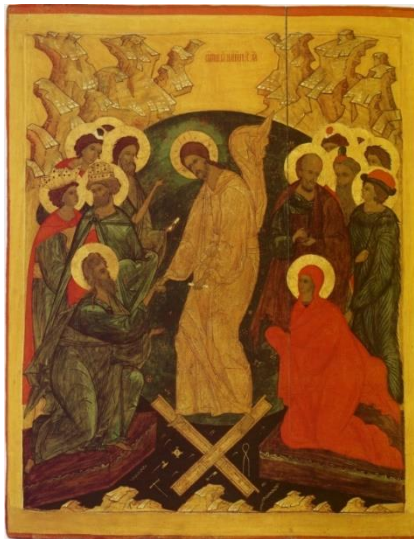


**The Orthodox Parish
of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
Lancaster, UK**

The Stavronian

Monthly magazine and newsletter published by the Holy Cross Synodia



*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

THE DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

In this month of August we celebrate the “Summer Pascha” or the Pascha and Dormition of the Theotokos. After supporting the nascent Church witnessing to the Ascension of her Lord and living in the home of the Beloved disciple John, the angel Gabriel came to tell her of her repose which took place three days later. The apostles whose missionary activity had taken them throughout the world were drawn to Jerusalem to say their goodbyes, all except Thomas who was characteristically three days late and therefore he is not featured in the Icon at the funeral bier. Mary, according to her wish was buried in Gethsemane and Thomas asked the apostles that he might see the grave so that he too might pay his respects. When they took him to the place where she had been buried, her body had gone leaving a sweet fragrance. Christ had taken her body to Himself in Heaven so that his mother’s body may not see corruption and so reunite her body to her soul as a foretaste of the general resurrection.

As we sing in the Exapostilarion of the Paraklesis:

*O You Apostles from far off,
Being gathered together
In the village of Gethsemane,
Lay my body in burial,
And You, my Son, and my God,
Receive now my spirit from me.*

Mary fell asleep as all humans do, but her soul was received by Christ upon her Dormition and her body was resurrected on the third day after her repose, passing beyond death and judgement and lives in the age which is to come. This then is an inspiration and exemplar of the hope that we poor sinners have in our own resurrection, to share in that same glory in that closer presence of Christ. As we await this, we have the reassurance that we have access to her who bore God the Word as our constant intercessor.

*You are the sweetness of Angels,
The gladness of the afflicted ones,
A protection of all Christians,
O Virgin Mother of our Lord;*

*Grant me now help and save me
From the eternal torments.*

*I have you as Mediator
Before God who loves mankind;
May He not question my action
Before the hosts of the Angels,
I ask of you, O Virgin,
Hasten now quickly to my aid.*

Just as the apostles were called to the side of the Theotokos in her repose -- so we, who are the fruit of the same apostles’ word, are called to view her passing, we are called to this same scene in order to bring us hope and to remind us of our own resurrection. Likewise, at Holy Cross in 2023 we have disciples from all over the world, from England, Syria, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Serbia, Germany, Canada, Panama who are called to witness this falling asleep. The human agent in God’s wonderful salvation plan is called home. The one who said, “Be it unto me according to your word” the one who said “yes” to God has her eternal reward. That unique co-operation between the Maker of heaven and earth and his chosen creature in the Annunciation is completely fulfilled in this feast. In a similar manner God invites us to receive Him that His Word may abide in us -- so that our “yes” to God may lead to our own resurrection.

True discipleship requires sacrifice. God acts in cooperation with the human soul as with the Blessed Virgin so with all those who want to be perfected. To save the unwilling would be compulsion and imposition but to save those who desire the Kingdom, is grace. The law came through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ as the apostle John reminds us in his prologue of his Gospel. Eternal Life depends on that strong desire to see, be near and follow Christ. What will save us from death? Only He, who is the Resurrection and the Life.

In the Orthodox Church we do not speak of death but of falling asleep, of being at rest, of reposing in the Lord, that is why we say with such conviction at the Anastasis “Christ is Risen!” why we can rejoice in this holy event that “Mary, is Risen” and why we proclaim in faith “We are risen”.

In 2007, I took the funeral of a little boy that I had baptised two years before. Alex had a

distressed birth which resulted in a lack of Oxygen to his brain. I was called to baptise him at birth in the Victoria Hospital in Blackpool. He was a little soldier of Christ and suffered cheerfully having to go to the Childrens Hospice in Chorley often. At his funeral the little chapel was packed, only his parents were Orthodox but without exception all held candles and came to give the last kiss to the little one. After the service so many people expressed similar sentiments about the funeral -- how filled with joy, light and faith it was. One woman said to my server: "I've been to many funerals but this one was amazing, it was so beautiful." Alex in his short life touched the lives of many people, not just in Lancashire but his God parents in Khazakstan and Siberia from Cyprus to the United States and Canada. Christ who is the Resurrection has taken this little one to Himself. May his memory be eternal!

Of all disciples, Mary the Mother of God remains the archetype of faithfulness, for it is not just in her bearing of the Word of God that she is blessed but in her following of her Son even to the Cross. In the wedding at Cana the blessed Mother points to her Son when she says to the servants: "Whatever He says to you, do it." At the cross Our Lord speaks to his beloved disciple and symbolically all beloved disciples when he says "Behold your mother." She is our mother and the mother of the Church.

This holy tradition of the Dormition of the Mother of God is the proclamation of the early Fathers and wholly consistent with what the Apostle St. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians:

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has now become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. But each one in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." Even so come Lord Jesus. (1 Cor; 15:20&23)

In the Most Holy Mother's glorious departing we rejoice in the blessed communion of saints:

"Christ and His mother dear and all the saints are here, and where they are is heaven and what they touch, divine."

Fr Jonathan

POEM CORNER

Dear Friends and spiritual children in Christ, I was praying for you and I offer three of my poor poems in humility for your strengthening and for the August Stavronian! Two of them are directly related to the Feast of the Transfiguration on the 6th of August. The first is for spiritual sons and daughters.

But first some words from St Porphyrios:

"Whoever wants to become a Christian must first become a poet. That's what it is! You must suffer. You must love and suffer -- suffer for the one you love. Love makes effort for the loved one. She runs all through the night; she stays awake; she stains her feet with blood in order to meet her beloved. She makes sacrifices and disregards all impediments, threats, and difficulties for the sake of the loved one. Love towards Christ is something even higher, infinitely higher.

And when we say 'love', we don't mean the virtues that we will acquire, but the heart that is pervaded by love towards Christ and others. We need to turn everything in this direction. Do we see a mother with her child in her arms and bending to give the child a kiss, her heart overflowing with emotion? Do we notice how her face lights up as she holds her little angel? These things do not escape a person with love of God. He sees them and is impressed by them and he says, 'If only I had those emotions towards my God, towards my Holy Lady and our saints!' Look, that's how we must love Christ our God. You desire it, you want it, and with the grace of God you acquire it." (Saint Porphyrios, "Wounded by love")

The Kite

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

Look upward to the sky
And allow your wings to fly
Upon the glorious breath of God
In the sunrise of your youth.
Soar swiftly with an eagle's strength,
Measure the height, breadth, depth and length.
Reach heavenward, dear son by the sacramental

strings on earth,
Hold firm to the lifeline and anchor of new birth.
Let the Holy Spirit lift you high
And allow your wings to fly
Upon the glorious breath of God
In the sunrise of your youth.

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Amma Syncretica said, "In the beginning there are a great many battles and a good deal of suffering for those who are advancing towards God and, afterwards, ineffable joy. It is like those who wish to light a fire. At first they are choked with smoke and cry, until they obtain what they seek. As it is written, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:24); so we also must kindle the divine fire in ourselves through tears and hard work."

The Transfiguration

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them." (Mark 9:2)

Possess your soul with patience,
Let the seasons bear their own time.

Lighten your heart with love,
For passion beats to an uncertain pulse.

Provide your mind with peace
Since idle imagination is a deadly weapon.

Still your tongue with silence
So that you may allow the Word to speak to you.

Open your hands to offerings
In order to give generously and to receive gracefully.

Guard your eyes with goodness
To become a pupil of Light.

Place your feet in poverty.
That you may walk in the way of the saints.

Feed your stomach with friendship
So that you may nourish and sustain the lonely.

Breathe into your nostrils the air of beauty
For the Holy Spirit gives life to the canvass of creation.

Humble your ears to holiness
That you may become deaf to the whispers of pride.

Wash your skin with wisdom
That you may be clean from the accretions of the world.

Commend your life to Christ
So that you may be transfigured into His likeness.

"My soul, seek the Only One... My soul, you have no part with the earth; for you are from heaven. You are the image of God: seek your First Image. For like strives after like. Each object finds its rest in its centre and element -- fish in water, fire in its upward movement, -- everything strives to its centre. My soul, you are an immaterial spirit, immortal... In Him alone you will find your rest." (St. Tikhon of Voronezh)

Changed

"As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered and His robe became white and glistening." (Luke 9:29)

They ascended Tabor's mountain heights, to contemplate and pray,

But Peter James and John, the friends, had a revelation on that day.

Blazing glory in the flesh of Christ, they saw the uncreated Light

Which was hidden for a season, now clear within their sight.

Blinding, glistening, ultra- white was the appearance of His face,

The splendour of the Godhead could be seen within our race.

Moses and Elijah from of old appeared full
bright within the cloud,

Peter said "Let's build three booths, if we are al-
lowed!?"

He was silenced by the Father's voice and filled
with holy fear.

The friends shine in glory now like Christ and
with Him appear

In heaven: the blessed communion is transferred
to us on earth

To help us scale the heights of Tabor and to aid
our spiritual birth.

May we indeed acquire the Spirit and grow into
the likeness of the Son.

May we be changed to shine like Him, and them,
when our earthly course is run.

Abba Pachomius said,

*"A sinner like me does not ask God that he will
see visions, for that is against His will and wrong.
Hear all the same about a great miracle: if you
see a man pure and humble, that is a great vision;
for what is greater than such a vision, to see the
invisible God in His temple, a visible man?"*

With love and prayers

Ev Χριστώ

Fr. Jonathan

ACCOUNT OF ST. PORPHYRIOS' ARRIVAL

A Professor Emeritus of Athens Medical School, who out of obedience wishes to remain unnamed, was a spiritual child of Saint Porphyrios, along with his family. The obedient physician had been one of the Saint's personal doctors from 1970 until 1991, when the Saint (known as Pappoulis affectionately amidst his spiritual children) fell asleep in the Lord.

During the Saint's later years the physician



had been frequently sampling blood from him for necessary laboratory examinations -- he would keep on various occasions leftovers of blood from those laboratory tests in test tubes well before the Saint's dormition. He would later donate many of those test tubes to Orthodox Temples over the world.

At his behest, on a home visit such a test tube with a tiny microhematocrit blood clot was donated to The Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross Parish -- at the moment Fr. Jonathan's phone rang, so that he might be notified and have a short conversation with the donor, he had been miraculously commemorating the Saint.

By the account of the self-same Professor St. Porphyrios had left word with his subordinates at

the Monastery, that his remains upon exhumation be re-interred in a far off place in the woods, so that nobody might know where his relics lay. Obedient to his Elder the Professor Emeritus follows his Elder's lead, and wishes to remain anonymous.

May St. Porphyrios's blessing be with the kind Professor, Fr. Jonathan's Priesthood and with us laity.

AN OCCASION IN THE FR. NICOLAE STEINHARDT'S LIBRARY

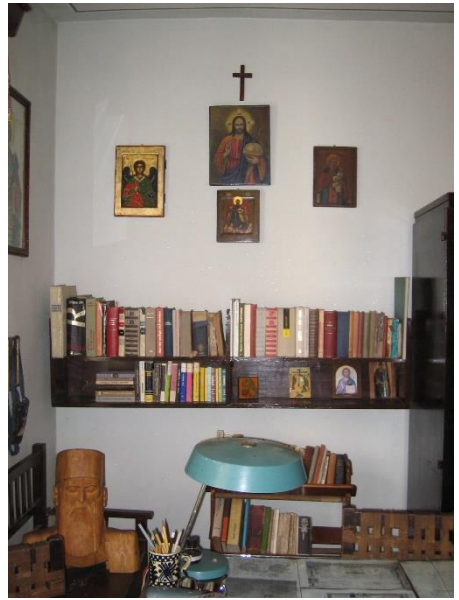
Dear Father,

Do you remember our visit to Rohia in 2002 (or 2004, I do not remember well)?... And the scene in the library?...

I wrote a confession which was appreciated by a lot of friends. I also got a photo inside the library of Nicolae Steinhardt that reminds me of the scene...

«I will tell you a short story!... In 2002 I was visiting, together with Father Jonathan Hemmings from Lancaster (former Anglican, chaplain to the Duke of Westminster, now the representative of the Antiochian Patriarch on the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue) the holy Rohia monastery!... I was at the beginning of the missionary pastoral activity and I was thinking of going permanently to a Romanian parish in England. Among my wishes was that of studying the King James' Version Orthodox Bible, also called the English Orthodox Bible...

We were walking through Nicu Steinhardt's huge library and Father Jonathan was at one end of the corridor between two shelves, I was at the other. When I hear Father Jonathan calling me from the other side and with a King James edition



raised in his hands as at the liturgical exit with the Evangelist during the Liturgy, he says in a harsh voice: "Now, Father Bogdan, you can stay here, you do not need to travel to England for King James!..." I paused when I realized that a book I wanted to look for in England was in Nicu Steinhardt's library. The monk from Rohia... This was the monk Nicolae Steinhardt, he had the most important books of mankind in his library!... 🙏»

Do you remember?!... You can use this for the next edition of Stavronian...

Yours in Christ, Fr Bogdan

Dear Father,

I also remember the fragrance of myron when we left the studio of Fr Steinhardt.

Εν Χριστώ, Fr. Jonathan

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Aug. 14: *Paulina*
 Aug. 26: *Evangelos*
 Aug. 29: *Angelos*

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

6th Aug: The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

13th Aug: St. Tikhon, Bishop of Voronezh, Wonderworker of Zadonsk and All Russia

15th Aug: The Dormition of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos

16th Aug: St. Gerasimus, Wonderworker of Cephalonia

20th Aug: St. Oswin, King and Martyr († 651)

22nd Aug: St. Sigfrid, Abbot of Wearmouth († 688)

24th Aug: St. Cosmas of Aetolia, Equal-to-the-Apostles

27th Aug: Martyr Phanourios

28th Aug: St Moses the Black

29th Aug: Beheading of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

31st Aug: The Placing of the Cincture of the Most Holy Theotokos in the Church of Chalkopratea. St. Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne († 651).

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 August

Fri. 4th	18:30	The Little Paraklesis
Sat. 5th	16:00	Great Vespers*
Sun. 6th	09:45	Divine Liturgy of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ . Please bring grapes, apples and fruits to be blessed in Church
Fri. 11th	18:30	The Little Paraklesis
Sat. 12th	16:00	Great Vespers*
Sun. 13th	09:45	Divine Liturgy. The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary (by anticipation)
Sat. 19th	16:00	Great Vespers*
Sun. 20th	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom: 11 th Sunday after Pentecost
Sat. 26th		<i>No services</i>
Sun. 27th	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom: 12 th Sunday after Pentecost

*Note. Memorials are offered at 15.45 on most Saturdays before Great Vespers. If you wish to commemorate your reposed loved ones please contact Fr Jonathan beforehand.

“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”
-- St. George Karslides –



For further information please contact:

Parish priest: Father Jonathan Hemmings
67 Sibsey Str., Fairfield, Lancaster, LA1 5DQ
Tel: 07951 722 877
Email: frjah@yahoo.co.uk

The Orthodox Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross:
www.orthodox-lancaster.org.uk
The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of
the British Isles and Ireland: www.antiochian-orthodox.com

Orthodox online liturgical guide: www.antiochian.org/liturgicday

The following blogs of Old Stavronians are available in English at orthodoxcityhermit.com

