



Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self –isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
16th August 2020



The True Worth of Man

Extract from a Sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony in the University Church
of S. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, on October 22nd, 1967

For centuries, as it seems, within the Church we have tried to make our God as great as we could, by making man small. This can be seen even in works of art in which the Lord Jesus Christ is represented great and his creatures very small indeed at his feet. The intention was to show how great God was, and yet it has resulted either in the false, mistaken, almost blasphemous view that man is small, or in the denial of this God who treats men as though they were of no value. And these two reactions are equally wrong. The one belongs to people who claim to be children of God, God's own chosen people, who are the Church. They have managed by doing this to make themselves as small as the image they have of men, and their communities as small and lacking in scope and greatness as their constitutive parts. The other attitude we find outside the Church, among the agnostics, the rationalists and the atheists; and we are responsible for these two attitudes and we shall be accountable for both in history and at the day of judgment. And yet this is not the vision of God about man.

When we try to understand the value which God himself attaches to man, we see that we are bought at a high price, that the value which God attaches to man is all the life and all the death, the tragic death, of the only begotten Son upon the Cross. This is what God thinks of man, of his friend, created by him in order to be his companion of eternity. Again, when we turn to the gospel, to the parable of the Prodigal son, we see this man who had fallen away from the greatness of his sonship, of his vocation, coming back to his father. On his way he prepares his confession. He is ready to admit that he has sinned against heaven and against his father. He is prepared to recognise that he is no longer worthy of being called a son. And yet, when he meets his father, his father allows him to make half of his confession, to recognise that he is unworthy, that he is a sinner, that he has sinned against heaven and against him; but as to allowing him to ask a place in the kingdom on terms lower than those of sonship, 'let me be like one of thy hired servants', this he does not allow. He stops him at a moment when the young man has recognised his unworthiness, but he is not prepared to allow his son to establish new terms of worthiness, unworthy of the primeval, original and eternal relationship to which he is called. He can be an unworthy son; he can be a repentant son; he can come back to the father's house, but only *as* his son. Unworthy though he be as a son he can never become a worthy hireling.

And this is the way in which God looks at man - in terms of the sonship offered us in the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, implied in the act of creation and in our calling to become partakers of the divine nature, to become sons by adoption in the only begotten Son and in the only Son; to become, in the very words of Irenaeus of Lyons, *the* only begotten son in the total Christ.

This is our vocation. This is what we are called to. And nothing less than this is acceptable to the Lord. We have grown small because we have made our God into an idol and ourselves into slaves. We must recapture the sense of the greatness of that God revealed in Christ and the greatness of man revealed by him. And then the world may begin to believe and we may become co-workers of God for the salvation of all things.

Saint Irenaeus on the Fall

Irenaeus repeatedly insists that God created the world and has been overseeing it ever since. Everything that has happened is part of his plan for humanity. The essence of this plan is maturation: Irenaeus believes that humanity was created immature, and God intended his creatures to take time to grow into his likeness. Thus, Adam and Eve were created as children. Their Fall was thus not a full-blown rebellion but a childish spat, a desire to grow up before their time and have everything *now*. Irenaeus says of Adam: 'He was a little child, and it was necessary that he should grow and so come to his perfection.' (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching: 12*)

Everything that has happened since has therefore been directed by God to help humanity overcome this and grow up. The world has been designed by God as a difficult place, where human beings are forced to make moral decisions - only in this way can they mature.

Source: Orthodox Wiki – Irenaeus of Lyons

On Accepting Responsibility

Men usually interpret justice in terms of legal responsibility. We reject the idea of laying one man's guilt on another, as not according with our concepts of equity. But the spirit of the love of Christ speaks otherwise, seeing nothing strange but, rather, something entirely natural, in sharing the guilt of those we love, and even in assuming full responsibility for their wrongdoing. Indeed, it is only in this bearing of another's guilt that the truth of love is revealed and grows to full awareness of itself.

Many of us cannot, or do not want to, accept and suffer of our own free will the consequences of Adam's original sin. 'Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit - but what has that to do with me?' we protest. 'I am ready to answer for my own sins but certainly not for the sins of others.' And we do not realise that in arguing thus we are repeating within ourselves the sin of Adam, making it our own personal sin, leading to our own personal fall. Adam denied responsibility, laying all the blame on Eve and on God who had given him this wife; and by so doing he destroyed the unity of Man and his oneness with God. Each time we refuse to take on ourselves the blame for the common evil, for the deeds of our neighbour, we are repeating the same sin and likewise shattering the unity of Man. The Lord questioned Adam before Eve, and we must suppose that if Adam had not justified himself but had taken upon his shoulders the responsibility for their common sin the destinies of the world might have been different, just as they will alter now if we in our day assume the burden of the transgressions of our fellow men.

Archimandrite [Saint] Sophrony in *The Monk of Mount Athos: Staretz Silouan 1866-1938*



This Week We Celebrate

On Tuesday 18th August: **Saint John of Rila (Ivan Rilski)** (876 – 946) Patron Saint of Bulgaria and founder of the famous Rila Monastery in Southwest Bulgaria, he was widely regarded as a saint in his own lifetime. His *Testament* of advice to the monks of Rila is an important document of early Bulgarian literature. 18th August is the day of his repose – he is more widely celebrated on 19th October, the day of the translation of his relics.

We wish Fr Trayan, Martin, Mariela and Family, and all our Bulgarian parishioners and friends a Happy Feast!

Livestreamed Services

While Fr Peter is recuperating, readers might like to visit livestreamed services from St Nicholas Orthodox Church, Oxford - on Facebook, details at <https://www.stnicholas-oxford.org/> (Services in English and Slavonic)

or from the Vicariat in France – the group of parishes of our former Exarchate who have remained within the Ecumenical Patriarchate – via their website at <https://www.facebook.com/lettreVicariat/> (French and Slavonic). (Hugh warns that they may close down during August, like most of France)

If you have found other livestreamed services you have felt at home with, please let us know the details so that we can post them in the Newsletter.

[For instance, services are sometimes streamed from St Nicholas Cathedral in Kampala at <https://www.facebook.com/UOChurch> They bring me happy memories. Also, Hugh found a 'slightly ramshackle but delightful' liturgy from a Kenyan orphanage at <https://www.stireneorthodoxmission.org/divine-liturgies/> Martin]



Who is this Saint?

Found among some photographs taken probably during a visit to Norfolk, but with nothing written on the back. It would be nice to know who she is, if anyone has any ideas. *Ed.*

Love Does That

All day long a little burro labours, sometimes
with heavy loads on her back and sometimes just with
worries
about things that bother only burros.

And worries, as we know, can be more exhausting
than physical labour.

Once in a while a kind monk comes
to her stable and brings
a pear, but more
than that

He looks into the burro's eyes and touches her ears

And for a few seconds the burro is free
and even seems to laugh,

Because love does
that

Love frees.

Meister Eckhart, trans. Daniel Ladinsky in
Love Poems from God Penguin Compass 2002

Urgent Appeal – for a Guest Editor

The Editors are taking a week off next week and so someone needs to step into their shoes – just for one week. We will supply the heading and you can put in the content you wish. It doesn't have to be four pages – the first few editions were only two. The completed newsletter in PDF format is sent to Fr Peter for approval and to Hugh for printing on Thursday morning. Hugh needs the time to print it and have it in the post by Friday morning so non-internet connected people can have their copy by Saturday – in time for Sunday.

Please contact celia.olsson.art@gmail.com by Sunday evening so we have time to send you the heading.