



Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self – isolation for the Orthodox Church
of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
4th April 2021



Third Sunday of Great Lent – Veneration of the Cross



The Cross is the abyss of wonders, the centre of desires,
the school of virtues, the home of wisdom,
the throne of love, the theatre of joys,
and the place of sorrows;
It is the root of happiness,
and the gate of Heaven.

Thomas Traherne (1637-1674) *Centuries* The Faith Press 1960

Archbishop Dimitri of Dallas and the South on the Sunday of the Cross

It has been said that Lent is a time for returning to "the basics" of the Faith, for re-evaluating priorities, for renewing one's commitment to Jesus Christ. The Cross, in a profound sense *is basic* to our Faith. Its acceptance, therefore, as the way of life for Christ's followers lies at the very heart of any understanding of Lent. The Cross is our badge and emblem as Christians. Remove the Cross from our lives and we have nothing. Without the Cross, both in Christ's life and in ours, there is no genuine Christianity and consequently, no reason to observe Lent or any other sacred season

This fact may seem self-evident. Yet ours is a time in which words like sin, repentance, sacrifice, the Cross and crucifixion, are misunderstood, being viewed even by some Christians with suspicion, as "negative" terms, at least when applied to our own lives. Acceptable, very popular "religious buzz words," are resurrection, triumph, victory, peace and the like. "These are the things," one is told, "that will motivate people, what they want to hear about and acquire for themselves." The problem is that these so-called "positive" elements of the Christian life are unattainable apart from the so-called "negative" elements. Acknowledging sin's existence and its consequences, and being co-crucified with Christ on a daily basis, are all part of 'working out our own salvation with fear and trembling,' (Philippians 2:12)

In speaking of the Cross we must take note of its constant use by Christians. We adorn our church buildings and homes with it. We carry it reverently in procession and venerate it. The Cross is worn around our necks as a daily reminder of who we are: people who have died and risen with Christ. In addition we sign ourselves with the Cross. In so doing we mark or brand ourselves with the emblem of shame. For our Lord, pure, undefiled and guiltless, was put to death in a manner reserved for the worst of criminals. It is written, "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23). By suffering crucifixion our Lord endured the penalty that each of us deserves for our many sins, for our wickedness.

In and through Christ, however, the Cross, once synonymous exclusively with humiliation, becomes His glory and ours as well. It becomes His victory over sin and death and ours also. Through the Cross and its completion in the Third Day Resurrection we have everlasting life. Thus the Cross is the main emblem for Christians of joy and strength. Along with St. Paul we "glory ... in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." (Galatians 6:14)

The Christian must take very seriously the words of our Lord: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." How do we deny ourselves and lose our lives, in order to come after the Lord to save our lives? The answer is very simple, but its very simplicity makes it the hardest thing on earth to accomplish. Nevertheless it must be done, by putting God and our relationship with Him, first, above every other consideration: before business, pleasure, country, family, friends or reputation. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Taking up the Cross and following the footsteps of Christ is not merely a formal compliance with a set of external religious or charitable acts. To be sure, such acts are necessary. We must demonstrate openly how we feel towards Him. These acts, however, cannot be some sort of mechanical or self-affirming performance. Rather they must proceed from the depths of the heart, a heart turned completely toward Christ. Our Lord wants His followers hot, not lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-16), as hot as the flames that burn before icons of His saints. During Great Lent Orthodox Christians are quite accustomed to celebrating the weekday penitential services with great solemnity, almost entirely by candlelight. The burning wicks, illuminating the temple in which God is being praised, are vivid reminders of the heat and intensity of the saints' devotion to Christ. What we say, in effect, when we light candles in Church or before our personal icon corners, is that we now light the flame of devotion in our own hearts. The act of lighting a candle is a pledge of our promise, with God's help and the intercessions of the saints, that we will kindle the fire of faith within ourselves.

*From Archbishop Dimitri of Dallas: **The Sunday of the Cross** www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org*

(Originally published in The Dawn, Diocese of the South, OCA, February 1999)

This Week We Celebrate

On Sunday April 4th: Third Sunday of Great Lent – **The Veneration of the Holy Cross**

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14 – 5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

On Tuesday 6th: **Saint Methodios**, Equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of the Slavs (885)

On Wednesday 7th: **Saint Savvas the New of Kalymnos** (1948)

Saint Savvas the New – Patron Saint of Kalymnos

Born in Thrace in 1862, he felt an early calling to the monastic life, leaving home for Mount Athos at the age of 12. It was at Saint Anne's skete on Athos that he learnt iconography and Byzantine music. Following a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he spent many years as a hermit in the Palestinian desert before he was forced to leave with the outbreak of war in 1914.

He travelled widely in Greece looking for a suitable place to settle, and in 1919 was invited by Saint Nektarios to serve as priest to the Convent of the Holy Trinity on Aegina. He remained there for six years, becoming a close friend of Saint Nektarios, and it was he who conducted the Saint's funeral, as well as painting the first icon of him.

'One day St. Savvas asked the abbess not to let anyone disturb him for forty days, during which he remained confined to his cell in which the nuns could hear constant conversation (between the living Saint and the reposed Saint). After 40 days, he came out of his cell holding an icon of the saint. He handed it to the abbess and asked her to place it in the church for veneration. The abbess was surprised since Nektarios had not been formerly glorified as a saint, and was afraid that the convent would get into trouble. Although Savvas was always meek and humble, he insisted, and told her, "Take the icon and place it on the icon stand, and do not scrutinize the will of God." He knew the holiness and purity of St. Nektarios'.



Soon after the repose of St. Nektarios, the number of pilgrims to the convent increased rapidly due to the growing reputation of the saint as a miracle-worker. This greatly disrupted the quiet life that Saint Savvas loved; he left Aegina in 1925 and went to the island of Kalymnos, where he spent the last years of his life as the beloved priest and spiritual father at the *Convent of All Saints*.

Source: OrthodoxWiki

Noticeboard

Services:

Saturday April 3rd: Vespers and Matins for Sunday of the Cross – Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday April 4th: Orthros and Divine Liturgy – Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

Vespers – Saint Anne's 3pm

Saturday April 10th: Divine Liturgy – Saint James' Hall 10.30

Sunday April 11th: Orthros and Divine Liturgy – Plymouth and Torquay*

Vespers – Saint Anne's 3pm

*(For times go to plymchurch.com/services)

Advance notice – Services in Exeter in Holy Week (Covid permitting)

Saturday April 24th – **Lazarus Saturday:**

Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Palms – Saint James' Hall 10.30

Thursday April 29th – **Holy Thursday** Service of 12 Gospels – Saint James' Hall 6pm

Friday April 30th – **Holy Friday**

Vespers 3.30pm Matins (Burial Service) 6.30pm – Both at Saint James' Hall

Saturday May 1st – **Holy Saturday** Vespers and Liturgy – Saint James' Hall 9.30

May 1st/2nd **Easter Night** – Paschal Vigil and Liturgy 10pm – venue to be announced.

Memory Eternal - Peter France

Peter France died at his home in Lyme Regis on Friday 26th March after a long illness. He would have been 90 on April 2nd. Born in Yorkshire, after graduating from Oxford and spending time in Fiji and Canberra, he became host of the popular BBC radio program *The Living World*. For fifteen years, he was the acclaimed host of *Everyman*, a television show that marked a new style of religious-affairs programming. [*Quite apart from his skill as an interviewer Peter had, in my opinion, the most beautiful speaking voice of anyone in broadcasting. Ed.*]

Peter's account of his slow journey towards faith in the television series *Journey – A Personal Exploration with Peter France* can still be followed on the subscription site Vimeo, and his lovely book about the period he and Felicia spent on Patmos: *A Place of Healing for the Soul: Patmos* is still readily available.

May his memory be eternal!

Felicia is in our thoughts and prayers. The Lord said: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

O Precious Cross

Come, Adam and Eve, our first father and mother, who fell from the choir on high through the envy of the murderer of man, when of old with bitter pleasure you tasted from the tree in Paradise. See, the Tree of the Cross, revered by all, draws near! Run with haste and embrace it joyfully, and cry to it with faith: O Precious Cross, you are our succour; partaking of your fruit, we have gained incorruption; we are restored once more to Eden, and we have received great mercy.

From Great Vespers on Saturday evening

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden;
It has mysteriously been quenched by the wood of the Cross!
The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished;
For You, O my Saviour, have come and cried to those in hell:
"Enter again into paradise."

Kontakion (Tone 7)