No. 228

November 2025

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

The Stavronian

Monthly magazine and newsletter publicised by the Holy Cross Synodia

Ἐνθρονος 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)

ST. ARSENIUS THE CAPPADOCIAN

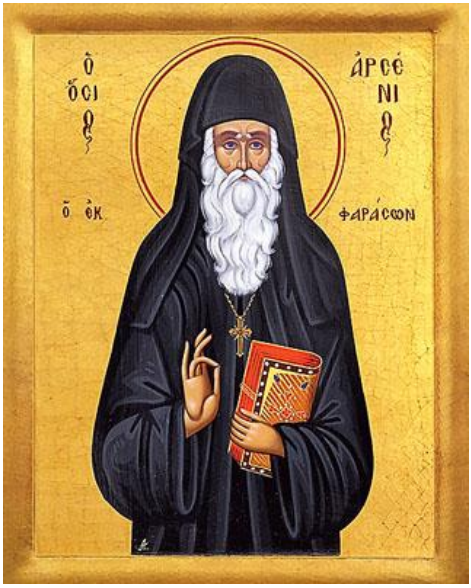
Cappadocia (today in eastern Turkey) is virtually devoid of Christians now, but in 1840, when St. Arsenios was born there, there were still vital Orthodox communi-ties. He became a monk and was sent to his native town, Farasa, to serve the people. He became known as a mighty intercessor before God, praying for all who came to him, Muslims as well as Christians. His countless miracles of healing became known throughout Cap-padocia; those who could not come to see him would sometimes send articles of clothing for him to pray over. He became known as Hadjiefendis, because he made pilgrimage to the Holy Land every ten years on foot. He never accepted any gifts in return for his prayers and healings, saying “Our faith is not for sale!”.

He concealed his holiness as much as he could beneath a rough and sharp-tempered exterior. If anyone expressed admiration for him, he would reply “So you think I'm a saint? I'm only a sinner worse than you. Don't you see that I even lose my temper? The miracles you see are done by Christ. I do no more than lift up my hands and pray to him.” But as the Scriptures say, the prayers of a righteous man avail much, and when St. Arsenios lifted up his hands, wonders often followed.

He lived in a small cell with an earthen floor, fasted often and was in the habit of shutting himself in his cell for at least two whole days every week to devote himself entirely to prayer.

Fr. Arsenios predicted the expulsion of the Greeks from Asia Minor before it happened, and organised his flock for departure. When the expulsion order came in 1924, the aged Saint led his faithful on a 400-mile journey across Turkey on foot. He had foretold that he would only live forty days after reaching Greece, and this came to pass. His last words were "The soul, the soul, take care of it more than the flesh, which will return to earth and be eaten by worms!" Two days later, on November 10, 1924, he departed in peace at the age of eighty-three. Since 1970, many apparitions and miracles have occurred near his holy relics, which reside in the Monastery of Souroti near Thessalonica.

He was the godfather of fr. Paisios of Mt. Athos who later wrote a book about his life: “St. Arsenios the Cappadocian”. When St. Arsenios baptised fr. Paisios, he foretold that the child



would become a monk. He was officially glorified a Saint by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1986.

(Stavronian November 2008)

FLAWED BAKING

Last night, I listened to some very interesting spiritual advice on an Orthodox Youtube channel, about marriage, raising children, holiness, choosing a path in life and judging others. At the end, I felt downcast to say the least. I was incredibly sad, bordering on despondency. I couldn’t discern whether this was good from a spiritual point of view since it had made me very uncomfortable and it might lead to repentance. Or whether it was leading me to despair and hopelessness and therefore, it was actually a temptation. I couldn’t even explain to myself what exactly had made me so deeply sad.

This morning, in the midst of my typical Saturday chaos, I understood my sadness.

I undertook baking Prosphora for the Holy Liturgy. This is a very rare occurrence in my life, so I am quite nervous when I bake it. All was quiet and peaceful in the kitchen. I started by saying the

Prayers before the baking of the prosphora. This is one of my favourite prayers:

> *"I thank You, Lord for this holy moment where you have counted me worthy to knead with my sinful hands the all-immaculate Gifts of Your love. I plead with You to send down Your All Holy Spirit, Who blesses all the mysteries of the Church, to also bless these gifts so that they become good and acceptable before Your Holy Altar. And I ask that You accept them as You accepted Abel's sacrifice, the glorification of the shepherds, the gifts of the Magi, the tears of Peter and the thief's repentance. And make me worthy to always offer them to You with a good conscience. Amen"*

Then, I began mixing the dough and kneading it while praying for every person in the parish. In the midst of prayerful kneading, a thought popped up in my mind: "My kitchen is not clean or tidy enough for such a task". Immediately, another thought intruded: "Although I have a special bowl for Prosphora baking, I do not have a special wooden board and would have to use the one I use for all the bread I bake". This unsettled me greatly. Holy baking suddenly appeared as sinful baking. The next minute, the doorbell went and a friend "popped in" to tell me the trouble she was having at work. The phone rang. Two minutes later, my daughter came into the kitchen looking for food and increased the mess by leaving behind a trail of ingredients, then my husband came in looking for his water bottle and finally, my son, looking for medicine. All these people spoke to me, made a mess, then left. By then, I had gone from frustration and blood pressure rocketing to deep sadness and discouragement. The holy task of baking the Prosphora cannot be undertaken like this… in the midst of chaos. It needs to be done in peace, with prayerful focus. But my kitchen is always like this: extremely messy, always bursting with people, full of their chatter and problems. How can I turn this chaos, which is my life, into stillness and order?

This question brought light on the previous evening as well. The particular spiritual advice in the Youtube video could not be applied to my specific situation, but to an ideal one or to a young person, just starting off in life. I have been married for many years and my children are grown up. Advice on the choice of a husband or on raising children cannot help me. I cannot visit monasteries regularly because there are none around, I cannot bake in perfect peace because my kitchen is chaotic. I am sad to say, it is a reflection of my life and my inner myself.

There are two paths open to the baking dilemma. The first one is to stop baking altogether and fall into despondency because of the unworthiness of my kitchen and myself, because of past failures and present imperfection. This is what I felt last night listening to the spiritual advice: since I cannot do these things because it is too late or I am not in the right place, what is the point? My life, my baking, cannot be holy. This reminded me of my younger self, loitering at the door of the church and not daring to go in, preparing for confession, but finding that the list was so long, "I couldn't possibly be forgiven" and therefore giving up on it.

This also reminded me of the story of a young monk who fell into carnal sin. He was so wretched, he fell into despondency. Eventually, he went to a wise elder who told him the parable of the farmer and his son. A farmer asked his son to go weed a field belonging to him, far removed from his farm. The son dutifully went with his tools, but when he got there, the field was a jungle. He was so disheartened, that he fell into despondency. There was no way he could possibly complete the task. So, he lay down and slept all day. He returned to his Father and explained what had happened. So the Father sent him back the next day and asked him to weed only a small square of the field and not worry about the rest. The son managed this and was encouraged by his success so the next day, he weeded another small portion. So on and so forth until all the field was ready for sowing. This is a story that gave me courage because great spiritual gains can be achieved in small steps.

The second path open to the prosphora baking dilemma is accepting the reality of my life as it is: busy, chaotic, filled to the brim with noise and movement and people, accepting myself as I am, flawed and weak. I can give thanks for the good in this chaos, where often I find Love and hope that in my weakness I shall also find humility. *"There is more hope in honest brokenness than in the pretence of false wholeness."* (Jamie Arpin-Ricci)

I liked this story of the encounter between a woman and the monk and could see myself cast

in the role of the woman. A woman came up to a monk when he was speaking somewhere – she was quite irritated. She complained that she couldn't find the perfect church. He listened patiently to her stories of frustration before telling her with a smile, "If you find the perfect church, don't join it. Or else it won't be perfect anymore." The same goes about kitchens. If I started baking in the perfect kitchen, … it would cease to be perfect.

I shall therefore resume my flawed baking with humility and acceptance, a little earlier in the day to minimise the interruptions, on the understanding that although my offering is not holy or perfect, it is the best that I can give and hope that the Lord will perfect in due course both the offering and the baker, in His great Mercy.

Martha and Mary

St John of Damascus Byzantine Chanting School

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Silouan, registration for the academic year 2025/2026 is now open!

This four-year programme, following the curriculum of the St Romanos the Melodist Ecclesiastic Music School in Beirut, is designed to train chanters in Byzantine Ecclesiastical Music for service in the Church.

📌 Weekly online lessons begin on 20 October 2025

📌 Enrolment musical assessment for new students: 21 October 2025

📌 In-person practice sessions in London

📌 Open to students aged 12+

📌 Annual fee: £150

Registration closes on 20 October 2025.

Register now using the links below:

New Students:
https://forms.gle/aBfegtQJ8JjTsijY8

Current Students:
https://forms.gle/9RpFCUFuCshABnws7

For more information, please contact Hadi Tannous (07943 242530).

PARISH NEWS

Sunday school: The Four Gospels

Sunday School in October focused on the Gospels. We celebrate the feast of St Luke the Evangelist on the 18th October and we spoke to the children about the Gospels and the Four Evangelists as well as the symbols used from the earliest times to represent each of them: Matthew -- a winged man or angel, Mark -- a winged lion, Luke -- an ox or bull, and John -- an eagle. The children made a small origami book with golden covers, which they decorated, in which they glued images

of the Four Evangelists and their symbols and wrote out quotes from each of The Gospels.

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!

Iconostasis extension

With the blessing of Metropolitan Silouan, our Iconostasis is now planned to be extended by Christmas 2025. A preliminary sketch is shown above. If you would like to donate, please use the credentials above and specify "Iconostasis" in the description of payment.

Christmas Fayre

Inspired by last year's success, Holy Cross church is organising St Nicholas' Fayre on Saturday 6th December 11:00--15:00. Please save the date in your calendars. There will be many stalls and free soup and home-made bread. If you want to have a stall or contribute something (for those who live at a distance and can't make it) then please contact Alexandra.

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Nov. 8: *Fr Tosko*
Nov. 11: *Eleonora*
Nov. 12: *Sir John Tavener*
Nov. 19: *Geronda Gregorios*
Nov. 24: *Katerina*
Nov. 29: *Ioanna, Susan*

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 Nov: Sts Cosmas and Damian, the Holy Unmercenaries and Wonderworkers
8th Nov: Synaxis of Archangel Michael and Gabriel and the other Bodiless Powers
9th Nov: St. Nectarios the Wonderworker, Metropolitan of Pentapolis

10th Nov: St. Arsenius of Cappadocia
11th Nov: St. Martin of Tours (†397)
13th Nov: St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople
14th Nov: St. Gregory Palamas the Wonder-worker, Archbishop of Thessalonica
***15th Nov*: Beginning of the Nativity fast**
16th Nov: Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew
17th Nov: St. Hilda, Abbess of Whitby (†680)
21st Nov: The Entry of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos into the Temple
23rd Nov: St. Alexander Nevsky
25th Nov: Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria
30th Nov: Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called

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

Services at St Martin's in November*

Sat. 1st	15:45	Great Vespers and confessions
Sun. 2nd	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Wed. 5th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting**. Rule of St Pachomius*
Sat. 8th	15:45	Great Vespers and confessions
Sun. 9th	09:45	Divine Liturgy (St Nektarios)
Wed. 12th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting**. Rule of St Pachomius*
Sat. 15th	15:45	Great Vespers and confessions. **Beginning of the Nativity fast***
Sun. 16th	09:45	Divine Liturgy (holy Apostle and evangelist Matthew)
Wed. 19th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting**. Rule of St Pachomius*
Sat. 22nd	15:45	Great Vespers and confessions
Sun. 23rd	09:45	Divine Liturgy
Wed. 26th	19:30	Online Prayer Meeting**. Rule of St Pachomius*
Sat. 29th	15:45	Great Vespers and confessions
Sun. 30th	09:45	Divine Liturgy (holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called)

*May be subject to change. Please monitor the email updates and the parish's Facebook page.
**Via WhatsApp: https://call.whatsapp.com/video/1WnKsoP45eHcAukXpIYXrl
***Fish, wine and oil allowed except Wednesdays and Fridays. Fish allowed on the 21st for the Feast of the entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

Online
Prayer Meeting
Weekly
on Wednesday
7:30 PM
via
WhatsApp

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

https://call.whatsapp.com/video/1WnKsoP45eHcAukXpIYXrl

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: Rule of St Pachomius with discussion.

2025 Fasting Calendar

LEGEND:
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil, wine
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs
Abstain from meat

Note: On the day of a parish's patronal feast, fish wine and oil are allowed if it falls on a fasting day.

January						
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May						
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June						
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November						
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December						
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28	29	30	31			

"*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

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

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