

**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)*

BLESS MY ENEMIES, O LORD

Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.

Enemies have driven me into Your embrace more than friends have.

Friends have bound me to earth, enemies have loosed me from earth and have demolished all my aspirations in the world.

Enemies have made me a stranger in worldly realms and an extraneous inhabitant of the world. Just as a hunted animal finds safer shelter than an unhunted animal does, so have I, persecuted by enemies, found the safest sanctuary, having ensconced myself beneath Your tabernacle, where neither friends nor enemies can slay my soul.

Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.

They, rather than I, have confessed my sins before the world.

They have punished me, whenever I have hesitated to punish myself.

They have tormented me, whenever I have tried to flee torments.

They have scolded me, whenever I have flattered myself.

They have spat upon me, whenever I have filled myself with arrogance.

Bless my enemies, O Lord, Even I bless them and do not curse them.

Whenever I have made myself wise, they have called me foolish.

Whenever I have made myself mighty, they have mocked me as though I were a dwarf.

Whenever I have wanted to lead people, they have shoved me into the background.

Whenever I have rushed to enrich myself, they have prevented me with an iron hand.

Whenever I thought that I would sleep peacefully, they have wakened me from sleep.

Whenever I have tried to build a home for a long and tranquil life, they have demolished it and driven me out.

Truly, enemies have cut me loose from the world and have stretched out my hands to the hem of Your garment.

Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.

Bless them and multiply them; multiply them and make them even more bitterly against me:

so that my fleeing to You may have no return;

so that all hope in men may be scattered like cobwebs;

so that absolute serenity may begin to reign in my soul;

so that my heart may become the grave of my two evil twins, arrogance and anger;

so that I might amass all my treasure in heaven;

ah, so that I may for once be freed from self-deception, which has entangled me in the dreadful web of illusory life.

Enemies have taught me to know what hardly anyone knows, that a person has no enemies in the world except himself.

One hates his enemies only when he fails to realize that they are not enemies, but cruel friends.

It is truly difficult for me to say who has done me more good and who has done me more evil in the world: friends or enemies.

Therefore bless, O Lord, both my friends and enemies.

A slave curses enemies, for he does not understand. But a son blesses them, for he understands.

For a son knows that his enemies cannot touch his life.

Therefore he freely steps among them and prays to God for them.

*Bp. Nikolai Velimirovich
(Stavronian March 2007)*

FOOD FOR BODY AND SOUL

“Come, O ye people, and today let us accept the grace of the Fast as a gift from God” (Monday Matins in the first week of Lent).

As we begin our Lenten journey towards the Passion and the Resurrection, we are called to embark upon fasting as a form of self-denial, of control over our body and passions. Fasting is a help along our journey towards God, a gift and a guide to self-control. It is an antidote to Gluttony, one of the simplest and most dangerous sins. Saint John of the Ladder rails at it: *“Gluttony is hypocrisy of the stomach. Filled, it moans about scarcity; stuffed and crammed, it wails about its hunger. Gluttony thinks up sweet seasonings, creates sweet recipes. ... Gluttony has a deceptive appearance: it eats moderately but wants to gobble everything at the same time. A stuffed belly produces fornication, while a mortified stomach leads to purity. The man who pets a lion may tame it, but the man who coddles the body makes it ravenous.” (The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 14)*

It is through the act of eating after all that our ancestors Adam and Eve caused the fall of humanity. *“So when the woman saw the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and a tree beautiful to contemplate she took its fruit and ate.” (Genesis 3:6)*

In the age of over consumption and over indulgence we live in, it is more difficult than ever to be temperate and exercise strict self-control over what and especially how much we eat. This is nonetheless for our good and for our spiritual growth.

St Seraphim of Sarov advises: *“Everyday we should partake of just enough food to allow the body, being fortified, to be a friend and helper to the soul in performing the virtues. Otherwise without the body exhausted the soul may also weaken”*

The Holy Fathers regard the control of the stomach as one of the first steps in our spiritual life. *“One should not think about the doings of God when one’s stomach is full; on a full stomach there can be no vision of the Divine mysteries.” (St Seraphim of Sarov)*

Our Lord Jesus Christ joined in many feasts, shared food, blessed it and multiplied it. He also fasted, but often reminded the disciples that spiritual matters should come ahead of material ones: *“I have food to eat of which you do not know. [...] My food is to do the will of him who sent*

me.” (John 4:34) “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures into everlasting life.” (John 6:27)

Saint Paul also writes, *“Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy them both.” (1 Corinthians 6:13)*

What we eat and how much we eat is important at all times and during Lent in particular, but ultimately Our Lord Jesus Christ also teaches: *“Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” (Matthew 15:11)*

Having thought about our consumption of food and drink, what of our consumption of information, images and noise? What of the things which enter our bodies through our eyes, ears and mind? How much more important is this for our wellbeing?

“Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.” (Matthew 15:17-20)

The foods we eat go in and come out of our body. What about the things we feed our soul? What about the things we consume with our eyes and ears and mind? Where does all the violence we watch go to? Where do all the distressing images go? Where does all the mind numbing scrolling and the indecent reading go? How about the angry, resentful thoughts we allow to enter us and we harbour and dwell on? What imprint do they leave on our mind and soul? And furthermore, later on, how do they come out of our mouth and how do they reflect in our actions?

The human body has adapted over thousands of years to cope with our food consumption. It breaks down the food, retains what is useful and discards what is surplus or toxic even when we overeat or eat things which are bad for us, but is our mind able to process in the same way the deluge of information and images we feed it?

Researchers and child psychologists are watching with increasing alarm as surveys of teens have revealed a correlation between social media and depression, self-harm and suicide. Data released in 2021 in the USA shows that nearly 1 in 4 teens said they’d seriously

considered killing themselves. This alarming situation is partly blamed on Social Media.

The 2021 Hwang study, found that overall, all types of news media consumption increased emotional distress, but television and social media exposure were more strongly associated, with younger adults and women more vulnerable. Another study, conducted by Matthew Price, PhD, of the University of Vermont in 2022, found an association between the amount of exposure to news on social media and more depression and PTSD symptoms. Psychologists with media expertise advise practicing *dietary media restriction* and taking steps to better process and rightsize the news in people's personal lives.

If refraining from foods is important for the body, how much more important is fasting from the things we feed our mind and soul? Restricting our media and internet diet, choosing to watch, read and listen to things which lift the spirit and makes it soar towards God rather than the things which crush us to the ground and keep us earth bound are essential to our wellbeing and to our spiritual growth.

As we begin our fast, let us concern ourselves equally if not more with the fast of the eyes and ears, with the fast of our mind and soul. Let us rest our eyes on beauty and harmony and reject all that is violent, indecent, vulgar and pernicious to the soul, let us cast out all evil thoughts and turn towards God, the source of all Beauty, Love, Truth and Joy.

Martha and Mary

THE CEREMONY OF MUTUAL FORGIVENESS

The Ceremony of Mutual Forgiveness at the end of Lenten Vespers is where we ask forgiveness from one another before Great Lent starts. We come to the priest at the Royal Doors, bow to the ground (metanoia) and say: "Forgive me, father." He will say: "God forgives and I forgive". The priest will bow to you and then say: "Forgive me" and you will say "God forgives and I forgive." You kiss his hand and stand next to him. After each of the faithful go to the priest to ask forgiveness, they ask the same forgiveness of each brother and sister

bowing and exchanging a holy kiss three times on the cheeks either side of their head (in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit). This holy ceremony lasts until everyone has asked forgiveness of each other and they form a circle.

Kalo Stadio (Good fight!) for Lent.

Ev Χριστώ

Fr Jonathan

SUMMARY OF CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING NO. 06

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

Sunday, 9th February 2025

Fr. Jonathan began by going through a number of matters which arose from the last meeting. The new set of vestments, which the church will be purchasing by means of the generous charity of the old Stravronians, have started to be designed and will hopefully be sourced from a Romanian monastery. The problem with the electricity in the church has been fixed. Petronela's husband, Martin, has been thanked with a card, an icon of St. Martin and two bottles of fine red wine for his good work in setting up the church on Fridays ready for the weekend's services. This responsibility Nikolai has now kindly offered to assume. Finally the experiment with the children coming up for the Lord's Prayer during the Divine Liturgy was agreed a success and is hoped to be a permanent aspect of the service from now on.

Church stewardship was discussed developing previous ideas regarding the nature of a more official, online payment scheme for church giving. A movement towards planned giving and charity status in accordance with Sayedna's wishes is to be encouraged after consultation with our parishioners. If parishioners have any thoughts on this matter then they are very welcome to talk to any of the Church council members and they will certainly be brought forward and taken into account in any future discussions.

After the treasurer's report, Fr Jonathan took the council through the Paschal Calendar for 2025. **Great and Holy Pascha will be on 20th April this year.** He then went on to speak about Catechism. He is giving classes after Great Vespers on Saturdays, however, further material will hopefully be made available which catechumens could access from home. This being in the form of a series of lectures produced by the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies titled *The Way*. More information to follow.

The idea of t-shirts with a Christian design on the front was discussed but then replaced in favour of canvas bags with the same design which will be available for purchase soon.

It was agreed to have in the church a separate collection box during Great Lent, the total amount of which will be donated to Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service. The target is £700.

PARISH NEWS

Visit of Metropolitan Silouan

God willing, Metropolitan Silouan will visit our parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross on the 22nd and 23rd of March for the Holy Cross Sunday. The Hierarchical Liturgy will take place on Sunday 23rd.

Catechesis

On February 15th, Matthew Seraphim was made catechumen. We congratulate and welcome him to our family! May we all celebrate the salvation of our souls together in heaven with our Lord!

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

Mar. 4: *Nikolaos*

Mar. 12: *Georgianna, Theodora*

Mar. 18: *Fr. Thomas Hopko*

Mar. 19: *Metropolitan Philip of North America, Fr. Georgios Myrou*

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 Mar: St. David of Wales (+589)

2nd Mar: Our Holy fathers St Nicholas Planas & St Joachim of Ithaca and Vatopaedi. Forgiveness Sunday

9th Mar: Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. Sunday of Orthodoxy

16th Mar: Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

17th Mar: St Patrick, the Enlightener of Ireland (+492)

20th Mar: St Cuthbert the Wonderworker, Bishop of Lindisfarne (+687)

23rd Mar: Sunday of the Holy Cross

25th Mar: The Annunciation of our Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

26th Mar: Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel

30th Mar: St John Climacus the Righteous, author of The Divine Ladder of Ascent

31st Mar: St. Innocent, Enlightener of Siberia & Alaska

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



Annunciation of the Theotokos (image: goarch.org)

**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
the prayer meetings of
our parish group are
back.**

**Included: Paraklesis to
the Mother of God**



Services at St Martin's in March*

Sat. 1st	15:45	Great Vespers
	16:30	Catechesis**
Sun. 2nd	09:45	Divine Liturgy: Forgiveness Sunday. St Nicholas Planas, St Ioakim of Vatopedi and St Chad of Lichfield
	11:30	Lenten Vespers with Ceremony of Mutual Forgiveness
	12:15	Refreshments
Wed. 5th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting***
Fri. 7th	18:30	Akathist 1 to the Mother of God
Sat. 8th	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 9th	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St Basil. Sunday of Orthodoxy: Procession of Icons. Church Council meeting
Wed. 12th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting***
Fri. 14th	18:30	Akathist 2 to the Mother of God
Sat. 15th	15:30	Saturday of Souls Memorial
	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 16th	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St Basil: St Gregory Palamas. Sunday School
Wed. 19th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting***
Fri. 21st	18:30	Akathist 3 to the Mother of God
Sat. 22nd	15:30	Saturday of Souls Memorial
	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 23rd	09:45	Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of St Basil: Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross. Parish meal and book-lending
Wed. 26th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting***
Fri. 28th	18:30	Akathist 4 to the Mother of God
Sat. 29th	15:30	Saturday of Souls Memorial
	15:45	Great Vespers
Sun. 30th	09:45	Divine Liturgy of St Basil: St John Climacus of Sinai, Author of "The Ladder"













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

**Catechesis only on March 1st, thereafter on line --- T.B.A.

***Via Skype: <https://join.skype.com/K1CF0gMGxDQU>

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2025

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 9th 	TRIODION WEEKS Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 16th 	The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:1-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 23rd FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY 	The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare MARCH 2nd FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY 	Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 9th 	GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 16th 	ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 23rd 	VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS HALF WAY TO PASCHA! Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 30th 	ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 6th 	ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 13th GREAT WEEK BEGINS 	GREAT AND HOLY WEEK ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 18th 	GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 20th NO FASTING! 	BRIGHT WEEK HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

“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

