No. 238

September 2026

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)

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH YEAR

The first of September marks the beginning of the Church Year when we pray for the Crowning of the new year; that the Lord will forgive our transgressions in the past year, that He will guide us in the way of righteousness, that He will provide us with temperate seasons, that He will give peace to the world and enlarge the Church.

Apolytikion of the Indiction

> O thou Creator of the whole universe, who didst appoint times, by thine own power, bless the crown of this year with thy goodness, O Lord. Preserve in safety all Orthodox Christians, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, and save us.

(Stavronian September 2007)

THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS

In Orthodox practice, the Exaltation of the Cross commemorates both the finding of the Cross in 326 and its recovery from the Persians in 628, and is considered to be one of the Great Feasts of the church year. One of the high points of the celebration is when the priest or bishop brings the Cross out of the sanctuary, where it has been reposing on the Holy Table (altar). The cross is lying on a tray that has been covered with an Aër (liturgical veil) and decorated with basil leaves and flowers. He sets the cross on a table in the centre of the church as the choir sings of the festal Troparion of the Cross: "Save, O Lord, Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance, granting unto Orthodox Christians victory over enemies, and by the power of Thy Cross, do Thou preserve Thy commonwealth." Then, all the members of the congregation prostrate themselves on the ground as all sing, "Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify" three times (at the words "Thy holy Resurrection" all stand up again on their feet). Then all come forward to venerate the cross and receive the priest's blessing.

In cathedrals and monasteries, a special "Exaltation" is performed by the bishop or abbot, standing in the centre of the church. This consists of his taking the cross in his hands and raising it above his head. He makes an exclamation, to which the choir responds, chanting, Kyrie eleison 100 times. As they chant, he makes the sign of the cross with it three times, then slowly bows down to the ground, and stands up again raising the cross above his head as before. This process is repeated four more times to the four points of the compass.

(Stavronian September 2007)

PRISON ESCAPES

Recently I went for a walk with a friend. She told me all about her problems and worries, the fall-outs she had had. The day was glorious, the sun was shining, the birds were singing, the sky was limpid, but she couldn't notice any of the beauty surrounding us because she was so wrapped up in her worries. This reminded me of many occasions on which I went for drives with my husband and he stopped the torrent of my chatter to say: *Look how beautiful the view is!* I couldn't see the beauty around because I was trapped inside my head, a prisoner of my words. So often these days, people walk around with earbuds in or looking at their phone, cut off from their surroundings, oblivious to everything around them. Our thoughts, feelings and concerns become walls which stop us from relating to the world and the people around.

Lord, do you hear me?
I'm suffering dreadfully.
Locked in myself,
Prisoner of myself,
I hear nothing but my voice,
I see nothing but myself,
And behind me there is nothing but suffering.
(Michel Quoist)

Inversely, there are so many beautiful stories about people who have been in prison and found their inner freedom while they were incarcerated. Freedom is release from the prison of the self, from the burden of anxiety and worry, free from incarceration in the tower of self-preservation. The call of Christ is to offer ourselves, to spill ourselves out, to burn ourselves for others. It is so hard to understand and such a great mystery that in the midst of pain, cold, hunger, illness, suffering, torture, physical incarceration, humiliation, Christ gifts us freedom through the Cross. Many a saints were fashioned in prisons and concentration camps.

I know a retired man who used to work in a prison. He is an open sociable man, but he closes every door and even locks it, if possible, when he leaves a room and keeps his keys permanently on his belt. It is simply a habit, a professional quirk. I found it an amusing eccentricity, until it struck me that I do the same thing -- metaphorically, of course. I shut every door to protect myself from robbers of fortune, time, well-being. The world is a huge prison, each of us locked up in a cell, the cell of our ego. We hear the others and their distant moans, each in their own cell. We long to reach for them and hold hands, but we cannot, locked up with the heavy chains of the ego: our opinions, our sense of self-worth, our preoccupation with wealth and status, our desires, our hurts and traumas, our anxieties and worries. Christ comes with the key to unlock our cells: Love. Like scared caged animals, when the door is left open, we take a step outside and run back to our prison, terrified by the sense of freedom. There are courageous spirits, who, once liberated, never return to their cell. They are the saints.

In my late teens I happened to read a Belgian novel, which has sunk into oblivion since except for the most vivid memory of one page, which describes the falling in love of the heroine for the first time. A lonely girl, deprived of love throughout her life, falls in love and describes the sudden, surprising feeling of her heart opening up. She is walking down the road and it feels like a crack has suddenly appeared in her heart. Through this small crevice things start to penetrate inside her: the sunshine, the beggar at the side of the road, people in the street. Years later, when I met Christ, I felt the same, the whole world entered my being: the birds, the workmen, the beggar, the cashier at Sainsbury's. Another friend described a similar experience since meeting Christ: *"I feel there is a crack in my heart*". It is like being released from prison and noticing the world anew. And with it, this discovery brings great joy and thirst for God, for people, for Creation.

When I was a child, we had no curtains in our 5th floor flat. When I went to bed, I faced my window and saw the sky with the millions of stars. This unsettled me and made it very hard to go to sleep. It was a taste of infinity, which dwarfed all my little worries and concerns, bringing about vague questions about the meaning of life, the universe and all there is within it. I felt like a small, insignificant ant. What used to be an unsettling feeling, a sort of sadness and existential angst then, has now turned to joy and gratitude with the knowledge of Christ. The sight of the myriad of stars (much rarer now I live in cloudy England) brings about a sense of freedom. All my small successes, joys, preoccupations, worries and anxieties disappear in wonder at the sight of infinity. I am in awe at the beauty of Creation, grateful for life itself which allows me to experience it simply in the present moment. I am freed from myself, the past and the future.

Yesterday, I asked my adult, atheist children which was their favourite Bible story. One replied *The Good Samaritan*, the other *Jonah and the Whale*. I found this very interesting they are both stories of freedom in their own way.

The Good Samaritan shows the juxtaposition between freedom through compassion and the prison of self. Three people walked past the man in trouble; one stops: the one who is free, free from himself, from worries about money, concerns of impurity, thoughts on ethnical division.

Utterly liberated from the things that hinder most of us -- our past, our sins, our fears, our desires and the whole plethora of things that condition us from our youth up -- the Samaritan does the work of God. When we experience this unmitigated freedom, we know that the Spirit of

God is moving in us. (Fr Antony Hughes)

Jonah is freed from the belly of the whale by choosing obedience to the will of God, prefiguring the freedom of the Cross.

Paradoxically, the things which set us free are obedience, love, compassion, faith. *"Have faith and love! Faith sets you free, love unites you to Christ. You will be free in union with Christ and remain in His love." (Father Calciu Dumitreasa*.)

Saint Gavrilia received from God alongside the gift of healing, the gift of "dispassion". She used to say *"I do not exist"* and felt like a spectator of her own life. She practised the precept of Saint Nilus: "He knows himself best, who believes himself as not existing". She talks of existence. When asked how this non-existence was to be reached, she replied: "By thinking all the time of the other and not yourself." What wonderful freedom there is in becoming the other, taking on their "self" to the point of our own non-existence!

"…When I depart from this world,
just as a passing boat leaves no trace
on the surface of the water
-as the poet says-
So shall I leave no trace…
Yet, I have no qualms of conscience.
That's it! Dispassion!
If the Lord wanted,
He could have made me different.
But He leads the Way
And I follow Him
Beholding His Miracles!
I am only a spectator…"

Complete freedom is very difficult to attain. We may experience it fleetingly for a moment when we offer ourselves to God and to our neighbour, but then we find ourselves trapped yet again inside our ego. If we can allow Christ to open the heavy door just a crack to let the world in, we allow the beginning of freedom to enter our prison.

"The Christian is free and therefore joyful." (N Steinhardt)

Martha and Mary

PARISH NEWS

Pilgrimage to St Herbert island

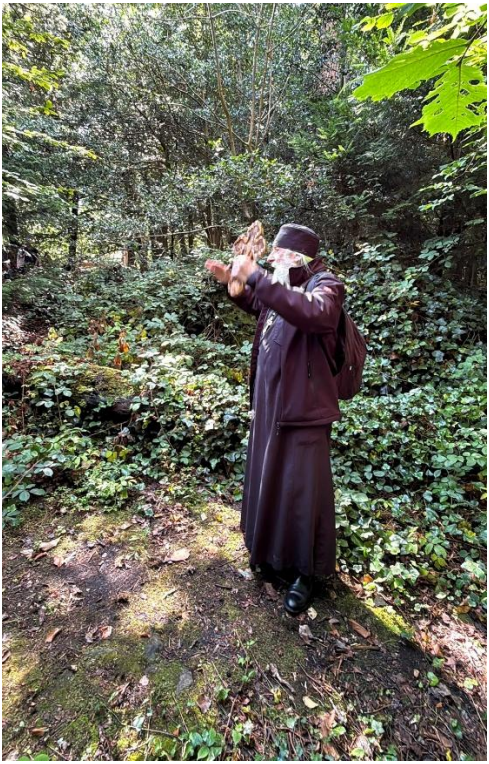
"The Church in the British Isles will only begin to grow when She begins again to venerate her own Saints"
(St. Arsenios of Paros, †1877)

We have a hermit who is living in our back garden. St. Herbert of Derwentwater is his name, and above all else he loves to have silence and solitude. He hasn't said very much, and thus we don't know much about him, but nevertheless his presence is felt in our parish.

We went to his home, an island he loved, where he laboured, prayed, and glorified God. We brought with us our memories of the departed – Barnabas, Katerina, and all the others whose image we hold in our hearts – and left them here in the cell of St. Herbert.

The veil is thin in this place. The silent ascetic guides an inquirer's mind towards Christ.

St. Herbert of Derwentwater, pray to God for us!



Baptisms and Chrismations

On 29 August, baptisms of Alexei at the Holy Cross and Elijah (Marta and Sean's son) in Poland took place. May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ keep them under His protection!

Alexei's baptism

Elijah's baptism

The Library Table

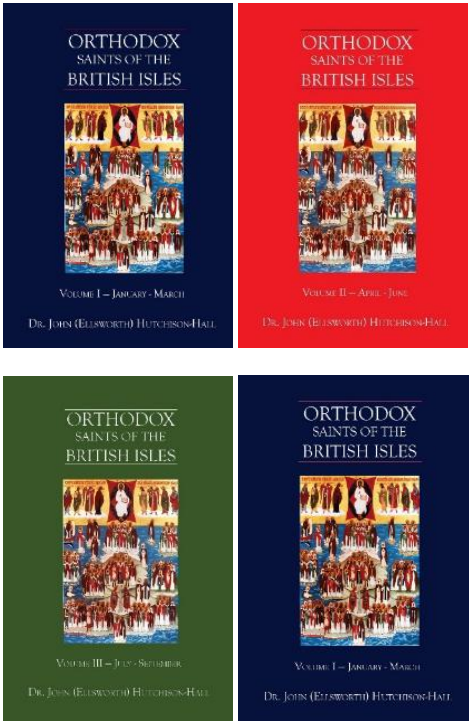
"When you immerse your mind and heart in spiritual books, you will always be filled, for spiritual reading gives you a foundation in God." (St. John Chrysostom)

You can now browse the Holy Cross Library catalogue anytime by visiting: https://www.librarycat.org/lib/Holy.Cross.Orthodox

We warmly invite you to contribute to this Library Table feature by sharing short reviews of books that have inspired, encouraged, or supported you in your spiritual life. Your reflections may be just the encouragement someone else needs.

Our library also welcomes donations of books on Orthodox topics. If there are titles you would love to see on our shelves, please speak with James. (Please note that any books outside the Orthodox tradition will need a blessing from Father before being added.)

Spotlight on Our Latest Addition



Orthodox Saints of the British Isles (4 Volumes)
by Dr. John (Ellsworth) Hutchison-Hall

- Volume I -- January – March
- Volume II -- April – June
- Volume III — July – September
- Volume IV — October - December

The British Isles can boast many things. Our landscapes, along with breathtaking mountain ranges, are among them. You don't have to go far to be welcomed by our rolling hills, walks through forests, or a stroll along our many beaches, picturesque rivers, and streams.

The beauty is abundant. But most importantly, these isles boast hundreds of Orthodox Saints. We have been blessed by the addition of a four-volume collection of Orthodox Saints of the British Isles.

After all, Saint Arsenios of Paros himself stated, "The Church of the British Isles will only begin to grow when she begins to venerate her own saints."

St John of Shanghai and San Francisco taught that Orthodox Christians living in any land have a spiritual duty to honour and pray to the local and national saints of that region.

There is no better place to start than with these four books. Have we heard of St Kinnia, a holy maiden baptised by Saint Patrick? Or maybe Saint Guinoc from the 9th century, a bishop in Scotland? No? Well, let Saint Arsenios's and Saint John of Shanghai's wishes be granted, and let us do the will of God.

On a recent stay at St John the Baptist Monastery in Essex, we discovered that Father Andrew, a kind and humble Scottish priest serving there, encourages the nuns and monks to learn more about the Saints of the British Isles. He was thrilled to learn about Saint Samantha of Clonbroney, as he had never heard of her. These books were recommended for the monastery bookshop, and the excitement to add them to the collection was very encouraging.

Review and recommendation kindly provided by Samantha

Iconostasis extension

With the blessing of Metropolitan Silouan, our Iconostasis is now planned to be extended by Christmas 2026. 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.

Summary of church council meeting N.23

Held at the Church of St. Martin of Tours,
Westgate, LA4 4UZ
Sunday, 9th August 2026

The Parish Council meeting of August began with a report of the parish finances for July in which the council heard that income had been steady and similar to the previous months with a continuation of the recent trend in donations moving away from plate collections slightly and an increase in online giving. Outgoings for the month of particular note were the charitable donation to St Constantine's Parish in York towards the purchase of their new church building. Our parish managed to raise £457 in total. Fr Christopher of St Constantine's wrote to our parish expressing his immense gratitude for its kindness and generosity. In iconostasis news, our chosen carpenter, Marian, of the Preston Parish, has been to take measurements for the new pieces and will now begin crafting them in his workshop. The council planned to have a collection-box made by the children, which will be kept out in church permanently for the Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service so that parishioners may make donations more easily and frequently, should they choose, as opposed to the usual collections held only twice a year at Great Lent and Christmas. The council discussed plans for upcoming baptisms and other minor housekeeping. This concluded the meeting.

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

Sept. 1: *Pericles*
Sept. 26: *William*
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 the Holy Apostle John the Evangelist and Theologian
28th Sept: St. Lioba of Wimborne, Abbess of Bischofsheim (†782)

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 September*

Tue. 1st		*Church New Year (no service)*
Wed. 2nd	18:30	Online Prayer group of St Etheldreda and St Seraphim
Sat. 5th	15:45	Great Vespers and Confessions. Memorials by arrangement
Sun. 6th	09:15	Shortened Matins and confessions
	09.45	Divine Liturgy
Wed. 9th	18:30	Online Prayer group of St Etheldreda and St Seraphim
Tue. 8th		*The Nativity of our Most Holy Lady the Mother-of-God and Ever Virgin Mary (no service)*
Sat. 12th	15:45	Great Vespers and Confessions. Memorials by arrangement. *Baptisms and Making of Catechumens to be arranged and confirmed
Sun. 13th		*Forefeast of the Exaltation of the Precious and lifegiving Cross and Procession*
	09:15	Shortened Matins and confessions
	09.45	Divine Liturgy, followed by church council meeting
Wed. 16th	18:30	Online Prayer group of St Etheldreda and St Seraphim
Sat. 19th	15:45	Great Vespers and Confessions. Memorials by arrangement
Sun. 20th	09:15	Shortened Matins and confessions
	09.45	Divine Liturgy
Wed. 23rd	18:30	Online Prayer group of St Etheldreda and St Seraphim
Sat. 26th		Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian
	09:45	Divine Liturgy (no Great Vespers)
Sun. 27th	09:15	Shortened Matins and confessions
	09.45	Divine Liturgy
Wed. 30th	18:30	Online Prayer group of St Etheldreda and St Seraphim

*May be subject to changes, which would be announced. Please monitor the email updates and the parish's Facebook page.
**Via WhatsApp: https://call.whatsapp.com/video/1WnKsoP45eHcAukXpIYXrl

2026 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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"*God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith*"
-- St. George Karslides –

For further information please contact:

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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.