



Prophet Elias News

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

7th June 2020



Come, Holy Spirit, Sanctify Our Lives!

The cry for transformation and sanctification corresponds to the deepest longings and desires of the human being. The world as it is, our existence, as it actually is, needs transformation. We cannot be content with things as they are. We must change ourselves and the way things are; but how?

There are two ways of asking the Holy Spirit to be involved in any process of transformation leading to holiness. One is to ask him to assist with our efforts. This is the way of ethics: we do the planning, we make the efforts, and the Spirit is asked to help. The other way is to leave everything to the Spirit. We do nothing but pray, and leave everything to the Spirit. Both of these extremes are wrong, but of these two the first one is probably the one we have to watch out for more carefully at this time of widespread rationalism and planning. The Spirit seems to have an obsession with freedom. He blows where he wills, and does not like to be told what to do. We must certainly try, and we must definitely do our best, but when we pray for the Spirit to come we must be prepared for the unexpected. Our [internal] computers may well prove to be wrong or even useless.

Sanctification has always been associated with the specific operations of the Holy Spirit since the time of the Church Fathers. But the way this sanctification and the holiness that results from it have been understood through the centuries has turned spirituality into a concept almost irrelevant for the world at large. How can we make the concept of holiness relevant today?

Holiness means setting apart someone or something for God. The *ethos* of holiness requires an attitude towards all that exists (our bodies, our minds, the material world, etc.) as if it by nature belonged to God. We cannot own ourselves, our bodies, our lives, our natural resources - they belong to God. We are there in the world as the priests of creation endowed with the privilege of referring creation back to its Creator. This eucharistic ethos is the first thing that we need today at a time of severe ecological crisis. This spirituality has to be recovered urgently, now that we need to be redeemed from humanistic and human-centred attitudes to existence.

Yet we must guard ourselves against an easy spiritualism. We often speak too easily and too quickly of the presence and the activity of the Holy Spirit in what we do. We must humbly submit what we are and what we do to his purifying judgment, awaiting for him to reveal the truth. There is always the danger of confusing the Spirit of God with our own psychological experiences or certainties. The Spirit is God. He is Lord. He cannot be contained by our own feelings. The best we can do is to worship him as Lord, to pray to him to dwell among us, and to await patiently upon him in all that we do.

Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon: *Sourozh 44 (1991)* [Abridged]

O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth
Who art everywhere present and fillest all things
Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life:
Come and abide in us, cleanse us of every impurity
And save our souls, O Good One.

Texts for the Sunday of Pentecost

The Holy Spirit provides all things:
He pours forth prophecies, He leads priests to perfection,
He teaches unschooled people wisdom,
He reveals fishermen as theologians, He confirms the Church.
O Comforter, one in essence and enthroned with the Father and the Son,
glory to Thee!

Troparion

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God,
Who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise
by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit,
and through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net.
O Lover of Man, glory to Thee!

Kontakion

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues,
He divided the nations;
but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity.
Therefore, with one voice we glorify the All-holy Spirit.

For The Day of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is Light and Life, a living Fountain of spiritual gifts,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, all-knowing, upright and good:
He leads us and washes away our sins. He is God, and He makes us gods;
He is Fire proceeding from Fire, speaking and acting and distributing gifts.
By Him all the Prophets, Martyrs and Apostles of God are crowned.
Strange account, strange and wonderful sight:
Fire is divided for distributing gifts.

Metropolitan Anthony - Sermon for the Day of the Holy Spirit on 19 June 1989

We are today keeping the Feast of the Holy Spirit. What do we know about Him? We have heard wonderful words yesterday; but when we think of Him, of the name He is given in the Gospel, that which is translated in English 'The Comforter', in other translations 'The Advocate' — Who is He? He is the one Who is the Comforter, indeed the One Who consoles us for our separation from Christ, Who consoles us who are like orphans, who long to be with Christ our God, our Saviour, and who know that as long as we are in the flesh — and this is the word of Saint Paul — we are separated from Him. But for Him to be our comforter, to be our consolation, we must first of all be aware of the fact that we *are* separated; and this is the first question that we must ask ourselves: are we aware of it? Or do we live in the delusion that we are in God, and God in us, and that nothing more is needed. *How much more* is needed!

He is also the One, Who — as the Comforter — gives us strength, strength to live despite the separation, strength to stand fast and to be the doers of the way, the fulfiller of the commandments of God, the One Who can give us vigour of soul, determination, power to do it. But this again, only if we turn to Him and say, Come! And abide in us! Cleanse us! Be not only our Comforter but our strength.

And lastly, He is the One Who gives us, already now, the joy of knowing how close we are despite what seems to be an infinite distance between God and us, the One Who, in unutterable groanings speaks to God from the depths of our being; the One, Who because we are Christ's own people, His brothers, His sisters in humanity — and these are His own words — are the children of the Father. The joy of this, the wonder of this, the dignity of this! Indeed also, the responsibility of this. And if we think of our world which is to such a great extent alien to God, He is already the beginning of eternal life; His presence is a *decisive* event; He beats against the rocks like the sea, He breaks resistances; He is the joy of eternity, knocking at our door, forcing Himself into our lives, reminding us of God, of Christ our Saviour, of our greatness and dignity before God, and that all things are possible in the power of Christ Who sustains us.

Let us therefore responsibly and gratefully keep this Feast; and may the Spirit of God Who came in tongues of fire upon the Apostles come to us, either like a fire that sets us aglow and makes us to burn like a Burning Bush or to touch us like a still little voice which the Prophet heard, in the wilderness in which God was, in His quiet humility, in His surrender to us, in His love for us.

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June 11th – Saint Luke of Simferopol

Saint Luke the Physician, Archbishop of Simferopol, was born in 1877 in the Kerch Peninsula of Crimea. He graduated first in Fine Arts, but decided he wanted to work where he could help people who suffer, and chose a career in medicine. As a young doctor he married Anna, a nurse, who sadly died young, at only 38, leaving him with the responsibility of bringing up four children. He became a leading surgeon, and published many important scientific papers. In 1921 he was ordained a priest, but continued his medical career. Because he insisted on having an icon of the Mother of God in his operating theatre, he was accused of giving 'inappropriate surgical care' to Red Army soldiers, and sentenced to 16 years imprisonment and internal exile, the first of three periods of arrest, interrogation and imprisonment. He was ordained a Priest in 1921, Bishop of Tashkent in 1923, and in 1946 he was promoted to Archbishop of Simferopol in Crimea. He remained in this position until his repose, on 11 June 1961.

Fr George Papavarnavas writes:

'Studying the life and conduct of Saint Luke, one cannot distinguish the Bishop from the physician. Saint Luke was both together everywhere. He would heal patients with the use of medical science, but also through prayer. Also, his pastoral ministry included him being a physician, since he tried to heal people both physically and spiritually. Because of his great love for God, he loved others, all without exception, without discrimination.' In prison, he would tell fellow prisoners, 'They demand that I take off my ryassa [outer cassock]. I will never do so. My ryassa will be with me to my very death. I help people as a physician, and I help them as a servant of the Church.'

Sources: OrthoWiki; Orthodox Christianity 13/6/2015 - Fr George Papavarnavas:
Saint Luke the Physician of Simferopol as a Model for our Lives.



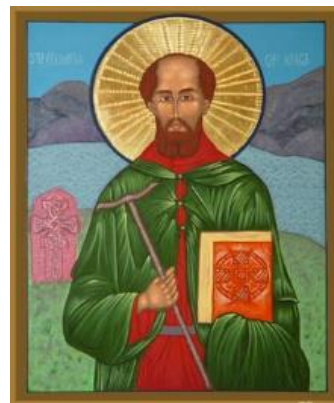
Reminder

On Sunday evening 7th June, Fr Peter will livestream
Vespers with Kneeling Prayers from his home at
6.30pm

June 9th - Saint Columba of Iona (521 – 597)

Columba was an Irish abbot and missionary evangelist who introduced Christianity into what is today Scotland and Northumbria. He founded the important abbey on Iona, which became a dominant religious and political institution in the region for centuries, and is today an important site of pilgrimage. He is the patron saint of Derry. He was highly regarded by both the Gaels of Ireland and the Picts, and is remembered today as one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland. In Ireland, he is commonly known as Colmcille, which means ‘Church Dove’

Adapted from Wikipedia



The Death of George Floyd and its Aftermath

‘I call upon Orthodox Christians in the Holy Metropolis of Chicago to do the hard work that this moment in history demands. Grieve with the victims of injustice, pray for those gripped by hate and fear, protest peacefully against injustice, advocate for the under-served, rebuild destroyed communities and, above all, extend unconditional love and mercy. We are all complicit in the suffering of our neighbour, and we must all repent—transforming our way of seeing, thinking, and acting toward Christ-likeness.

Doing the hard work of repentance is the very essence of being a Christian and, to that end, we must prayerfully take up our crosses and begin, today, to reconcile with God and our fellow human beings. Our rights, our nation and our salvation depend on it.’

Metropolitan Nathanael (Symeonides) of Chicago,
in a statement issued on the website of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, 1st June 2020.

Future Newsletters

When I first started this ‘Newsletters in time of self-isolation’ back in March the idea was to keep our parish in Devon connected, but over the last few weeks I have discovered that its reach has been expanded and it is being appreciated by others beyond our borders. As I said last week, I have a feeling that whilst we are all being bodily separated we have somehow become more connected. My thanks go to Martin who over the last weeks who has sourced Metropolitan Anthony’s sermons for each Sunday. Now that Pentecost has passed that source of specific sermons has run out so we’re going to need to look elsewhere for material – and this is where you come in!

I have always envisaged the Prophet Elias newsletter as a newsletter for all and by all – some of you will have experienced my nagging for contributions (and that was only for a quarterly newsletter)! I do not see it as an Olsson-fest. Therefore from next week onwards I would really appreciate contributions from as many people as possible, and here I’m including all those receiving the newsletter who live beyond the boundaries of the Devon parish. Please do not feel you have to be super-clever and to expound great theological theses. All contributions are appreciated. I need a mixture of longer articles and little short paragraphs and they could be about something you’ve seen, heard, read or a question you want other’s opinions on. My only stipulations are that anything you have copied from a book, journal or internet is acknowledged and that contributions reach me by 5pm on a Wednesday at the very latest. I do most of the work on a Wednesday and send it to Fr Peter for approval and Hugh for distribution. Hugh needs to have it by Thursday evening at the latest as he needs to post copies to those people who do not have email connection so they have it for the Sunday.

Celia