

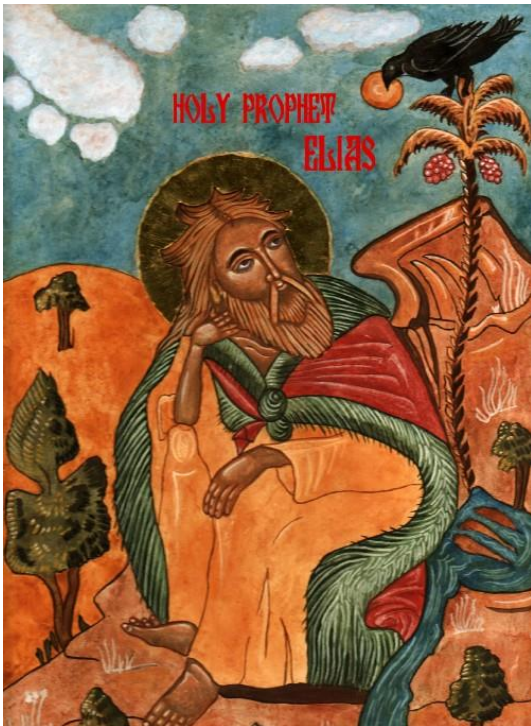


# Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self –isolation for the Orthodox Church of  
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
19<sup>th</sup> July 2020



On 20<sup>th</sup> July we celebrate our Patronal Feast of the Holy Prophet Elias



Icon by Simeon Row presented to Saint Cyprian Parish in Uganda by Fr (then Deacon) Peter 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012



The Prophet Elias in the Fiery Chariot passes his cloak to Elisha

HAPPY FEAST  
AND  
MANY YEARS  
TO ALL

## An Extract from **Laying the Groundwork for the Salvation of Mankind**

by **Archbishop Nathaniel (Lvov)**

*Archbishop Nathaniel's article looks at the roles of Abraham, Moses and Elijah as major figures who laid the foundations for salvation under the Old Covenant. He outlines the high points of Elijah's story and his strengths before concluding:*

Yet even Elijah cannot be a worthy receptacle of the full revelation of God. His elemental, unbridled and unrestrained anger, his all-encompassing fire of zeal for God are of a different character from the spirit of the New Testament, the spirit of the One who is meek and humble of heart. This is why, when the Apostles John and James insist that fire be brought down from heaven as in Elijah's day, the Lord prohibits this, saying: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* (Luke 9:54-56)

The Lord reveals this lovingly and delicately to His prophet when He appears to him. *And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord Almighty, because the children of Israel have forsaken Thee; they have digged down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I only am left alone: and they seek my life, to take it. And He [the Lord] said, Thou shalt go forth tomorrow, and stand before the Lord in the mount. Behold, the Lord will pass by..... And behold, there came a great and strong wind rending the mountains, and crushing the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire the voice of a gentle breeze. (3 Kings 11-14 LXX)*

Elijah was the great and mighty wind which tore down mountains and crushed the cliffs before God, but not the soft and gentle breeze. The voice which was missing in Elijah the Lord God waited to find in mankind for many centuries to come. For the Lord who brings about salvation with the participation of those created in His image and likeness could not come to His creation without this light and gentle voice, for He is found therein, not in a mighty wind, an earthquake, nor fire.

This gentle voice was finally manifested in mankind when the Lord sent the Archangel Gabriel to Nazareth (Luke 1:26-28). It sounded in response to the Annunciation, words more wondrous than ever were said to Abraham, words requiring more responsibility than those which were addressed to Moses and words by far more serene than those heard by Elijah. To these words there came the soft reply: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.* (Luke 1:38). It is within this moment that the Coming of the Son of God to mankind became possible. At that moment it became reality, for the Almighty Lord, Who had waited so long for this instant, did not wait a second longer, but reunited His creation to Himself, severed from Him by sin but never forgotten by His love. He renewed human nature, within the womb of the Ever-Virgin.

Archbishop Nathaniel (Lvov) in *Collected Writings* Russian Orthodox Youth Committee 1991

## Prophet Elias Celebrations in Mani

Mani – the 'middle finger' of the extreme south of mainland Greece, has been described as 'the land of ten thousand churches'. Every village, besides its parish church, has many small chapels, sometimes built for public use by a local benefactor, more often belonging to a particular family and set within their yard or garden. Some are small Byzantine masterpieces, some look like simple barns from the outside but inside have walls covered with vibrant frescoes, some are plain outside and in but for the icons of the family saints in simple reproductions. What they have in common is that almost always there is a lit oil-lamp hanging, and that once a year, on the feast day of the patron saint, there will be a celebration of the Liturgy there.

Outside the villages, too, you will find small chapels dotted around the landscape, by the sea, in olive groves and at road junctions, on apparently inaccessible ridges. Always there will be one at the highest point of the parish, which in almost all cases will be dedicated to Profitis Ilias – the Holy Prophet Elias. In the mountain communities these chapels are often on peaks some miles from the village, up vertiginous stone tracks used during most of the year only by goats. But on 19<sup>th</sup> July, the eve of Prophet Elias day, on one of the hottest days of the year, they will be teeming with people. Shawled, black-clad old ladies in their inevitable slippers will spend the day making their way slowly uphill. Male villagers will make several journeys carrying cooking equipment, chairs, tables and crates of drinks. Children will rush about being children. The whole village will be moving up to the chapel for the next 36 hours. This evening there will be eating, drinking, lots of talk, and probably music. Tomorrow morning the celebration of the Divine Liturgy – thirty or so people squeezed inside, everyone else outside - then feasting (almost certainly *giouvetsi* - lamb or goat stew with orzo pasta), and more partying through the afternoon.

The extraordinary thing is that if you were to visit many of these villages at any time of year other than July or August, they would be almost empty – perhaps a dozen old people hanging on where they have lived all their lives. But Maniats have strong connections to their village roots, and the village is where they live during the summer holidays. At the feast after the Liturgy you will meet villagers not only from Kalamata and Athens, but from Frankfurt, Chicago, Johannesburg, Toronto, Melbourne – from every part of the Diaspora. Wherever they make their livings now, they are still at heart from Milia, or Kastania, or Langades, and from Profitis Ilias day to the Feast of the Dormition they bring their village a massive transfusion of energy to keep it alive for another year.



## Dealing with the Prophets of Baal

*We live in the world, and in the world we are surrounded by the prophets of false gods – wealth, power, status, conspicuous consumption, insistence on individual rights divorced from their corresponding responsibilities; the list could go on and on. We each have to decide how we will deal with them in our own lives, given that we cannot physically slay them as Elias did. Some maintain that we must keep our distance, others that only by engaging with the world can we hope to change it. Here is a range of views.*

‘Apostasy is permitted by God: do not attempt to stop it with your powerless hand. Flee from it yourself, protect yourself from it; that is enough for you to do. Learn to know the spirit of the age, study it, so whenever possible you will be able to avoid its influence ... Only God’s special mercy is able to stop this all-destroying moral epidemic, to stop it for a while, because it is necessary that everything foretold by the Scriptures happen.’

Bishop Ignatii (Brianchaninov)

‘I beseech you, put this to the test. When a man affronts you or brings dishonour on your head, or takes what is yours, or persecutes the Church, pray to the Lord, and say: ‘O Lord, we are all Thy creatures. Have pity on Thy servants, and turn their hearts to repentance’, and you will be aware of grace in your soul. Constrain your heart to love her enemies, and the Lord, seeing your good will, will help you in all things. But the man who thinks with malice of his enemies has not God within him and does not know God.’

Saint Silouan

(Saint Sophrony wrote that ‘When he spoke of ‘enemies’ the staretz was merely using the current language. His own attitude was different. He would say that for Christ there are no enemies...[that] for the Creator of every living thing there can be no enemy.’)

‘She was on good terms with everyone. She was the kind of person who made no distinction between people, whether they held extremely progressive political views or had religious views quite different from her own. She allowed nothing of secondary importance to impede her contact with people.’

Solange Perichon, prisoner at Ravensbruck, of Saint Maria (Skobtsova)

Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5: 43 – 45

### Library Corner

I have recently reread Waugh’s *Sword of Honour* trilogy, and was in a strange way comforted to be reminded about the immense amount of muddling through and rapid changing of orders; what is new? And we came through the war somehow or other, as we recently remembered on the VE anniversary; I vividly remember the thrilling celebration in 1945.

I am now in the midst of some memoirs of “an Old West country Clergyman”, which was among some books belonging to my grandfather (also a West country clergyman), and I had never had a look at it for some reason or another. It is a fascinating bit of social and C of E history; I am quite spell bound by it, and pleased to find the parson to be of an admirably eirenic frame of mind. He meets up with various RC clergy, in the UK and on the continent, and finds himself quite able to appreciate their standpoint and to see them as Christian brothers. I found this a pleasing surprise, given what was going on during the time of his ministry, 1850-1890, roughly.

Mother Sarah



## The Prophet with an Oar on his Shoulder

*We are grateful to Elizabeth Theokritoff for sending this extract from an account of the life of Elias for children. It is a lovely example of how legends grow around great lives, and of the fact that a good story has a life of its own*

*The Prophet Elias is a popular saint in Greece and the Middle East, and holds an important place in folk culture. This is reflected in the story below, which serves as the epilogue to a Greek children's book about the Saint, O Vasiliis Ahaav kai oi peripeteies tou Propheti [King Ahab and the Adventures of the Prophet] (Athens: Maistros, 2001), by Evi Voulgaraki-Pisina. The English translation of the book is unpublished, and is used here by kind permission of the author.*

Everyone venerates Elias, in East and West alike. Everyone honours him with special feast days. Many people want to be like him, as Elisha did. There are even some people who ask him to send rain; and when the thunder rumbles and roars, they believe that the prophet Elias is driving about the heavens in his chariot. Some think that when it thunders, it is because he is still pursuing demons and false gods. Some say they have seen him chase away dragons and wild beasts. But the best story is one I heard in Greece, and it explains why chapels of the prophet Elias are always built on mountain tops.

I will tell you the story as I first heard it from Grandpa George, an old shepherd who lived near Mount Helicon; later I found out that many others tell the same story.

As the popular story goes - and as Grandpa assures us - Elias was a sailor in his youth. Journey after journey, port after port, he travelled all over the world, all over the Mediterranean. But at that time, voyages were difficult and dangerous, and he was often shipwrecked. Each time, he vowed never to go aboard a boat again, but he could not resist – the sea always drew him back. The sailors of those days saw many, many strange things. So once, I was told, Elias saw the mermaid, the sister of Alexander the Great, who goes round the seas asking after her brother; and she was angry. When the captain told her that Alexander was no longer alive, she flew into a furious rage and overturned the ship. It was then that Elias, who escaped by the grace of God, decided once and for all never to go aboard a ship again.

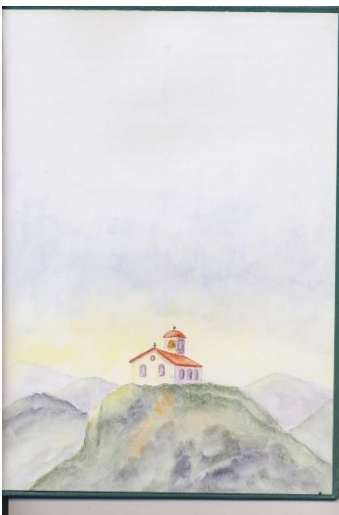


Illustration by Amalia Voulgaraki

Not only did he want never again to board a ship, but he did not want even to see the sea; he wanted to go and live among people who had never seen the waters of the sea. So Elias put an oar over his shoulder; he travelled and travelled, asking whoever he met, 'What am I carrying?' And everyone answered, 'An oar.' So Elias would put the oar back on his shoulder and move on. He went further and further from the sea, until he reached the top of a mountain. There he met some people, so he asked them in their turn, 'What am I carrying?' 'Do you mean that bit of wood?' they replied. And then Elias knew that they had never seen an oar before, which meant that they had never seen the sea. So he decided to settle down and stay there on the mountain top.

So that is why in Greece the chapels to the prophet Elias, brilliant white and shining, are always built on mountain peaks; and his feast on the twentieth of July is a very big day.

### Troparion of the Feast

An angel in the flesh and the cornerstone of the prophets,  
the second forerunner of the coming of Christ,  
glorious Elijah sent grace from on high to Elisha,  
to dispel diseases and to cleanse lepers.  
Therefore, he pours forth healings on those who honour him.

## This Week We Celebrate

- On **20<sup>th</sup> July** – **Holy Prophet Elias**: our parish Patronal Feast  
**Many Years** to all parishioners – and particularly to **Otto Elias**  
New Martyrs **Maria** of Paris and Ravensbruck (1945) and her co-workers Father  
**Dimitri** Klepinin (1944), **Elias** Fondaminsky (1942) and **George** Skobtsov (1944)
- On **22<sup>nd</sup> July** – Saint **Mary Magdalene**, Equal to the Apostles  
**Many Years** to **Mary, Maddy, Margaret** and **Michelle**
- On **24<sup>th</sup> July** – Holy Martyr **Christina** of Tyre (3<sup>rd</sup> C)  
**Many Years** to **Christina S, Christina C** and **Christine A**
- Holy Passion Bearers **Boris** and **Gleb** (1015) (*See last issue*)
- On **25<sup>th</sup> July** – Dormition of the **Righteous Anna**, Mother of the Mother of God  
**Many Years** to **Emma**

### News Please

The idea of bringing out this newsletter weekly was to help us all feel we are still a community even if we can't meet up physically. But a newsletter needs to contain some news if it's to do its job, and we need you to provide it.

In former times we would have been together this Sunday, celebrating our Patronal Feast. We would have chatted over our Bring and Share meal in St James' Hall, filling one another in on what had been happening for us. We can't do that now in person, but we can do it through the newsletter. So please, send us your news. It doesn't have to be 'churchy', (though of course it can be), but anything you might have found interesting. What have you read, or seen, or heard that you would like to share; what has cheered you up, or surprised you, or made you change your mind about something; what are you proud about having grown in your garden, or disappointed at having spectacularly failed to grow? Anything, in fact, that you might have chatted about in the Hall.

Please remember that the deadline for contributions each week is  
6pm on Wednesday.

### A Prayer for the Suffering

Do Thou watch, dear Lord, with all who watch or weep tonight.  
Tend Thy sick ones, O Christ, rest Thy weary ones,  
soothe Thy suffering ones, bless Thy dying ones,  
and all for Thy love's sake.

Saint Augustine of Hippo