

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

The Stavronian

Monthly magazine and newsletter published by the Holy Cross Synodia



*Ἐθρονος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης.
(Φ. Κόντογλου, 1962).*

*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)*

SPEECH BY DEACON EPHRAIM AFTER HOSPITAL ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

I stand before you today, as a deacon in the Holy Apostolic Orthodox Church, a servant of the all-good and almighty God, and a servant to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

For a long time I have been waiting for this new day in my life, remembering the words of Saint Basil the Great, who says, "Strive to make yourself worthy and worthy of the honorable laws, then think and reflect on whom you stand before, and how you will complete the honorable service."

I will always try to keep this commandment, but I know how difficult it is in our present day, in which sin has become easy, but God, whom I always believed was seeing me from above, was seeing me from within, made it easy and arranged all matters for me, as He placed spiritual people to guide me according to the amount of their love that they sought from God.

The first of them is the father of fathers, the shepherd of shepherds, master of masters 13th of the Holy Apostles Kyrios Kyrios John X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, my teacher since my teenage years when he was Metropolitan of Europe, as he had the merit of placing the love of God in my heart, and planting in me the love of the true holy service of Christ through his spiritual teachings, his paternal care that continued with me throughout my journey in studying theology at the University of Balamand and unto this present day.

I also thank from the bottom of my heart His Eminence Silouan, Metropolitan of the British Isles and Ireland, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support, patience, paternal tenderness, generosity and guidance since the beginning of your episcopal ministry here. I thank you for your sincere fatherhood and your endless dedication, what I have seen in you I have not seen in anyone else, my venerable master. I pray to Almighty God to grant you many more years as a father, and inspiration to this archdiocese protected by God, so that we may grow more through you in grace, love and humility as servants of the Most High God, our Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be all the glory.

I also thank the Abbot and Fathers of the Holy Royal Stavropegic Monastery of Machairas Cyprus, to which I was sent just before my ordination, where I experienced monastic life through silence and prayer to better prepare myself for this solemn and blessed day. His Eminence Bishop Epiphanius, the Abbot, is a source of grace, he is close to my heart because he enriched my spiritual life and brought me closer to Christ so that I may become a man prepared as much as possible for this blessed ministry, even if I was unworthy, to stand before the Lord.

I also thank my beloved family, my mother, father and siblings, there are no words that can describe how grateful I feel for your love, support and patience, which the good God has given you, you are an icon of a good family, I love you always until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to thank priest Father Jonathan for his spiritual guidance and prayers, which he blessed me with from the beginning of my church life.

I would also like to thank all those who came from afar, especially our family friends from Cyprus who traveled specially to be with me on this blessed day by the grace of God.

I thank the Faculty of Theology at the University of Balamand, the Dean Archimandrite Jack Khalil, professors, staff and students who played a role in my spiritual and intellectual growth. Balamand is truly the cornerstone of our Holy Patriarchate of Antioch.

I also feel joy for your presence, my beloved ones, my family and friends, without whom my day would not be complete, as the apostolic laws say that the community of believers are who elect a man as a deacon or priest by exclaiming the word "worthy", I will rejoice with you at all times of my life in God because He is joy and peace.

I pray to the all Holy Mother of God the Virgin Mary to protect guide and support all who place their hope in her.

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.
Amen

“ When your rason becomes old and dusty, it will be a reminder of the work you continue to do for God and His people. See it as a blessing, my spiritual son, not as an embarrassment. ”



Abouna Jonathan and Deacon Ephraim (Ramy)



Dcn George, Fr Jonathan and Fr Dmitry

LOVE STORY AND THE WEDDING FEASTS

God loves us not because we are loveable but because He is love. As we meditate on God's love for us, especially in the cross of Christ, our love for God and our neighbour will increase, and our hearts will become more and more like God's, filled with love.
(CS Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*)

It is very strange that we can go through life or, at least, we can live for many years completely unaware of God's love, we can live an entire long life and not know where we come from, where we are headed to and that we are immensely loved. Some of us, lucky few I think, are blessed to know God's love and experience it from the beginning of their lives, for others the realisation comes slowly, it grows like a timid little plant in their heart, for others it is a thunderbolt and for some it never comes. God chooses the place, the time and the manner of a personal encounter with each one of us according to His own will and our readiness... or lack of it. This encounter marks the beginning of a personal love story, intermingled but apart from the great Love story between humanity and the Creator.

The poet Michel Quoist describes his own love story in deeply moving words:

*Lord, you seized me and I could not resist you.
I ran for a long time, but you followed me.*



Concelebrants in the Divine Mysteries

*I took by-paths, but you knew them.
 You overtook me.
 I struggled,
 You won.
 Here I am Lord, out of breath, no fight left in me, and I've said "yes" almost unwillingly
 When I stood there trembling like one defeated before his captor, Your look of love fell on me.
 The die is cast, Lord, I can no longer forget you.
 In a moment You seized me,
 In a moment you conquered me.
 My doubts were swept away,
 My fears dispelled.
 For I recognised you without seeing you,
 I felt you without touching you,
 I understood you without hearing you.[...]
 At times, O Lord, you steal over me irresistibly, as the ocean slowly covers the shore,
 Or suddenly you seize me as the lover claps his beloved in his arms.
 And I am helpless, a prisoner, and I have to stand still.
 Captivated I hold my breath, the world fades away. You suspend time.
 (Michel Quoist, *Lord, You Have Seized Me*)*

Love has taken us by surprise or has crept up on us in unexpected places: in a sycamore tree like Zacchaeus, at a well like the Samaritan woman, collecting taxes, fishing, lying on a bed of sickness, in the street or in our own home. It started like a whisper or it struck like lightning. But no matter how much we have heard or read about the Love of God, it always surpasses any imagination. The Love of God breaks your heart and heals it at the same time, it makes you thirsty yet entirely at peace, it humbles you to the ground and lifts you up to Heaven. It opens your heart to the world and transforms everything around you. How beautifully the yearning (mind, soul and body) for God is expressed by King David in Psalm 62:

*O God my God, I rise early to be with You;
 My soul thirsts for You.
 How often my flesh thirsts for You.*

We are always loved by God with an unwavering faithfulness. He tells us so again and again in the Old Testament and the Gospels. What more compelling proof of God's endless love than His

enfleshing to unite Himself to our nature, than the Cross and the gift of Himself every Sunday on the Altar? We ourselves are often fickle and turn away, distracted, deceived by the lures of the world and sin.

*The Lord is always waiting for us to unite ourselves with Him in Love, but instead we drift further and further away from Him.
 (Elder Thaddeus)*

In the Old Testament, the Book of Hosea, the prophet expresses God's longing for us, His great love and desire to unite us to Himself in terms of a Betrothal --- a promise of faithfulness and full union:

*I will betroth you to Myself forever;
 Yes, I will betroth you to Myself
 In righteousness and justice
 And in mercy and Compassion
 I will betroth you to Myself in
 Faithfulness.
 (Hosea 2:19)*

How can we understand a love so great? How can we prepare for a union so holy? During Holy Week, in the Services of the Bridegroom, the allegory of the wedding expresses both our longing to be one with God, because He has created us to be in union with Him and our unworthiness and need to prepare for this mystical Union:

*O my Savior, now I see Your wedding hall decorated, and I have not the garment needed for me to enter it. Make this raiment of my soul brightly shine, O Giver-of-Light, and save me.
 (Exapostelarian for Bridegroom Matins)*

And again, "Brethren, let us love the Bridegroom and prepare our lamps with care, shining with the virtues and right faith; that, like the wise virgins of the Lord, we may be ready to enter with Him into the wedding feast. For God the Bridegroom grants to all the crown incorruptible."

And again: "Into the splendor of Your saints how shall I enter? For I am unworthy, and if I dare to come into the bridal chamber, my clothing will accuse me, since it is not a wedding garment; and I shall be cast out by the angels, bound hand and foot."

SUMMARY OF CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING NO. 05

Held at the Church of St. Martin of
Tours, Westgate, LA4 4UZ

Sunday, 19th January 2025

How can we ever prepare and be ready to become One with God? It is an insane idea when we consider it dispassionately. The “first sign” our Lord performed at the wedding of Cana (John 2:1-12) may help us take a step towards understanding this mystery. Invited to a feast which significantly celebrates a union, the union between a man and a woman, our Lord, His Mother and the disciples go to bless this union and enjoy the feast. But the festivities fall short of perfection, the celebration fizzles out when the wine runs out. How often has our wine run out? How often have we found ourselves short of love, short of joy? What are we to do when we are sad, at a stand still, empty like the stone waterpots or filled with flavourless water? At such a time, the Mother of God intercedes for us “They have no wine” and then tells us “Whatever he says to you, do it.” We are told to bring our six waterpots of stone and fill them with water. In other words, we are told to take our incompleteness (the six waterpots as opposed to perfection symbolised by seven), our imperfection, our insipidity (water) and offer it up to the Lord. He blesses it and turns it into the choicest wine. The joy has returned to the wedding feast.

Every single Sunday we are invited to The Holy Liturgy, although our garments are soiled and in tatters, although we are lame and blind and deaf, although our wine has run out. We must come as best we can, but full of joy and anticipation even if we have carried heavy burdens all week long. In fact we must run because the wedding we are invited to is a wedding between the celestials and the terrestrials, a wedding between the Creator and Creation, a mystical union between our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. We are each of us Bride to our Holy Bridegroom and guests at the feast, where we eat and drink Our Lord Jesus Christ to become One with Him.

Martha and Mary



After opening prayers by Fr. Jonathan, Alexandra presented the financial report for the month of December which saw a good amount in donations both via the collection plate and increased contributions online. This was followed by a review of the year in which the council heard that monthly donations had generally increased towards the end of the year and the church is in good financial health for its size.

Next the secretary, Jacob, read through a number of notices from the Archbishop, the first of these pertaining to Liturgical colours. In his letter, His Eminence outlined a set of five vestment colours which each parish in the Archdiocese should aim to possess for the different liturgical seasons. They are blue, gold, red, green, purple and a dark set for general use. We are just missing green and steps are being made to correct this. His Eminence stressed also that black must never be used in the Antiochian tradition. The second notice concerned weddings and the days on which they may not be performed, including 14th September, 20th – 25th December, 5th – 6th January, Wednesday of the Cheesefare – New Saturday, Holy Pentecost, 1st – 15th August and 29th August. The final notice was about the newly appointed Canonist, Fr. Boniface, who had graciously accepted the previously empty post.

Other matters of business which the council discussed included the problem with the electricity not working correctly in the church, a matter which the owners have been made aware of by Fr. Jonathan but about which we have had no news yet. Also a schedule was finalised for the different parish activities. On the second Sunday of each month will be held the council meetings, Sunday School on the third and the parish meal and book-lending on the fourth. Catechesis lessons will be held on Saturdays, along with Great Vespers, where people may come to learn about Orthodox Christianity. Fr. Jonathan noted that both new enquirers and those who are already baptised are welcome, adding that it is always important to continue to learn about our Holy

Church and Her tradition! Finally it was decided to begin the practice of inviting the children up beside the choir to recite together the Lord's Prayer. It was thought that this would help to make the children, at least for a short while, fully present in the Divine Liturgy.

PARISH NEWS

On January 11th, we had the Holy Chrismation of Neil Columba Stewart Hall. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ keep them under His protection!



Online donations

Our Orthodox Community of the Holy and Life Giving Cross has been blessed to have a building for a Temple that serves the needs of the Orthodox Christians in the Lancaster area. To this end, we are making **an appeal to help raise funds to cover the rent and other needs of the Church** on a permanent basis. Our monthly expenditure also includes purchasing food, drinks, disposable cutlery and dishware, paying insurance, and other costs. Hence, regular on-line giving to the Church, instead of cash donations on the plate, would help the parish to budget better and plan for the future.

If you would like to give regularly, the details are provided below:

Name: The Orthodox Church of Holy Cross
Bank: Lloyds Bank Plc
Sort Code: 30-96-26
Account Number: 80662168

IBAN: GB23LOYD30962680662168
BIC/SWIFT: LOYDGB21446

Post code: LA1 4XJ
City: Lancaster
Country: United Kingdom

We give thanks for the special ministry that God has given to us over two decades serving particularly the Liturgical and Pastoral needs of Orthodox students from Lancaster University and the citizens of the nearby towns. We aim to continue this ministry but to broaden it to serve the families who now attend our Community.

We are indeed blessed in having support from so many former parishioners "Stavronians" and having our extended family who offer prayers and donations to us from Cyprus, Greece, Romania, USA and elsewhere.

We ask your prayers in this holy task which is now before us and ask a blessing upon you in the name of the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-Giving and Undivided Trinity.

May God prosper this little plant in His Vineyard!

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

9th Feb: Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. Triodion begins today

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

16th Feb: Sunday of the Prodigal Son

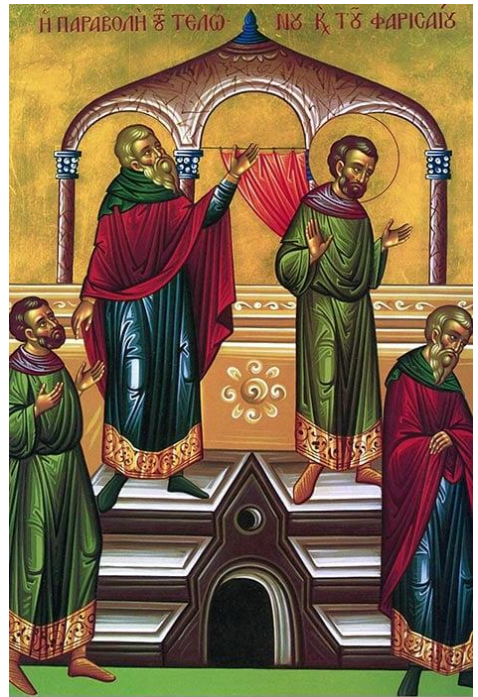
18th Feb: St Colman (+675), Bishop of Lindisfarne

23rd Feb: St Polycarp, the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna. Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)

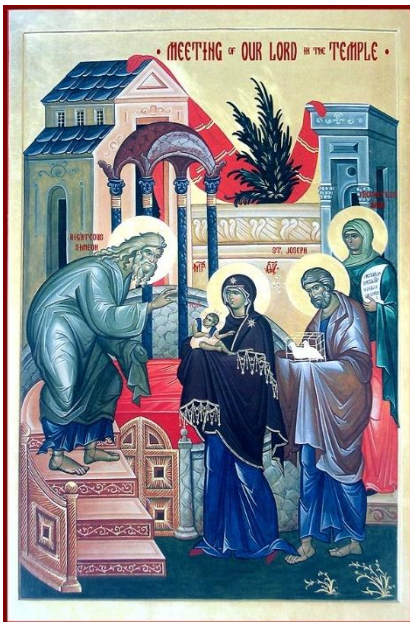
24th Feb: First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of St. John the Baptist

26th Feb: St Photine, the Samaritan woman

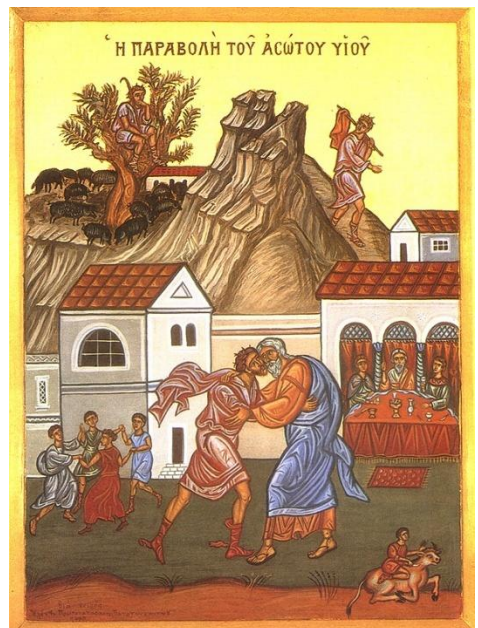
For the lives of Saints please visit the Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: www.calendar.goarch.org. The Orthodox Calendar and Scriptural Readings Lectionary, including the British and Irish Saints, is available online at www.antiochian-orthodox.com/calendar



Publican and Pharisee (image: goarch.org)



The Presentation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Temple (image: oca.org)



Prodigal Son (image: oca.org)

**Online
Prayer
Meeting
Weekly**

on
Wednesday

7:30 PM

via **Skype**



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 the prayer meetings of our parish group are back.

Included: Paraklesis to the Mother of God

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

[https://join.skype.com/K1CF
OgMGxDQU](https://join.skype.com/K1CFOgMGxDQU)

Services at St Martin’s in February*

Sat. 1st	15:30	Confessions
	15:45	Great Vespers
	16:30	Catechesis. Theme: Services in/of the Orthodox Church
Sun. 2nd	09.45	Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom: Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Refreshments
Wed. 5th	19.30	Online Prayer Meeting**
Sat. 8th	15:30	Confessions
	15:45	Great Vespers
	16:30	Catechesis
Sun. 9th	09.45	Divine Liturgy. Beginning of the pre Lent Triodion. Church Council meeting. Refreshments
Wed. 12th	19.30	Online Prayer Meeting**
Sat. 15th	15:30	Confessions
	15:45	Great Vespers
	16:30	Catechesis
Sun. 16th	09.45	Divine Liturgy: Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Sunday School. Refreshments
Wed. 19th	19.30	Online Prayer Meeting**
Sat. 22nd	15:30	Confessions
	15:45	Great Vespers. Saturday of Souls
	16:30	Catechesis
Sun. 23rd	09.45	Divine Liturgy: Judgement Sunday (Meatfare Sunday). Parish meal and book-lending
Wed. 26th	19.30	Online Prayer Meeting**

*May be subject to change. Please monitor the email updates and the parish’s [Facebook page](#)

**Via Skype: <https://join.skype.com/K1CFOgMGxDQU>

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



For further information please contact:

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Orthodox Church of the Exaltation of the Precious 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

Online Orthodox Calendar and Scriptural Readings Lectionary:
<https://www.antiochian-orthodox.com/calendar>

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

