

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

The Stavronian

Monthly magazine and newsletter published by the Holy Cross Synodia



Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever

Hebrews 13:8

*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

**Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Archdiocese
of the British Isles and
Ireland**



**الأبرشية الإنطاكية
المسيحية الأرثوذكسية
للجزر البريطانية و
إيرلندا**

PASTORAL LETTER

To all the Faithful of our God-protected Archdiocese; to the Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, the Honourable Trustees and Esteemed Parish Councillors, and all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Grace, peace and mercy from our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

*O foremost in the ranks of Apostles,
and teachers of the world, Peter and Paul,
intercede with the Master of all
to grant peace unto the world,
and to our souls the Great Mercy.*
(Apolytikion of the Apostles Peter and Paul)

It is with great joy that we come to celebrate again the feast of the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul. Although with different talents and different temperaments, together they demonstrate to us that both are needed for the good management of the Church. Our Archdiocese, likewise, needs and requires the many different skills and talents from each of you to fulfil our Gospel mission. Each one of you is necessary that we carry on the apostolic work of St Peter and of St Paul, of St Simon Zelotes and of St Aristobulus, and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout our countries in these Islands in the Western Ocean. We must work together, as the Apostle so beautifully describes in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, as one body: *"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."* (12:12) You and I are one body whose head is Christ and we must act together as did the Apostles.

Being one body with one another, we are one with the Antiochian Sec. The Great City of Antioch, from where Paul went on his missionary journeys while Peter took up the pastoral care of the city, where *"the disciples were first called Christians,"* (Acts 11:26) where countless saints have trodden is our inheritance. We must learn carefully from what we have received that we may faithfully pass it on to as many as will receive him (see John 1:12).

For us to be faithful witnesses of what we have received we are in need of more clergy: it is the responsibility of all the faithful to pray and work for this to happen. If we are to be the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church," in the tradition and according to the example of the Holy Apostles, we must increase the proclamation of the Resurrection of our Lord by celebrating the Divine Liturgy throughout all these lands. We must pray together, fervently and often, for more faithful men to come forward for ordination and that we all may support them, spiritually and financially, to perform this sacred task.

I greet you all again with great joy on this feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul and I ask for your prayers for me and our Archdiocese that we all work together, as one body, for the building up of the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God bless you!
Your prayers!
I remain your Father in Christ

+ Silouan, Metropolitan of the British Isles and Ireland

+Silouan

Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East

HERE I AM, LORD

For many years now I have been giving my children the same advice on the matter of exams. The first step and most important is to turn up for your exam at the appointed place and time, whether you have prepared well or not. If you do not turn up, you destroy all your chances to pass the exam. I always advice the same in matters of coursework of any sort: even if it is poor, just hand it in on time. They have all rolled their eyes at me since it seems such a basic and self-evident piece of advice. And yet it is so true in our spiritual life as well. Turning up for our encounter with God is the first step towards growth and ultimately salvation. Just as we cannot pass and exam if we are absent, we cannot begin to know God and grow in Spirit if we ignore His repeated invitations. *"The kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son and sent out his servants to call on those who were invited to the wedding: and they were not willing to come."* (Matthew 22) We are these unwilling guests, who instead of responding to the invitation of the king, ignore it and go to their farm and their business. Our King sets up a feast for us every Sunday in the Holy Liturgy, a feast of healing, love and joy. We are certainly not worthy of this feast, our garments are tatty, we are worried about many things and we are tired, but by our own efforts, we shall never become worthy. We need to turn up at the feast as we are: a little scruffy and dishevelled and sometimes downright dirty because we have been invited, as the Gospels say, *"all whom they found, both bad and good"*. Unless we answer present to this Sunday feast, we have no chance to pass the one and only exam which matters.

Our God is such a God of miracles and wonders that He can work any wonders in us and through us, as long as we are willing. He chooses the most unlikely candidates for His great missions. He chose Moses to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt although Moses had a speech impediment. *"God called to him from the midst of the bush and said: Moses! Moses! Then he said: Here I am!"* (Exodus 3:4) Moses had no hesitation in answering the invitation, but he hesitates when he hears what his mission is: *"Who am I to go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt?"* Not only does Moses feel unworthy, but he also has a speech impediment: *"I am weak in speech and*

slow of tongue". Yet the Lord empowers Moses to complete the monumental mission entrusted to him.

Throughout the Old Testament we witness God calling individual people to complete missions. More often than not, these prophets-to-be feel unworthy and are sometimes unwilling like Jonah, but they sooner or later respond to God's call and enter His presence and trust Him to do the work.

The prophet Isaiah promptly and eagerly responds to the call of the Lord: *"Whom shall I send and who will go to this people? Then I said: Behold! Here I am. Send me."* (Isaiah 6:8). When the Lord wakes Samuel up three times in the night, calling him by his name, Samuel replies: *"Here I am!"* and later *"Speak for your servant hears"* (1 Kingdoms 3).

The Lord does not only call us to the Sunday feast. He also calls us every day to enter into a dialogue of love with Him. Sometimes it is hard to pray and words seem empty and the prayer sticks to the ground. Then, like the prophets, we can only say "Here I am, Lord." Turning up to prayer time is the first step and if we are too weak to pray, the spirit will pray in us. If we make the first step towards the encounter, God will do the rest. He will take the mute person that we are, small in faith and poor in love and transform it into the person He wants us to be, into a person fit for mission.

Father Seraphim of the monastery of All Celtic Saints speaks of vigils and night time prayer and advises to begin the practise of night time prayer by remaining standing awake in front of the icons for 15 minutes in the middle of the night. This presence at the appointed time suffices to begin the journey. God will do the rest in our silent presence.

Even though they feel unworthy, Moses, Isaiah, Samuel reply *"Here I am, Lord"*. They are not ready for mission but they answer present. In contrast, Adam hides when the Lord calls: *"Adam, where are you?"* We, like Adam often hide on Sunday mornings in our beds, in the supermarkets, at the seaside; we hide at prayer time in the Cinema, in the garden, cleaning, in any distraction which can take our mind off the fact that we are not with God but choose to separate ourselves and be absent and deaf to his call.

Our God is so merciful that He never gives up on people: He invites and calls us by our name

in so many ways. We can take the first step, the crucial and most important step of turning up. We can turn up to church to celebrate the Feast with Him, we can turn up to prayer time and to whatever place He asks us to go -- to the home of the poor, the sick and the lonely. He will do the rest and work the miracles.

Martha, Mary, and Lazarus

DIARY OF PILGRIM

Wednesday, 7th June

If I believed in purgatory (which I don't) I think airports come close to the image. Souls coming and going, carrying their baggage, waiting and hoping for a better state of being somewhere else...

The final checks completed, the aeroplane takes off to another place and time, two hours ahead. After a short while, we seem not to be moving in the air but we are being moved all the same at some considerable pace; rather like life in the Holy Spirit. The clouds disappear as we leave Manchester and the beautiful patchwork of fields open up below like Joseph's coat of many colours or a court jesters costume displaying the truth of God's abundant creative power and mocking the insanity of war on His sovereign soil.

Arriving in Cyprus my phone goes to roaming mode as I switch to my faltering spoken Greek. The taxi driver is quite silent which, whilst strangely surprising, is also a relief.

I have a most beautiful room overlooking the harbour, the serenity broken incrementally by the increasing noise from families in cafés, rather like refreshments after the Holy Liturgy.

Off to St Lazarus church to pray for the faithful. Prayer in a holy place intensifies the memory and promotes good thoughts. Meanwhile two Russian ladies with heads respectfully covered seek a blessing from me which the unworthy one duly gives. We exchange icon cards. The saints like to be shared amongst the faithful, it seems!



Thursday, 8th June

A day of rest and adjustment. Adjusting to the heat of a Mediterranean country takes an Englishman by surprise. It is 25 °C first thing in the morning without air conditioning (it was faulty, now corrected).

Acclimatisation is not just about the weather, it is about culture and faith too. Our colder climate often means the British are more reserved: we need more outer clothing, live indoors and thus become less sociable. We need to become acclimated to God too.

I feel better in a hot climate. Perspiring toxins as one adjusts brings a certain sense of well-being.

So that's why they have saunas in cold countries!

There is a temptation to eat more on Holidays. Actually holy days often require fasting. Whilst it is difficult to avoid hospitality, the body benefits from restraint and exercise. The Church is a gymnasium.

St. Basil the Great says *"one who truly fasts abstains from anger, rage, malice and vengeance. One who truly fasts abstains from idle talk, empty rhetoric, slander, condemnation, flattery, lying and all manner of spiteful talk."*

The old men sit and drink lots of coffee, the cleaners work so hard in the hotels. Rest and asceticism are found as neighbouring realities.

I say my prayers and visit St Lazarus asking for his intercessions. As I leave the supernatural brightness of the church and go once more into the natural brightness, words of St John of Damascus come to me:

"The Father is the sun, the Son is the light and the Holy Spirit is the heat."

Indeed, amen!

Friday, 9th June

"We have no grandmas (giagiades) in this community; you are the Church." This was my reply to a group of Cypriot students who, when faced with my request for them to build and decorate the Epitaphion for Pascha ten years ago, exclaimed "but, father, our giagias do this in Cyprus."

Meeting Adamos (old stavronian 2011-2015)



today took me back in time to those days at the University Chaplaincy when we had to build a church every week. Time stood still. Now married, with a daughter, we recalled the trials and joys of years past. It is such a pity we no longer have any Cypriot students attending the Church (the exception being at Pascha).

We made our way to the Metropolis where his grace Bishop Nektarios of Kition afforded me more than 30 minutes of his precious time.

The time we offer to others is indeed a grace reflecting the time that God gives to us. We will find when we allow the Lord into our schedule and daily agendas, time is stretched.

We must not think that time belongs to us or even that we can manage time. If we are not interrupted then we are of no use to God or humans. We only have to look in the Gospels to see that our Lord Jesus Christ was continually interrupted in His earthly ministry. Time belongs to God alone.

Metropolitan Philaret writes: "in unforeseen events let us not forget that all are sent by God." When we seek first the kingdom of God, everything falls into place and time (kairos).

I recall trying to persuade some anxious students to come to church during their exams. I said: "Don't worry, God will give you more time, a clear mind and a peaceful spirit for your revision!"

"It worked father, you were right!"
God is good!

Saturday, 10th June (part 1)

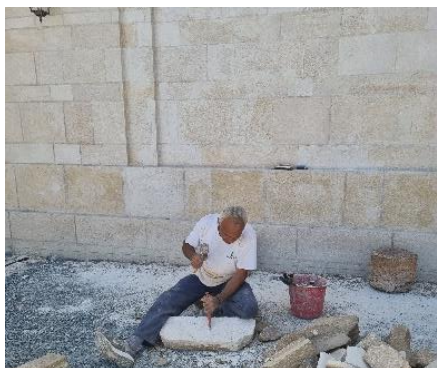
A long, busy, eventful, fruitful and most joyful day. And a long diary entry.

Trying to shake off the nuisance of a cold, induced by my temperamental air conditioning, I suspect, I gathered myself for a tight schedule of visit. Costas Papaconstantinou, old stavronian (2006-2009), arrived at the hotel at 11.00.

He was my guide, chauffeur and auditor of our many visits. Thank you, Costas.

Our planned itinerary of several monasteries had no relation to what took place. Our first visit however was to the Monastery of Mavrovouni and an audience with Geronda Symeon, the translator being monk Porphyrios. A beautiful Monastery is next to the fields where St Spiridon kept his sheep and goats. They are building a new church made complete of stone. A stone cutter

was working whilst we were there. See below



Costas car overheated and we stopped. I could understand it because it was a hot day. I shared some sympathy with the automobile, indeed I was overheating a little also! We made it to the garden centre and the car overheated again. I bought two

olive trees in line with St Amphilochios' 11th commandment "love the trees." We were in Nicosia when the car decided to overheat again. We tried to make it to Costas' parents' house but the car had had enough and so we called Savvas, Costas' father, to come and collect us. We had an amazing meal with Savvas, Irene his mum, and Nelu from Sri Lanca.

Saturday, 10th June (part 2)

After lunch we went to see Presbyteria Maria Anastasiou former choir member and old Stavronian and her husband Pater Ioannis (Ionut) and their four children at their new house in Lakatamia in Nicosia. It was lovely to see them. Refreshments in the garden and we talked of the Chaplaincy days.

From there we went to see Kyriaki's mother Loukia and two grandchildren at Psimolofou village. A vast array of icons in the house was a reminder that faith is still very much alive in Cyprus. We have the large icon of the mother of God of Psimolofou in church. We wanted to stay longer but time was pressing, we were already late for Great Vespers at Kofinou village.....

We managed to take in the last ten minutes of Great Vespers at St Modestos church at Kofinou village with Pater Theophanis. There was a surprise for me. Eftychia, another old stavronian, was there with her two children and her dad to meet us. Then Pater Theophanis decided to take us on a tour of the other churches: St Photini and the old church 7th century of Panayia.

The drive back to Larnaca was full of rich memories





Father Theophanis, Costas and Fr Jonathan in the ancient 7th century church:



Sunday, 11th June

Prince Vladimir/Volodymyr of Kyiv (AD 958-1015) sent his emissaries to tour the world in search of the True Faith. Upon their return they reported to him as follows:

"Then we went to Greece [Constantinople], and the Greeks (including the Emperor himself) led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty."

These words came to mind after the 3 and a half hour service of Matins and the Holy Liturgy from 6.30 to 10 00 a.m. As we are beginning the liturgy at home, everything is finished here. I was able to be in the altar of St Lazarus church in Larna -- a most ancient and beautiful church. I remembered you all at the proskomede and the names, which I had written on Wednesday, were read out by another priest. I lost count of the number of huge baskets of antidoron blessed. I took two prosphora given to me by the Kyriaki's mother and Costas' mother.

A late lunch before the fast. The local cafe cat spotted me as the soft and easy target for food. Looking deep into my eyes and with a pleading meow I gave in to the cat's supplication.

Another surprise in the evening happened when I received a text from my spiritual son Ramy, who was also in Larnaca. We went for a good walk and celebrated his forthcoming graduation with a glass of white wine.



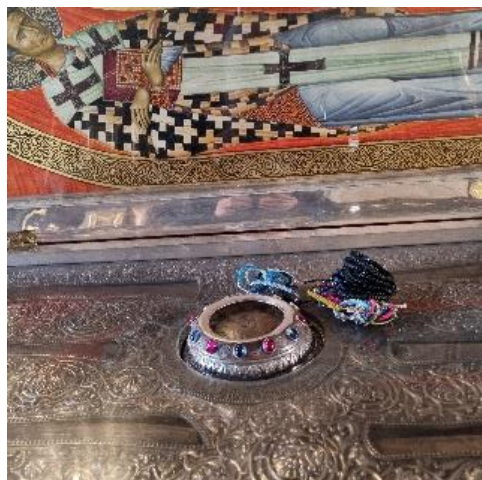
A blessed day of prayer and fellowship.
Spot the priest amongst the trees:



Monday, 12th June

A blessed Apostles fast to you all. We are allowed fish wine and oil. God is so gracious!

An Icon shop near the church of St Lazarus



had some komboskini and holy bracelets in the window. In the morning I bought some to give to

our children. I ordered a small icon print on wood of St. Amphilochius of Patmos. Maria the Iconographer and shop keeper said she would have it ready for tomorrow afternoon. Some things happen very quickly in Cyprus!

I took the bracelets and komboskini and placed them on the Holy relics of St Lazarus for blessing to give to our children at church.

Wherever we go in accordance with Saint Amphilochius' instructions we should buy a tree in memory of a loved one, as a gift to others, as an act of contrition for our sins and to bear the fruit of goodness.

The prophet Nehemiah has a recurring theme in his book in the Old Testament: *"Remember me O my God for good."* It is the prayer of a pilgrim in this life who, whilst knowing his sins, asks God to remember the good deeds he has done through following His commandments:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.

The choir of the saints has found the fountain of life and the door of Paradise.

May I also find the way through repentance, the sheep that was lost am I, call me up to You, O Savior, and save me." (Evlogitaria, Saturday of Souls)

Tuesday, 13th June (part 1, "The cloud")

"Every cloud has a silver lining!"
(English proverb attributed to John Milton)

The cloud



On line apps are a world and age away from my simple technology of pen and paper. Having to obtain my boarding pass on line for returning to UK has proved a testing time this morning. The reception could not help me so they suggested I took a taxi to the airport. There was no TUI desk there, I went to Swiss Air, they said "you have to download the app" but didn't show me how and the information desk didn't think I needed to download it! The phone call I made to the travel agent gave a series of options, none of which I wanted. No TUI representatives at the hotel.

In the end I had reached a point of frustration with my own incompetence and so I called my secretary and spiritual son Dmitry.

In a few minutes he had diffused my panic and solved the problem.

Yet my concern remains for the ever advancing voracious monster of Artificial Intelligence consuming reality and feigning the image of God.

One of our great saints, St Kosmas Aitolos spoke words of prophecy. He predicted many things before his martyrdom in 1779, some which have come to pass, others yet to be fulfilled.

"the time will come when people will speak from one far place to another, for example, from Constantinople to Russia as though they were in adjoining rooms."

"you will see in the plain a carriage without horses which will run faster than rabbits."

"you will see people flying in the sky like blackbirds and hurling fire on the earth."

Lord have mercy

Tuesday, 13th June (part 2, "The Silver Lining")

After every trial comes a blessing. I went to collect the icon of St Amphilochios. Ioanna had it ready and gave it as a gift. She was so pleased I had introduced her to this saint who she didn't know that she offered to paint an icon for our Parish. Dimitri from church kindly translated my thank you letter. I bought some more komboskini and crosses and blessed them on the relics of St Lazarus. As I was praying with my hand on the relics for some of our people, I felt a surge of energy through my fingers and joy.

As it was my last full day, I went to my favourite cafe and had prawns with chips and a

glass of local white wine. No Octopus! Sophia (I named her) the cat spotted me (ah, here is the clerical guy), sat at my feet pleading once more for the prawns tail ends. Yet again I gave in to her petition.

I have so many gifts that I needed to distribute some of them, otherwise my suitcase would be too heavy.

I was given a rose cordial and some basil from my visit to Nicosia. Together with an icon of the Mother of God of Patmos I gave them to the daughter of a priest Pater Makarios who fell asleep in the Lord in 2019.



As I was about to leave the church I saw the Russian lady who I met on the first day in church. We sang some hymns together in Russian and Greek..... others started quite spontaneously joining in with us.

I shared the last of my icon cards, St Dimitrios, to a lady whose son just happened to be called... You guessed it!

Wednesday, 14th June (part 1)

(Traveling light: Luke 22:35)

"Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"

"Nothing," they answered."

The packing is almost completed. One can just imagine what it would be like for Britain's largest family with 22 children. Of course, they are from Morecambe. I recall years ago, when Pilgrimage

to Orthodoxy met with his Beatitude Ignatios (of thrice blessed memory) in Paris, I took a small case for the weekend. On the coach to meet with his Beatitude from the hotel I asked one of our brethren where was his case, he pulled out a tooth brush from his top pocket with the words: "Here it is!" Some of you know him. He now has the longest beard in the Archdiocese!

Once again I find myself in that waiting period but making the most, quietly, of the time here amongst new friends.

The reception staff, one Cypriot one Romanian, last evening talked with me about monasteries in Cyprus and Romania. It was a joyful conversation. They said "why don't you come and live here in Cyprus, father?" I replied with a wry smile "I don't think my Archbishop or my people would like it!"

Such are the vagaries of the English language that a word can have more than one meaning which can be confusing but sometimes revealing!

It is important not only that we travel light, but perhaps more importantly that we travel with the Light of Christ, bringing it to all He has given us to meet.

Be a traveling light!

Wednesday, 14th June (part 2, "Airport")

The taxi driver was surprised to learn that I had never been to Mount Athos. He used his komboli prayer beads with great alacrity as he drove me to the airport. Whether out of faith or stress I cannot say. I gave him a tip and he kissed my hand. Again, I am not sure if these two events were concomitant.

I have passed through the checks and security. Indeed one kind lady official seeing me with my rasson (cassock) ushered me into the fast priority lane. The irony is that my flight is delayed by more than one hour. Nevertheless, it was considerate of her and I am not sure if the same level of respect would be offered in Manchester.

Passing through the shops I saw some traditional Cypriot crafts including icons and "ancient" vases. My curiosity was aroused when I saw some loaves of bread. I couldn't resist picking one up to discover that it was made of pottery / ceramics!

Recognising the fake from the real, the false from the true is a matter of discernment and one which we should seek, especially in spiritual

matters since it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Thursday, 15th June ("Reflection")

Glory to God through your prayers I have returned home.

The title of my diary was set really by one of our parishioners when, before I left, he wished me a "blessed pilgrimage." At first I thought this a little odd, a good holiday, yes, which means holy day, but pilgrimage? It is not as though I was going to Jerusalem (well, not until October). I understand the spiritual element of the word, but looking up the Latin origin "peregrinus" it means "a foreigner." The Romanian word is the same for pilgrim.

In the book of Leviticus we read:

"When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Our Lord, His most holy Mother and Joseph were also foreigners in Egypt when Christ was a child. Our Lord met with the Samaritan woman, the Syrian phoenician woman and commended the one grateful leper of the ten who were healed, "has no one returned to thank God except this foreigner?"

Our Lord Jesus Christ said "love your neighbour as yourself", echoing the words of the Old testament law, and when asked "who is my neighbour?", he used the example of a Samaritan, a foreigner.

"And they shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the

south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.” (Luke 13:29)

There are no boundaries in God's kingdom and no foreigners.

Panos Georgopoulos wrote: *“Wow, father, Presbyteria Maria, Father Ionut, Costas, Eftychia, Adamos, all at Lancaster around my time! Fantastic memories with them in the presence of God at our Holy Cross Parish!*

Our extended family of the Holy and Life Giving Cross, past, present and those yet to come are not separated by time, by place, or by their falling asleep, we are all one in Christ.”

“For in Him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28)

The cross is my passport, the resurrection is my visa, and God's love is my currency.

*Love and prayers
Ev Χριστώ
Fr. Jonathan*

PARISH NEWS

Dear Friends in Christ,

God bless this week -- may you receive many blessings from God.

It was lovely to see so many people in Church on Sunday 25 June. A big thank you to all who made the post Liturgy activities possible -- to those who prepared Sunday School, to those who prepared food, to those who washed up and cleaned the Church, to the servers and chanters (young and older!).

How beautiful it is to see so many young families now. We still have room for growth of course and for you to tell your friends about our loving fellowship in Christ within the Kingdom of God.

I attach the group photo for you to view-- I think one feels a genuine joy from this photo, not fake smiles! Glory to God. I tried to count the number of people and every time I get a different number! As someone once said “God doesn't count numbers He looks at hearts.” May our hearts be warmed with the Love of God.



We are so very grateful to those who remember us in their prayers and show their love as generous benefactors of our Parish. We would like to thank the parishioners for the kind and generous gifts of wine and candles for the Church. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ give the reward!

On July 2nd, we had the Holy Chrismation of Marina and Helen-Marie. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ keep them under His protection!



200TH EDITION GREETINGS

About The Simplicity And Humility Of Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy is something extremely simple!... I was raised in Orthodoxy from a young age, but I love those who are converted to Orthodoxy!... This is how I imagined Orthodoxy. I always liked the Celtic Christianity which is much more Orthodox than anybody could imagine!... Pray in the name of the Lord, for the British Saints to protect you!...

*Pr Bogdan Georgescu,
Blejo, Romania*

Hieromonk Chrysostom, Father Jonathan and Fr Bogdan. Photos from the presentation of the book "Fountains in the Desert" in Greece



There are two ways to live your life. You can either walk, blind amongst blind, or you can walk with your eyes open. Whilst the former is easy, comfortable and comforting, the latter is ruthless. Ruthless but inevitable, once you have had a sneak peak of what the light has to reveal around you. After all, how can one lead a life in the knowledge of what could be achieved, what can be experienced and what can be seen, and nevertheless make a conscious choice to keep their eyes shut? Life is an uphill trek. A constant and ever demanding struggle facing one's very existence, and the futility of it all. Who am I? Where do I come from? Where do I want to go? This ruthless, inescapable but also bountiful quest we call mortal life is what will define us at the end. It is not simply the choices we make, but mainly the risks we take that end up writing the résumé of our short time on this rock, the third one from the Sun as we approach it from the stars. What have I done to deserve this? What have I achieved worth remembering? These questions agonizingly occupy every corner of our mind, every waking hour, every day of our life. What do I stand for? What do I believe in? The latter is a tough one. Do you believe in others? Do you believe in Love? Do you believe in God? WHY? What have you seen? What proof have you got? Just like Thomas, we consume ourselves in the search for proof. We consider ourselves smart, special even. Why do we then choose to walk blind, amongst the blind?

Alas, we are creatures of comfort. Although capable of the greatest heights, we do sometimes choose to confine ourselves at base camp. Do we do it out of fear? Insecurity, perhaps? Is it a matter of convenience? What is it? Quernmore road is

hardly Golgotha, although we do have its name-sake here in Lancaster too. Climbing Quernmore road for the first time on a Sunday morning in rainy Lancaster in 2001 was eventful. Leaving aside the fact that I did get lost on the way (nothing unusual for me), the actual reason for me electing to do so was, to say the least, less than clear to me at the time. Was it wishful thinking that what awaited at the top was the real deal? A deal I had lost hope on, or better put, had been obscured by a figurative curtain of rage, pride and disappointment? Was it curiosity? Was it a mirage of what my mind had created?

My thoughts were abruptly interrupted. I am at the top of the hill. "This smells AMAZING". It had been a few years since I smelled incense last. The internal compass, this powerful magnet that just pulls you, either you like it or not, was taking over. I was a passenger now. Finding myself facing a tiny back room up some unassuming stairs, I remember marvelling at the sound or Katya's singing, and a male voice responding with "Chanting, voicing, shouting and saying the Triumphant Hymn". Familiar, yet strange. Daunting,



yet so welcoming. I do not remember much after this. Climbing the stairs, I found myself standing by the door and watching, almost mechanically at a Holy Liturgy I have observed but also actively participated so many times before. Only that all these times were in the past, in another country, in another language, in a different life and Universe, it felt. I remember thinking to myself, this is different. This cannot be happening. Why was it not like this before? Why did I not feel like this the countless times I witnessed, participated and helped carry out the same procedures in the past? Why now? This was not an eye opener. My eyes were always open to this. After all, the light had been revealed to me before, so I had no choice but

pay attention. This was rather a moment, rare and raw as they come. A moment you realize that you are home. THIS is where you need to be. This is what was missing. It was its absence that brought the rage, the pride and the disappointment. Forget about the past. Time to look towards the future. Take a moment. Breathe it all in. Enjoy.

I asked Vera Nina if she wanted to join me, next weekend she travelled up to Lancaster to see me from London. She did want to. Since that morning I/we climbed Quernmore road many times. No matter how many other places we saw, lived or visited, this tiny room up these unassuming stairs at the back of Lancaster Royal Grammar School remains my/our happy place. The people



we met became our family away from our physical ones in Greece and Germany. Some left. Others fell asleep in the Lord. New ones came. The



family in Christ grew. The small room was replaced by a larger one in the University's chaplaincy centre. We moved away from Lancaster for work, but the aforementioned compass, this magnet was simply too powerful. We had to come back. We started our own family. The chaplaincy centre was replaced by an Anglican church in Morecambe. Our children serve and sing nowadays. We are still moved by this voice we came to know as Fr Jonathan's: "Chanting, voicing, shouting and saying the Triumphal Hymn". Our eyes still well up sometimes when the feelings overwhelm us. We do not mind. We are home...

Konstantinos Arfanis

At the Chaplaincy centre of Lancaster University



At the Church of St Martin of Tours





Panos & Eleanna's wedding (2015)



Dear father,

Your blessings. Here is my contribution to the special issue of the "Stavronian Bulletin".

Thank you very much dear father.

Kissing your right hand,

Nikolaos



Fr Jonathan with Panos, Eleanna, & tweens (2017)



Here are some nostalgic photos from Lancaster Easter of 2009 😊

Costas Papaconstaninou



Easter 2010





SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS

“The garden, plants, flowers, trees, the countryside, a walk in the open air -- all these things tear a person away from a state of inactivity and awake other interests. They act like medicines. To occupy oneself with arts, with music and so on is very beneficial. The thing that I place on top of the list however, is interest in the Church, in reading Holy Scripture and attending services. As you study the words of God you are cured without being aware of it.”

(St Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia, “Wounded by Love”)

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Jul. 6: *Constantin, Soultana*

Jul. 9: *Metropolitan Methodios Fougias*

Jul. 23: *Christina*

MEMORY ETERNAL!

Please send us the names of your departed loved ones and date of their departure in order for them to be remembered.

DONATIONS

If you would like to make a donation, please use the following details:

Name: The Orthodox Church of Holy Cross

Bank: Lloyds Bank Plc

Sort Code: 30-96-26

Account Number: 80662168

For international transfers:

IBAN: GB23LOYD30962680662168

BIC/SWIFT: LOYDGB21446

Post code: LA1 4XJ

City: Lancaster

Country: United Kingdom

MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st July: Cosmas and Damian, the Holy and Wonderworking Unmercenaries

2nd July: St. John Maximovitch, Bishop of Shanghai & Archbishop of San Francisco (✚ 1966); St. Juvenal, Protomartyr of America and Alaska (✚ 1796)

3rd July: St Germanus, Bishop of the Isle of Man and Enlightener of Peel (✚ 474)

4th July: St. Andrew of Crete, author of the Great Canon

7th July: Great-martyr Kyriake

11th July: Great Martyr Euphemia the All-Praised; St. Olga, equal to the Apostles, Princess of Kiev

13th July: Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Gabriel

15th July: Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Great Prince Vladimir, in Baptism Basil, Enlightener of the Russian Land

17th July: Great-Martyr Marina of Antioch and Child-Martyr Prince Kenelm

20th July: Holy Glorious Prophet Elijah
25th July: Dormition of righteous Anna, mother
of the Most Holy Theotokos
26th July: Holy Martyr Paraskeve
27th July: Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon

31st July: St Joseph of Arimathea

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 July

Sat. 1 st	15:45	Memorials (please bring Kolliva)
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 2 nd	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Sat. 8 th	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	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	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 23 rd	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Sat. 29 th	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 30 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy, followed by Sunday School and Parish Meal

“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](#).

