blessing of the livestock, which constitutes their livelihood.



The monastery The Dormition of the Mother of God (La Dormition de la Mere de Dieu) in Faurie (South Eastern France) is another relatively new monastery dating back to 1982 is situated in an idyllic location surrounded by the Alps. The monks at the monastery of the Dormition, like the sisters of Solan live very close to nature. Their earthly charisma is bee keeping. In a beautiful short French documentary called *Les moines et les abeilles* (The monks and the bees), the hegumen of the monastery speaks of the similarities between life in a monastery and life in a hive. Bees, like monks live in obedience to the queen or the hegumen, community life takes precedence over individual manifestations. Each bee has its own particular obedience, just as each monk has their own charisma, serving the others and the community in their particular service.



The fourth monastery I would like to introduce briefly is yet another dependence of Simonos Petra, like Saint Antoine and Solan. It is the Monastery of the Transfiguration (Le Monastere de la Transfiguration), founded by Father Elie who continues to be the spiritual father of this small community of nuns, which is now situated in the Dordogne. The sisters grow walnut trees

I was deeply moved by the spiritual beauty and peace of all these monasteries but equally amazed at the simplicity of the life of these communities and the closeness to Creation in the midst of an increasingly artificial and complicated world.

Work is a form of spirituality. It is not disconnected from monastic life; on the contrary, it complements individual and collective prayer. These two forms of prayer favour the vertical relationship with God, while work brings a sense of "horizontality", a relationship with the earth, the elements and our fellow creatures, whether within the community or outside. (Monastic website)

Alexandra McCafferty

THE BEE HIVE

"Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (John 6:27)

The buzz of bees' wings around the flowers
The chant of monks' prayers saying hours;
Such melodies of mystery sound,
From those who work on holy ground.

The bees fly to their respective hive
The monks to monasteries where they thrive;
Around the skete and catholicon,
Summoned by the simantron.

The one collects nectar for honey
The other profits without money;
Oh what blessed labour and reward
To taste the fruit sent from the Lord.

The monks work and produce you will see
Has much in common with the bee
For in both a grace will multiply the sum
When wings beat to the holy hum.

St Basil tells us to be like the Bee which takes only the best from each flower it visits and makes honey.

Εν Χριστώ
Fr. Jonathan

ORTHODOX YOUTH FESTIVAL

Would you like to explore your faith with other like-minded young orthodox people?

Every year the Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist (OFSJB) organises a festival to bring together **young Orthodox people** (ages 18 - 40 approx) from all over the world to explore the Orthodox faith in a fun and relaxing environment.

You can look forward to engaging lectures, discussions, prayer, fellowship, great food, and incredible memories with friends new and old! The theme of this year's Festival is "**Scripture under an Orthodox lens**" and will take place on 26-29 May at the **Othona Community**, on the beautiful Essex coast near Bradwell-on-Sea.

We have some great speakers lined up, including Father Andrew Stephen Damick from Ancient Faith radio! In addition to the talks, you can expect daily **morning and evening prayers**, **nicc strolls** by the seaside, a **beach campfire**, a **Divine Liturgy** on Sunday, and other social activities you can take part of if you would like, but also **plenty of free time** to just enjoy the surroundings and **relax or sit around and talk** to other attendees. You do not need to have a deep understanding of the Orthodox faith, but we hope you have an open mind and are curious to learn more about it.

If you're interested in coming, **please click 'going' on the Facebook event and sign up using this form:** <https://fb.me/e/2lZmMqLWu>
The application form can be found here: <https://www.cognitofirms.com/.../OrthodoxYouthFestival202...>

Please contact ofsjbyouthuk@gmail.com with any queries and to stay updated about future events, and we hope to see you there!

*With love in Christ,
The OFSJB Festival Committee
Anastaziia, Maria, Nicole,
Andreas and Daniel*



NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Apr. 8: Evangelos
Apr. 14: Jeanne
Apr. 16: Aristides

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

2th Apr: Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt
8th Apr: Lazarus Saturday
9th Apr: Palm Sunday
16th Apr: Great and Holy Pascha
21st Apr: Theotokos of the Life-Giving Spring
23rd Apr: St. George the Great Martyr and Triumphant. St Thomas Sunday
25th Apr: Mark the Apostle & Evangelist
30th Apr: James the Apostle & brother of St. John the Theologian

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 April		
Sat. 1 st	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 2 nd	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St Basil. St Mary of Egypt
Sat. 8 th	16:00	Great Vespers. Lazarus Saturday
Sun. 9 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)
Wed. 12 th	18:30	Efchalion service. Blessing of oils
Thurs. 13 th	18:30	Twelve Gospels
		Great and Holy Friday
	10:00	Royal Hours
Fri. 14 th	11:00	Preparation of Epitaphion
	13:00	Great Vespers
	18:00	Lamentations
		Holy Saturday
Sat. 15 th	10:00	Liturgy of St Basil (Victory over Hades)
	21:00	Resurrection Matins
	22:00	Giving of the Holy Light followed by the Liturgy of the Resurrection
		Midnight Refreshments. Breaking of the Fast
Sun. 16 th		Holy and Great Pascha
	15:00	Vespers of Love followed by Parish Feast
Sat. 22 nd	16:00	Great Vespers. Bright Saturday
Sun. 23 rd	09:45	Divine Liturgy. Second Sunday of Pascha. St Thomas Sunday. St George
Sat. 29 th	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 30 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy. 3 rd Sunday of Pascha. Holy Myrrh-Bearing women



The Paschal Greeting in various languages*

English	Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!
Arabic	المسيح قام ! حقا قام (El-Mesiyah qhama! Haqqan qaam!)
German	Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaft auferstanden!
Greek	Χριστός ανέστη! Ἀληθῶς ανέστη! (Christos angsti! Alithos angsti!)
Romanian	Hristos a înviat! Adevărat a înviat!
Bulgarian	Христос възкресе! Наистина възкресе! (Khristos vzkrese! Naistina vzkrese!)
Russian	Христос воскрес! Воистину воскрес! (Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese!)
Polish	Chrystus zmartwychwsta! Prawdziwie zmartwychwsta! (Krijstus zmertvykh-vsta! Pradzivie zmertvikh-vsta!)
Latvian	Kristus (ir) augšamcēlies! Patiesi viņš ir augšamcēlies! (Kristus (ir) aughsham-elias! Patiesi vin ir aughsham-elias!)
Chinese (Mandarin)	基督复活了！他确实复活了！ (Titu fūhuola! Ha-tieshi fūhuola!)

*Underlined letters indicate the emphasis in pronunciation

“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*.

