

**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 MISERY OF INGRATITUDE

I have days when nothing goes right. From the moment I wake up late and don't have time to say my prayers. I go to work unwillingly. I feel dissatisfied with my employer who is always late and feel the day is wasted. The shopkeeper is rude when I ask for help and I have misplaced my keys. My husband forgot the laundry was out and it has rained all day and nobody has cooked dinner by the time I arrive back to a messy home. I have many messages on my phone with pressing matters and I feel my grumpiness and dissatisfaction is increasing. This is all on a background of war in Europe, wildfires across the world, famine in Africa and a miserable rainy summer in Britain. I am displeased with everybody around, the world and myself. The more you dwell on sadness and misery, the more miserable you become. On a microscale, a day like this is a sinful, wasted day, because, in my grumpiness, I have failed to notice all the things which were a gift for me: the gift of life itself, the gentle breeze, the smiling stranger, my daughter's funny story from school, the delicious soup at lunchtime, the geranium outside my house. For all these and many more I should give thanks and be joyful. These are wonderful gifts in themselves to be savoured, but most of all our joy should reside in the fact they are a gift from our Father because He loves us, wants us to be joyful, to come to Him and love Him.

The miserable day I described can easily turn into a whole lifetime of complaints and dissatisfaction. Ingratitude is such an easy sin to fall into. We live in a dissatisfied world -- people having lost sight of their Creator, feel "entitled" to everything and only the best. Like an unseen network of negative thoughts, we are surrounded by complaints more than ever before, as nothing lives up to our expectations. People get divorced because their wife or husband doesn't help enough, "isn't good for them any longer"; we change jobs because the hours are too long and the pay insufficient; our house isn't big enough; the children's school isn't teaching them as well as they deserve, the teacher is picking on them; church is not big enough and father's homily isn't quite what we wanted to hear. We wish we lived in a bigger city and had a more rewarding job and the neighbours' political views were different and more like our own. As to the weather, the least said

the better...The underlying current of all of our complaints is really that we ought to have more, that we deserve better and what God has apportioned us isn't our fair share or not proportional to our efforts and ability. In our pursuit for the ideal job, partner of life, house, school, meal, we miss out on the present gifts, we fail to enjoy them, we do not notice them. St Paisios says: "Sometimes the Devil deceives us and makes us unable to be pleased with anything; however one can celebrate all things in a spiritual manner, with doxology and secure God's constant blessing."

Ingratitude is at the root of Humanity's fall: "Ultimately, in his essence, Satan is an ingrate. And he sinks his venom into the heart of Eden. Satan's sin becomes the sin of all humanity: the sin of ingratitude. Adam and Eve are simply, painfully, ungrateful for what God gave." (Ann Voskamp, One thousand gifts)

Ingratitude goes hand in hand with greed, pride, slothfulness and other sins. Like Adam and Eve, Paradise is not enough for us. We want more than what has been given to us. Like a spoilt child we cannot enjoy the gift we have because of the ideal gift which we haven't received or because we wanted the gift our neighbour has received. We are unhappy with our state in life because pride whispers to us that we deserve better. We feel others around us in our family, at work or in church let us down because we are better than them and should associate with superior people. And we disregard our gifts and do not look after them because we do not appreciate them, we do not view them as an expression of love from our Creator.

Sometimes hard things come our way, heavy burdens to carry, crosses which seem beyond our strength. Loosing children in their infancy, struggling with disability and illness, being separated by war from your entire family, being imprisoned. But if we start from the true premise that God knows what is best, that He will console us, rescue us, bear our pain with us, any cross becomes a blessing. Ingratitude when faced with difficult trials is in fact lack of trust.

Because we fail to perceive that every small thing in our daily life is a gift and not our due, because we haven't given thanks for it, we do not experience the joy which has been gifted to us.

"Happiness can only be achieved by looking inward and learning to enjoy whatever life

has and this requires transforming greed into gratitude." (St John Chrisostom)

Martha and Mary

PILGRIM'S DIARY

Day 1 (Tuesday 22nd August)

The dark grey skies of Manchester belie the future sun 3 hours to the east. We pass through dark days physically and mentally as human beings and often assume "that is how it is." Yet how much more we appreciate the sun when our usual weather is rain, and how much more we appreciate the rain when we have unremitting heat.

The "wings" of the iconostasis were repaired yesterday by two of the faithful. Great! "Ready for take-off!" one of the faithful e-mailed me to say. Me too... as we are called to board the flight. The sun comes out as we climb the steps into the aeroplane. I pray the Jesus prayer for all the passengers and crew 33 rows x6 plus pilot, copilot and 4 crew... you do the maths. Then I say prayers for all the faithful.

Descending onto *terra firma* one is hit with the wall of heat 34C. It was a great joy to see two other English Orthodox priests fr S. and fr D. as we pass through customs. Fancy that! Three Orthodox priests all bound for Thessaloniki and all three English men, not a Greek priest in sight. God has a sense of humour.



Klio is there to meet me at the airport, a great joy. The years and distance slip away. We drive to the city centre and go for a refreshing Greek Salad at a local Taverna by the sea. My room at the hotel is

rather too spacious and although a siesta beckons (I have been awake since 2.30 this morning) I am not really tired, plus I have a very important appointment with St Dimitrios at 6.00 p.m. Greek time 4.00 p.m. British time.



Church of St Gregory Palamas



His holy relics



St Dimitrios tomb



Agios Dimitrios, pray for us.



St Dimitrios where we sang the supplication



Sometimes one can fit a lot of events into a short space of time. The planned itinerary however has a way of being changed. God has a way of surprising us and altering our plans. The visit to St Dimitrios shrine was full of such delightful God-intervening surprises. Klio and I had been talking about the visit of the ladies choir from Thessaloniki some years ago to Holy Cross for Great week. Lo and behold who should walk into St Dimitrios but Maria the ladies choir director. Klio and I then sang the supplication to St Dimitrios and the apolytikion for Holy Cross and Ti Upermachō for the mother of God. A lady asked me for a blessing who was surprised I was an English Orthodox as she lived in London. Then another lady spoke to me about a certain pilgrimage she was on led by a certain Abouna Justin from Lebanon from whom we learned that he was a student at Balamand of Abouna Samir some years ago.

After our two hours with St Dimitrios we went for a long walk to various churches and bumped into Maria again quite by "coincidence." We met a fr Spyridon who gave us a beautiful icon of the Mother of God. Then we went to the 4th c. St Sophia's Church in the city centre followed by veneration St Gregory Palamas in his church. An amazing coincidence I had said the Jesus prayer for all the passengers!

Later as we were seated at a local fine taverna toasting our Dmitry we learned of Dmitry's success at his PhD. Strange that we had been with St Dimitrios most of the evening. 🙄

C.S. Lewis once wrote:

"A secret Master of the Ceremonies has been at work. There are no "coincidences" when you walk with Jesus."

"Life of the soul is union with God, as life of the body is union with the soul. As the soul was separated from God and died in consequence of the violation of the commandment, so by obedience to the commandment it is again united to God and is quickened. This is why the Lord says in the Gospels, 'The words I speak to you are spirit and life' (Jn. 6:63)." (St Gregory Palamas)

Day 2. Little pilgrimage: Sharing almonds

Why are there so many cafes next to churches?

- a) priests like coffee
- b) to attract business
- c) a place to chat after the services

Well, maybe all of the above. The liturgy in the world is often conducted over food and drink. This is where friends make social discourse and where social discourse makes friends. We were opposite to St Dimitrios church about to visit the catacombs, outside an icon shop. There we met two priests from Cyprus fr. Andreas and fr. Irenaeus. Fr Andreas with his Presbytera invited us to join them for coffee at a cafe. Our conversation outlasted the coffees as we made connections of places and people we knew. The Orthodox Church is both large and small. One can be sure that you will know someone in common.

After a long joyful conversation we parted friends exchanging contact details. Asked if I was on Viber I shook my head.

After visiting the quite remarkable catacombs of St Dimitrios the intended visit to a clerical tailor did not materialise either metaphorically or literally.

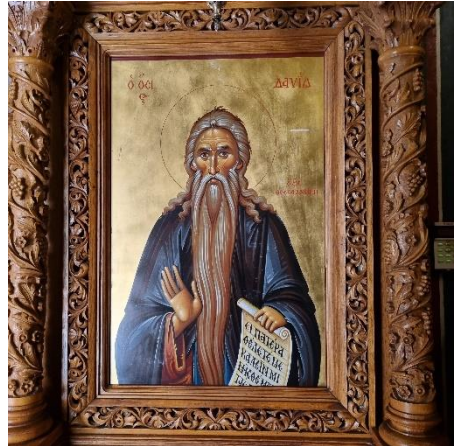
So we visited the monastery church of St Theodora where we venerated the relics of the saint and those of St David the tree dweller of Thessaloniki.

Lunch time is very flexible in Greece, late afternoon seems as good a time as any other. My eremital instinct was beginning to re-emerge so my kind hosts allowed me to take some quiet in my room or as my host said "escape."

"Wishing for a quiet life, St David fled to the

seclusion of an almond tree." (Life of St David the Dendrite)

Fellowship and hesychia are both needed in the Christian life.



Day 3. Thursday: the angelic habit

The drive from Thessaloniki to Halkidiki was furnished by olive trees but to remind us of the fragile nature of our planet there was the faint smell of smoke in the air. As St Paul says in Romans 8: "creation is groaning". Our first visit on the itinerary was the Monastery of St John the Forerunner at Metamorfosi. Although it has a strict typicon, we were allowed to sing a glorious trilogy of apolytikia and Kyries.

We were joined by Baia and Theologos



and four of their ten children... Konstantinos overheard my English tones and introduced me to his wife Marina and mother Gabriela who lives in London. A most interesting exchange of spiritual experiences ensued. Gabriela studied at Lancaster university at the same time as I was studying by Post Graduate certificate of education at St Martin's college now University of Cumbria (Lancaster campus) and having been brought up in the middle east she is looking forward to Dmitry's ordination to the diaconate in September in Arabic. Two priests joined us with their families for monastic hospitality "metrio cafes parakalo" the most delicious cake, loukoumi and much needed water. It was after all 37C.

On to Ormilía monastery where Marta and Alexandra have stayed. We venerated the tomb of the founder Geronda Emilianos. Klio said she

wanted me to meet a nun who spoke better English than me "if that's possible" Klio added with playful wit, "This is Mother P." I was not at all offended or diminished by Klio's words, especially when I learned that mother P. was born and brought up five miles from where I was born.

We were in the company of people from Cyprus who had connections with our parish, a Belgian priest and a Serbian priest whose Metropolitan and Professor respectively sit on the same International Commission as me.

Lunch time beckoned it was 4.00 after all. A wonderful local café near Klio's beach house where we were joined by Nikos.

We made the short journey to Klio's beach house where we met the Romanian family who were staying there. You can't get much closer to the sea! If you rolled over in bed you would be splashing in the gentle waves!

On to St Paisios Monastery where we met friends of Sayedna. We joined the queue to venerate the tomb of St Paisios. A little boy took the blessing from priests in the queue.

The light of joy shone in the eyes of the faithful, reflecting the Light of Christ. Everyone we met today, those wearing the angelic habit and those who were faithful Pilgrims were happy.

God is glorified in his saints.

"God wants us, above all, to be happy and to enjoy inner peace. God is not a tyrant who pesters and intimidates us, but instead he wants us to be free." (St. Paisios)

Queue to venerate tomb of St Paisios





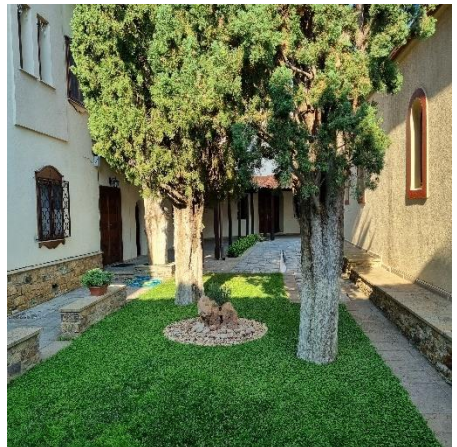
Panorama monastery



St Arsenios Monastery



With Klio, Theologos, and family





Day 4. Washing your face

Monasteries are places of healing and light. The Monastery of St Arsenios in the mountains overlooking the sea is one such place.



N.b. This is as close as I came to Agion Oros in the distance!

Another little miracle enabled us to meet Theologos and Vaiga with children again. We were joined by a priest from Germany Fr Victor with his Presbyteria and children. The usual courtesies were extended to us, loukoumi, coffee and biscuits along with the necessary water! Geronda Theoklitos joined us and he afforded us a great deal of his precious time even though he had many confessions to hear. It was a true blessing to meet him.

God it seems bends time in order for those who seek Him to receive His grace. Time is not really measured in monasteries. Of course there are set times for worship and work but one does not sense time passing. I told Geronda of the mutual ministry we have at our parish and he quoted a greek proverb

“Το 'να χέρι νίβει τ' άλλο και τα δυο το πρόσωπο”

which when translated goes something like:

"The one hand washes the other hand and both wash the face".

I suppose we have similar saying "many hands make light work."

Washing the feet is an act of service and humility, but washing the face brings cleansing and refreshment.

He gave another word:

St Anthimos of Chios: “εκείνο το ‘γιατί κι εκείνο το ‘εγώ’ που έχομεν, αυτά μας απομακρύνουν απο τον Θεό και μας χωρίζουν απο αυτόν” — «this “why” and this “I” which we have, these distance us from God and separate us from Him.”

The proximity of hospitality and holiness is palpable in Orthodox monasteries. Faith, food and fellowship are inseparable.

For some visitors monasteries are places not only of refreshment but of healing where quiet can replenish the soul and regenerate the spirit. It is most important for Orthodox Christians to renew their spiritual batteries. Such peace was abundant at Panorama monastery. Sister S. shared the typicon and structures of monasticism and we glimpsed the evening service before heading back to Thessaloniki.

I think words alone cannot convey the experience of visiting monasteries. For those who truly seek God then they are places where His energies are to be found... in abundance!

"The orthodox monastics are like the lighthouse. The lighthouse has to be always on the rocks by the sea. Do you want them to go and live into the city and be added to the other street lights? They can not become a lantern and be placed into the city's roadside. The orthodox monastic is like a remote lighthouse, that stands high on the rocks, directing the ships of this world with their flashes, and upon the open seas the ships are orientated in order to reach their destination, which is God." (Saint Paisios of Mount Athos from the book: "Spiritual Awakening")

Day 5: returning

Some years ago I learned that numbers are not important. The number of people attending Church is not an accurate indicator of either faith or success; however one measures success? Geronda Theoklitos of St Arsenios monastery confirmed this independently of my thoughts when he said "look after your small flock."

"God looks at the heart not on the outward appearance" as the prophet Samuel said to Jesse, the father of David.

I have passed through security and passport control. The flight is delayed.

From	To	Time	Status
Hamburg	14	Waiting	
Mytilini	04	Final Call	
Rhodes	12	Departed 14:02	
Rome CIA	02	Final Call	
Manchester	23	Delayed 16:00	
Athens	08		
Ikarie	13		
Paris CDG	10		
Athens	12		
Budapest	02		
Frankfurt	14		
Larnaca	21		
Larnaca	19		
Bucharest	24		
Munich	12		

Time to pray. We pray that God will keep us all in His love.

Wherefore, O you who fear the Lord, praise Him in the places where ye now are. Change of place does not affect any drawing nearer unto God, but wherever you may be, God will come to you, if the chambers of your soul be found of such a sort that He can dwell in you and walk in you. (St. Gregory of Nyssa 8)



POEM CORNER

Isaiah 43:19

*¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing,
Now it shall spring forth;
Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert.*

John 7:38

*³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture
has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of
living water.”*

Salvation is offered by God

but it demands a response
from the human soul consisting of
our will, faith and action.
Without the will there is no drive,
Without faith there is no direction,
Without action there is no destination.

To find Living water requires us knowing:
Whose open hand gives this treasure,
What the treasure is and
Where to find it!
We must dig for this gift as water in a dry land.
If our ground is rocky, we must dig in silence
with the sharp adze of patience.
If our ground is hard we must soften it with the
tears of compassion and repentance.
The resistant soil of pride can only be removed
with the spade of humility.

We must not simply remove the weeds which are
the fruits of the passions but we must
excavate them each day with persistence. The
humus of humility is the place for new growth.

Only in this way can we lead in order to serve.
Lead the way to build a viaduct.
Service the soil to construct a conduit.

Dig then with compassion,
Dig with discernment,
Dig with love.
At all times guarding the heart with all diligence,

Then at the time appointed, God will open the
doors of your heart
Forming a channel of grace for others
and a watercourse of refreshing, clear, living
water.

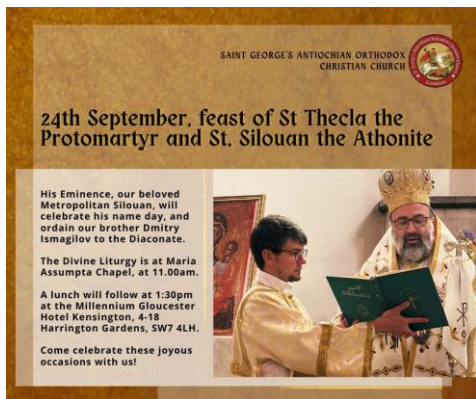
Fr Jonathan

PARISH NEWS

On August 6th, we had the Holy Baptism of John
Cormac. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
keep him under His protection!



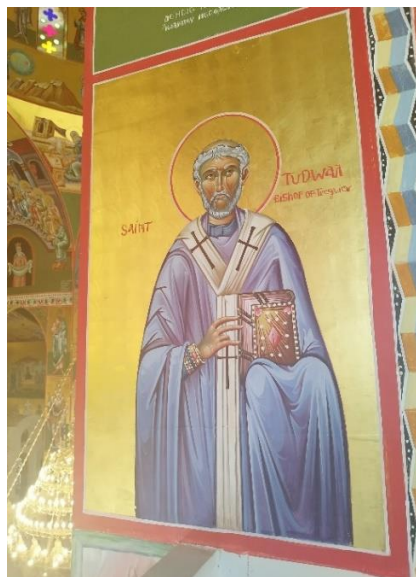




OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Dear Friends in Christ

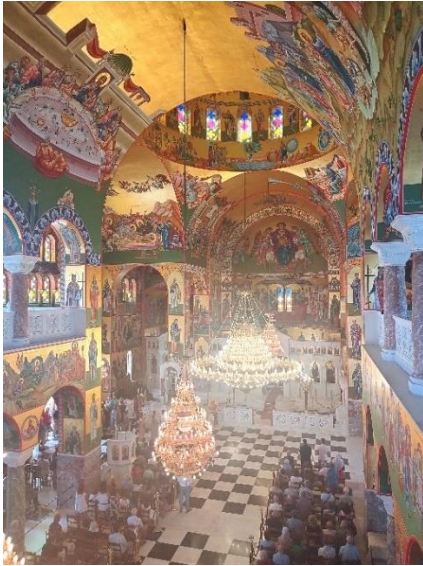
Anastasia Stamatalatou (Old Stavronian) sends her greetings together with those of Mother Gerasimia of Holy Cross Monastery from Kefalonia. Recently it was the Feast of St Gerasimos. Anastasia sent some photos and two of British Saints depicted in the Church of St Gerasimos, St Tudwal of Wales and St Edmund King and Martyr of England.



God willing, Dmitry Ismagilov, our Stavronian, Parish Secretary and my spiritual son is to be ordained **Deacon in London by our Archbishop and Metropolitan, His Eminence Silouan on Sunday 24th September.** Dmitry will serve as Deacon at the Cathedral in London. Sayedna has asked me to be present as his spiritual father for this most special occasion, so there will be no service on this date in Church here in Lancaster / Morecambe.

Your prayers please as Dmitry prepares for ordination.





NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Sept. 1: *Pericles*
Sept. 29: *Georgios*

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 Sept: The Ecclesiastical New Year

8th Sept: **The Nativity of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary**

9th Sept: The Holy & Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna

14th Sept: The Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

17th Sept: Martyr Sophia and her three daughters, Faith (Pistis, Vera), Hope (Elpis, Nadezhda) and Love (Agape, Lyubov)

19th Sept: St. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury (✙ 690)

24th Sept: St. Silouan the Athonite

25th Sept: St. Sergius of Radonezh, Abbot and Wonderworker

26th Sept: The Falling Asleep of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian

28th Sept: St. Lioba of Wimborne, Abbess of Bischofsheim (✙ 782)



Εν Χριστώ
Fr. Jonathan

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 September

Fri. 1st	18:00	Church new Year induction. Day of prayer for the protection of the environment
Sat. 2nd	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 3rd	09:45	Holy Liturgy. Prayer for starting School
Fri. 8th	18:00	Paraklesis to the Mother of God. Nativity of the Theotokos
Sat. 9th	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 10th	09:45	Holy Liturgy
Wed. 13th	19:30	Great Vespers
Sat. 16th	15:45	Memorials
	16:00	Great Vespers
Sun. 17th	09:45	Holy Liturgy
Sat 23rd and Sun 24th: No services at Holy Cross. <i>Ordination of Dmitry Ismagilov to the diaconate on Sunday at Maria Asumpta Church, South Kensington, London</i>		
Sat. 30th	18:30	Great Vespers (<i>note a slightly later starting time and the lack of Memorials, since the Hall is being used</i>)

*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



Top and bottom sketches are created at the Holy Monastery of "The Annunciation of the Theotokos" Chios, Greece, courtesy of Fr Theodosios Dendrinios, Ithaca, Greece.
The sketch of Christ by Photis Kontoglou was scanned from the Orthodox calendar of the *Apostoliki Diakonia* of the Church of Greece.