



Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self-isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
15th November 2020**



[Today's Gospel reading, Luke 10: 25-37, tells the story of the Good Samaritan. Today also marks the beginning of the Advent Fast. Thus we have two sermons from Metropolitan Anthony for this Sunday – one on the parable, and one on Fasting.]

On the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Today's Gospel in short, contains everything which is the way of the Christian. The first commandment is that we should love our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength, with all our being, and our neighbour as ourselves. To love means to prefer all that is dear to the beloved person, to what is dear to us. To love God means that we should live, and indeed be such that He could rejoice in what we are, that there should be nothing alien to Him in our lives.

And here comes the second commandment, which the lawyer did not understand: that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. To love again our neighbour, forgetting ourselves. Very often we think that we are worthy Christians if we feel that we have in our hearts a warmth, that we love God. But this is not enough. The test of this love is to share God's own love for every one of our neighbours. I remember a sad moment in my own life, when my father asked me: what was the dream of my life? I was young then, and I said, 'To be with God alone.' And he looked sadly at me and said, 'You have not begun to be a Christian.' Because if we love God we must share with Him all His concerns for the whole world and for each person in this world.

Let us, therefore, take this short event in the life of Christ and the parable as a rule. We will never be able to know how much we love God. It is difficult, because it is so easy to delude oneself. Even when we say that we love someone, a moment may come when selfishness, indifference, a quarrel may make an end, at least for a time, to our mutual friendship and closeness. But there is a criterion which is objective. How do you treat your neighbour? What does he mean to you? If he means nothing, if he is a passer-by, if he is only someone in your way, or if he is someone to whom you can pay attention when you are in the right mood, then we have not begun to love God and to love the world together with Him. Let us therefore think of it, ask ourselves pertinent questions, and redress our lives.

Sermon given on 30th November 1997 - Copyright The Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Foundation

On Fasting

In today's Gospel we hear the Lord saying to each of us that our neighbour is not the one whom we like, not even the one whom we love; it is the one who needs us, whether he likes us or not, and it is to him that we must turn in compassion, in charity, as indeed the Lord God Himself turned to us at the moment when the whole of mankind was alien to Him; and again, turns to each of us at the moment when we are at rock bottom, when we are as far away from Him as we can imagine, indeed, much farther, because only God can measure the distance that separates us from our being in Him, with Him, the distance which measures His absence from our life.

[Today] is the beginning of fasting time that prepares us for Christmas; many will turn to fasting, eating those things which are appointed by the Church; but is that the fast which God wishes us to keep? Listen to what the Lord said to the Hebrews, from the lips of Isaiah the Prophet [Isaiah 58:3-8]:

They [my people] ask of me 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?'

“Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?”

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily, your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.”

Let us remember these words, because more than ever in our time we must not fast hypocritically, not fast with false piety, but fast by turning away from every evil, from all evil, put right in our lives everything that has gone wrong.

Are we going to meet the day when the Lord our God took flesh by accepting to continue in our estrangement from Him? And we are estranged from Him when we hate our neighbour, when we reject our neighbour, when we refuse to forgive, when we turn away from him or her who is in need of our mercy — not only of bread, not only of shelter — indeed, that also counts! — but in need of forgiveness, of the mercy of the heart! Are we going to meet the Lord who came to save sinners by rejecting those whom we consider as sinners, those who have offended us, those against whom we have fought? Can we meet the Lord on such terms?

Let us therefore enter into this period of fasting in earnest, stand in judgement before God to be judged by Him, and ask ourselves whether we could stand side by side with Him when others come to be judged, and step forward and say, 'Lord! I have forgiven — Thou hast no grudge against him, against her, any more!'

From a sermon given on 25th November 1995 – Copyright The Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Foundation

I have taken the liberty of using the English Standard Version for the quote from Isaiah in place of the Authorized Version – Ed.

Two Prayers of Saint Philaret of Moscow

Prayer at the Beginning of the Day

O Lord, grant me to meet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will. In every hour of the day, reveal Your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words, guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by You. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all that it shall bring. Direct my will, teach me how to pray, pray You Yourself in me.

Amen.



Prayer for the Acceptance of God's Will

O Lord, I do not know what to ask of You. You alone know what are my true needs. You love me more than I myself know how to love. Help me to see my true needs, which are hidden from me. I do not dare to ask of You either a cross or consolation; I can only stand before You with an open heart. Visit me and help me, for the sake of Your great mercy. Strike and heal me, cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Your holy will and Your ways that are unfathomable to me. I offer myself as a sacrifice to You. All my trust is in You. I have no other desire than to do Your will. Teach me how to pray; pray You Yourself in me. Amen.

2021 Calendar

Hugh will shortly be ordering copies of the 2021 Calendar and Lectionary produced by the Orthodox Fellowship of Saint John the Baptist. If you would like one, please contact Hugh soon via hpeliasdevon@gmail.com or by phone at 01884 258031. This year's calendar cost £5 – as far as we know the price is unchanged.

This Week We Celebrate

On Monday 16th November: The **Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew**
We wish **Hugh a Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Tuesday 17th : **Saint Hilda, Abbess of Whitby** (680)

On Thursday 19th : **Saint Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow** (1867)

The **New Martyr Elias (Ilya) Fondaminsky** (1942) Co-worker with Saint Maria of Paris

On Friday 20th: **Saint Edmund of East Anglia, King and Martyr** (869)

On Saturday 21st: **THE ENTRY OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD INTO THE TEMPLE**

Saint Nektarios' *Agne Parthene Despina*

Midway between the feasts of St Nektarios (9 November) and the Entry of the Mother of God (21 November) -- what better time to listen to the saint's very popular para-liturgical hymn to the Mother of God, 'Agne Parthene Despina'? Youtube offers many versions in many languages: a version in English can be heard on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZQa3UqDsjc>

For an English translation of the text go to:

<https://young-orthodox.blogspot.com/2012/04/agni-parthene-o-pure-virgin.html>

Behind this extraordinarily popular setting there is an intriguing cross-cultural story. The hymn was set to music in the 1990s by an Athonite monk, Fr Grigorios of Simonopetra, who adapted the melody from a hymn he heard sung to guitar accompaniment by some young German or Italian pilgrims in Jerusalem. According to the Oxford musicologist Dimitri Conomos (writing in 2012),

'Approximately fifteen years ago, a suave, lyrical melody set to a religious poem by St. Nektarios of Aegina was composed by a monk at Simonopetra and subsequently recorded on cassette tape and CD. Within two years this melody circled the globe. It has captured the hearts of Orthodox choir masters worldwide. The hymn, entitled, "O Pure Virgin," can today be heard sung in Japanese, French, Tlingit, Italian, Russian, Swahili, Arabic, Romanian, English, and many other languages. Its popularity is entirely due to the fact that it combines familiar elements of two different musical cultures: the harmonic and metrical features of European lyrical ballads with the vocal production and exoticism that evokes a flavour of the East.'

From Dimitri Conomos, 'A brief survey of the history of Byzantine and post-Byzantine chant':

<http://www.asbm.goarch.org/articles/a-brief-survey-of-the-history-of-byzantine-and-post-byzantine-chant/>

(With thanks to Elizabeth Theokritoff)

Virtual Visits to Saints and Holy Places

Following the success of its summer series of virtual visits, the Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist has arranged a winter series of **Virtual Visits to Saints and Holy Places**. These will take place on Monday evenings from 30 November to 4 January.

The visits are to Bari - St Nicholas (30 November), Corfu - St Spiridon (7 December), Spruce Island, Alaska – St Herman (14 December), Bethlehem – The Nativity of Christ (21 December), Walsingham – The Mother of God (28 December) and Diveyevo – St Seraphim of Sarov (4 January).

For more details and to register, go to:

<https://forerunner.org.uk/winter-series-2020-21/>

Hope Springs Eternal

An old and dear friend sent me this quote from Garson Kanin, an American playwright:

Youth is a gift of nature, but old age is an art.

I find that hugely encouraging: it suggests that if we keep practising, we can get better at it!

Reader's Corner

There was an interesting discussion last week on Radio 4's *In Our Time* about *Piers Plowman* – that great rambling allegorical dream poem by William Langland, Chaucer's contemporary. (Both men lived through the Black Death pandemic and wrote in its troubled aftermath.) Part satire, part homily, part epic, it is a remarkable exploration of the challenge of how to live. I had always found it quite difficult, not because of the language – there are several good translations from the Middle English – but because the moral ground Langland covers never seems entirely firm. A certain episode seems to point one way, only for a subsequent one to take a slightly different route, often undermining the ideas of the first. But one of the contributors to this discussion suggested that this is precisely the point (though *precise* is perhaps not quite the word I would use for Langland's style). The dramatic events of the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell towards the end of the poem demonstrate to us that the key to living life well is not a particular moral stance, but a person – the Person of Christ crucified and triumphant over Hell. The poem ends with the narrator waking to find the world as corrupt and venial as ever, but with a renewed determination to engage with it in a spirit of Christ-like love for all the motley inhabitants of the 'fair field full of folk' described at the beginning of the poem – that is, for all people.

You can listen to the discussion at www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl

Martin O

In Memoriam Father Peter Scorer (1942 - 2020)

I would like to evoke the memory of Father Peter Scorer, who died on September 11, 2020, only a few months after being ordained a priest. His sudden departure has touched us deeply. We knew him as an open and reassuring personality, attentive to everyone, both as a deacon and as a youth camp facilitator.

The grandson of the great religious philosopher of the Russian emigration, Simon Franck, he was also influenced by the teaching of his mentor, Father Alexander Schmemmann. For as long as I can remember, Father Peter shared our vision of the Church, working for a living orthodoxy rooted in the culture of his country, England. In his youth, he regularly frequented ACER-MJO, especially the student camp. I remember a warm, cheerful and very open young man who always subsequently took part in the various congresses organized by ACER or the Orthodox Fraternity.

Very attached to the person of Bishop Anthony Bloom, of whom he was the faithful disciple, he worked to spread his teaching. Very close to the dean of England, Father John Marks, he also demonstrated his loyalty to Monsignor Gabriel, of blessed memory, on numerous occasions. For us he will always remain the faithful protodeacon Peter, a role he held for nearly fifty years in his parish of Exeter in the south-west of England. To Matoushka Irina, to his loved ones, to his parishioners and friends, our deep affection. Eternal memory, dear Father Peter!

Michel Sollogoub

Published in French in *La Lettre du Vicariat*, November 2020. Michel Sollogoub was formerly Secretary to the Council of the Exarchate of Churches of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe.