



# Prophet Elias News

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



## This Week We Celebrate

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September:



**Saint Bega**, Abbess of Copeland in Cumbria (7<sup>th</sup>C)  
We wish **Fr John** and all at the parish of **St Bega**,  
**St Mungo** and **St Herbert** in Keswick a  
**Happy Feast and Many Years!**

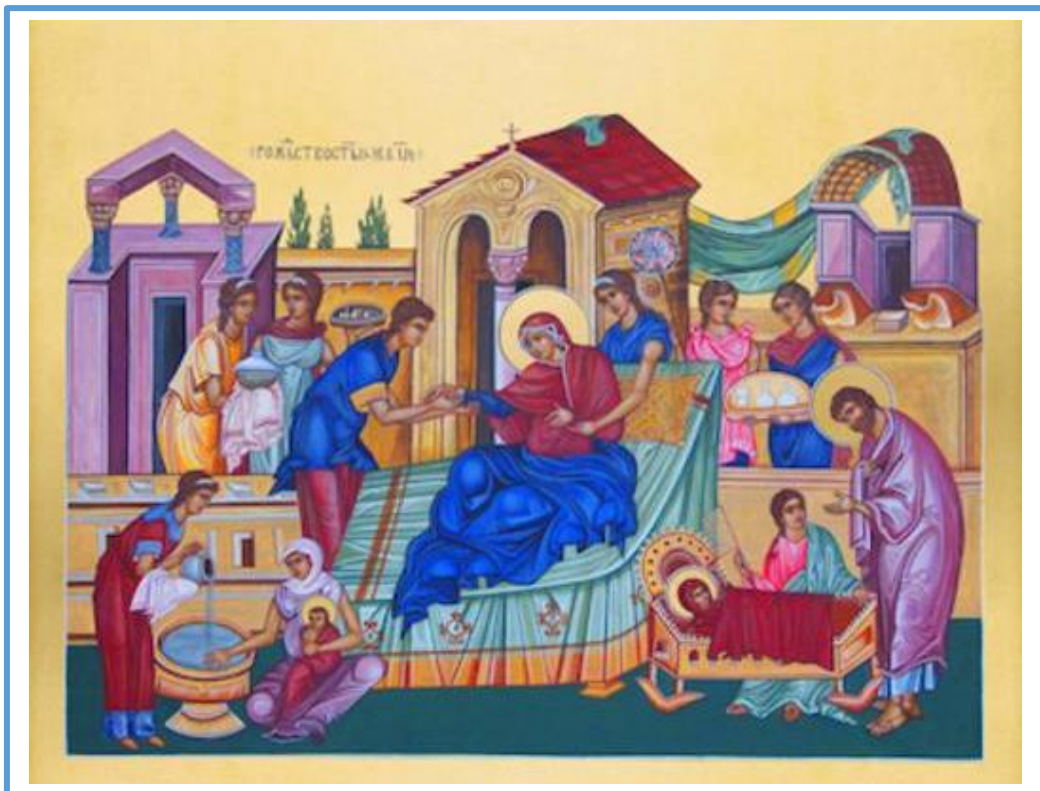
On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September:

**Saint Kassiani the Melodist** (9<sup>th</sup> C)  
Writer of the beautiful Hymn ‘by Kassiani  
the Nun’ sung at Matins on Holy Wednesday.



On Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September:

**The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God  
and Ever-Virgin Mary**



## Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God given by Metropolitan Anthony on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1971

I should like to say a few words about the greatness of this feast. When a man surveys this world in which we live, which is so vast, seemingly boundless, and looks at himself in it, he feels very small and insignificant. And if he adds to this the hardness and coldness of men, he may sometimes feel extremely vulnerable, helpless and unprotected both before people and before the terrifying vastness of the world. Yet at the same time if a man looks at himself not in relation to his surroundings, but goes deep into himself, he will there discover such an expanse, such depths, that the whole created world is too small to fill it. Man sees the beauty of the world — and the vision does not completely satisfy him; he learns an enormous amount about God's creation — and the knowledge does not fill him to the brim. Neither human joy nor even human sorrow can completely fill a man, because in him is a depth that exceeds everything created; because God made man so vast, so deep, so limitless in his spiritual being, that nothing in the world can finally satisfy him except God Himself.

Today's feast of the Mother of God demonstrates this fact with particular beauty and splendour. She so believed in God, She gave herself to Him with such a pure mind and pure heart, with an unwavering will, with the purity of Her virginity and life such that She was granted to say the Name of God perfectly, with such love that the Word became flesh and God was made man in Her. Through this we are shown that not only is the soul, the inner being and spirit of man, so created by God that it can contain the mystery of a meeting with the living God, but that even the body is so made that in an unfathomable way it can be united with the living God. Indeed, according to St. Peter we are called to become partakers of the divine nature; according to St. Paul our vocation is to become temples of the Holy Spirit. The whole of the New Testament teaches us that we are the Body, the living tremulous Body of Christ, through baptism and through Holy Communion. How wonderful this is, and therefore with what reverence must we regard not only our immortal soul, but this body of ours which is called to rise again, to enter the Kingdom of God and be glorified, like the body of Christ.

In the XI century St. Simeon the New Theologian wrote one day when he had returned to his humble cell after receiving Holy Communion, words to this effect, "I look upon this corruptible body, upon this frail flesh, and I tremble, because by partaking of the Holy Mysteries it has been permeated by God, it has been united with Christ, it is overflowing with the Holy Spirit... These powerless hands have become the hands of God, this body has become a body that God has taken possession of."

Consider what has been given us not only by our faith, but by the sacraments of the Church. The immersion in the blessed waters of Baptism makes us particles, living members of Christ's Body, the Anointing with Holy Chrism is not only the visible seal of the Holy Spirit, but makes us the temples in which He dwells. When the bread and wine which are offered by our faith and love to God are consecrated, they become incomprehensibly and mysteriously the Body and Blood of Christ, and this created matter partakes of Christ and imparts to us, who are incapable of soaring to God in spirit, the divinity of Christ, which saves and transfigures us in soul and body.

This feast of Nativity of the Mother of God is the time when we remember the birth of the One who for the sake of us all, for the whole human race, was able to show such faith, to surrender so absolutely to God, that He could become Man through Her, and bring us these manifold, unfathomable gifts. Glory to Her humility, glory to Her faith, glory to Her love, glory to God Who was incarnate and to the Virgin Mother of God, the worthy vessel of the incarnation of the Son of God, Christ our God.

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### Thy Will Be Done

The first and the last of the Great Feasts of the Christian year celebrate the Mother of God: her Nativity on September 8<sup>th</sup>, her Falling Asleep on August 15<sup>th</sup>. It is no accident that in this way the Mother of God holds in her embrace the whole account of our salvation as told in the other Feasts. Rather it is a reminder that without her willing cooperation in the divine plan there could be no salvation, and that in this she is the crowning example of our human purpose. It is a reminder that we too are called upon to act in synergy with God to bring about His Kingdom. We sometimes forget, as we pray 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven', that it is we, as the 'hands of God' as St Simeon puts it, who are charged with the *doing* of His will.

Martin Olsson

*'O Lord, you know your creation and what you have willed for it. May your will be fulfilled also in me, a sinner'*

St John Chrysostom

## On the Imitation of the Mother of God

*In this important essay, Saint Maria (Skobtsova) suggests that, just as we are called to take up our cross in the imitation of Christ, so we need also to be prepared to imitate the Mother of God in accepting the sword that pierces the heart.*

When political commentators speak of ‘the cross and the sword’, they imply that the cross is passive suffering, while the sword for them is a symbol of activity. Not so in the Gospel. The cross is taken up voluntarily, and therefore actively, by the Son of Man. The sword deals a blow, it pierces the soul, which passively receives it. According to the Gospel, the sword is a symbol of suffering endured passively, not voluntarily chosen but inevitable – a weapon that pierces the soul. The cross of the Son of Man, accepted voluntarily, becomes a two-edged sword that pierces the soul of the Mother, not because she voluntarily chooses it, but because she cannot help suffering the sufferings of her Son.

[Since] a man is not only the image of God but also the image of the Mother of God, then he should also be able to see the image of God and the image of the Mother of God in every other man. In man’s God-motherly soul not only is the birth of the Son of God announced and Christ born, but there also develops the keen perception of Christ’s image in other souls. And in this sense, the God-motherly part of the human soul begins to see other people as its children; it adopts them for itself. The end of the God-motherly relation is the perceiving of God and Son in the other, an end which, of course, could have been reached only by the Virgin Mary. But insofar as we must strive to follow her path, and as her image is the image of our human soul, so we must also perceive God and Son in every man. God, because he is the image and likeness of God; the Son, because as it gives birth to Christ within itself, the human soul thereby adopts the whole Body of Christ for itself, the whole of Godmanhood, and every man individually.

Let the cross lie on human shoulders, along the path of human God-likeness. The human heart should also be pierced by the two-edged swords, the soul-cutting weapons, of other people’s crosses. Our neighbour’s cross should be a sword that pierces our soul. Our soul should co-participate in its neighbour’s destiny, co-feel, co-suffer. And it is not the soul that chooses these swords; they are chosen by those who took them up like a cross on their shoulders. After the likeness of its archetype, the Mother of God, the human soul is called to Golgotha in the footsteps of her son, and cannot help being drawn there, cannot help bleeding.

To my mind, it is here that the authentic mystical bases of human communion lie.

‘On the Imitation of the Mother of God’ in Mother Maria Skobtsova: Essential Writings.  
Trans. Richard Prevear and Larissa Volokhonsky Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 2003

### Services in Whipton, Torquay and Plymouth

At the time of writing, Father Peter is still in hospital undergoing tests, after which he will need time to recuperate. In the meantime, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated regularly in Whipton (Exeter), Torquay and Plymouth as follows:

**Whipton** Community Centre, Whipton Village

Sundays 9-12 (Matins and Liturgy) Services in Romanian

**Torquay and Plymouth**

Normally Sundays 9.30 For confirmation of the September calendar go to:

[www.plymchurch.com](http://www.plymchurch.com)

Fr Gregory Palamas livestreams the services he conducts on facebook at

<https://facebook.com/StsDemetriosNikitasPlymouthEngland/>

## News from CTAX – Churches Together Across Exeter

### SINGING IN CHURCH

It is now legal for small choirs and worship groups to sing in church, indoors and out! Singers must observe 2m social distancing and the numbers must be as small as possible, but this is still welcome news. Read more, here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

### PLANS TO TACKLE ROUGH SLEEPING IN EXETER

Exeter City Council and partners including St Petrock's have launched the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, to support those accommodated during Covid-19 and help to further address homelessness in the city. More here: <https://news.exeter.gov.uk/plans-to-tackle-rough-sleeping-in-exeter/>

### TACKLING LONELINESS

Exeter City Community Trust are running a project to help members of the community tackle loneliness and stay connected. It's a great way to make new friends or get back in touch with old ones, and it is all FREE to access. Find out more and how to get involved, here: <https://news.exeter.gov.uk/tackling-loneliness-together/>

### 12TH SEPTEMBER - HERITAGE OPEN DAY AND RIDE AND STRIDE

12th September is to be Exeter's Heritage Open Day (<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting>), which coincides with a ride and stride (<https://ridestride.org/>) round Exeter's historic churches. Covid has disrupted but not entirely stopped proceedings. You can check the website to find out which historic churches are open and hosting activities if you would like to visit. For example, **St Michael's, Mt Dinham (near Iron Bridge in the city centre) are open 8am-4pm, with organ music, a guided tour, and info about their peregrine falcons** (<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/st-michaels-all-angels-church2>).

**We did not submit plans to open St Anne's this year for Heritage Day/ Ride and Stride because at the time everything was so uncertain. However, if anyone feels the church should be open for this day when normally we get a lot of visitors, and can offer a few hours to be in attendance and ensure sanitation procedures are followed, please let me know: martinolsson827@btinternet.com**

### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID AWARENESS TRAINING - 12TH SEPTEMBER, 5TH OCTOBER 1.30-4.30pm **Online**

3 hour training (with good break in middle!). Led by local Christian trainer (Ben Slater of fiveways Devon). Accredited by the Royal Society of Public Health; framed for Christian participants. Equipping us to understand, listen to, and signpost people in our communities with mental health challenges. More info: <https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/pastoral-care-counselling/mental-health-first-aid-training/>

## From the Texts of Vespers for the Feast

From Ann today has sprung forth a rod, a branch given by God, even the Mother of God, salvation of men. From her, in manner past understanding, is born the Maker of all, who in His goodness purges all the indignity of Adam.

The Maiden in whom God came to dwell, the pure Mother of God, glory of the prophets, the daughter of David, is born today of Joachim and Ann sober in spirit; and by her birthing she overthrows the curse of Adam that weighed upon us.

The soil which formerly was barren gives birth to fertile ground, and nourishes with milk the holy fruit sprung from her sterile womb. Dread wonder! She who sustains our life, who received within her body the Bread of Heaven, feeds at her mother's breast.

Today God who rests upon the spiritual thrones has made ready for Himself a holy throne upon earth. He who made firm the heavens in his wisdom has prepared a living heaven in His love for man. For from a barren root He has made a life-giving branch spring up for us, even His Mother. God of wonders and hope of the hopeless, glory be to Thee, O Lord.

### *Troparion*

Thy birth, O Mother of God, has brought joy to all the inhabited earth: for from thee has shone forth the Son of Righteousness, Christ our God. He has loosed us from the curse and given the blessing; He has made death of no effect, and bestowed on us eternal life.