



# Prophet Elias News

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



## Father Peter

We are deeply sad to let you all know that following a late diagnosis of cancer on Thursday Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, Father Peter died at home in the early hours of Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September.

We have been nursing him at home with much sorrow and joy. Philip and Thomas were able to bring Fr John and Dawn to see him last Sunday and they received communion together from Fr Alexander. Fr Nicanor visited the following day.

Saint Isaac the Syrian advised: “When the messenger comes, go joyfully to meet him, saying ‘Come in peace. I knew that you would come, and I have neglected nothing that could help me on my journey.’” Father Peter approached his death in just such a frame of mind.

Please continue to pray for all his family and especially for Fr Peter and Matushka Irina.

Give rest O Lord to the soul of Thy departed servant the priest Peter,  
and make his memory to be eternal.



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## 14th September – The Universal Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross



**FENCE US  
ABOUT, O LORD,  
WITH THE  
POWER OF  
THINE ALL-  
HONOURABLE  
AND LIFE-GIVING  
CROSS, AND  
PRESERVE US  
FROM EVERY  
EVIL.**

### Images of the Precious Cross

The Exaltation of the Cross is unique among feasts of the Church. It does not celebrate an event in the life of Christ or His Mother; its Liturgy Gospel refers to the Crucifixion, but that is not the theme of the feast. The Exaltation has historical connections with the discovery of the Cross by Queen Helena and its recovery from the Persians in 628, and the latter event most likely occasioned the present troparion with its prayer for "victory over barbarians"; but the subject of the feast is not an event in the life of the Church either. This feast is simply a celebration of the Cross itself - of its ever-present, mysterious and cosmic significance.

When modern people think of the crucifixion, our natural inclination is probably to look at the Cross in functional terms: the important point is that Jesus was put to death, and crucifixion happened to be the Roman method of execution. But the New Testament does not think like that. Christ is lifted up on the Cross "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" (Jn. 3:14); He dies "becoming a curse" by "hanging on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). The very scandal of the Cross, the fact that it was a demeaning mode of execution reserved for the dregs of society, gave redoubled impetus to early Christians' efforts to find clues in Scripture to the significance - and indeed necessity - of *this particular* death. The result is not a systematic exposition of the meaning of the Cross, but a kaleidoscopic vision of Scripture illustrating the extraordinary power of images for expressing the inexpressible.

From **Of Trees and Unicorns: Images of the Precious Cross** by Elizabeth Theokritoff (By kind permission)  
(publ. *Alive in Christ* XIV.2 (Summer 1999), 11-13; reprinted in *Souroz* 78 (December 1999)).

## **Sermon by Metropolitan Anthony on The Exaltation of the Cross** (September 28, 1986)

We have been keeping during these days the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. There is a passage in the Gospel in which the Lord says to us, "No one has greater love than he who gives his life for his neighbour". And these words resolve the antinomy between the horror of the Cross and the glory of it, between death and the Resurrection. There is nothing more glorious, more awe-inspiring and wonderful than to love and to be loved. And to be loved of God with all the life, with all the death of the Only-Begotten Son, and to love one another at the cost of all our life and, if necessary, of our death is both tragedy but mainly victory. In the Canon of the Liturgy we say, "Holy, most Holy art Thou and Thine Only-Begotten Son and Thine Holy Spirit! Holy and most Holy art Thou because Thou hast so loved Thy world that Thou hast given Thine Only-Begotten Son that those who will believe in Him do not perish but have life eternal, Who hath come and hath fulfilled all that was appointed for our sakes, and in the night when He was betrayed - no! - when He gave Himself up, He took bread, and brake it and gave it to His disciples ..."

This is the divine love. At times one can give one's own life more easily than offer unto death the person whom one loves beyond all, and this is what God, our Father has done. But it does not make less the sacrifice of Him who is sent unto death for the salvation of one person or of the whole world. And so when we think of the Cross we must think of this strangely inter-twined mystery of tragedy and of victory. The Cross, an instrument of infamous death, of punitive death to which criminals were doomed, because Christ's death was that of an innocent - and because this death was a gift of self in an act of love - becomes victory.

This is why Saint Paul could say, "It is no longer I, it is Christ Who lives in me." Divine love filled him to the brim and therefore there was no room for any other thought or feeling, any other approach to anyone apart from love, a love that gave itself unreservedly, love sacrificial, love crucified, but love exulting in the joy of life.

And when we are told in today's Gospel, 'Turn away from yourself, take up your Cross, follow Me' (Mark 8: 34) - we are not called to something dark and frightening. We are told by God: Open yourself to love! Do not remain a prisoner of your own self-centredness. Do not be, in the words of Theophane the Recluse, like a shaving of wood which is rolled around its own emptiness. Open yourself up! Look - there is so much to love, there are so many to love! There is such an infinity of ways in which love can be experienced, and fulfilled and accomplished... Open yourself and love - because this is the way of the Cross! Not the way which the two criminals trod together with Christ to be punished for their crimes. but the wonderful way in which giving oneself unreservedly, turning away from self, existing only for the other, loving with all one's being so that one exists only for the sake of the other - this is the Cross and the glory of the Cross.

So, when we venerate the Cross, when we think of Christ's crucifixion, when we hear the call of Christ to deny ourselves - and these words simply mean: turn away from yourself! Take up your cross! - we are called to open ourselves to the flood of Love Divine, that is both death to ourselves and openness to God and to each and to all.

In the beginning of the Gospel of St. John we are told, "And the Word was with God". In the Greek it says "Godwards". The Word, the Son, had no other love, no other thought, no other movement but towards the Beloved One, giving Himself to Him Who gave Himself perfectly to Him. Let us learn the glory of crucified Love, of this Love sacrificial which is, in the words of the Old Testament, stronger than death, stronger than hell, stronger than all things because it is Divine Life conquering us and poured through us onto all those who need to be loved in order to come to Life, to believe in Love and themselves to become children of Love, children of Light, inherit the Life eternal.

## **The Meaning of the Cross on Our Human Paths by Saint Maria of Paris**

The meaning and significance of the cross are inexhaustible. The cross of Christ is the eternal tree of life, the invincible force, the union of heaven and earth, the instrument of a shameful death. But what is the cross in our path of the imitation of Christ; how should our crosses resemble the one cross of the Son of Man? For even on Golgotha there stood not one but three crosses: the cross of the God-man and the crosses of the two thieves. Are these two crosses not symbols, as it were, of all human crosses, and does it not depend on us which one we choose? For us the way of the cross is unavoidable in any case, we can only choose to freely follow either the way of the blaspheming thief and perish, or the way of the one who called upon Christ and be with Him today in paradise. For a certain length of time, the thief who chose perdition shared the destiny of the Son of Man. He was condemned and nailed to a cross in the same way; he suffered torment in the same way. But that does not mean that his cross was the imitation of Christ's cross, or that his path led him in the footsteps of Christ.

What is most essential, most determining in the image of the cross is the necessity of freely and voluntarily accepting it and taking it up. Christ freely, voluntarily took upon Himself the sins of the world, and raised them up on the cross, and thereby redeemed them and defeated hell and death. To accept the endeavour and the responsibility voluntarily, to freely crucify your sins – that is the meaning of the cross, when we speak of bearing it on our human paths. Freedom is the inseparable sister of responsibility. The cross is this freely accepted responsibility, clear-sighted and sober.

From *On the Imitation of the Mother of God* in: Mother Maria Skobtsova: Essential Writings  
Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 2002

### **Some Texts of the Feast**

Lifted high upon the Cross, O Master, with Thyself Thou hast raised up Adam and the whole of fallen nature. Therefore, exalting Thine undefiled Cross, O Thou who lovest mankind, we ask Thee for Thy strength from above, crying: O God Most High, in Thy mercy save those who honour the sacred, light-giving and divine Exaltation of Thy Cross.

In Paradise of old, the wood stripped me bare, for by giving of its fruit to eat, the enemy brought in death. But now the wood of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up in the midst of the earth, and the whole world is filled with boundless joy. Beholding it exalted, O ye people, let us with one accord raise in faith our cry to God: Thy house is full of glory.

Today the Cross of the Lord goes forth, and the faithful welcome it with love; and they receive healing of soul and body and of every weakness. Let us kiss it with joy and fear: with fear, for we are unworthy because of sin; with joy, for upon it Christ the Lord was in His great mercy crucified, who grants the world salvation.

*Sung during the priest's elevation on the Cross to the four points of the compass in turn:*  
Come, ye people, and looking upon this marvellous wonder, let us venerate the might of the Cross. For a tree put forth the fruit of death in Paradise; but life is the flower of this Tree on which the sinless Lord was nailed. Reaping incorruption from it, all the nations cry: O Thou who through the Cross hast laid death low and set us free, glory to Thee.

### The Most Exalted of All Objects

The cross is the abyss of wonders, the centre of desires, the school of virtues, the house of wisdom, the throne of love, the theatre of joys, and the place of sorrows; It is the root of happiness, and the gate of Heaven.

It is the most exalted of all objects. There we might see all nations assembled with their eyes and hearts upon it. There we may see God's goodness, and wisdom and power; yea His mercy and anger displayed. There we may see man's sin and infinite value. His hope and fear, his misery and happiness. There we might see the Rock of Ages, and the Joys of Heaven. There we may see a Man loving all the world, and a God dying for mankind.

It is the Root of Comforts and the Fountain of Joys. It is the only supreme and sovereign spectacle in all Worlds. It is a Well of Life beneath, in which we may see the face of Heaven above: and the only mirror, wherein all things appear in their proper colours: that is, sprinkled in the blood of our Lord and Saviour.

Thomas Traherne – *From Centuries*: Century 1: 58, 59

### From **The Dream of the Rood** \*

Listen, I will tell the best of visions -  
what came to me in middle of the night,  
when voice-bearers dwelled in rest.  
It seemed to me I saw a most wondrous tree  
lifted in air, wound round with light,  
the brightest of beams. That beacon was wholly  
cased in gold; beautiful gems stood  
in the earth at the corners, likewise there were five  
upon the cross-beam. All the fair in creation  
gazed on the angel of the Lord there.  
This was surely no gallows of the wicked;  
but the holy spirits beheld it there  
and men across the earth and all this glorious creation.  
Wondrous was the victory-tree, but I was stained  
with sins and wounded with guilts. I saw the tree of glory  
honoured with garments, shining with joys,  
covered in gold; gems had clothed magnificently  
the tree of the forest. Yet could I glimpse through that gold  
the ancient hostility of wretches, so that it began  
to bleed from its right side. I was all sorrow-drenched.  
The fair vision frightened me; I saw that urgent beacon  
change its covering and colours; sometimes soaked  
with wetness, stained with the coursing of blood;  
sometimes adorned with treasure.

Old English 9<sup>th</sup> C - perhaps by Cynewulf

\*'Rood' – Old English: wooden pole – often used referring to the Cross of Christ.

### This Week We Celebrate

On Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September: **The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Lifegiving Cross**  
**Happy Feast and Many Years** to each and every **Stavros and Stavroula**

On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September: **Saint Edith of Wilton** (984)  
We wish **Edie O** a **Happy Feast and Many Years**

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September: **Saint Sophia** and her Daughters **Faith , Hope and Love**  
We wish **Sophia R, Nadya K, and Nadya L** a **Happy Feast and Many Years**

### September Services in Plymouth and Torquay (Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy)

For more details visit <https://plymchurch.com>

Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Plymouth 09.30	Torquay 09.30
<b>Monday 14<sup>th</sup> – Holy Cross Day:</b>	<b>Plymouth 08.30</b>	<b>Torquay 09.30</b>
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> - Saint Nikitas:	<b>Plymouth 08.30</b>	
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup>	Plymouth 09.30	Torquay 09.30
Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> – Saint John the Theologian:	<b>Plymouth 08.30</b>	
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup>	Plymouth 09.30	Torquay 09.30