



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

TO FIND LOVE

St. Cosmas of Aetolia, who toured occupied Greece around 1750 establishing schools, gives us the price of heaven. Starting with perfect love, he says:

“If you want to find perfect love, go sell all your belongings, give them to the poor, go where you find a master and become a slave. Can you do this and be perfect?”

“You say this is too heavy? Then do something else. Don’t sell yourself as a slave. Just sell your belongings and give them all to the poor. Can you do it? Or do you find this too heavy a task?”

“All right, you cannot give away all your belongings. Then give half, or a third, or a fifth. Is even this too heavy? Then give one tenth. Can you do that? Is it still too heavy?”

“How about this. Don’t sell yourself as slave. Don’t give a penny to the poor. Only do this. Don’t take your poor brother’s coat, don’t take his bread, don’t persecute him, don’t eat him alive. If you don’t want to do him any good, at least do him no harm. Just leave him alone. Is this also too heavy?”

“You say you want to be saved. But how? How can we be saved if everything we are called to do is too heavy? We descend and descend until there is no place further down. God is merciful, yes, but he also has an iron rod.”

St. Cosmas of Aetolia

ON SILENCE

When I was twenty years old, I went out for a meal with my future husband to a restaurant. We chatted and laughed throughout the meal. At the table next to ours there was an elderly couple who ate their meal in almost complete silence. I thought at the time how sad it was that they had nothing to say to each other anymore and with the optimism and enthusiasm of youth, I also thought: “This will never happen to us, we shall always have something to say to each other.” Twenty five years later, I can sit through a meal with my husband in almost perfect silence, but now I understand this

is not sad at all. This occasional silence in each other’s company is the fruit of a deep seated understanding, where we know each other so well, very little needs to be said. Just being with each other is restful and peaceful, it is being one.

This oneness in marriage is in fact a miracle, as Fr Akrotirianakis writes: “*It is the grace of God (through the Holy Spirit), which takes what is ordinary (two single people) and makes it extraordinary (a family).*” Through the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit, with God’s blessing, two people are joined together and become one, without either of them uttering a single word. It seems strange to the western mind that there are no vows in the wedding ceremony in the Orthodox Church. The man and woman who come to be joint together in the sacrament of marriage are perfectly silent all the way through. God alone speaks. He blesses.

Similarly, during baptism, the person who is being baptised or their godparents do not say a word, because “*it is time for the Lord to act*” and for man to be silent. Man or woman has signified their consent to God’s miracle by becoming a catechumen (when they speak out their renouncement of Satan and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and king). When the bride and groom turn up at church, they consent to becoming one in marriage. No words are needed after that. Just as the elderly couple dining out together after 40 years of marriage signify their continued love and commitment by their presence alone.

Another final milestone for the Christian in church is his own funeral. We are perforce silent then...

Listening is so much more important than speaking. What can we say to God that He does not already know? God only asks us one question: “*Do you want to be healed?*” (John 5:6) If we answer in the affirmative, there is nothing more we can add. We need to listen and act in obedience. The mercy of God is such that even when we answer No or Maybe or Later, He keeps asking us again and again.

When the Theotokos answered to the Angel Gabriel “*I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done unto me as you have said.*” (Luke 1:38), by her consent she brings healing to the entire world. How few words are needed for our salvation! The words of the Mother of God are only recorded in 2 Gospels and then only on 4 occasions: at the

Annunciation, at the meeting with her cousin Elisabeth (Luke 1:46-55), when Jesus is found in the Temple and at the wedding of Caana. Her words are recorded at key points, but so few words. Her silent, prayerful presence is felt throughout the Gospels. In her last recorded words at Caana, the Theotokos points us to her son and urges obedience: *"Do what He tells you"* (John 2:5)

Saint Joseph the Betrothed, who is such a key figure in the early life of our Lord on earth is completely silent. No words of his are recorded. His presence is so unobtrusive and yet he is always there at the side of the Mother of God to protect her and the infant Jesus.

Joseph and Mary are in complete obedience, always listening to the word of God and following it without hesitation. They treasure the word and dwell on it in the silence of their heart. *"But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart"* (Luke 2:19)

Silence is the beginning of prayer. We need to silence our incessant inner noise in order to make room for God. Getting our whole being to be still in order to listen is no easy task. It cannot be achieved without humility and the grace of God. As St. John the Solitary says: *For God is silence and in silence is He sung by means of that psalmody which is worthy of Him [...] There is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is a silence of the soul, there is a silence of the mind, there is a silence of the spirit."*

If *"Intelligent silence is the mother of prayer"* (St John Climacus), it is also a weapon in our fight against our passions and the evil one: *"Silence is a great power in our unseen warfare and a sure form of gaining victory. Silence is much beloved of him who does not rely on himself but trusts in God alone. It is a guardian of holy prayer and a miraculous helper in the practice of virtues; It is also a sign of spiritual wisdom."* (L. Scupoli)

The Holy Fathers and elders' advice concurs in extolling us to keep silent when we are in turmoil or experiencing passions. It is very tempting to relieve ourselves of our emotional burden by speaking our mind. This rarely leads to anything good. *If thou, being offended by anything, does sense that grief and wrath have seized thee, preserve silence and say naught until unceasing prayer pacifies thine heart* (venerable Ammon of Nitria). And in the same spirit: *If you feel that hatred has overwhelmed you, remain silent. Say*

nothing until by ceaseless prayer and self-recrimination, you have calmed your heart (St Hilarion Ponomarev of Optina)

May we learn to practise and grow to love silence as it will show us the way to our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore silence, prayer, obedience; when you practise these virtues with the help of God, then you will know the light of Christ is within your soul. (Elder Ephraim)

Martha and Mary

PARISH NEWS

Fr Jonathan's absence

As most of you already know, Fr Jonathan, our beloved shepherd of the Lancaster parish, has been facing serious medical difficulties over the past few weeks. Thanks be to God, his state is getting better, but he still remains at the hospital. His recovery remains long.

As Fr Jonathan still remains quite frail, please be advised that until he -- directly or through his family -- invites visitors, the doctors and family **INSIST** on not disturbing him. So, until further notice **NO VISITORS PLEASE!** This has been agreed with Fr. Gregory and endorsed by Metropolitan Silouan. Please stay reassured that Father is taken care of well, both medically and spiritually, and he needs to be given time and quiet to recover.

Using this opportunity, it is also important to emphasise the importance of prayers for Fr Jonathan's quick and full recovery. Every word matters when it comes from the heart!

Services at the Holy Cross in Fr Jonathan's absence

For the time Fr Jonathan remains in hospital and cannot minister to the community, Sayedna Silouan blessed Fr Gregory Hallam and Fr Daniel Codreanu -- the clergy of St Aidan's parish in Manchester -- to celebrate Divine Liturgy at our church **once a month on the 2nd Sunday of every month.**

Fr Gregory Hallam served the first Liturgy on the 11th of February. Fr Daniel will come to celebrate next Liturgy on Sunday, 10th of March. On the remaining Sundays, parishioners will do the readers Hours and Typika.

We thank His Eminence Sayedna Silouan, Fr Gregory and Fr Daniel for their care and support. Please remember them in your prayers.

Fr Gregory writes concerning helping out at Holy Cross

Fr Jonathan and I have known each other for over 30 years! We were part of the original small group of former Anglican priests who became convinced of the claims of the Orthodox Church and who sought to be received into her communion. The Church of Antioch responded to our need and most of us were ordained in the year following our meeting with the former Patriarch Ignatios IV and his Vicar Bishop, Gabriel Saliby in 1994. Both gracious and holy men reposed in the Lord some years ago. Since that time, Fr Jonathan and I have worked closely together, first in the Antiochian Deanery in the Archdiocese of Western Europe, and then from 2013, in the Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland. Both Fr Jonathan and I once worked as teachers in secondary education. I also have a background in finance and a passion for science. My wife, Helen, and I have a daughter Jennifer and a granddaughter Lily.



Fr Daniel, his wife Florentina and their two daughters Anna and Ioanna have been in our parish for some years. Fr Daniel was ordained to the priesthood last year and is a true servant of God, man of deep faith and compassion. It is an honour for me both to know him and work with him. As his name suggests, Fr Daniel and his family originally come from Romania but have lived here in the UK for many years. May it please God, Fr Daniel will be my successor in Manchester after I retire.



Both Fr Daniel and myself consider it both a great honour and joyful calling to serve the good people at Holy Cross until our beloved Fr Jonathan can resume his duties. Like myself though, (I am 71 this year), I suspect that both of us will need to measure out our service according to both our ages and our health. The Church always needs new and younger priests to take her mission forward.

Father Gregory

Greetings from Sofia

Dear Father Jonathan,
I hope this email finds you well.

I passed my driving test here in Bulgaria and am currently waiting for my driving licence to be issued.

I am also starting a new job as a flight attendant. I am starting the training for the job

tomorrow. hopefully things will work out well in this new adventure of mine.

I hope I will be able to come visit Lancaster some time this year.

*Kindest Regards,
Kamen*



Bless the Lord, you hoarfrosts and snows, and sing a hymn to Him, and exalt Him beyond measure unto the ages. (Daniel 3:70)

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Feb. 2: *Dimitri, Eleni*

Feb. 14: *Ion*

Feb. 21: *Pisistratos*

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 Feb: St Bridget of Kildare (†525)

2nd Feb: The Meeting of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Temple

3rd Feb: St Nicholas, Equal-to-the-Apostles, Archbishop & Enlightener of Japan

10th Feb: Hieromartyr Charalampos, Bishop of Magnesia in Asia Minor

18th Feb: St Colman (†675), Bishop of Lindisfarne

23rd Feb: St Polycarp, the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna

24th Feb: First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of St. John the Baptist

25th Feb: Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. Triodion begins today

26th Feb: St Photine, the Samaritan woman

For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America:
www.calendar.goarch.org



*Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee
(image [source](#))*

Online

Prayer Meeting

Weekly

on *Wednesday*
7:30 pm

via *Skype*



**Click here to join the meeting
(no account needed):**

[https://join.skype.com/K1CF
OgMGxDQU](https://join.skype.com/K1CF
OgMGxDQU)

**The Orthodox
Christian Parish of the
Holy and Life Giving
Cross – Lancaster
invites you to join our
Online Prayer Group “
Saint Seraphim & Saint
Etheldreda”.**

**With the blessing of Fr
Jonathan Hemmings,
though without him
until he recovers, the
prayer meetings of our
parish group are back.**

**Included: readers
version of the
Supplication to St Luke
of Simferopol to pray
for the health of Fr.
Jonathan**

Services at St Martin's in February

Sun. 4 th	09:45	Readers Hours and Typika
Wed. 7 th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting*
Sun. 11 th	09:45	Divine Liturgy**
Wed. 14 th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting*
Sun. 18 th	09:45	Readers Hours and Typika
Wed. 21 st	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting*
Sun. 25 th	09:45	Readers Hours and Typika
Wed. 28 th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting*

*Online on Skype at <https://join.skype.com/K1CFOgMGxDQU>

**With the blessing of His Eminence Silouan, Fr Gregory or Fr Daniel will serve Divine Liturgy once a month. Please remember them in your prayers, along with our dear Fr Jonathan.



“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”

-- St. George Karslides –



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.