

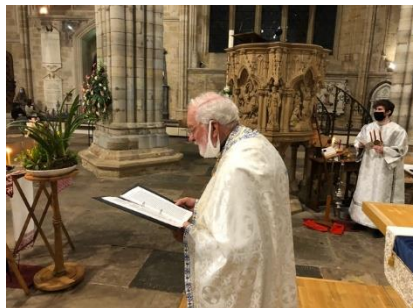


# Prophet Elias News

News for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
16<sup>th</sup> May 2021



## HOLY WEEK and PASCHA 2021



## Our Nomadic Pascha

To quote Fr Anthony Hughes in our issue of 25<sup>th</sup> April, 'Each Holy Week is different.' Well, Holy Week and Pascha have certainly felt very different for us from last year to this. Last year, we were in the depths of the first Covid lockdown. Celia had come up with the idea of putting out a weekly newsletter to keep us in touch with one another, and since we could not go to church, we turned small corners of our houses into churches. Father Peter, so recently ordained, gave huge comfort by livestreaming services from Barnfield Road not only to us in the parish but to a much wider circle. Some of us quietly read the services from the Triodion. On Easter Day many of us joined a Zoom party which was the nearest we could get to greeting one another with a kiss.

The most obvious practical difference this Pascha was that churches could open for public worship. This presented problems for us, though. Not only was Saint Anne's quite unsuitable for any gathering with social distancing, but – and this was much more difficult – Fr Peter was hugely absent. As Lent proceeded it seemed we had nowhere to meet and no-one to lead us.

But we were not alone. Our close neighbours the Anglican parish of Saint James offered us the use of their church hall – well known to us from our after-church coffee and patronal and Easter feasts - whenever we needed it, and Fr Trayan rearranged his work schedule so that he could celebrate the Liturgy with us on some Saturdays. Taking heart from this, we decided that we needed to keep Holy Week and Pascha as fully as we could. Fr Trayan served the Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday and afterwards blessed our palm crosses, some of which were later posted to those who were still shielding at home. A few of us met at Saint Anne's for the Bridegroom services and Wednesday evening Matins. Saint James' Hall was not available the next morning, but we were invited to celebrate the Mystical Supper of Holy Thursday in the church instead, again with Fr Trayan presiding. Later on Thursday Fr Patrick arrived in Exeter, and led us in the Service of the Twelve Gospels, both of the beautiful Holy Friday services, and the Vespertine Liturgy of Holy Saturday, all in Saint James' Hall, which by now we had become quite expert at converting into an Orthodox church in short order.

The biggest problem we had was, where could we celebrate on Easter Night with some hope of accommodating the numbers who have turned up in previous years? Well, the biggest space for public worship in Exeter is the Cathedral. Why not ask? They can only say 'Sorry, but no'. But the Dean said they would be delighted, and arranged for us to liaise with the Custos, Luke Stevenson, who quickly took on board everything we needed to arrange, and was hugely helpful in setting out 'bubble zones' to accommodate the 100 people we had agreed the space could hold. (Only the nave of the cathedral is currently in use for services.) We had to operate a ticket system, and the 100 places were soon booked: sadly, we had to disappoint a further 40 or so who would have liked to come.

Matins was beautiful. A little less exuberant than usual, perhaps; people had been asked to stay in their places and wait for the holy light to be brought to them, rather than surging forward, and to respond 'He is risen indeed!' in a normal speaking voice rather than shouting. They were also not able to follow the procession of the altar party and choir, which left the nave through the south doors in the great screen, up the south choir aisle and back to the north screen doors for the proclamation of the Resurrection. But the effect, for those of us standing in the candlelit nave, was extraordinarily beautiful, as the singing faded almost to nothing and then swelled again on the return, and every light in the nave flooded on as the door was flung open for the procession to reenter.

Contrary to my expectations, almost nobody left during or after Matins. (The crowd who traditionally gather outside Saint Anne's on Easter night almost all melt away after the procession.) And nearly all went up to take Communion, including a good number of very sleepy children. Who then mostly stayed awake enough to take their own red egg as they left the Cathedral – our only stipulation being that they take them home rather than leaving the Cathedral and forecourt littered with broken eggshells.

And in the evening, back at St James' hall, for a joyous coda Fr Nicanor led us in Paschal Vespers, as he has done every Easter for thirty years at least. If you ask him, he will be happy to tell you why that is.

So we did keep Holy Week and Pascha as fully as we could, and for that we owe our huge gratitude to many people: to Nigel, the Churchwarden of Saint James', for whom nothing has been too much trouble, to the Dean of Exeter and Custos Luke, to Fr Trayan, Fr Patrick, Fr Nicanor, Deacon Brandon, Servers Daniel and Alexander, to Irina and the choir (whose reward was being enfolded for three hours in the glorious acoustic of the Cathedral), to Hugh for ticket distribution, to Celia and Emma and Nadya at front of house, to the Prophet Elias Removals Company (Thomas and Philip) for transport of our little church from place to place...

And of course to our beloved Father Peter, who bequeathed to us as a community the strength and the shared love we needed to make this work.

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Martin Olsson

## Arise, O God

Yesterday we sang 'Arise, O God' to say to Jesus: Rise from the dead so that we can live in You. Our days are painful and our country [Lebanon] is getting poorer. And yet You have conquered. Is there any other victory than that over death? Help us to overcome his power which leads us to despair, sadness and the fear of disease, impoverishment and old age, so that the feast may last more than a day and dwell in our soul to make her overcome fear, and make us come back to You after a fall and put our trust not in our own strength, but in You...

The feast cannot hide the omnipresence of the evil that surrounds us. It must be celebrated in the midst of the world, otherwise it will be merely an escape from it. Easter is celebrated in the Church so that we can bring it to the world. The Church must entirely pour itself out like a river into the world, otherwise it will become a museum. The feast must not make us forget our misery, but help us overcome it. As death could not swallow up Jesus, your sorrows cannot swallow you up. You can carry the cross with joy if you carry it with Him. You will triumph in the midst of your sufferings because if you love the Lord He will enter deep within you ...

From this perspective the Resurrection becomes an attitude. It was a unique event, but must become a state that remains in you and makes you a new person. Do not be afraid, for He said, "Be of good cheer; I have conquered the world." The world is the place of passions, greed and hatred. You can overcome it with the grace of Christ ...

Then you will rejoice with all those whom Jesus has comforted, and you will form with them the Church of the Resurrection, that is to say a community of people living in hope because they know that Christ comes to them in glory to wash them clean of all iniquity. When you sing today "Christ is Risen", you must understand that it is not a simple chanting, but that your soul is resurrected with Him and in Him, making you a resurrected person. The people who are risen in Christ fear nothing and no one, because the Lord has given them a taste of new life. They know they have been set free, and no longer have to be subject to their passions. They live on earth like everyone else, yet with the conviction that Christ is Risen from the dead, and that they will rise like Him.

The Resurrection is at once the source of our faith and its support. When faith is translated in us into acts of love, we understand that our cleansing began with the Lord's victory over sin. Sin will have no hold on us if we are convinced that Christ has conquered it and that His victory will have no end in us. Pascha, the memorial of the Saviour's Resurrection, is also a promise that we will be freed by it of our sins. The Resurrection began in Him and continues through our sanctity. This is why it has become for us a Pascha which lifts us up, on the way to the ultimate Pascha in the Kingdom. Then the whole universe will be transfigured and will become a universe of light.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

*From Metropolitan Georges Khodr: The Blessed Crown of the New Year, 2007*  
(Text translated from Arabic into French by Raymond Rizk  
© Monastery of Notre-Dame -de -Toute-Protection, Bussy)  
Printed in *La Lettre du Vicariat — No 13, mai 2021.*  
English translation by M. Olsson

## This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday May 16<sup>th</sup>: **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Pascha – Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women:**  
**Mary Magdalen, Mary** the wife of Cleopas, **Joanna, Salome** the mother of James and John, **Susanna,**  
and **Mary and Martha** of Bethany. The **Righteous Joseph of Arimathaea** and **Nicodemus.**

**Saint Brendan the Voyager** (c575). We wish **Deacon Brandon** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup>: The **Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles** the **Emperor Constantine** and his mother **Helena.**  
We wish **Konstantina D, Konstantina S** and **Helen O** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>: **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha – Sunday of the Paralytic.**

On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup>: **Third Finding of the Head of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John.**

On Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>: **Mid-Feast of Pentecost**

**Saint Augustine** of Canterbury (c605)

On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>: **Saint John the Russian** (1730)

**Saint Melangell,** Hermit of Pennant Melangell in Wales (c560)

**The Venerable Bede** of Jarrow (735)

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Germain** of Paris (576)



## From Uganda

Deacon Procopios, who through Fr Peter appealed to the parish for help with the costs of surgery for the child David, emailed recently when I enquired about David's progress: 'I have talked with Dr Graham to send you or to share with me David's last operation report but up-to now I have seen nothing. True he is so busy with Government Covid work, but what I witnessed is that the boy was fully operated and he is in good condition, because always I talk to his mother on phone call, and my last talk with her was on Good Friday.' I will continue asking for feedback from Dr Graham.

Procopios also sent these thoughts of Metropolitan Jonah of Kampala:

'We have seen our Lord as Risen, but the question is who will roll away the stone for us? (Mark 16:1-8).

Mark tells us that when the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to prepare Jesus' body for burial. But the big question on their lips was; who will roll away the stone for us? However when they got to the tomb, the stone had already been rolled away, not by any man power but God's power. An angel of the lord had rolled the stone away.

When the stone was rolled into place to seal the tomb of Christ, it signified for them the end of Jesus' life and ministry. It was an end of their hopes and dreams for a new life. The stone was an obstacle. Just like the stone over the grave of Christ was an obstacle to these women, we all have stones, obstacles that prevent us from reaching out in faith to Christ. They make us to stumble, make our life difficult, they block one's view of reality.

Often times, most of the time, we cannot remove them by ourselves. Like the women on the way to the tomb we are not strong enough to move these heavy stones. But, there is someone who can! God rolled away the stone of death and replaced it forever with the eternal life with God. God will help us roll away our stones/ obstacles too. There is no obstacle that is so heavy that God cannot remove it from our lives and replace it with a living heart of love.

In whatever struggle or challenge you have been experiencing in your life, any hold of shame or pain, may the power of resurrection bring that struggle to an end completely.'

## Noticeboard

### Services

Saturday May 15<sup>th</sup>:

**Divine Liturgy** – Saint James' Hall 10.30am

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>: Vespers – Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>:

Matins and Divine Liturgy (Romanian parish) –  
St Stephen's Church, Exeter High Street 9-12

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>:

**Divine Liturgy** – Saint James' Hall 10.30am

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>:

Matins and Divine Liturgy (Romanian parish) –  
St Stephen's Church, Exeter High Street 9-12

### PAC Meeting

There will be a meeting of the Parish Advisory Council on 19<sup>th</sup> June at which we will consider the Agenda for the (delayed) Annual General Meeting of the parish to be held on 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> July. Please inform Hugh of any matters you think should be discussed.

## The Angel

Sometimes the boulder is rolled away,  
but I cannot move it when  
I want to. An angel must. Shall  
I ever see the angel's face,  
or will there always only be  
that molten glow outlining every  
separate hair and feathered quill,  
the sudden wind and odour, sunlight,  
music, the pain of my bruised shoulders.

Ruth Fainlight

In *New & Collected Poems* Bloodaxe Books, 2010  
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## Library Corner

**The Beekeeper of Aleppo** by Christy Lefteri (ISBN: 978-1-83877-001-3)

A story of a man and his family who have fled their beloved city to settle in a new land and tells of their journey across Europe. They meet other characters on the way and it gives an insight into the plight of refugees – people unsafe at home and forced to leave the lands they love. The author's family are Cypriot refugees, and so no doubt has some understanding what her characters are experiencing. It is a story which is heart-lifting, sad, heroic, terrifying and in places funny. A recommended read.

Celia

## News from CTAX (Christians Together Across Exeter)

### **MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING**

Friday 21st May 1:30-4:30pm

The Diocese of Exeter is working with fiveways devon to deliver a range of Mental Health First Aid courses accredited by Mental Health First Aid England. You do not need to be an Anglican to book - people from any Devon churches can join. The cost is subsidised (£40 max) and includes a course-book, online resources, and a follow-up peer support session.

Book here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/VYF999Y>

## Going Fortnightly

It has been over a year now since I started this weekly newsletter, at a time when we were all physically separated from each other by stringent restrictions and it was my contribution to keeping us together. Now we are about to be released from most restrictions and many of us are able to meet more often at services this newsletter is going to go fortnightly. As always contributions are always welcome. The deadline for the next issue will be breakfast time on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.

Celia