



# Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self-isolation for the Orthodox Church of  
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
8th November 2020**



## **Metropolitan Anthony on the Healing of Jairus' Daughter (Luke 8: 41-56)**

Today's Gospel is not only about miracles and the mercy of God; to me it is about hope beyond hope. In the story of the daughter of Jairus we see a child already dead; everyone knows about it; there is such certainty that when the Son of God, become the Son of Man, says, 'No! This child has not died, she is fallen asleep', everyone contradicts Him: 'No, this child has died'. And then Christ, with a word of power, but in an act of love, calls the child to earthly life again.

Isn't this, - apart from being a true event of our human history - isn't this also a parable, and an image of so many human situations? How often we would say, 'There is no point in doing anything about this person, this person is lost anyhow; there is nothing to do about redeeming a given situation, this situation is beyond redemption'. And we must remember the words which were spoken by Christ to Peter when he said, 'Who then can be saved?' and the Lord said to him, 'What is impossible to man, is possible to God'.

Hope beyond hope: not because we have got good reasons to hope, but because we can be possessed of a passionate certainty that not only love divine but also human love can bring back to life what was lost. People who have fallen into the deepest dereliction, people who seem to us to be hopelessly evil, if they are met by the sacrificial love - and the word sacrificial is essential - the sacrificial love of God and the same sacrificial love in us, they can be redeemed.

In the case of this child it happened immediately. In our relation to one another it may take years, years of patient love, years during which we will give ourselves, but also endure, endure endlessly the most unendurable things; and in the end there can be redemption. There can be redemption on this earth, in the form of a person who was thought to be hopeless, beyond help, and who begins to change, and then we see a miracle, and we are elated, and hope becomes complete and real, and joy fills our heart.

But there is also another way in which this sacrificial love can be redemption. A western theologian said around the time of the last war, when feelings were deep and pain acute, that suffering is the meeting place between evil and humanity; suffering is always caused by human agency, or else human agency turns away from it and does not alleviate it. And suffering always cuts into the soul or into the body of people. But when it has happened, the victim acquires divine power to forgive, and by forgiveness to undo the evil, and to redeem those who have done the evil.

Let us reflect on this. This thought has come to me not out of reflection, and indeed not out of my own life that has always been too easy for me to be able to speak such words. But after the war a document was found in one of the concentration camps. It was written on a torn sheet of wrapping paper by a man who died in this camp. And the substance of his message was a prayer in which he said, 'Lord, when you come as a Judge of the earth, do not condemn the people who have done such atrocious things to us; do not hold against them their cruelty and our suffering, their violence and our despair; but look at the fruit which we have borne in the form of patience, of humility, of fortitude, of forgiveness, of loyalty, of solidarity; and may these fruits be accounted unto their salvation. Do not allow the memory of us to be in eternity horror to them; may it be their salvation.'

This is also hope beyond hope. And to me it is connected with this contrast between the sinful, the false, the blind knowledge expressed by the people in the house - they laugh at Christ, they know that the child is dead, hope is superfluous, it is drowned in despair - and the victory of love and of mercy which is shown in the event but which can extend in so many ways into our personal lives on the simplest level, and also on the most heroic ones.

## This Week We Celebrate

On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>: The Synaxis of the **Archangel Michael** and of **All the Bodiless Powers**  
We wish **Mike L, Michail N** and **Michail C** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Monday 9<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Nektarios of Pentapolis** (1846-1920)

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Martin the Merciful**, Bishop of Tours (397)  
We wish **Martin M** and **Martin O** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup>: **Saint John Chrysostom**, Archbishop of Constantinople (407)  
We wish **William** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>: **The Holy Apostle Philip**  
We wish **Philip** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

## A Memory of Angels

It was early morning, when I was seven years old, that I saw the angels. I am as sure of it now as I was then. I was not dreaming, nor “seeing things” – I just know they were there, plainly, clearly, distinctly. I was neither astonished nor afraid. I was not even awed – I was only terribly pleased. I wanted to talk to them and touch them.

Our night nursery was lit by the dawn and I saw a group of angels standing, as if chatting, around my brother’s bed. I was aware of this, although I could not hear their voices. They wore long flowing gowns of various soft-shaded colours. Their hair came to their shoulders, and different in colour from fair and reddish to dark brown. They had no wings. At the foot of my brother Mircea’s bed stood one heavenly being, a little aside from the others – taller he was, and extraordinarily beautiful, with great white wings. In his right hand he carried a lighted taper; he did not seem to belong to the group of angels gathered around the bed. He clearly stood apart and on watch. I knew him to be the guardian angel. I then became aware that at the foot of my own bed stood a similar celestial creature. He was tall, his robe was dark blue with wide, loose sleeves. His hair was auburn, his face oval, and his beauty such as I cannot describe because it was comparable to nothing human. His wings swept high and out behind him. One hand was lifted to his breast, while in the other he carried a lighted taper. His smile can only be described as angelic; love, kindness, understanding, and assurance flowed from him. Delighted, I crawled from under the bedcovers and, kneeling up against the end of the bed, I stretched out my hand with the ardent wish to touch my smiling guardian, but he took a step back, put out a warning hand, and gently shook his head. I was so close to him I could have reached him easily. “Oh, please don’t go,” I cried; at which words all the other angels looked toward me, and it seemed I heard a silvery laugh, but of this sound I am not so certain, though I know they laughed. Then they vanished.

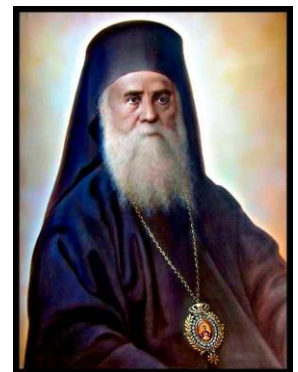
I was but a child when I saw my guardian angel. As time passed I still sporadically remembered and acknowledged his presence, but mostly, I ignored him...

From *The Holy Angels* by Mother Alexandra (formerly Princess Ileana of Romania) [eighthdaybooks.com](http://eighthdaybooks.com)

## Saint Nektarios of Pentapolis

As well as being a scholar and a gifted writer and preacher, Saint Nektarios was renowned for his humility and compassion. Once while he was principal of the Rizarion Ecclesiastical School in Athens, the school cleaner fell ill. For several weeks Saint Nektarios personally carried out the cleaner’s duties so that he would not lose his job.

“We have within us deeply rooted weaknesses, passions, and defects. These cannot all be cut out with one sharp motion, but with patience, persistence, care and attention. The path leading to perfection is long. Pray to God so that he will strengthen you. Patiently accept your falls and, having stood up, immediately run to God, not remaining in that place where you have fallen. Do not despair if you keep falling into your old sins. Many of them are strong because they have received the force of habit. Only with the passage of time and with fervour will they be conquered. Don’t let anything deprive you of hope.”



From Saint Nektarios: *The Path to Happiness*

## Reader's Corner

The feast day of Saint Winifred last week reminded me of *A Morbid Taste for Bones* - the first of Ellis Peters' series of mediaeval whodunnits featuring the shrewd and worldly-wise monk detective Brother Cadfael.

For those who don't know him, either from the novels or from the television dramatizations, Brother Cadfael is the herbalist of the rich and powerful Shrewsbury Abbey in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Before taking monastic orders he had a checkered and eventful history as a layman, including service in the Crusades, and he has highly effective skills of observation and investigation as well as a penetrating understanding of human nature.

Cadfael is also Welsh, a fact which not infrequently leads to friction with some of the predominantly Norman aristocratic Abbey authorities. In this story, a plan is devised to bring the bones of the Welsh Saint Winifred from her native village in rural Gwynedd to become a focus of pilgrimage in the Abbey, thus increasing its prestige (and, incidentally of course, its income). Cadfael, though, has other ideas...

The Cadfael books are not Hilary Mantel, but they do succeed in creating believable characters who bring a troubled period of history alive, including the fact that at that time faith was an essential element of the air that everyone breathed, even if some were tempted to abuse it.

Martin Olsson

## News from CTAX (Christians Together Across Exeter)

### Food and Chaplaincy for Rough Sleepers

There are high numbers of rough sleepers in Exeter at the moment, but a network of churches and charities, including Bread of Life, Exeter Cathedral, Exeter Network Church, the Salvation Army, St. David's Church Exeter, and St Petrock's continue to provide free food and pastoral care to Exeter's homeless and vulnerably housed.

St Petrock's service, which includes teams going out around the city each weekday morning, is going really well. It's creating good opportunities for one-to-one follow-up work, getting housing assessments in place for people new to Exeter, and accompanying people to appointments for support. Teams from Bread of Life, Petrock's, and others are out distributing free hot drinks, breakfast rolls and packed lunches – typically around 25 packs a day.

Meanwhile, Exeter City Council have been successful in securing funding from the government's Next Steps programme to continue to provide hotel accommodation at the Great Western Hotel for homeless people until March 2021 (more details: <https://news.exeter.gov.uk/exeter-gets-major-funding-boost-to-tackle-homelessness/>). This is really good news, and will be a lifeline for vulnerable people this winter. There are church groups helping out with evening deliveries of free food to the hotel (providing around 33 free meals a day), and visiting on Saturdays for chaplaincy.

### Make Lunch

Make Lunch is a national parachurch charity who have been running for years, dedicated to filling the holiday hunger gap. They've been helping churches provide free food and bring hope to families and children struggling with holiday hunger. More info here: <https://www.tlg.org.uk/your-church/make-lunch>

## Walking Through the Portal

We've been in 'lockdown' up here [in Edinburgh] for a few weeks now. Getting quite used to a quieter city! Yet somehow an enormous hotel is still being built at the end of our street. I am sad (but not surprised) to see that yet again and despite everything this kind of 'work' is being prioritised over and above the artistic, cultural and spiritual productivity that we know is so vital for our humanity's survival. Mama and I were walking through the city centre yesterday and saw this quote from Arundhati Roy posted across the doors of the Fruitmarket Gallery next to Waverly Station:

“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And to fight for it.”

I feel like our life together in our parish has always provided this 'portal' for me. In reading this I was reminded how much I carry you all with me wherever I go. And of how much I love and miss Petya..

Anya K.

### **St Anne's - New Lockdown Regulations**

Sadly, the new Covid-19 regulations mean that we will not now be able to celebrate Vespers at Saint Anne's in the coming weeks. Let us hope and pray that this four-week lockdown will not need to be extended. In the meantime, in the words of Saint Nektarios, 'Do not think that you have a right to complain when your prayers are not answered. God fulfils your desires in a manner that you do not know.'

### **Watching and Listening for what God Wants.**

Churches are once again closed for services – and predictably there is a lot of complaining. Yes, it is very sad and I miss celebrating the Liturgy together and seeing my friends - but look at it this way: life, now and through the centuries, has presented us with many events which test our faith in God - all the martyrs are proof of that. Maybe this pandemic is one of those events. We can all say what good Orthodox we are when we attend x number of services weekly or monthly – that's the easy bit. But in the distant past, the more recent past (eg in the Soviet Union), as well as now there are many people who have not had the luxury of regular services, if any, and their faith in God has not diminished. Yes, attending services and celebrating together are important aspects of being Orthodox, but we can serve God in so many other ways. So perhaps we should take this time to watch and listen for what God wants of us – who knows what happy surprises are around the corner.

Celia

### **A Sad Message from Hugh**

Hugh Allen thanks God for 12½ happy years shared with his labradoodle Zoe, now sadly no more; she was known and loved by many in the parish community. The search for a replacement has begun.

### **Verses from the Canon for the Synaxis of the Archangels**

I implore thee, O Michael, Captain of the hosts,  
to be my companion when my soul goes forth upon its heavenly journey,  
and a helper for my life on earth:  
my watch and protection and my guard against all the enemy's array.

Illumine my whole mind with the lightning from thy countenance,  
and purify it, O Michael, that I may clearly see thy beauty  
surpassing all speech.

All my hopes have I placed in thee, O Archangel of God:  
do thou comfort my soul and soothe the sufferings of my flesh.

O bright and fiery Angels  
quench all the flames of despondency in my humble soul,  
and send forth on it the refreshment of your joy.

By thy power, O Michael, Captain of the hosts,  
do thou speedily deliver those who call upon thee  
from plague and severe fever and every infirmity.

Michael greatest of angels, deliver from all anger and grief  
those who venerate thy revered and holy icon  
and deliver them from the bitterness of sudden death  
and from fearful sickness, O wise Captain of the hosts:  
that, kept ever safe by thy holy protection  
we may honour with love thy venerable name.

