



# Prophet Elias News

News for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon

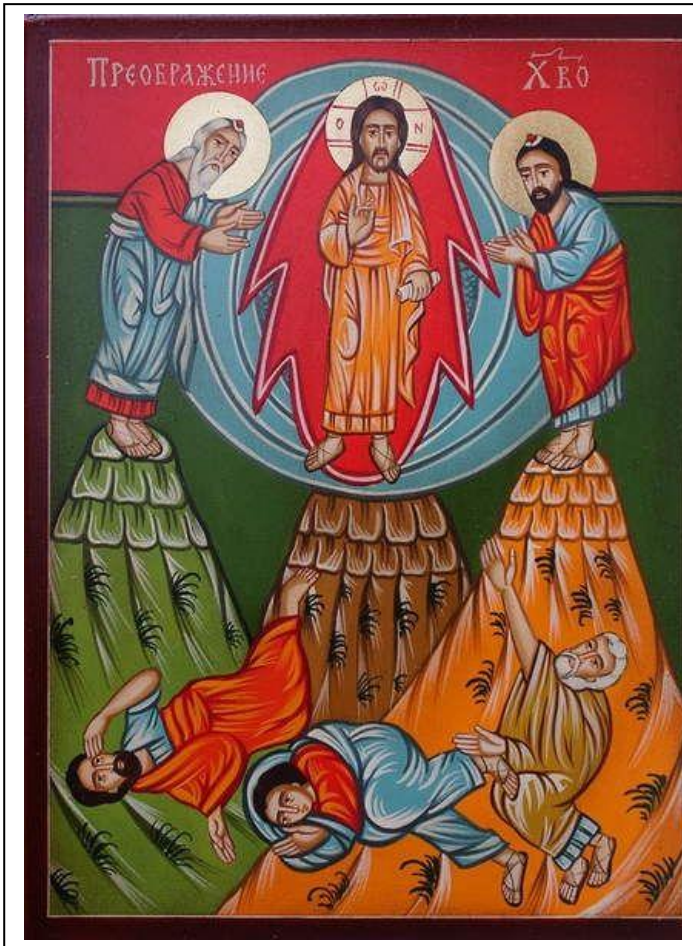
7<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> August 2021



## Feast of the Transfiguration - 6<sup>th</sup> August

It is Good for Us to Be Here

by Father Alexander Schmemmann



One word dominates this feast in all its prayers, hymns and readings. This word is light. "Let your everlasting light shine also upon us sinners." The world is a dark, cold and terrifying place. And this darkness is not dispelled by the physical light of the sun. On the contrary, perhaps, the sun's light makes human life seem even more terrible and hopeless as life surges relentlessly and inexorably, bound by sufferings and loneliness, toward death and annihilation. All is condemned, all suffers, all is subject to the incomprehensible and merciless law of sin and death. But then comes the appearance on earth, the entrance into the world, of a man, humble and homeless, who has no authority at all over anyone, who has no earthly power whatsoever. And He tells people that this kingdom of darkness, evil and death is not our true life; that this is not the world God created; that evil and suffering and finally death itself can and must be conquered; and that He is sent by God, his own Father, to save people from this terrible bondage to sin and death.

Human beings have forgotten their true nature and calling, renounced them. They must turn to see that they have lost the ability to see, to hear what they are already incapable of hearing. They must come to believe all over again that good is stronger than evil, love stronger than hate, life stronger than death. Christ heals, helps and gives himself to everyone. And nevertheless the people do not understand, do not hear, do not believe. He could have revealed his divine glory and power and forced them to believe in him. But He wants from them only freely-given faith, freely-given love, freely-given acceptance. He knows that in the hour of his ultimate sacrifice, ultimate self-giving, everyone will flee in fear and forsake him. But right now - so that afterwards, when everything is finished, the world would still have some evidence of where He is inviting people to come, what He is offering us as a gift, as life, as the fullness of meaning and joy - now, therefore, hidden from the world and from the people, He reveals to three of his own disciples that glory, that light, that victorious celebration to which man is called from eternity.

The divine light, permeating the entire world. The divine light, transfiguring man. The divine light in which everything acquires its ultimate and eternal meaning. “It is good for us to be here,” cried the apostle Peter seeing this light and this glory. And from that time, Christianity, the Church, faith is one continuous, joyful repetition of this “it is good for us to be here.” But faith is also a plea for the everlasting light, a thirst for this illumination and transfiguration. This light continues to shine, through the darkness and evil, through the drab grayness and dull routine of this world, like a ray of sun piercing through the clouds. It is recognized by the soul, it comforts the heart, it makes us feel alive, and it transfigures us from within.

“Lord! It is good for us to be here!” If only these words might become ours, if only they might become our soul’s answer to the gift of divine light, if only our prayer might become the prayer for transfiguration, for the victory of light! “Let your everlasting light shine also upon us sinners!”

*From Alexander Schmemmann: Celebration of Faith: Sermons, Vol. 2: “The Church Year” St. Vladimir’s Press 1994.*

## **St Elias Feast 2021**

As always it was a great pleasure to welcome our acting Parish Priest Fr Patrick Hodson and his wife Mary, who had journeyed from Norfolk to join us for Vespers at St Anne’s on the Friday and the Liturgy in St James’s hall on the Saturday morning. The combined effect of new worries about covid, school holidays and freedom to travel abroad rather reduced our numbers – there were almost as many enquirers as regular worshippers at the beginning of the Liturgy, although the balance did gradually alter as latecomers drifted in. It was this element that dictated a last-minute change of plan, the bring and share lunch following immediately after the Liturgy and the AGM, delayed from last November, taking place when only the hard core of parish members remained, its attendees just qualifying as a quorum (thirteen, in case you ask) – originally we’d planned to have the lunch after the meeting.

Philip Scorer was confirmed as Parish Warden, delivering a report on events of the past rather disturbed eighteen months, with additional observations submitted in advance by Fr Trayan. Ed Skidelsky has taken over from me as Parish Secretary, and Anna Cahill and Mariela Ralchevska have been voted on to the PAC. Alice Scorer reported on the financial situation (quite encouraging, in spite of recent interruptions and uncertainties), and the revisions to the parish constitution were passed on the nod.

Many people want to return to St Anne’s, although everyone recognises the difficulty of doing so while the pandemic continues to rage and mutate. In a useful discussion it was decided to go ahead with Saturday Liturgies in St James’s hall during August (7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>), but from September to have a non-eucharistic service (Typika) on the first Sunday of the month at St Anne’s, with a Liturgy elsewhere (St James’s hall if available) on a Saturday later in the month. In the long term if church life here is to grow and develop we now accept the need to explore all sorts of possibilities, including closer collaboration with “mainstream” Thyateira parishes; taking practical steps to encourage vocations\* to the diaconate and priesthood; and facing the fact that even when hugging, kissing and standing shoulder to shoulder are once again permitted our beloved St Anne’s is just too small to serve as parish church for a potentially growing congregation.

Hugh Allen

\*I found this prayer for vocations on the OCA website. I feel it has a certain appropriateness. H. A.

### **Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood**

Master of All, You promised us, “I will be with you always, even until the very end of the age,” and You have taught, “I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that they may properly be able to fulfil Your will for Your people in this age.

There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name.

Send Your Church in this hour and in every age “vessels of clay” to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy!

*[More on the subject of Vocation in the next issue. Ed.]*

## Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God - 15<sup>th</sup> August

### Homily On The Dormition by St. Luke of Simferopol

Each of us is tormented with the question: what will happen to us and what awaits us after death? A sure answer to this we cannot find by ourselves. But Holy Scripture, and first of all the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, reveals the secret to us.

I want all of you to understand why the death of the Most-Holy Theotokos and Virgin Mary is called "Dormition". The great apostle John the Theologian, in the 20th chapter of the Revelation speaks of the first and second death. The first death, which alone is inescapable to all men, also awaits the saints and righteous ones. But the second, the fearsome and eternal death, awaits the great and unrepentant sinners, who denied the love and the righteousness of God and are condemned to eternity in communion with the devil and his angels.

In the Gospel of the same great apostle and evangelist John the Theologian, we read the words of Christ, which are very closely associated with those written in the Revelation: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life"* (John 5:24).

Do you hear this, do you understand this? I think that this probably strikes you as strange, that all those who are obedient

to the word of Christ and believe in the Heavenly Father Who sent Him pass immediately after death to eternal life. There is no reason to judge those who have living faith in God and who follow his commandments.

And to the great twelve apostles, our Lord Jesus Christ said: *"Amen, I say to you that you who follow Me, in the age to come, when the Son of Man sits upon His throne of glory, you will also sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Matthew 19:28). The Apostles of Christ will be judges and condemners during the Terrible Judgment of God, and of course, we are totally unable to imagine the Most-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary being judged, or John the Baptist of the Lord, the great Prophets of God, Elias and Enoch whom God took to Heaven alive, all the countless mass of martyrs of Christ, the holy hierarchs and wonderworkers who were glorified by God, foremost being St. Nicholas, archbishop of Myra of Lycia.

We are unable to let the thought pass through our minds that they would be judged, they who heard from the mouth of Christ: *"The kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17:21). In those great strugglers of Christ, as if in precious temples, dwelt the Holy Spirit. And while they were alive on earth, they were in close communion with God, for thus Christ said: *"If anyone loves me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."* (John 14:23)

The Most-Holy Virgin Mary was the spotless temple of the Saviour in which dwelt the Holy Spirit, and from her most-holy womb the Son of God received His human body, He Who descended from the Heavens. Because of this, bodily death is not death, but a *dormition*, in other words, an immediate passage from the Kingdom of God within to the Kingdom of the Heavens and to eternal life.

Let us think, brothers and sisters, about the blessed Dormition of the Most-Holy Virgin Mary and remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life"* (John 5:24).

May God also make us sinners worthy to experience this great joy, through the joy and love for man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom belongs all glory and dominion, with His Father Who is without beginning and His All-Holy Spirit, unto the ages. Amen.



## This Fortnight We Celebrate

### **On Friday August 6<sup>th</sup>: THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD**

We wish **Father Christopher** and all members of **Holy Transfiguration Parish** in **Great Walsingham** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Monday 9<sup>th</sup>: **Holy Apostle Matthias**

Glorification of **Saint Herman of Alaska** (1970)

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup>: **Holy Martyr Lawrence** of Rome and his companions (258)

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Blane**, Bishop of Bute (Dunblane) (6thC)

We wish **Father Alexander** and all members of the **Community of Saint Nicholas** in **Dunblane** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!\***

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Tikhon of Voronezh**, Wonderworker of Zadonsk (1783)

### **On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>: THE DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD**

We wish **Father Stephane** and all members of the **Parish of the Dormition** in **Holborn** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!\***

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>: **Saint John, Abbot of Rila** (946), Patron Saint of Bulgaria

We wish **Fr Trayan** and all our Bulgarian friends a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>: **Holy Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**

*\*Both Dunblane and Holborn in fact keep the OS calendar, and will accordingly themselves celebrate their Feastdays 13 days later than we do.*

On the day of his glorification, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1970, **Saint Herman's** relics were transferred from the site of his remote grave on Spruce Island to the Orthodox Cathedral on Kodiak Island. Because of adverse sea conditions, the transfer took place by helicopter – an event which is commemorated in some icons of the Saint, including the one we have in Saint Anne's.

## Noticeboard

### **Services in August:**

Friday 6<sup>th</sup>: Orthros and Divine Liturgy - Transfiguration Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>: Divine Liturgy to celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration**

**St. James' Hall 10.30** (with Fr Alexander Fostiropoulos)

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>: Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) St. Stephen's Church, Exeter High St. 9-12

Friday 13<sup>th</sup>: Paraklesis Plymouth 5pm

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>: Divine Liturgy to celebrate the Feast of the Dormition St. James' Hall 10.30am**

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>: Orthros and Divine Liturgy – Dormition Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>: Vespers St. Anne's 6pm

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>: Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

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

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

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

Monday 16 August - Father Alexander Men - Dr Alexei Tsvelik

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/tZEtdu2pqT8uGNLWPGSe3iA5Tq6WAJplPpf>

### **News from CTAX (Christians Together Across Exeter)**

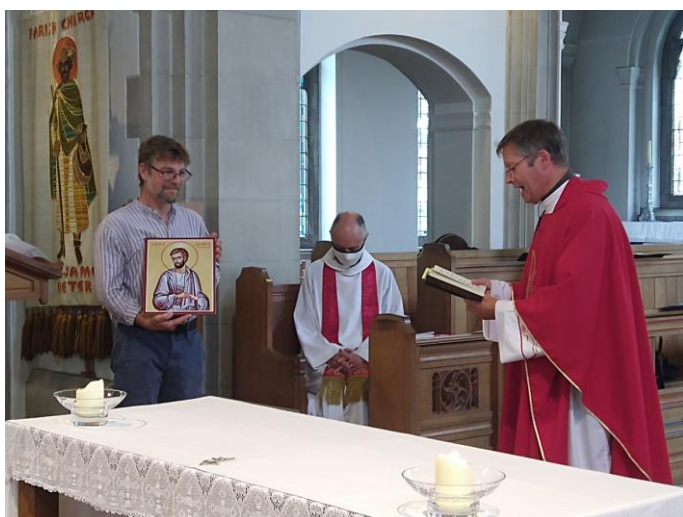
#### **REFUGEE COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP**

**Caritas** aims to support, assist and walk alongside refugees and migrants. We are a Lead Sponsor for Community Sponsorship groups. Several local churches and church-backed groups have already welcomed a refugee family or are in the process of welcoming one as part of this scheme. If you are interested in more info, please email [caritas@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:caritas@prcdtr.org.uk) or visit: <https://communitysponsorship.org.uk/>

## Saint James' Day

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July marked the feast day in the Anglican calendar of St James the Greater, who is Patron Saint to our friends at St James Church, Mount Pleasant. As many of you will know, the parish of St James, and especially their church warden Nigel, have been integral in allowing us to return to services this year. We have been lucky enough to be able to use St James Hall for services on a number of occasions, a space familiar to us but also large and well ventilated.

To thank the Parish who have been so kind, it was agreed to present them with an icon of St James the Greater. Serendipitously, the date of their Patron's Day fell at the lifting of lockdown, and we were able to attend their Sunday Eucharist and present the icon on the day itself. Philip (as newly appointed Church Warden) and I attended and were called up after the Eucharist. Philip said a little about how grateful we were for their friendship and Fr Henry then said a prayer of blessing.



This was also the first occasion the congregation had been allowed to sing together and we felt blessed to join them in their first communal hymn in over a year. We were kindly invited for tea and cake afterwards in the hall we know so well and it was lovely to put names to faces and to meet more of the congregation there. So many thanked us for the icon, including a Mrs Croft, who taught all three of our children while at Ladysmith Infant School! After what has been a difficult time for so many it was a lovely reminder of the friendships that remain and even deepened over the pandemic.

Many thanks go to Martin who has been integral in both fostering the relationship and in preparing the icon, but who was on a well deserved holiday over St James Day.

Alice Scorer

### A Message from Our Friends at St James'

Dear Martin, Philip and all our friends, brothers and sisters alike, of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias,

We were honoured and delighted to have been presented on our patronal feast day of July 25<sup>th</sup>, during our morning service, with the precious icon of St James. For now, it is placed on our altar for all to see. It is beautiful, picking up the blue of so much of our church's interior. We are both grateful and privileged. Thank-you for such a kind gift.

With many blessings,

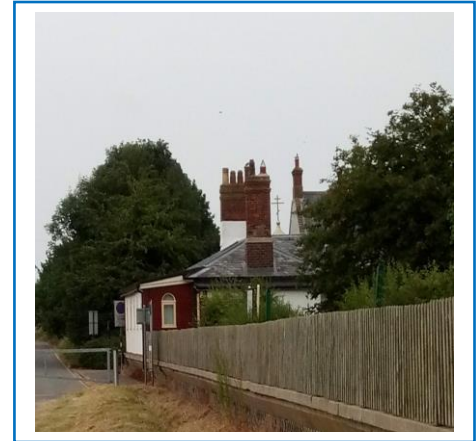
From Nigel Ridgway, Father Henry and all the family of Saint James'.

## A Little Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Over the weekend of 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July Martin and I made a small pilgrimage to Walsingham after an intensive week for me of *en plein air* painting with Paint Out Norfolk.

We made our way slowly from Norwich on B roads and country lanes visiting several local richly decorated churches – carvings, painted screen panels and in some cases fragments of medieval wall paintings. In the days before puritanism took hold these churches must have been something to behold – but more about them in another issue.

Our first stop was at St Seraphim's in Little Walsingham's old railway station, where a small church was established by Fr David in the 1960s. As you approach the church a small gold Orthodox dome and cross appears between the chimney pots. Over more recent years Sylvia has established a 'Quiet Garden', a long strip of land which runs behind and parallel to the old platform. It is there for the benefit of anyone of any creed or none who wants peace and quiet – and that it certainly offers in floral abundance. Since our last visit some six or seven years ago Sylvia has established a museum in the old booking office.



On show are icons, a deacon's vestment, communion sets and other things to be found in an Orthodox church. Norwich museum contributed a display case in which many of these items are beautifully displayed. Sylvia thinks being there for the community to be important and among others local school children pay visits.

From there we drove the mile or so to Great Walsingham, where we stayed the night with Fr Christopher Knight and his wife Cathy – the first time we had stayed a night away from home since our curtailed cruise to Iceland back in mid-March 2020. It was lovely to have drinks in their amazing garden and enjoy a delicious meal chatting about this, that and the other.



Next morning we walked the few paces up the road to the Church of the Transfiguration – a Methodist chapel converted so cleverly inside into a traditional Orthodox church. Covid meant we had to stay in our bubbles, but this was no problem as it was lovely to be celebrating the Liturgy in an actual church. Whilst I have grown fond of our temporary home in St James Hall, I realised I have missed being at the Liturgy surrounded by icon clad walls which are so much part of our spiritual lives.

Unfortunately, we had to leave soon after the Liturgy as we had to collect unsold paintings after the Paint Out exhibition. It was lovely to visit and see people, and I shall certainly be thinking of the Great Walsingham parish on their Patronal Feast Day on 6<sup>th</sup> August.

The Church at Great Walsingham

Celia Olsson

### Prayers for the Community in Cumbria

Let us remember in our prayers Father John Musther and all members of the Parish of Saint Bega, Saint Mungo and Saint Herbert in Keswick. Assistant priest Fr. Anthony Clements died last week of bowel cancer. May his memory be eternal. Father John's own health is failing, and his wife Jenny Bega has recently learnt that her brother Peter, who has been helping her with Father John's care, is suffering from aggressive throat cancer.