



# Prophet Elias News

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



## **Metropolitan Anthony: Sermon of the Healing of the Gerasene Demoniacs**

How familiar this story is to us. Yet every time we read it we rediscover something in it which touches our heart, or gives a new light to our mind. And to-day I would like to attract your attention to three features of this passage.

The first is the attitude of the devils, the powers of evil, to their victims. The powers of evil have no other intention or desire than to take possession of a living creature and to make it both a sufferer and one that will fulfil their will. The Fathers of the Church teach us that the devils can have no direct action in this world; all they can do is enslave human beings and through them work the evil within them. So this is what these powers of evil had intended: to enslave these men and to make them instruments of destruction, but at the same time to make them suffer for it.

When Christ commanded them to leave their victims they cried, shall I say, for a place of refuge, a place where they could dwell and work destruction. And Christ allowed them to in-dwell the pigs. Pigs, in the eyes of Jews, were a symbol of impurity; the request to be lodged in their bodies was a sign for all who could understand - and every Jew could - that they were as impure as the impurest of the animals. But what happened next was a demonstration to people of what happens when we allow ourselves to be possessed of evil, when we allow passions to have power over us - hatred, lust, jealousy, and all the passions of body and soul. Being possessed by them we are doomed to destruction, as this herd ended in death.

We should remember this because we do not always realise how much we are in the grip, in the power of those things which rule our life: likes and dislikes, hatreds, resentments and so on. We are not only possessed, but we are also working evil through our subjection to the power of evil. And the warning is clear: if we only allow evil to take possession of us completely, it will mean death; not physical death, but a total, tragic alienation from all that is life: from God, from love, from beauty, from meaning. We cannot fall out of existence but we can be possessed of an existence which is a ghostly one, an existence without life, without content - a shell that is empty, and yet a torment.

And in contrast to this we see the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God become Man. He is the Creator, He is the Lord, He is the Saviour of the whole world; and He forgets everything, as it were, the whole of creation to pay attention to nothing but these two men who are in need of salvation, indeed He is prepared to leave ninety-nine righteous, whole people who do not need Him at that moment alone in order to give all His attention, all His life, indeed all His power to save these two men. In the face of all the need of the world He can see every individual need and respond to it with all His love, all His compassion, all His understanding and all His divine power to save and to heal.

There is a third group of people whom we see in action in this Gospel story; it is the inhabitants of the country. They had known of the desperate condition of these two men; they were told of what Christ did for them; they were told who their master was, who was their tormentor: should they not have come to give glory to God and thank Him for delivering the two men from the power of evil? NO! All they saw in the act of Christ was that they were deprived of their herd of swine. What mattered to them the wholeness and the life and the salvation of these two men? They were deprived of what was important to them, what mattered to them more than a human life, and they asked Christ to leave their borders, to go - because they did not want to risk another miracle that would be costly to them. What a tragic - not monstrous, but just tragic contrast between the attitude of God and the attitude of these people.

Let us give thought and ask ourselves, where do we stand? Of course, the first thing we shall have to say is, 'On God's side'. It is not true. When there is a tragic need, and the cost of helping would be perhaps not a disaster but a pain or loss to us, what would we choose? Let us reflect on this: are we really on the side of Christ Who can forget the whole world because His Heart is pierced, transfixed with compassion, or - do we allow our heart to be moved one moment, and then recalculate the cost and turn away from the need?

Let us reflect - because every one of these stories is challenging us: Where do you stand? Who are you? The person possessed, to whatever extent? A disciple of Christ ready to forget everything for the sake of a desperate need? Or rather one of those who say to Christ: Go, go away - you are disturbing our peace, the harmony of our life and our security? Let us reflect deeply; but not only reflect, take a decision and act.

Sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1991: Copyright The Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Foundation

### **Return to Your Own House**

This Sunday's Gospel reading is St Luke 8: 26-39: the account of the healing of the Gerasene demoniac. Metropolitan Anthony's sermon is based on St Matthew's version (8: 28-34), which speaks of two men possessed by demons – otherwise the events are the same. But there is one detail absent from Matthew, which both Luke and Mark recount. After he is healed, 'clothed and in his right mind,' the man who had been possessed pleads with Jesus to let him follow Him – the only such request, as far as I am aware, among the many cases of Jesus calling people to him. But the answer is, No. Go back and stay in your own community, and tell them all the wonderful things that God has done for you. One can only imagine his disappointment at what must have felt like outright rejection., his sense of grief at losing so soon the man who had saved him, his fear, even, at having to confront the people who knew him only as a madman. Nonetheless, he did what he was told, and 'declared throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.'

There is food for thought here. In these strange times we too cannot be where we want to be: together in celebration of the Eucharist. Are we then, more than ever, called simply to be witnesses to divine love wherever we happen to be? Perhaps this is a chance for us all to learn how to participate in what Saint Maria calls 'the Divine Liturgy beyond church walls'.

Martin Olsson

### **Saint Maria of Paris: The Divine Liturgy Beyond Church Walls**

The Eucharist is the Gospel in action. It is the eternally existing and eternally accomplished sacrifice of Christ and of Christlike human beings for the sins of the world. Through it earthly flesh is deified and having been deified enters into communion again with earthly flesh. And all this is accomplished in the name of sacrificial love for mankind. But if at the centre of the Church's life there is this sacrificial, self-giving eucharistic love, then where are the Church's boundaries, where is the periphery of this centre? Here it is possible to speak of the whole of Christianity as an eternal offering of the divine liturgy beyond church walls. What does this mean? It means that we must offer the bloodless sacrifice, the sacrifice of self-surrendering love not only in a specific place, upon the altar of a particular temple; the whole world becomes the single altar of a single temple, and for this universal liturgy we must offer our hearts, like bread and wine, in order that they may be transformed into Christ's love, that He may be born in them, that they may become 'God-manly' hearts, and that He may give these hearts of ours as food for the world, that He may bring the whole world into communion with these hearts of ours that have been offered up, so that in this way we may be one with Him, not so that we should live anew but so that Christ should live in us, becoming incarnate in our flesh, offering our flesh upon the cross of Golgotha, resurrecting our flesh, offering it as a sacrifice of love for the sins of the world, receiving it from us as a sacrifice of love to Himself. Then truly in all ways Christ will be all in all.

Here we see the measurelessness of Christian love. Here is the only path towards Christification, the only path that the gospel reveals to us. What does all this mean in a worldly, concrete sense? How can this be manifested in each human encounter, so that each encounter may be a real and genuine communion with God through communion with mankind? It implies that each time one must give up one's soul to Christ in order that he may offer it as a sacrifice for the salvation of that particular individual. It means uniting oneself with that person in the sacrifice of Christ, in the flesh of Christ. This is the only injunction we have received through Christ's preaching of the Gospel, corroborated in the celebration of the Eucharist. Such is the only true path a Christian can follow.

From 'Types of Religious Life' in : *Mother Maria Skobtsova – Essential Writings*  
Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 2003

## This Week We Celebrate

On Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October: The **Glorious Great Martyr Dimitrios of Thessaloniki** (c309)

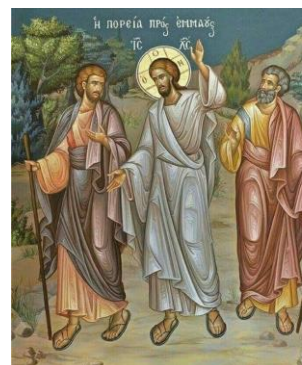
We wish our Uganda Medical Student **Dimitrios** and all **Dimitris** and **Dimas** who have worshipped with us over the years a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October: **Holy Martyr Anastasia of Rome** (3rd C)

We wish **Anastasia, Anastasia** and **Anastassia**  
a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October: The **Holy Apostle Cleopas**,  
who walked with the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus.

On Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October: **Saint Aristoboulos of the Seventy**,  
first Bishop of Britain.



## Parish Finances

It will come as no surprise to anyone that in recent months our parish income has shrunk considerably, with no weekly collection and no money from the sale of candles. Meanwhile, we continue to be liable for considerable outgoings. We still need to meet ongoing expenses such as rent for Saint Anne's, insurance, dues payable to the Deanery etc, and to be in a position to pay the expenses of visiting clergy when we are in a position to start holding services again.

Many of you already make regular payments to the parish by standing order from your bank. Those who in the past have contributed through the weekly collection might consider setting up a standing order instead. It is a simple process using a standard form which is attached to this issue. If you are also a tax payer, and would like to declare that you want the tax you would have paid on the amount donated to be added to your offering, there is also a form attached for this purpose.

M.O.

## Memories of the Optina Monastery Renovation 1990 (See 4<sup>th</sup> October issue)

'David Palmer was also with us. Among things I remember are Igor the Afghanistan Veteran Monk who preferred vodka to doing any work. "Igor *niet* eager" was our joke. We moved quite a lot of tiles and drank quite a lot of vodka in his cellar. Fields of dill and spring onions. Swimming in the river. Going on the tour bus with kitchen chairs in the isle to make up seats. Late nights drinking vodka round the campfire then starting over again with Igor the next day!. A photographer guy turned up who took nice photos but was rumoured to be KGB. Did I mention the vodka?'

William Olsson

'We stayed in a newly built log cabin a few hundred meters away from the monastery near a meandering river that flowed through fields of tall grass, dill and other crops. A few old wooden farmhouses around, baboushka milking the cow etc. We 'worked' both with Igor the monk moving tiles back and forth and also removing accretions of building material from the original fabric as the buildings had been used as a detention centre/prison(?) in communist times, also some work on the roof on very precarious scaffolding. We visited another abandoned monastery made out of very ornate brick work and overgrown with plants but cannot remember the name. Breakfast, lunch and supper always included pickled and preserved good from the grounds and river, David Palmer refused to eat the daily carp as he had some as pets, meals were eaten with the monks in silence with reading from the Bible during sittings. A group of young French Catholics and some Russian youths also attended and plenty of evening socialising in the cabin, meadow and river.'

Philip Scorer

### Father Peter's 40-day Panikhida



The Panikhida to mark the fortieth day since Father Peter's death was held at the graveside in Exeter Higher Cemetery last Tuesday at 10am, led by Father Gregory Palamas and Father Trayan. Afterwards prayers were offered for Aidan, Victor, Keith, Eleni and Wendy, who are also buried there.

### Memorial Prayers for the Dead

The Apostolic Constitutions (1st/2nd century) teach that Memorials for the dead be served with "psalms and readings and prayers" on the third day after the death of our beloved one, on account of the Lord Jesus "who rose after three days." They prescribe Memorials on the ninth day "as a reminder of the living and the dead," as well as "on the fortieth day after death according to ancient practice."

Therefore, panikhidas (Trisagion Prayers for the Dead) and prayer at home for the dead are beneficial to them, as are good deeds done in their memory, such as alms or contributions to the church. In the Church prayers are ever offered for the repose of the dead, and on the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, in the kneeling prayers at vespers, there is even a special petition "for those in hell."

We can do nothing better or greater for the dead than to pray for them. Of this they are always in need, and especially during those forty days when the soul of the deceased is proceeding on its path to the eternal habitations. The body feels nothing then: it does not see its close ones who have assembled, does not smell the fragrance of the flowers, does not hear the funeral orations. But the soul senses the prayers offered for it and is grateful to those who make them and is spiritually close to them.

Let us take care for those who have departed into the other world before us, in order to do for them all that we can, remembering that "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

*From Life After Death - A description of the first 40 days after death by St. John Maximovitch*

### Death Does Not Destroy our Communion With One Another

When we pray for those who have died and the forgiveness of their sins, we are asking for their communion with God, whether broken or impaired, to be made whole. Of course, we enter mysterious ground in all of this. The Orthodox Church has very little to say in a definitive manner about prayers for the departed. The doctrine of purgatory is a development with Western Catholicism and plays no part in Orthodoxy. Officially, the Church says that our prayers for the departed are "of benefit." They help.

What is essential in this is something that runs very counter to our contemporary minds, formed as they are by the false assumptions of modernity. Salvation, the full and complete restoration of communion with God and our complete healing, is not a private matter. We are not saved alone, for "alone" is the very antithesis of salvation. *Communion* is how we exist. Neither can we have communion with God without communion with our neighbour (1 John 4:20-21). Our contemporary culture imagines that we are self-existing, that life is merely a matter of biology. However, true existence, both in this life and the next, is marked by communion, both with God and with others.

This is the very heart of our salvation. That the Church prays for those who have died is the abiding confession that death does not destroy our communion with one another. That our prayers are of "benefit" for those who have died is the abiding confession that our communion is real and effective. That we ask the prayers of the saints is the abiding confession that those who have finished the course are of benefit to us.

*From Fr Stephen Freeman: Prayers for the Dead. Ancient Faith Ministries Blog 'Glory to God for All Things' 21-5-2016*