

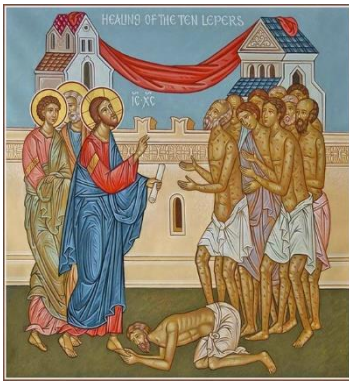


Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self-isolation for the Orthodox Church
of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
Sunday 17th January 2021**



The Ten Lepers (Luke 17.12-19)



On the feast of the Theophany we celebrated the revelation of God as Trinity when Jesus the Son of God accepted baptism, the Holy Spirit rested on Him in the form of a dove, and the Father acclaimed Him as His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased (Matthew 3.13-17).

On the following Sunday we heard how Isaiah's prophecy of a 'Great Light' which would shine on those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death was fulfilled when Jesus began his public ministry (Matthew 4.12-17).

In today's Gospel we see that Light focusing on a village on the borders of Samaria and Galilee – 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (Matthew 4.15), then as now an area riven by strife both political and religious.

The Light shines – and its beams fall on ten outcasts, and especially on one doubly an outcast, excluded on account of his contagious physical condition but also because he was a Samaritan, a member of the despised sect of unOrthodox part-Jews, part-pagans.

Christ comes as Light of the world (John 8.12). Today he comes through his Body the Church, to shine even into the world's darkest corners and among its most marginalised people. How? Through the members of that Body – you and me, fuelled by our participation in His life through Scripture, Sacrament, and prayer. Metropolitan Anthony gives us a 'God's-eye view' of this:

"When I discovered God, the first thing that struck me was that for this God, everything is significant, that he does not divide people, that He is not the God of the good against the evil, not the God of believers against unbelievers, not the God of some against others. Each person exists for Him as a person full of content and value. And once I discovered such a God, my attitude towards everyone around me had to become the same.

I was amazed to find that I was completely turned around by this discovery, by the fact that I had discovered God as Such and that His attitude towards everyone was such. I looked around me and saw no more hateful, disgusting creatures, but people who are in relation to Him and with whom I can enter into a new relationship, if I believe in them as God believes in them."

(Developed from an idea in a rather lengthy sermon 'borrowed' from an American parish website. The quote from Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh was posted on Facebook a few days before Christmas.)

Week Of Prayer For Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity runs from 18 to 25 January, in the western calendar the feasts respectively of the Chair of St Peter (i.e. his apostolic authority) and the Conversion of St Paul. Launched in 1908 by an American priest-convert from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, it was originally primarily concerned with reconciliation between those two communions but has since been adopted by non-episcopal churches as well as by Orthodoxy both Eastern and Oriental.

In many places it's an occasion for joint services and ecumenical get-togethers, even if in this country Orthodox support is only patchy. However, it's important to remember that it's a week of **prayer** rather than just an occasion for ecumenical fraternisation; that public events aren't a necessary part of it (just as well, in this time of Covid); and that our prayer must always be for **unity as God wills**. There can be no threat in this of Orthodox teaching being diluted, nor of distinctive Christian traditions being swallowed up in a bland uniformity.

It would be good if each of us could make time this week to pray for unity across the whole of Christendom – not forgetting the need for it within sadly divided Orthodoxy, as well as within every local congregation. And not only in this week: as dogs are not just for Christmas, so prayer for unity shouldn't be restricted to a single week in January.

This Week We Celebrate

On Sunday 17th January - **ST ANTONY THE GREAT**, hermit in the Egyptian desert and founder of monasticism.

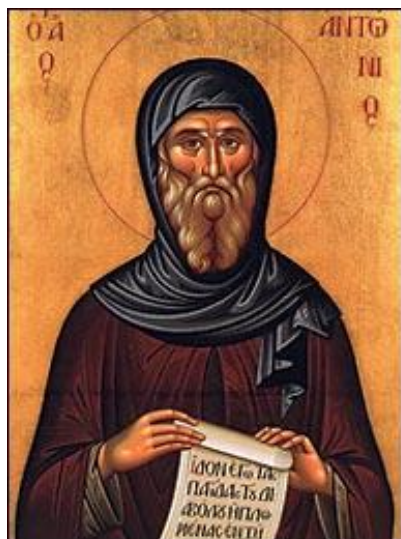
We wish **Antonis, Tony R., Anton S.** and **Anthony (Eddie) B.** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years**.

On Monday 18 January - **ST ATHANASIOS THE GREAT & ST CYRIL**, Archbishops of Alexandria.

We wish **Athansios T.** (in Uganda) and **Kyril** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years**.

On Thursday 21 January - **ST MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR**

We wish **Priest Maxime** (in Brittany) and **Max S.** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years**.



ST ANTONY THE GREAT (251-356) is regarded as the founder of monasticism properly so called (individual Christian ascetics are known to have lived before him); his life story was narrated by his younger contemporary St Athanasius, who spent a period of exile in the Egyptian desert shortly after Antony's death. The following is taken from the introduction to this work in Carolinne White (ed), *Early Christian Lives* (Penguin Books 1998):

Athanasius's portrait of Antony depicts the tension in the life of a man who desired solitude above all else but was forced to adopt the role of a spiritual adviser and healer by the people who were drawn to him because of the special status his extraordinary way of life gave him: Antony's determination to turn to the desert, away from

people and from the things of this world, made him all the more attractive to them. Such tension does not however detract from the fact that the Antony we come to know in this biography is a 'holy hero', outstanding in his spiritual achievements but also in his humility and simplicity.

In his preface to the *Life of Antony Athanasius* indicates that he is responding to a request from ascetics overseas for information about Antony's life. At the end of the work he also expresses the view that it may be valuable to non-Christians, too, by showing them that Jesus Christ is God and that those beings whom they worship as gods are but demons and deceivers over whom the Christian God has power.....

LIBRARY CORNER

Two recent books by contemporary writers trying to make sense of extraordinary relations: *Kiss Myself Goodbye: the Many Lives of Aunt Munca* by Ferdinand Mount (Bloomsbury Continuum), and *Between Heaven and Earth: A Journey with my Grandfather* by Robert Nurden (published by the author).

Mount is well known, and the book has been widely reviewed. 'Aunt Munca' was the (bigamous? trigamous?) wife of his father's brother, a wealthy shoe magnate – they maintained a permanent suite at Claridge's, nicknamed by them 'The Pub'. Her origins in the back streets of Sheffield were overlaid as were later murky episodes by a tissue of lies and inventions, and it was only through diligent detective work and a series of lucky breaks that Mount succeeded in divining the truth about a dominant figure in his childhood. Vastly entertaining, if ultimately rather sad.

Nurden's maternal grandfather Stanley B. James (1869-1951) was the son of a Congregationalist minister, which occupation Stanley himself followed for some years after a spell as cowboy, journalist and soldier 'across the Pond'. Successively caught up in pacifism (during WW1), the campaign for women's suffrage and 'three acres and a cow' Distributism he found suburban Nonconformity increasingly constricting, not helped by his weakness for intense relationships with young female congregants. It was through the Distributist connection that like so many in the 1920s he 'found himself' through conversion to the Catholic Church (Orthodoxy in those days would scarcely have been an option), making a modest name for himself thereafter as a writer and journalist. An interesting read, especially for one who found echoes of his own father's career in the subject's life-story. The author's self-confessed agnosticism, however, is perhaps the chief reason why in telling the story he finds it hard to understand.

H.A.

MANY THANKS to Martin and Celia who produce the Newsletter week by week, and who asked me to assemble this issue to give them a short break. We are enormously grateful to them for having worked hard to keep the parish together since the arrival of covid last March – as am I to Alice for organising the layout. – Hugh Allen.

WORSHIP IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

While it was felt advisable to cancel the Liturgy scheduled for 10 January, we hope to be able to hold occasional Sunday services again after an interval of a few weeks – watch this space for further developments. Meanwhile as Martin reminded us in last week's Newsletter there is a great deal we can do at home to fill the gap, whether as individuals or in families.



The first port of call should be the Sunday readings from Scripture, which can be found in the printed Calendar or on this website: <https://www.goarch.org/chapel>. Another useful site (though following a slightly different allocation of Sunday Gospels) is <https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy>, which also provides some lives of saints together with their Troparia and Kontakia. A fuller range of these last is given on http://orthodox.cn/saints/menologia/index_en.html, and materials for celebrating native British saints can be found on a number of specialist websites.

With these resources you have almost everything you need for the service of Typika, a tried and trusted option when no priest is available to serve the Liturgy. This is in effect a simplified version of the first and final parts of the Liturgy; if you don't have the order printed in a book you can access it here: <https://www.bristol-orthodox-church.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Hours-and-Typika-Sunday-1.pdf> (Typika itself starts on page 11).

Too complicated, or too structured? Just read the Sunday Gospel (or a Gospel passage of your choice) slowly and attentively, then read it again. Select a word or a thought from the passage which speaks to you and let this lead you into prayer. Sum this up in the words of the Our Father. And as the pandemic continues you might like to add the prayer given below and others from the relevant part of the Bristol parish website: <https://www.bristol-orthodox-church.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Prayers-for-Use-During-the-Coronavirus-Outbreak-1.pdf>.

H.A.

Prayer for deliverance from coronavirus

Written by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation, visible and invisible, in your ineffable goodness look down upon us, your people gathered in your holy name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction. You know our weakness. You hear our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O Lord, who love mankind, deliver us from the impending threat of the coronavirus. Send your angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this virus. Guide the hands of physicians and preserve those who are healthy. Enable us to continue to serve our suffering brothers and sisters in peace, that together we may glorify your most honourable and majestic name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.