



Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self –isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
22nd March 2020**



It is hoped to produce a more frequent newsletter to counteract our being not be able to meet at church as we usually do. Some of us live alone and far from others, which may make them feel even more isolated. There will be Metropolitan Anthony sermons, readings and/or prayers suitable for the stage of Lent we are in, or beyond Pascha if that is what we have to do, plus other snippets of information that anyone would like to share. I am happy to collate all the information and would appreciate contributions (email: celia.olsson.art@gmail.com) as I am working so don't have a lot of time. If anyone would like to take over of an edition, please let me know.

Part of a Sermon for the Sunday of the Cross given by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh on 18th March 1990

There is a passage of the Gospel in which we are told that when Christ spoke of salvation and of its conditions, Peter said to Him, 'Who then can be saved?' - and Christ answered, 'What is not possible to men is possible for God!'. And He Himself came; the fullness of God abided in a human person, and He has power to forgive because He is the victim of all the evil, all the cruelty, all the destructiveness of human history. Because indeed, no one but the victim can forgive those who have brought evil, suffering, misery, corruption and death into their lives. And Christ does not only forgive His own murderers, when He says, 'Father, forgive - they don't know what they are doing': He goes beyond this, because He had said, 'Whatever you have done to one of My smaller brethren and sisters, you have done it to Me' - not only in good, but indeed, the worst: because in compassion, in solidarity He identifies with every sufferer: the death, the pain, the agony of each of those who suffer is His. And so, when He prays, 'Father, forgive! They do not know what they are doing, what they have been doing', He prays for each of us not only in His own name, but in the name of all those upon whom evil has visited because of human sin.

But it is not only Christ who forgives; everyone who has suffered in soul, in body, in spirit, - everyone is called to grant freedom to those who have made him suffer.

And so, we can see why Christ says, 'Forgive so that you may be forgiven' because both the victim and the culprit are tied in one knot of solidarity and reciprocal responsibility. Only the victim can say, 'Lord - forgive him, forgive her', and only then can the Lord say, 'I do!'.

But do you realise what responsibility it puts on each of us with regard to all and everyone? But also the depth, the glorious depth of hope which opens up to us when we look at the Cross and see that in solidarity with all mankind Christ taking upon Himself all the suffering of the world, accepting to die an impossible death has said in the name of all the sufferers, 'Yes, - we forgive!'

This is one more step towards freedom, this is one more step towards the moment when we will be faced with Christ's resurrection that engulfs us also because the risen Christ is risen and is offering all and each of us the fullness of eternal life.

And so again, and again we can say that Lent is a spring of a new life, a new time, a time of renewal, not only in repentance, but in being taken by Christ Himself as the shepherd took the lost sheep, as the Lord took up His Cross, brought it to the place of death, and undid death, undid evil by forgiveness and giving His life. Once more we are confronted with another step of our freedom and of newness. Let us enter ever deeper into this mystery, into this wonder of salvation, and rejoice in the Lord, and rejoicing, step after step, more and more, let us also express our gratitude by newness of life. Amen!

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Third Sunday in Lent – The Adoration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

Shine, O Cross of the Lord! Illumine the hearts of those who honour thee! With love inspired by God, we embrace thee, for thou art the only hope of the world. Through thee our tears are wiped away, the snares of death are sprung, and we pass over into everlasting joy. Through the Cross reveal Thy beauty to us, O Lord! Help Thy servants who ask for mercy in faith! Bestow upon us the fruits of abstinence!

Today the Master of creation and the Lord of Glory is nailed to the Cross and His side is pierced; and He who is the sweetness of the Church tastes gall and vinegar. A crown of thorns is put upon Him who covers heaven with clouds. He is clothed in a cloak of mockery, and He who formed man with His hands is struck by a hand of clay. He who wraps the heaven in clouds is smitten upon His back. He accepts spitting and scourging, reproach and buffeting; and all these things my Deliverer and God endures for me that am condemned, that in His compassion He may save the world from error.

Troparion

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. Grant Orthodox Christians victory over the enemy, and protect Thy habitation with Thy Cross.

Kontakion

The fiery sword no longer guards the gate of Eden, for in a strange and glorious way the wood of the Cross has quenched its flames. The sting of death and the victory of hell are now destroyed, for Thou art come, my Saviour, crying unto those in Hell: Return again to Paradise.

In place of the Thrice-Holy Hymn

Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, O Master, and we glorify Thy holy Resurrection.

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14 – 5:6

Gospel: Mark 8:34 – 9:1

A Prayer for Difficult Times

Give speedy and lasting encouragement to Thy servants, O Jesus, when our spirits are despondent. Withdraw not from our souls in trouble. Be not far from our thoughts when we are in difficulties, but ever protect us. Draw near, draw near to us, O Thou who art everywhere. As Thou wast always with Thine apostles, so too unite with Thyself those who love and long for Thee, O Compassionate One, that with one voice we may sing to Thee and praise Thine all-holy Spirit.

(from the Third Hour)

St Gertrude of Nivelles Patron of cats

Ian Bromelow (ex student of Fr Peter's and who has visited St Anne's on many occasions) posted this icon on Facebook a few days ago. Being on the staff of a ginger cat I thought it was rather charming.



She lived in Belgium in the 7th century and became a nun helping to build churches and hospitals along with offering care to travellers and people in need. She also offered food and kindness to the cats that lived around her monastery.

Her feast day is the same as St Patrick of Ireland – 17th March.