



Prophet Elias News

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

21 June 2020



**Extract from a Sermon given by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh on the Sunday of All
Saints of this Land on 19 June 1988**

We keep today the memory of all the Saints of this Land. Christ is not knocking only at the doors of individual souls. He knocks at the doors of every Kingdom and of every Land. And the Saints of the Land are those people who respond with all their heart, indeed - all themselves - to His coming. They are the glory, they are the shining of the Land, they are the holiness of the Land, the light that shines in the darkness, because few they are, and the darkness is vast, and the darkness is deep. We live in a time of confusion, a time of doubt, a time of fear. The Saints lived in difficult times, but they were steady; they received the message of the Gospel, and against all evidence, against fear, against the danger of martyrdom they stood steadfast in the truth of God. They are indeed the glory of this Land, as the Saints of so many Lands are a wonderful response of the earth to the coming of God in the flesh.

But they are not only the glory of the Land - they are a challenge to the Land. They were men, and women, and children like us, with one difference: they proved capable of responding to God wholeheartedly. They were prepared to respond to God with their lives and their deaths, to respond to God by sacrificing everything that was unworthy of Him, and indeed, of themselves, because they were loved of God, and being loved makes you infinitely significant and precious.

They are a challenge to us: where do we stand? We sing their praises, we admire their persons - but do we follow in their footsteps? If Christ came now, visibly, would we find in ourselves more courage to follow Him than we find in ourselves now, with the Gospel to teach us, the Saints to pray for us, to be before our eyes a living example of those who have heard Christ say, 'I have given you an example for you to follow'?

Let us reflect on our place in the mystery of salvation; not the mystery of our own salvation, but the salvation of the world. It is Christ who carries the burden of the whole world, but you may remember how, when He went to His Passion, the Cross was too heavy for Him; and Simon of Cyrene was called upon to help Him carry His cross. The Saints of God are carrying, each according to their strength, the Cross of Salvation. But we are all awaited: Christ passes before each of us, with His cross breaking His shoulder and His back, and saying to us, 'Are you another Simon of Cyrene? Or are you one of the crowd who let Me pass, see how I fall, see how I walked to Calvary to die, without help?'

Let us all reflect on the call which comes through every Saint and through all the Saints of the Land to us, who ask us, 'Where are you? What are you doing for the salvation of the Land to whom God came, and who responded to it in our persons? Are you to become one of us, or are you to be another cross for Him to bear?'

Saint Alban, first Martyr of Britain (3rd Century)

Last Sunday we celebrated all the saints of the Church worldwide and throughout its history. This Sunday we commemorate particularly the Saints of our own country, as do the people of Russia, Romania, America, and Palestine. Many of our very local saints here in Devon have feastdays around this time (see previous issues), and this Monday, 22nd June, we remember the earliest of British saints, the holy martyr Alban.

Alban was a Romano-Briton who lived at Verulamium (now Saint Alban's). Himself a pagan, he nevertheless sheltered a Christian priest during a period of systematic persecution, probably under the Emperor Septimius Severus in 209. This encounter led to his conversion and baptism, and when soldiers came to arrest the priest, Alban dressed himself in the priest's clothes, was arrested and executed by beheading.

Very soon a Christian shrine grew up at the scene of his martyrdom, which Saint Bede described as a spot "whose natural beauty had long fitted it as a place to be hallowed by the blood of a blessed martyr". A church built on the site of the shrine was later incorporated in the cathedral that bears his name. M.O.



The Saints Behold Hell and Embrace It

God is love, and in the saints the Holy Spirit is love. Dwelling in the Holy Spirit, the saints behold hell and embrace it, too, in their love.

Saint Silouan

Ancient Faith Radio – Church Music at Home

Ancientfaith radio <https://www.ancientfaith.com/radio> is a website recommended by Fr Alexander Fostiropoulos which plays church music from many Liturgical traditions and in several languages. Although much of it is a bit American, some is very familiar (when I tuned in I caught the end of something Metropolitan Anthony & Fr Michael were celebrating, I think part of Vespers, but it was in Slavonic and unlabelled on the play list so I wasn't quite sure!). It also has talks and comment.

Anne-Marie Angus

Children's Summer Camp in Wales 2020

After very careful consideration and with heavy heart we regret to announce that we have to cancel our Children's Summer Camp in Wales this year. This decision has not been taken lightly and has been reached after evaluating the potential health risks, unprecedented challenges, and hazards our children and adult volunteers would be exposed to during the Covid-19 epidemic. In addition, we feel that the logistics of maintaining a social distancing strategy would mean that we would lose the family atmosphere of our camp.

Our camp has been running for some 45 years for children aged 9-16 from our parishes in the UK and from Europe. Therefore you can understand the sadness the organisers, helpers and leaders feel at having to make the decision to cancel this year. We therefore thank you for your support and understanding and very much look forward to welcoming new and old campers to join us in Summer 2021. We will keep you up-to-date of future developments. In the meantime, stay safe and God Bless.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Father Alexander Fostiropoulos: fostiropoulos@clara.net (020 3565 4585), Alexis Martinowsky: alexis@martinowsky.com (07966 198 770), Naomi Schubert: naomi_marks@hotmail.com (0781 1355 178).

Some Thoughts on Saint Matthew's Gospel

We've now emerged from the seasons of Lent/Pascha/Pentecost into the seemingly endless period "after Pentecost". From now until late summer the Sunday and weekday Gospels are taken from St Matthew, with Luke and Mark filling the time until Lent comes round again.

In its ninth chapter we read the story of the calling of Matthew the tax collector to follow Jesus, but it's unlikely that the Gospel was actually composed by him. For the past 150 years or so the scholarly consensus has been that Mark was the first of the three "synoptic" Gospels to be written, and that Matthew and Luke came years later, fleshing out the skeleton of his brief account with material from other sources. (One of these may have been a collection of "sayings of Jesus", which could conceivably have come from the pen of the Apostle Matthew himself or the community over which he presided.) Not everyone has accepted this tidy solution – a book by the late Enoch Powell (who as a classical scholar was well placed to make informed judgements on the original Greek text) upholds the once general view that Matthew was written first, and argues that in their different ways Mark and Luke adapted and added to it. Some of his other conclusions, however, are as controversial as his more notorious political statements.

The body of Matthew's Gospel (between the opening stories of Jesus's birth and first public acts and those of the Passion and Resurrection at the end) is arranged as five blocks of teaching, set between narrative passages. It thus forms a new "Torah" or body of law, providing for the New Israel of the Church a foundation document comparable to the Pentateuch or "five books" (Genesis to Deuteronomy) for the Old Israel.

The first of these five blocks is the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5 to 7), the opening section of which (the Beatitudes) is familiar to us from its use in the Liturgy. It also contains the text of the Lord's Prayer as part of Christ's teaching on the practicalities of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. The second block (chapter 10) recounts the commissioning of the Twelve and instructions for their (and our) mission, and the third (chapter 13) is a collection of parables illustrating the ways of God with humanity ("The kingdom of heaven is like..."). In the fourth (chapter 18) there are more parables providing lessons on humility and forgiveness (the pattern for life in the Church), paving the way for the final section in chapters 24 and 25. This looks forward to the end of the age and the final judgement: the challenging parables of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Talents and the Sheep and Goats are found here.

I realise this is a slightly over-simplified picture; there are in fact parables and other sayings of Jesus in some of the narrative sections, and little bits of narrative in some of those devoted to teaching. It does, however, give an idea of the Gospel's general shape and help us to focus on how the author (or editor, or compiler) wanted us to understand its meaning and purpose.

There are probably several more weeks of restricted life ahead of us, even if they are gradually easing, so now might be a good time to start immersing ourselves in this "Word of the Lord" to us, his New People. This could be done either by a thoughtful reading of the short passage appointed for each day, or by tackling a chapter or two at a time – or perhaps by a combination of the two.

Hugh Allen

You may have noticed that unfortunately the computer malfunction in the editorial office has yet to be sorted. We hope to be able to bring you the pictures from Pentecost at Home and other contributions in the next issue.

Celia

Online streaming services

I have been struck in particular during the streaming of our services, both from home, and now from St Anne's, by the way in which this unusual form of communal prayer has brought together not only those who would regularly attend services in our church, but also those from far and wide, who may have in the past been visitors, or for whom our little church has given some form of spiritual sustenance. Those who have been following or sharing in the online celebration of the divine Liturgy will have noticed that during the service I read a very long list of names, both of the departed and the living. These names have been sent to me by people from many places asking for prayers. I do so, not at the service of preparation, when it is customary for a server to read out the names submitted by parishioners while the priest takes out a tiny portion from the prosphora and places them on the discos next to the Lamb which is to be consecrated, but after the anaphoral prayer. I first came across this practice in a Moscow church (Sts Cosmas and Damian) which we would regularly attend during our visits to Russia. Following the prayers of consecration, we remember the whole church, starting with the Mother of God, and then we read the following prayer:

For the holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, John, the holy, glorious and all-praised Apostles, Saint(s) N(N)., whose memory we keep today, and for all thy saints, at whose prayers visit us, O God. And remember all those who have fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection to eternal life, (here he may remember by name the departed whom he will: especially ...)

There follows a short prayer (much longer in the Liturgy of St Basil):

Remember, O Lord, the city [or: town or: village or: monastery] in which we dwell, and every city, town and village, and those who dwell in them by faith. Remember, O Lord, those who travel by land, air or water; the sick, the suffering, those in captivity, and their safety and salvation. Remember, O Lord, those who bear fruit and do good works in thy holy churches, and those who remember the poor, and upon us all send down thy mercies.

And it is at this point that I read out the lists for the living. In doing so, I am struck by the fact that the recitation of all these names, both of the departed and the living, bring together those who are scattered and isolated in their homes into a communion of love and prayer.

So please, if you have names you would like to be read out during the Liturgy, do not hesitate to send them to me.

Father Peter

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A quote from Fr Alexander Schmemmann:

“Once more, the joyful character of the eucharistic gathering must be stressed. For the medieval emphasis on the cross, while not a wrong one, is certainly one-sided. 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. And it is this joy of expectation and this expectation of joy that are expressed in singing and ritual, in vestments and in censuring, in that whole 'beauty' of the liturgy which has so often been denounced as unnecessary and even sinful. Unnecessary it is indeed, for we are beyond the categories of the 'necessary.' Beauty is never 'necessary,' 'functional' or 'useful.' And when, expecting someone whom we love, we put a beautiful tablecloth on the table and decorate it with candles and flowers, we do all this not out of necessity, but out of love. And the Church is love, expectation and joy.”