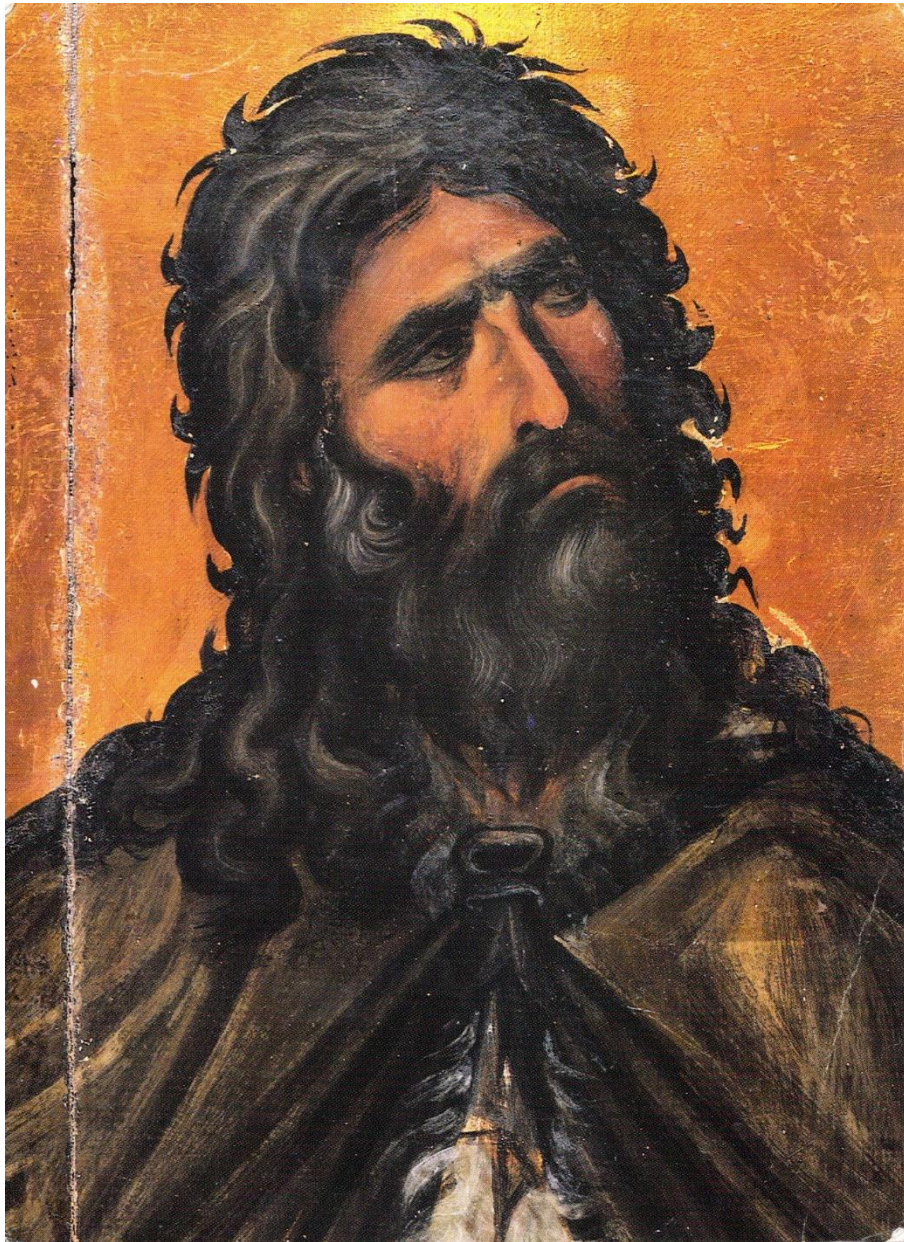




Prophet Elias News

News for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
10th – 24th July 2021



Detail from 12th Century Icon at Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai

20th July - Feast of the Holy Glorious Prophet Elias

We wish all parishioners a Happy Feast and Many Years!

Tolerance Has A Child's Face by Aida Bode

There's no doubt that religious tolerance is a great need we have in our world today. And while I could make a few philosophical points, or even preach about the human aptitude to love and accept others, I will not do that. In fact, I believe we are far from being philosophical, or even accepting of another's religion; and that's because, before we do any of that, we need to be children whose faith can move mountains.

I was born in communist Albania, at the peak of religion denial and of spiritual poverty. These are big words that I use now, but as a child, I knew nothing of religion or of the human need to believe. I only knew that there was something, deeper than myself, that constantly called me, and every time I responded to that call, I found peace in darkness.

My knowledge of God was nonexistent. What I remember are bits and pieces of conversations in hushed voices that adults would have, and somehow, the concept of "God" became real in me. I knew not to ask about God, for anyone who mentioned Him was in danger, taken away, imprisoned; put to death whose face held an irrefutable truth. Death was never abstract. It was real without anyone ever explaining to me what it was. And so, with this understanding of God being dangerous, yet somehow good, I believed ever since I can remember. In fact, I have no memories without God. He was always present and constant, good and dangerous.

I was 6 or 7 when I first I created a visual idea of God. I had noticed that my grandparents kept a book hidden in a locked drawer-chest, and they always hid the key underneath its cover. (I always paid attention when grownups hid anything! It meant that I could find candy, and any other thing that was in short supply.) One day, when I was alone, I searched for the key and opened the drawer where the book was. I took the book and opened it. Right between the cover and the first page, there was a picture (icon, I later learned) with two men dressed in an unusual way. I realized they were not God, but somehow, I felt they knew Him, and just by looking at them, I was closer to Him. They wore bright-coloured long robes, hats, and what looked like a crown, made of sunlight. I touched the image gently knowing it meant something. I opened the next page filled with excitement. I had just learned how to read, so I was going to be able to read the book. But the language made no sense. (Later, I learned it was Old Albanian.) I understood only a few words, not the entire meaning. "GOD" was the only clear word. I could read "God." That was enough for me.

For some time, I created a ritual of finding the book and reading "God". I had this thirst for God, to feel God, to be with God. Every time I noticed adults speak in a low voice, I knew they were probably mentioning Him. My hearing sharpened, and my senses were alert. God couldn't escape me, no matter how much they tried to keep Him from me.

After a while, I found out that a few of my friends were also searching for God in their own homes. I was perhaps 9 or 10, the first time I learned a prayer. I knew of the sign of the cross, but I knew not what words were associated with it. So, when a friend of mine told me that she had heard her grandmother pray, I was ecstatic with joy. She told me to say: *Bismilah Rahman e Rahim*. For some reason, the words didn't match what I thought they should be, but, that's all I had. I did the sign of the cross and said *Bismilah Rahman e Rahim*. My friend did the same.

I somehow knew that her God and mine had to be different, but it didn't matter. God called us to be with Him. And so, we went to Him, children, with our hearts wide open. We were Christian and Muslim children who simply yearned for God. He recognized us. He knew us.

I was 15 when I first learned the Lord's Prayer. I was happy, yet I felt that I had lost something special. I realize that religion and faith are two different domains. In faith we are children, but in religion, we are divided, we are justified. We don't seek anymore. But, finding God is a process of faith, and faith is always needy—just like a child. There will never be satisfaction, no matter the righteousness we may find through religious devotion, no matter the knowledge we acquire through the study of tradition and literature. Children are the only ones who believe without judgement, and I say, let us all find the child we once were. We won't learn to appreciate others' faith, unless we become children and accept the path people choose to follow, be it by tradition or by choice.

Today, in my hometown, Pascha is celebrated by all, Christians and Muslims alike. They walk through the city streets with lit candles, bringing home the resurrection of Christ—like my friend and I brought the first

Bismillah prayer to our lips, and the sign of the cross to our hearts. My hometown is filled with people who never forgot the meaning of being a child. They believe and celebrate by sharing their hearts, not their doctrines.

Aida Bode is an Albanian poet and writer, and an Orthodox Christian. She holds an MA in English and Creative Writing from Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester. See her website, [Words to Breathe](#), for her extensive publishing history.

Posted on Orthodoxy in Dialogue 17-6-2021. Reprinted with permission.

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday July 11th: **Third Sunday after Pentecost**

Epistle - Romans 5: 1-10 Gospel – Matthew 6: 22-33

The New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke

The New Martyrs and Confessors of Bulgaria

Saint Olga, Princess of Russia (969)

Saint Sophrony of Essex (1993)

On Monday 12th: **Saint Veronica** who was healed by Christ

We wish **Veronica D** and **Veronika M** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Tuesday 13th: **Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel**

Saint Sarah of the Desert (5thC) (See next issue)

On Thursday 15th: **Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir**, Enlightener of Rus (1015)

Saint Swithun, Bishop and Wonderworker of Winchester (862)

On Saturday 17th: **Great Martyr Marina (Margaret)** of Antioch in Pisidia (c303)

Passionbearers Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra, Crown Prince Alexis and Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia (1918)

On Sunday 18th: **Fourth Sunday after Pentecost**

Epistle – Romans 6: 18-23 Gospel – Matthew 8: 5-13

New Martyrs the Grand Duchess Elizabeth and Nun Barbara (1918)

We wish **Eliza S** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Tuesday 20th: **HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET ELIAS** (9thC BC)

We wish **Otto S** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

New Martyrs of France the Nun Maria (Skobtsova) (1944), Fr Dimitry Klepinin (1944),

Elias Fondaminsky (1942) and George Skobstov (1944)

On Thursday 22nd: **Holy Myrrh-Bearer and Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalene**

We wish **Margaret E**, **Mary S** and **Maddy S** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Saturday 24th: **Holy Martyr Christina** of Tyre (3rdC)

We wish **Christine A** and **Christina S** **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

From CTAX (Christians Together Across Exeter)

Loneliness Pen Pal Project

A project run by Exeter City Community Trust may be of interest to some of your congregation: to tackle loneliness amongst older people, the project sees letters exchanged between the older and younger generation on a biweekly basis.

We would be very grateful if you could share this information with anyone who may be interested in participating in this project. To sign up, simply fill out the online form which can be found on our website <https://exetercct.org/programmes/adults/creating-connections/>, or alternatively, participants can call on 01392 255 611 or email Abigail.Appleby@ecfc.co.uk

Participants are then paired with a pen pal and letters are exchanged. So far, this project has had great success. We look forward to seeing this project help even more people in our community.

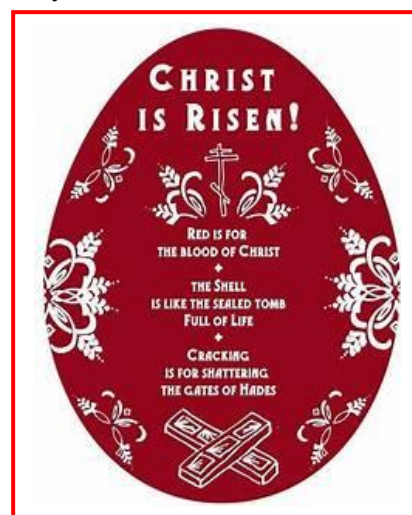
Saint Mary Magdalene and the Red Eggs of Easter

After the resurrection, Mary Magdalene became a strong witness and travelling preacher of the Gospel, and for this she is referred to as an “equal to the Apostles.” Her travels eventually took her to Rome, where because of her family’s standing she was able to obtain an audience with the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Caesar. Her purpose was to protest to him that his governor in Judea, Pontius Pilate, and the two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas, had conspired and executed an innocent man, namely our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the tradition, everyone visiting the Emperor was supposed to bring him a gift. Rich and influential people, of course, brought expensive gifts whereas the poor offered whatever they could afford. Mary Magdalene took an egg to the Emperor’s palace and handed it to Tiberius Caesar with the greeting: “Christ is risen!”

Tiberius Caesar, naturally, could not believe what he heard and responded to her: “How could anyone ever rise from the dead? It is as impossible as for that white egg to turn red.” While Tiberius was speaking, the egg in the hand of Mary Magdalene began changing colour until it finally became bright red.

Thus the Pascha greeting — in universal Christendom, both East and West — has ever since remained “Christ is risen!” and it became traditional for Christians throughout the world to colour eggs in red.



Abbah Raphael, Saint Barnabas Orthodox Orphanage, Kenya (Pascha 2016) (Reprinted with permission)
[Christ is Risen! Did you know? The Red Egg of Orthodox Easter. - St Barnabas Orthodox Orphanage and School \(orthodoxmissionkenya.org\)](#)

Noticeboard

Services:

Saturday July 10th: Divine Liturgy at Saint James’ Hall 10.30 am

Sunday 11th: Matins and Divine Liturgy Saint Stephen’s Church (in Romanian) 9-12
Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

Saturday 17th: Vespers - Saint Anne’s 6pm

Sunday 18th: Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

Friday 23rd: Vespers - Saint Anne’s 6.30

Saturday July 24th: Divine Liturgy at Saint James’ Hall 10.30am

Celebration of our Patronal Feast of the Holy Prophet Elias

Parish AGM The Parish **Annual General Meeting** will be held after the Liturgy at Saint James’ Hall.
Covid restrictions permitting, there will be a Bring and Share meal after the Meeting.

Sunday 25th: Matins and Divine Liturgy Saint Stephen’s Church (in Romanian) 9-12
Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

Reminder: OFSJB Summer Series of Online Talks: ‘By the Prayers of our Holy Fathers and Mothers’

Monday 19 July - Father Nicolae Steinhardt - Dr Razvan Porumb

Monday 26 July - Saint Silouan and Saint Sophrony - Sister Magdalen (of the Monastery of St John the Baptist)

Monday 2 August - Saint Maria (Skobtsova) of Paris - Subdeacon Ian Randall

Monday 9 August - Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh - Dr Elena Sadovnikova

Monday 16 August - Father Alexander Men - Dr Alexei Tselik

Monday 23 August - Elder Porphyrios and Eldress Gavrilia - Dr Evi Voulgaraki-Pissina

All talks will begin at 19.00

Register at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtdu2pqT8uGNLWPGSe3iA5Tq6WAJplpLpf>

This series follows the outline for the 2020-2021 Deanery conference talks, which was presented to the Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist, to be re-cast (with modifications) as an on-line series. Not a substitute for a Deanery Conference - but at least an opportunity for people who were looking forward to hearing more about the theme we had chosen. And by the time the series starts, it should even be possible for people to gather with a few fellow parishioners to listen to the talks, and continue the discussion informally if they wish.

Elizabeth Theokritoff