



# Prophet Elias News

News for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
21<sup>st</sup> August – September 4th 2021



## Finding One's Vocation in Life

by Fr. Thomas Hopko

Part 1

*In the last issue Hugh pointed out the need for us to pray for people who might have a calling to the priesthood to ensure to future of our parish. At the same time we need to remember that we all have a calling to further the life of the Church. We are all, clergy and laity alike, members of a royal priesthood, just as we are all members of the laos Theou, the people of God (1 Peter 2:9,10). In this article, Fr Thomas explores the meaning of vocation for all of us. Since it proved impossible to condense the article without losing valuable insights, we have decided to reprint it in full over three issues. In this issue Fr Thomas looks at the calling we all have in common. Ed.*

When we consider the Orthodox Christian understanding of vocation, several points can be made. The most obvious are the following:

### **Everyone Has a Calling**

God creates every human being in His image and likeness for everlasting life. There are no mistakes and no accidents. As the saying goes, "God makes no junk." Everyone, or, in Biblical language, the "many" are called. But not all are chosen. Some are rejected not because they have no vocation from God, but because they refuse to accept their calling.

Everyone has a vocation. And all vocations are "religious." This does not mean that everyone is called to serve the church in a professional manner; to be a bishop, priest, deacon, monk, nun, reader or church worker of one sort or another. Obviously not all are called to these specifically ecclesiastical ministries. But everyone is called to serve God and their fellow human beings in some form of life which God Himself wills. This "form of life" is not necessarily a job or profession. For example, some people may be called to suffer on this earth and to bear the results of fallen humanity in the most violent manner; to be victimized by disease, disability, affliction; to be the objects of other people's care, or disdain. This is their vocation, and they are particularly blessed by God and loved by Christ in its acceptance and fulfilment.

In a word, there is a divine plan and purpose for everyone. There is a "predestination," not in the sense that God programs His creatures or forces His will upon them against their will, but rather that God knows every person from before the foundation of the world and provides their unique life and the specific conditions of their earthly way which are literally the best possible conditions for them (however unacceptable this may seem to us creatures in our limited and fallen state). And God works together with each one of us so that, by suffering what we must on this earth, we may attain to life everlasting in the age to come.

### **Everyone Has the Same Calling**

In a certain sense every person has the same vocation, which is to be a saint. We are all called to be saints, to be holy as God is holy, to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect (Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Peter 1:15, Matthew 5:48). We are all made to fulfil ourselves as creatures made in God's image and likeness for eternal life. And we can do so because God not only creates us with this possibility, and indeed, this command; but because He also does everything in His power to guarantee its accomplishment by sending His Son and His Spirit to the world.

Since Christ has been glorified and the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all flesh, there is no excuse for those who know and believe this, and experience it in the life of the Christian Church, not to be saints. Everything possible has been done to secure this. There is nothing more that God can do. All is given and all is fulfilled. The rest is up to us. Whatever the Lord may be doing with other people in other places, some things are certain for Christians, and certainly us Orthodox: We can cooperate with God. We can share His holiness. We can become, as the saints themselves teach us, all that God Himself is by His gracious action in our lives. We can become loving, peaceful, joyful, good, wise, true, patient, kind, compassionate, powerful, pure, free, self-determining... Or we can refuse to cooperate with God, never find our true selves, and perish.

From *Finding One's Vocation in Life* by Fr. Thomas Hopko.

<https://www.oca.org/parish-ministry/theology/finding-ones-vocation-in-life>

*In the next issue Fr Thomas looks at our unique individual vocations.*

## A Statement from the French Vicariate – ‘Our Identity’

*The Vicariate of Saint Maria of Paris and Saint Alexis of Uguine is the French equivalent of our Deanery – our sister parishes of the former Exarchate who chose to remain within the Ecumenical Patriarchate when the Exarchate was dissolved in 2018. On July 3<sup>rd</sup> the General Assembly met to reflect on the Vicariate’s origins and to look to its future. The Vicariate is made up of 22 communities and parishes, with 26 priests and 5 deacons. During the past year two new communities have been established, an online catechism group has been run with over 100 catechumens, and many lectures and discussions have been held online, including a full-day conference on June 6<sup>th</sup>, in addition to the regular live-streaming of services and monthly publication of La Lettre du Vicariat. In his report on the activities of the Vicariate, Metropolitan Emmanuel commented on ‘your vitality, your creativity, your desire to build the Church of today and of tomorrow.’ The July issue of La Lettre has several articles stemming from the Assembly, including this statement - ‘Notre Identité’. The whole issue can be obtained on request by emailing [vicariatlettre@gmail.com](mailto:vicariatlettre@gmail.com). The presentations to the June Conference (in French) can be viewed at <https://vicariatorthodoxe.fr/archives/4896>*

### **Who Are We?**

*The conditions surrounding the creation of our Vicariate invited us to reflect on what constitutes the basis of our identity, on our roots as well as on the meaning of our presence here and now. A group made up of clerics and laity from different parishes of the vicariate, led by Father Georges Ashkov, rector of the parish of Saint Alexander Nevsky in Biarritz, undertook to lead this reflection and to produce a document. Today we offer for your consideration the result of this work. This text was distributed and presented to the delegates at our General Assembly. It presents us with an opportunity to debate and deepen our reflection, in each of our parishes, on how we live in our vicariate and our communities.*

The Vicariate of Saint Maria of Paris and Saint Alexis of Uguine forms part of the linear continuation in France of the Archdiocese of the Parishes of Russian Tradition in Western Europe, which later became an Exarchate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Vicariate now comes under the canonical responsibility of the Metropolitan at the head of the Orthodox Metropolis of France of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

### **A Legacy to be Preserved**

The Archdiocese was organized in western European countries following the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the civil war in Russia. It brought together the Orthodox parishes led by Russian refugees in Western Europe and was entrusted to the pastoral direction of Metropolitan Evlogii by Patriarch Tikhon (Decrees of 8 April 1921, No 423 & 424). Since 1924, the Archdiocese has been constituted as a religious association in France under the title 'Union directrice des associations orthodoxes russes', placing itself in 1931 in canonical obedience to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Exarchate carried out its ecclesial life in accordance with Orthodox tradition and in the spirit of the religious renaissance in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the Moscow Council of 1917-1918. It benefited from the experience of the theologians of the Paris School and from the liturgical and eucharistic revival which took place within the Orthodox Church in the twentieth century. Initially made up of parishes from the Russian diaspora, the Exarchate developed a broad evangelical mission which led to the creation of parishes and communities rooted in the various countries and cultures of Western Europe. These parishes were thus able to bear witness to the Gospel and to Orthodoxy in an ecumenical spirit born of the unprecedented meeting between Christians of the East and the West.

### **Ensuring Continuity**

Inspired by these ideas, the Vicariate continues to work to reconcile respect for the cultural and linguistic plurality of its communities with their indispensable local roots. As bearer of the history and legacy of the Exarchate, it aims to develop its spiritual, pastoral, liturgical and theological heritage. The Vicariate holds in special veneration Saint Maria of Paris and Saint Alexis of Uguine, under whose protection it has put itself. These two examples of sanctity represent in themselves a symbol of a contemporary Orthodox Church borne by the force of the Spirit.

### **Implementing Ecclesial Conciliarity**

From the time of the primitive Church and the ecumenical councils, conciliarity has been the

foundation of the life of the Church. It was restated in 1848 by the encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs<sup>(1)</sup> and written into the practical organization of the Church by the Moscow Council of 1917-1918. It allows a synthesis between the clerical hierarchical principle and the priesthood of the laity according to a sacramental ecclesiology (baptismal, eucharistic and pastoral). Conciliarity is not just about giving everyone the right to vote at general meetings. It is above all an attempt to express what the Church is in its pneumatological and eschatological dimension. The Church, as the living Temple of the Triune God, is a Christian community guided by its pastor in the image of the community formed by Christ Himself and his disciples. The life of the Christian community is inconceivable without a desire for fraternity, without a spirit of peace, without concern for the mission of charity. The members of the Vicariate strive to live this conciliarity at all levels, both in the parishes and within its organizational structure. The important decisions of the Vicariate's life, particularly with regard to the participation in the choice of a vicar bishop, are taken and discussed at clerical-secular assemblies.

### **Developing Missions**

The parishes and members of the Vicariate continue to develop evangelical mission and to take an active part in ecumenical dialogue in response to Christ's words: "Let all be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you; let them be in us also, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). In fruitful and fraternal collaboration with the other parishes of the Orthodox Metropolis of France and the other dioceses present in the country, the Vicariate wishes to be of service in the building of a local Orthodox Church in France and Western Europe, bearing witness "here and now", to an open, humble, evangelical Orthodox faith in the conviction that Tradition, to be alive, must be creative. The Vicariate is part of the panorthodox conciliar dynamic promoted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It wishes to be inspired by and actively contribute to the reception not only of the documents from the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church adopted in Kolymbari in Crete in 2016, but also of the text of 2020, written on the recommendation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, devoted to the social doctrine of the Orthodox Church: "*For the Life of the World — Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*"<sup>(2)</sup>. It offers its services to participate in the joint preparation of preliminary documents for forthcoming councils in order to bear witness to the vitality and universality of the Orthodox Christian faith.

*Published in French in La Lettre du Vicariat (Metropole de France) No 14, July 2021. Translation by M. O. with permission.*

(1) See [www.OrthodoxTalks.com](http://www.OrthodoxTalks.com):

"Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs 1848. A Reply to the Epistle of Pope Pius IX 'To the Easterns' "

(2) See <https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos>

## **Noticeboard**

### **Services:**

On Saturday August 21<sup>st</sup>: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

On Sunday August 22<sup>nd</sup>: Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am

**On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>: Divine Liturgy St. James' Hall 10.30am**

On Wednesday September 1<sup>st</sup>: Church New Year  
**Akathist ' Glory to God for All Things' Saint Anne's\* 6.30pm**

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

**On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup>: Typika Saint Anne's\* 10.30am**

**\* Please note: While there is no longer any legal requirement to wear face coverings indoors, it was agreed at the Parish AGM that we should recommend their continued use for the time being in the very confined space of Saint Anne's.**

**Advance Notice: On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>: Divine Liturgy Saint James' Church 10.30am followed by Panikhida (1 year) for Father Peter at the graveside in Exeter Higher Cemetery**

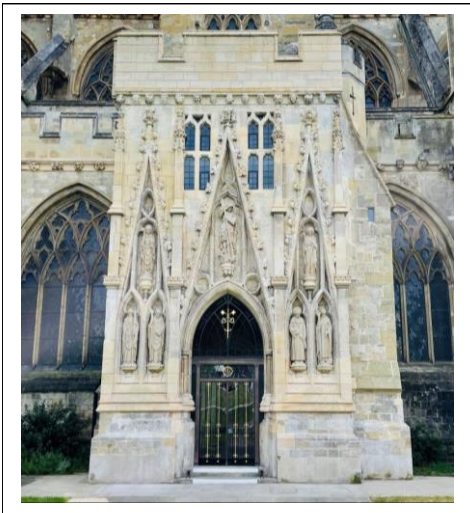
**OFSJB Summer Series of Online Talks: 'By the Prayers of our Holy Fathers and Mothers'**

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

Beginning at 19.00

Register at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZETdu2pqT8uGNLWPGSe3iA5Tq6WAJpLpLpf>

## Exeter Cathedral News



### Glorious North Porch Restoration Revealed

Restoration work on the Cathedral's North Porch is almost complete, after nearly a year of painstaking work. Gilder, Anna Ricketts, applied the finishing touches, scaffolding was dismantled, and the glorious result revealed. If you haven't had a chance to see it yet and you live locally or are planning a visit soon, it's well worth a look.

Traces of medieval polychrome were discovered during the restoration. The coloured fragments suggest that the North Porch was once decorated in bright colours, in the same way that statues on the Cathedral's main West Front entrance are known to have been. The project has required careful recording and analysis of the tiny coloured fragments.

It was all made possible thanks to support from the Associated Companies Joint Venture Charity, the Masons Company Charitable Trust, and the Friends of Exeter Cathedral.

*From Cathedral News 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021*

### Change of Address – Daphne and Bob Lock

After Bob spent several weeks in hospital following another fall at the residential Care Home in Ilfracombe, Daphne and Bob have moved to a Nursing Home in the Cotswolds, very close to Kate and Tony. Their new address is:

West Green House  
Wotton Road  
Kingswood  
Wotton-under-Edge  
GL12 8RA

### Blessing of Fruits at Transfiguration



Father Alexander blesses the fruits of the earth at our celebration of the beautiful Feast of the Transfiguration in Saint James' Hall on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August.

Father Alexander plans to come to Exeter again on 11<sup>th</sup> September to celebrate Divine Liturgy in Saint James' Church and afterwards to lead the panikhida for the first anniversary of Father Peter's death at the graveside in Exeter Higher Cemetery.

### News from Christians Together Across Exeter

From Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September – Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October we mark the **Season of Creation**, when Christians unite to reflect, pray and take action for our common home.

For more information see: <https://seasonofcreation.org>

*(Season of Creation is an international initiative to promote an interdenominational Christian response to the environmental crisis. Individuals as well as groups can participate. Ed.)*

### The Invisible Church

'In my parish the true parishioners are the children... and if those children live and grow up they will form the inner Church.... And we, too, belong to that Church, as long as we live according to our conscience and keep the commandments.... Do you understand what I mean? In the visible Church there is an invisible Church, a secret Church. In it are found the humble who live by grace and walk in the will of God. They can be found in every parish and every jurisdiction.'

Saint Alexis of Ugine. *Quoted in Jim Forest: [St Alexis of Ugine | Flickr](#)*



## This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday August 22<sup>nd</sup>: **Saint Alexis of Ugine** (1934)

We wish all our friends in the **Vicariate of Saint Maria of Paris and Saint Alexis of Ugine** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>: **Saint Irenaeus**, Bishop of Lyons (202)

On Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Kosmas of Aetolia**, Equal-to-the-Apostles (1779)

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>: **Martyrs Adrian and Natalia** (4thC)

On Friday 27<sup>th</sup>: Newly revealed **Great Martyr Phanourios** (date uncertain)

On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>: **Prophetess Anna**, who met the Lord in the Temple

We wish **Anya K** and **Felicia F** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>: **The Beheading of the Holy and Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John.** FAST DAY

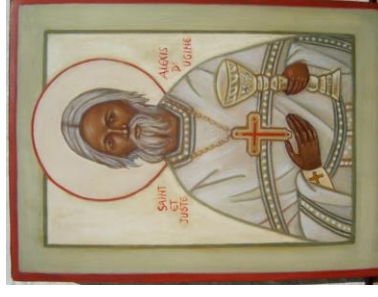
On Monday 30<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Decuman** of Watchet in Somerset (7<sup>th</sup> C)

On Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup>: **Saint Aidan** of Lindisfarne (651)

We remember **Aidan C** – **May his Memory be Eternal!**

On Wednesday September 1<sup>st</sup>: **Beginning of the Church New Year and Day of Prayer for the Protection of the Environment.**

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>: **Holy Prophet and God-Seer Moses** (15<sup>th</sup> C BC)



Saint Alexis of Ugine



Saint Kosmas

Little is known of the holy Martyr Phanourios, except what is pictured in the scenes of his martyrdom on his holy icon, which was discovered among the ruins of an ancient church on Rhodes in 1500, when the Moslems ruled there. St. Phanourios has become famous for assisting the faithful in revealing lost or hidden spiritual matters of the heart, objects, directing or revealing actions that should be taken, restoring health and similar situations. He is then honoured by the faithful through the baking of a symbolic cake, called the "Phanouropita" which can be brought to the church, at any time, for a blessing.

Sources: GOARCH, OrthodoxWiki



## Saint Alexis of Ugine

Alexis Medvedkov was born in Russia in 1867. After attending seminary he became a reader and choir director at a parish in Saint Petersburg, but felt himself unworthy to be ordained to the priesthood until persuaded by Saint John of Kronstadt in 1895. He served for 20 years in a rural parish, eking out his small salary by working the land alongside his parishioners. In the upheaval of the Bolshevik revolution he was arrested, tortured, and condemned to death, but managed to escape with his family to Estonia, where he worked in a mine and as a night watchman, becoming assistant priest in a local parish in 1923.

After the death of his wife in 1929, Father Alexis was invited by Metropolitan Evlogii to join the emigré Church in France, where he was appointed to the Russian Orthodox parish of Saint Nicholas in Ugine, near Grenoble, where a local factory employed some 600 Russian refugees. It was not an easy placement. Many of his congregation were more concerned with political activism than with their spiritual life, and were often abusive to their humble pastor, who patiently endured their hostility and continued to serve the community faithfully without complaint and without charge.

It was, in Jim Forest's words, 'a life of ordinary sanctity', of 'small deeds of holiness performed day after day'. He died of intestinal cancer on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1934; the disease was so far advanced that the doctor recommended he be buried as soon as possible, as his body would decompose very quickly. However, when in 1956 those buried in the cemetery where he lay were removed for reburial elsewhere to make way for a new housing development, Father Alexis' body, his vestments and the Gospel Book he held were found to be incorrupt, although the coffin had disintegrated.

Saint Alexis was glorified at a service in St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Paris in May 2004.