



Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self –isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon

3rd May 2020



Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women Metropolitan Anthony Of Sourozh Sermon 21st April 1991

We remember today the Myrrh-bearing women, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, people who in the course of the Gospel are hardly mentioned, yet who, when Christ was seemingly defeated, when death, rejection, betrayal and hatred had conquered, proved to be people of faithfulness and courage, the faithfulness of the heart and the courage that can be born only of love. At the moment of the Crucifixion all the Apostles had fled save one, John, who stood at the foot of the Cross with the Mother of God. Everyone else had abandoned Christ, only a small group of women stood at a short distance from the Cross, and when He had died, they came to anoint His Body which Joseph of Arimathea had sought from Pilate, unafraid of being recognised as a disciple, because in life and in death love and faithfulness had conquered.

Let us reflect on this. It is easy to be Christ's disciples when we are on the crest of the wave, in the security of countries where no persecution, no rejection is endured, no betrayal can lead us to martyrdom, or simply to becoming the victims of mockery and rejection. Let us think of ourselves not in regard to Christ alone but with regard to one another, because Christ has said that what we have done to any one of us, to the smallest, to the most insignificant, we have done to Him. Let us ask ourselves how we behave when someone is rejected, mocked, ostracised, condemned by public opinion or by the opinion of those who mean something to us: whether at that moment our heart remains faithful, whether at that moment we find courage to say, 'He was, and he remains my friend whether you accept or reject him'.

There is no greater measure of faithfulness than that faithfulness which is made manifest in defeat. Let us consider this, because we all are defeated, we are defeated in so many ways. We all strive, with whatever energy we have - a little or much - to be what we should be, and we are defeated at every moment. Should we not look at one another not only with compassion, but with the faithfulness of friends who are prepared to stand by a person who falls, falls away from grace, falls away from his own ideal, frustrates all hopes and expectations which we have set on him or her. At that time let us stand by, at that time let us be faithful and prove that our love was not conditioned by the hope of victory but was a wholehearted gift, gratuitous, joyful, wonderful. Amen.



Texts from the Pentecostarion for the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers

Joseph with Nicodemus took Thee down from the tree, who deckest Thyself with light as with a garment; and looking upon Thee dead, stripped, and without burial, in his grief and tender compassion he lamented, saying: ‘Woe is me, my sweetest Jesus! When but a little while ago the sun saw Thee hanging on the cross, it wrapped itself in darkness: the earth quaked with fear and the veil of the temple was rent in twain. And now I see Thee for my sake submitting of Thine own will to death. How shall I bury Thee, my God? How shall I wrap Thee in a winding sheet? How shall I touch Thy most pure body with my hands? What song at Thy departure shall I sing to Thee, O compassionate Saviour? I magnify Thy sufferings: I sing the praises of Thy burial and Thy resurrection crying: O Lord, glory to Thee.

The Myrrhbearing Women reached Thy tomb and saw the seals of the tomb broken. Not finding Thy most pure body, they lamented, saying: “Who has stolen our Hope? Who has taken the dead One, naked and anointed, the sole consolation of His Mother? How can the Life of the dead have died? How can the Capturer of hell have been buried? But arise in three days as Thou hast said, O Saviour, and save our souls!”

From the Secretary’s Sofa: *Ride Upon the Storm*

This powerful drama series from Denmark (with English subtitles) is only available on the internet <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/ride-upon-the-storm/episode-guide> so you could watch all twenty hour-long episodes end-to-end, or at least (as I have done) separately on successive evenings. Episodes 1-10 I saw a year or more ago when they were first released; in them we were introduced to the Krogh family, hereditary pastors in what is referred to without irony as the “state church” (and evidently run as a government department, about which we are left in no doubt as the story reaches its climax). Without giving anything away the first ten episodes build up to a major tragedy in the family and the remainder deal with its aftermath and eventual resolution; there are, however, plenty of sub-plots to rack up the tension on the way.

All the familiar tropes of modern life are there: urban rootlessness, new age “mindfulness” as a saleable commodity, the multi-ethnic society and sexual free-for-all, with a brief glance at medical ethics (the weakest part of the plot). The story may be centred in the magnificent vicarage which goes with Krogh senior’s appointment and the ornately furnished church next door (the Lutheran Reformation was less physically destructive than its Anglican equivalent), but these are just the background. It’s not for nothing that in the second series the emerging central character is struggling to complete an academic thesis on the thought of Kierkegaard: the real point at issue is the need for an authentic and honest personal faith, even if the quest for this imposes (as it did for Kierkegaard himself) a strain on one’s relationship with the institutional Church. Highly recommended, though perhaps a bit strong for family viewing.

Hugh Allen

Library Corner

A break from literary improvement – to some crime with added familiar landscapes. Ann Cleeves (of Vera and Shetland fame) has written her first book in a new series about a detective based in Barnstaple: *The Long Call*. I won’t say anything about the story as I don’t want to give a spoiler, but it was somehow reassuring to read about places I know. For those of you who know the South Hams and like crime novels, I’m reading a Kate Ellis at the moment. She slightly changes the names of places, eg the River Trad, Tradmouth, Neston – I’ll leave you to guess their real names - but once again you can recognise the landscape. Celia Olsson

Some views on Communion during Social Distancing

From Father Peter

I have been giving much thought to the question of our ecclesial gathering together, and of course the eucharistic communion we share is fulfilled by the communion we have with each other. And it pains me more than I can say, that while I am able to celebrate the Eucharist, simply by virtue of having been ordained, and to share the Sacrament alone with Irina, all of you cannot be there to be a part of that. At the same time, I am also profoundly aware that this service, this Sacrifice, is offered on behalf of all and for all.

Various clergy, because they see the eucharist as being so central to our faith, have suggested different solutions: distributing the reserved Sacrament; people coming to the door of the church to be given the Host to take home, or some other methods. But I find that this mechanical, almost magical approach is not the solution. I am afraid, or not afraid rather, that we shall have to be in a desert for some time to come, and our communion with Christ is not limited to partaking of the Holy Body and Blood. We have turned our homes into sanctuaries where Christ can be given a home and be present with all His saints. It is in our family or solo devotions and our presence in these hallowed spots which we have created that we can be in communion with Christ, and through Him, by our prayers with one another.

From Father Seraphim Aldea of the Monastery of All the Celtic Saints, Mull – Facebook posting 16th April. (Thanks to Hugh for submitting this)

This Pascha [and while our churches remain closed] we must remind ourselves that Christ's Blood and Body do not come with an 'expiry date' and do not vanish in a week or a month or even a lifetime. Once we have partaken of His Sacraments, we are One with Him in eternity, as long as we hold on to His Love and His commandments. Of course this is different from our usual Paschal celebrations. But a different experience can be positive and very enriching. Having to express our faith in a different manner could come with a different understanding of our faith, a new and deeper vision of our identity as Christians in this world.

From Archpriest Alexis Struve

(Translated by Fr Peter from 'La Lettre du Vicariat' No. 5 Avril 2020)

We weren't expecting this! It just came crashing down on us, right in the middle of the "normal" course of our lives. We are in the midst of a world health crisis with all its suffering, misery and uncertainty, and, above all, a tomorrow that no one can predict. Throughout this period, we have been forced to emerge from a certain "comfort". For some, our houses have been transformed into what they should always be, small churches; we have discovered the possibility of blessing, ourselves, the food we prepare for the feasts and the palms or flowers we put next to our icons. We have been forced to move away from a certain "church-centredness", to live our faith with new points of reference; to rethink our relationship to the ecclesial community and to the Eucharist which we miss so much today.

More than ever, in our lives, and especially in our spiritual lives, we are called to live in the present moment. It is not a question of running away from daily realities. On the contrary, it is about rooting time, with Christ, in eternity. Today, everyone is speaking of the "day after". Tomorrow will not be like before, will it be worse? Will it be better? Will it restore in its place everything that was upside down? All these theories confront each other. We know that these days will not be easy.

It is indeed now, that we must show that the Gospel begets something new in every aspect of human life. Invited to renew our Christian life, we must show, as Chiara Lubich writes, that "Christianity is no joke, it is a very serious matter. It is not some little bit of superficiality: a little compassion here, a little love and charity there. Christianity is demanding, it is life lived in its fullness." The Church is the sacrament of the Kingdom and she is called to bring the Kingdom to the world. Called to be the truth about the Kingdom of God; called to sing, as in the akathist hymn to the Mother of God, "the dawn of the day to come."

From your Acting Churchwarden

Our eucharistic life is not simply a matter of partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ: it is about doing this together, in communion. Fr Alexander Schmemmann reminds us that ‘the liturgy is, before everything else, the joyous gathering of those who are to meet the risen Lord and to enter with him into the bridal chamber.’ One of the central duties of the churchwarden is to ensure that proper provision is made for services to be held in the parish, and for parishioners to be kept informed about them, so that we can all participate in that ‘joyous gathering’. I am very much aware that this is a duty I am not currently in a position to fulfil, nor likely to be for some time. Many of us find huge comfort in joining Father Peter and Irina for services livestreamed on Facebook from their home, but not everyone can do this. What we can all do, though, is to keep one another in our prayers. I would like to suggest that we all try do this at the same time on Sunday mornings, say perhaps between 9 and 9.30, when normally our prayer lists would be being read in the altar. If we cannot be together in one place, we can at least gather together in time.

Martin Olsson

A Motorcycle for Father Daniel

Thanks to the generosity of so many parishioners, we have collected nearly enough to add to what Father Daniel has managed to put aside to meet the cost of a ‘new’ motorcycle for him to get around his parish communities. If you have been meaning to contribute but have not quite got round to it yet, don’t let that hold you back – he will still need to tax and insure the vehicle and keep it in fuel. We hope to make the transfer at the end of this month.

Our medical student Dimitrios reports that Covid-19 has not yet got much of a hold in Uganda – less than 100 cases to date, almost all detected among lorry drivers crossing the border from Kenya, and no fatalities. The country has been in a high state of preparedness ever since the recent Ebola outbreak in neighbouring DR Congo, and social distancing is strictly adhered to so, that all churches, mosques, schools, and universities are closed.

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Livestreamed Service Times

Father Peter will normally livestream services regularly from his home on

**Wednesdays:
Vespers at 6.30pm**

**Saturdays:
Vespers at 6pm**

**Sundays:
Divine Liturgy at 9.30am**

These can be found on Facebook
[@OrthodoxParishoftheHolyProphetElias](#)
under **Events**

I slipped His fingers, I escaped His feet,
I ran and hid, for Him I feared to meet.
One day I passed Him, fettered on a Tree,
He turned His Head, and looked, and beckoned me.

Neither by speed, nor strength could He prevail.
Each hand and foot was pinioned by a nail.
He could not run or clasp me if He tried,
But with His eye, He bade me reach His side.

For pity's sake, thought I, I'll set you free.
'Nay -- hold this cross,' He said, 'and follow me.
This yoke is easy, this burden light,
Not hard or grievous if you wear it tight.'

So did I follow Him Who could not move,
An uncaught captive in the hands of Love.

-- (Attributed to) Elizabeth Cheney
written circa 1865 and popular during the Spanish Flu
epidemic in 1919.
Posted on Facebook by Ian Burnett