



# Prophet Elias News

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



## **Metropolitan Anthony: The Parable of the Sower**

**(The Gospel reading for this Sunday is Luke: 5-8a, 9-15, 8b)**

How familiar, and how simple, seems to us today's parable of the seed and of the sower; and yet, how relevant it is to us, and how much more thought we should give to it. We forget the setting itself of the parable, the imagery of the sower and the seed, and we don't see in it an image of Christ, walking along the roads and the paths of Galilee and Judea; and everywhere He went, people came to the roadside because they had heard that He was a Teacher, that His words were true, that they had in them a power of life.

And people came, and lined the roads, and the streets, and listened. Some were prepared for the message; some have been in an agony of mind, have been asking themselves questions which hitherto no one has been able to answer. But others came, as so many people come now to a preacher, to an evangelist, to a leader of any side, to see a man of whom people spoke, and to listen to what he had to say. They heard the word, but it fell at their ears; they found it beautiful, lovely, true - but it did not go beyond this. They were listening to words, they were not listening to the cry of their own soul that was hungry for words of truth. And so, when He had passed, they all returned to what was their ordinary, their normal life.

Others, who had come to the roadside, received the message with emotion, it stirred something in their hearts, something in their minds, it answered something in them.

And they received it and hugged it to themselves, and returned home; but the moment they were no longer by the road, at home, the concerns of home overwhelmed them: there was so much to do, so much to think about, there was so much in life, there was no time to reflect again and again on the words heard, there was no time to sit quietly and to look in imagination at the face they had seen, to rehearse the voice they had heard.

These are the people who receive the word, who receive it truly, in their heart, but there are so many things that matter - tomorrow will do, or, if we only could reduce the message to something liveable, simple, not to the absoluteness of it!

And then, there are those who receive the message, like the rich soil that could receive a seed and bear fruit. Those people were not simply better people, they probably were not better people; they were people who had a question in their mind and heart, people who had a longing, people for whom their daily life was too narrow, too small, people who were aware that their soul was deep, and vast and could not be filled with the trivialities - or even the noble, the good things of life: they received the message, they took it to heart, deep into them, and they bore fruit because it was answering a need.



Now, we can apply this to ourselves: how many of us listen to the words of the Gospel, listen to the words of preaching, read books that are full of interest and depth, and store it in our memory, enjoy it - but that is the end; we can quote it, we can pass it on to others, - but that is all.

And there are so many of us who have received the message with enthusiasm, with passion, knowing that this message is an answer to all there is in us of longing, of hunger, of greatness, indeed; but then, life is so complex, there is so much to do! And in all this doing, in all this complexity the word is left aside - for another time, for another day, when I will be old enough not to have any concerns: then I can turn back to this glorious moment when life unfolded itself in all its splendour - I keep it in my memory!

What about us receiving the message and bearing fruit?

But how does this message reach us? I remember a Russian priest saying to me, 'I read the Gospel daily, and I respond to it very seldom. But I read it daily because I never know whether today, or tomorrow, or on another day I will be the barren roadside, or the weeds by the way, or, of a sudden, whether this word will not fall on a small patch in me which is capable of receiving it and bearing fruit'.

Isn't that simple, isn't that encouraging? We all are the three things described in the parable of the Gospel; but if we give a chance to God Who speaks, to God Who passes through our life, to God Who knocks at our heart - from time to time we will receive the message with joy and let go of it; but from time to time it will reach a depth in our heart, a core of our life and be the answer that will change it.

Let us therefore listen, listen to the words of the Gospel day in and day out; listen to the voice of our conscience, listen to what the deepest self says to us about life, about truth, about reality; and from time to time we will have been the good ground that can bear fruit.

This parable, so simple, so clear, if we only apply it, can be a beginning of a new life.

Sermon preached on 29 October 1989. Copyright: The Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Foundation

### **This Week We Celebrate**

On 11<sup>th</sup> October: Sunday of The **Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council**

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October: The **Centurion Longinus** who stood at the Cross of the Lord

### **The Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Holy Icons**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council, held at Nicea in 787, formalized the teaching of the Church on the role of icons. Echoing the views of Saint John Damascene, the Council concluded that their use, both in churches, in houses and at roadsides was not only permissible but in fact necessary, helping us to a closer bond of reverence and love for their prototypes, whether they be 'of our Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, or of our spotless Sovereign Lady, the holy Mother of God, or of the holy angels and of holy and venerable men.' Icons are also necessary because they protect the full and proper doctrine of the Incarnation. While God cannot be represented in His eternal nature, He can be depicted in so far as He "became human and took flesh." Of Him who took a material body, material images can be made. In so taking a material body, God proved that matter can be redeemed. He deified matter, making it spirit-bearing, and so if flesh can be a medium for the Spirit, so can wood or paint, although in a different fashion.

Source: OrthodoxWiki

### **Nothing that God has Made is Contemptible**

In earlier ages God was not represented in images, being incorporate and faceless. But since God has now been seen in the flesh, and lived among men, I represent in an image that part of God which is visible. I do not worship matter, but the Creator of matter, who became matter for my sake and deigned to live in matter and bring about my salvation through matter. I will not cease therefore to venerate that matter through which my salvation was achieved...

I also venerate and respect all the rest of matter which has brought me salvation, since it is full of the power and grace of God. Is not the wood of the Cross, three times blessed, matter?...And the ink, and the most Holy Book of the Gospels, are they not matter? The redeeming altar which dispenses the Bread of life, is it not matter?... And, before all else, are not the flesh and blood of Our Lord matter?

Either we must suppress the sacred nature of all these things, or we must concede to the tradition of the Church the veneration of the images of God and that of the friends of God who are sanctified by the name they bear, and for this reason are possessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Do not, therefore, offend matter: it is not contemptible, because nothing that God has made is contemptible.

Saint John Damascene - *Against those Decrying the Holy Images*

The artistic perfection of an icon is not only a reflection of the celestial glory – it is a concrete example of matter restored to its original harmony and beauty, and serving as a vehicle of the Spirit. The icons are part of the transfigured cosmos.

Nicolas Zernov - *The Russians and their Church*

### **I pray with all Creation and for all Creation**

I feel mute and inarticulate, my Luxurious Lord, when I want to express Your stability and all Your fullness. Therefore, I beseech the entire universe to kneel down with me and speak in my stead, since I am incapable and inarticulate.

.....

I adorn Your altar with wooden icons, golden crosses, silver seraphim, silk brocades, and books of salvation bound in leather. And I prostrate myself before Your embellished altars. But the arrogant laugh at me and say: 'Look at the idol-worshipper, who does not worship the Lord but mute objects!'

Nevertheless You know, my only Idol, that I am worshipping You alone. But so that arrogance may not engulf my heart and delay my salvation, I call upon tree and plant, resins and animals, to cry out together with me to You, each in its own language. Indeed, all creatures and all creation are in need of salvation, therefore, also need to join in prayer with man, who led creation into sin and leads it to salvation.

I pray with all creation and for all creation, so that I may learn humility before You, and so that I may express all the mystery of my love for You, O all-embracing Love.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich - Extract from *Prayers by the Lake No. XXVIII*  
Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of New Gracanica, Grayslake, Illinois 1999  
(Volume 5 of *A Treasury of Serbian Orthodox Spirituality*)

**The Whole Earth is an Icon of the Face of God** St John Damascene

## Virtual Pilgrimages

If you were inspired by last week's piece on the Optina Elders and want to know more about the monastery today, it is one of those explored in the highly recommended series of 'Virtual pilgrimages to monasteries', organised over the summer by the Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist and now available in video recordings: <https://forerunner.org.uk/videos/summer-series-2020/>

These presentations are not simply illustrated tours from a well-informed guide. They are intimate evocations of the life and spiritual significance of each monastery from either a member of the community, or an intimate friend who can testify to the significance of the monastery in her own life as well as that of the wider community and culture.

Elizabeth Theokritoff

*The other virtual pilgrimages are to monasteries in Ukraine, Greece, Romania, USA and Lebanon – Ed.*

## Noticeboard

**Funeral:** The video recording of Fr Peter's funeral has now been posted on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/rCyalVDGCXc>

### Educational materials:

<https://orthodoxpebbles.com/>

According to the founders of the web site, two Greek mothers living in America, 'Our plan is to keep creating **high-quality, free, online Orthodox Christian educational resources** for young children, adding a new topic to our digital content about once a month during the school season...'

[https://iocc.org/2020-prayer-journal?utm\\_campaign=Promotion&utm\\_medium=PrayerJournal&utm\\_source=Email&utm\\_term=Email1](https://iocc.org/2020-prayer-journal?utm_campaign=Promotion&utm_medium=PrayerJournal&utm_source=Email&utm_term=Email1)

The 'Prayer Journal' from International Orthodox Christian Charities provides resources for children (and adults) to reflect on the practical meaning of Christian love, at the same time learning more about the life, and needs, of Orthodox Christians in many different countries.

### Discussions and conversations

from the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge: recent topics include 'Lockdown Conversations', 'Sacred Spaces', 'Faith and Film'...

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYgpwESpl6C\\_uH\\_m60s8V9Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYgpwESpl6C_uH_m60s8V9Q)

or via: <https://www.iocs.cam.ac.uk/>

## Save the date! - Deanery Conference 2021

God willing and government regulations permitting, it is planned to hold the 2021 Deanery Conference on **28-31 May** (spring Bank Holiday weekend) at High Leigh conference centre, Hoddesdon, Herts.

It will largely follow the programme planned for 2020, with the theme: '**A cloud of witnesses: Saints and teachers of our day and their message for us**'. More details to follow. For the first time, we hope that it will be possible to attend plenary talks 'virtually' if you cannot participate in person. That is not a full substitute for being part of this unique gathering of our communities, instituted 45 years ago (partly on Fr Peter's initiative) - but far better than nothing!

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