



Prophet Elias News

News for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
September 18th – October 2nd 2021



Finding One's Vocation in Life

by Fr. Thomas Hopko

Part 3

We Need Help On The Way

To will God's will is essential. Without this, nothing can happen. With it, everything. One saint of the desert even dared to say that if a person would will God's will without wavering from sunrise to sunset, by the end of the day he would be "to the measure of God." But to will God's will we need help. We need, first of all, the help of God Himself. This means that we have to pray and to participate in the mystical life of God's Church. Jesus said, "Ask, and you will receive" (Matthew 7:7). And the apostle James reminds us that if we do not ask rightly, we will not receive. "You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4:2-3). To find our vocation in life we have to pray to God to show it to us, and to guide us into it for His Name's sake, and ultimately, for our own.

In addition to the direct help of God, so to speak, we also need His help as it comes to us through others. We need the guidance of those who are experienced in His ways, particularly our fathers and mothers in the faith. "Ask your fathers, and they will show you; your elders and they will teach you" (Deuteronomy 32:7). The saints of the Church love to repeat this line from the song of Moses. To hear God's voice, to discern His desires for us, to discover His purposes for our lives, we need the help of those who have found Him, or, perhaps more accurately, those who have been found by Him.

We receive this help in the life of the Church, first of all by our participation in the services and sacraments. We find it also in the Bible and in the lives and teachings of the saints. And we find it in the pastors and teachers whom God gives us. God promises that those who seek instruction will never be left without it. He Himself will see to it, as the saying goes, that "when the disciple is ready, the Master will appear." Without obedience to God's Word and Spirit in the services, sacraments, scriptures and saints of the Church, we who claim to be Christians will never discover our calling in life. For we will have rejected the means that God has given us to find it.

We Must Be Faithful Where We Are

Finally, we are taught that to discover God's will for us, we must be faithful to Him where we are, faithful to and in the conditions in which He has placed us. One of the greatest obstacles to the discovery of one's vocation in life, which is a clear expression of our disobedience and self-will, is the desire to be someone else, someplace else, sometime else. We have all heard people say that if only they lived in another place, or in another time, or with other people...then they could be holy. Or, if only they were married. Or, if only they were not married. If only this, and if only that! We must come to see how sinful such an attitude is, how crazy and deluded. It is simply blasphemy. And it may well be the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which Christ says cannot be forgiven, for it dares to tell God that our failures in life are His fault for making us the way we are (Cf. Matthew 12:31; Luke 12:10).

God has made us who we are. He has put us where we are, even when it is our own self-will that has moved us. He has given us our time and our place. He has given us our specific destiny. We must come to the point when we do not merely resign ourselves to these realities, but when we love them, bless them, give thanks to God for them as the conditions for our self-fulfilment as persons, the means to our sanctity and salvation.

Being faithful where we are is the basic sign that we will God's will for our lives. The struggle to "blossom where we are planted," as the saying goes, is the way to discern God's presence and power in our lives, to hear His voice, to accomplish His purposes, to share His holiness. Jesus said that only those who are "faithful in little" inherit much and get set over much. Those who are not faithful in the little things of life, and thereby fail to accept and to use what God provides, end up losing the little that they have, or - as Jesus says in St. Luke's gospel - the little that they think that they have, for even that "little" may exist only in their own deluded imaginations (Cf. Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27, 8:18).

So the summary of the whole thing is this: We must labour to do the smallest good and to avoid the smallest sin in the smallest, seemingly most insignificant details of life. We must accept who we are, where we are, when we are and how we are, and struggle to sanctify our real state of existence by the grace of God; resisting the world, the flesh and the devil and gaining the Spirit of God through Christ in the Church. We must participate in the services and sacraments, be fed on the scriptures and imitate the saints. We must seek out the help of the experienced, and heed their counsel and advice. And we must go to God Himself and say with a pure heart: "Thy will be done! And He will see that we find our vocation and calling in life, and become the saints that he has willed us to be from the beginning.

From *Finding One's Vocation in Life* by Fr. Thomas Hopko.
<https://www.oca.org/parish-ministry/theology/finding-ones-vocation-in-life>

O Lord my God, even if I have done nothing good in Your sight, yet grant me, according to Your grace, to make a beginning of good.

Saint John Chrysostom

Returning the World to God by Father Alexander Schmemmann

Contrary to our secular experience of time, the liturgical day begins with Vespers, in the evening. This is, of course, the reminiscence of the biblical 'And the evening and the morning were the first day' (Genesis 1:5). Yet it is more than a reminiscence. For it is, indeed, the end of each 'unit' of time that reveals its pattern and meaning, that gives time its reality. It is at the end, in the evening of each day, that God sees His creation as *good*; it is at the end of the day that the Church begins the Liturgy of time's sanctification.

But the vesperal service does not begin as a religious 'epilogue' of the day, as a prayer *added* to all its other experience. It begins at the *beginning*, and this means in the 'rediscovery', in adoration and thanksgiving, of the world as God's creation. The Church takes us, as it were, to that first evening on which man, called by God to life, opened his eyes and saw what God in his love was giving to him, saw all the beauty, all the glory of the temple in which he was standing, and rendered thanks to God. And in this thanksgiving he *became himself*.

Praise the Lord, O my soul. Blessed art thou, O Lord.

O Lord, how marvellous are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all.

The earth is full of thy riches.

I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live.

I will praise my God, while I have any being. (Psalm 104). [*Vulgate 103 – Ed.*]

And it must be so. There must be someone in this world – which rejected God and in this rejection, in this blasphemy, became a chaos of darkness – there must be someone to stand in its centre, and to discern, to see it again as full of divine riches, as the cup full of life and joy, as beauty and wisdom, and to thank God for it. This 'someone' is Christ, the New Adam who restores that 'eucharistic life' which I, the old Adam, have rejected and lost; who makes me again what I am, and restores the world to me. And if the Church *is in Christ*, its initial act is always the act of thanksgiving, of returning the world to God.

From Fr Alexander Schmemmann *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* St Vladimir's Seminary 1973

Noticeboard

Services:

On Saturday September 18th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

On Sunday 19th: Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

On Saturday 25th: Divine Liturgy Saint James' Hall 10.30am

On Thursday 30th: Vespers for the Commemoration of the Protecting Veil Saint Anne's 6.30pm

On Saturday October 2nd: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

On Sunday 3rd: Typica Saint Anne's 10.30am

Reminder: In view of the increasing rate of Covid infection across the Southwest, we ask that people continue for the time being to wear face coverings in the very confined space of Saint Anne's.

Saint Anne's Open Day

On Sunday September 19th Saint Anne's will be open to the public from 10 till 4 as part of the Exeter Historic Buildings Heritage Trail.

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Thursday September 23rd:

The Conception of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

On Friday 24th: Protomartyr and Equal-to-the-Apostles **Thekla** (1st C)

Saint **Peter the Aleut** (1815)

Saint **Silouan** of Mount Athos (1938)

On Saturday 25th: Saint **Sergius of Radonezh** (1392)

On Sunday 26th: **Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian** (2nd C)

We wish **Father John** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Friday October 1st: **The Protecting Veil of Our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God**

On Saturday 2nd: Hieromartyr **Cyprian** and Virgin Martyr **Justini** of Nicomedia (c305)

We wish **Father Daniel** and all in the **Parish of Saint Cyprian** in Uganda

a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

Editorial apology: In the last issue we missed the fact that on September 8th, the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, **Maria P** celebrated her Nameday. We hope she had a **Happy Feast** and wish her **Many Years!**

News from CETAX – Christians Together Across Exeter

Resettlement Scheme for Afghan Refugees

We are working with Exeter City Council and other partners to help house Afghan refugees. We are looking to initially source a private sector property to offer to an eligible family and the county council will commission the support to assist the family integrate into Exeter. **If you know of anyone who may have a property they wish to rent that is vacant then please do contact us on 01392 265819.**

Plymouth city council will be welcoming 7 refugee families, who will be arriving shortly with almost nothing by way of personal possessions. For details of ways in which you might be able to help, contact The Aid Redistribution Centre at admin@thearcplymouth.co.uk or ring 07525 216612.

You can find out more about the resettlement scheme here: <https://news.exeter.gov.uk/resettlement-scheme-for-former-afghan-interpreters/>

Those who dislike and reject their fellow-man are impoverished in their being.
They do not know the true God, Who is all-embracing love.

Saint Silouan

Life of the Protomartyr Thekla

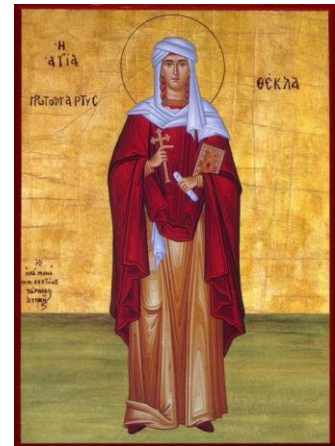
Saint Thekla was born in Iconium to wealthy parents. After having heard St. Paul speak, she decided she must follow Christ and abandon her plans to marry. Her mother and her fiancé were opposed to this decision, and their accusations to the governor landed St. Paul in prison. St. Thekla slipped away from her house to listen to St. Paul in prison, having bribed the guards with her gold jewelry to gain entrance.

At his trial, St. Paul was banished from the city, and Thekla refused to change her mind against all the tears, threats, and reasonings her mother and the governor could apply. She was firm in her conviction to follow Jesus Christ the Bridegroom. Her mother, enraged, persuaded the judge to sentence St. Thekla to burn to death. Emboldened by her love for Christ, she made the sign of the Cross over the flames, and was surrounded by a light, untouched by the flames. Rain and hail extinguished the fire, and thunder helped to drive away those who wished to put Thekla to death.

She sought out St. Paul and his companions, who were hiding in a cave near the city. She spread the Gospel of Christ with them in Antioch, and throughout her life performed many miraculous feats and suffered many tortures to give glory to God. Having retired to a desolate region of Seleucia with the blessing of St. Paul, Thekla continued to preach God's word and heal His children.

When St. Thekla had reached the age of 90, envious pagan sorcerers came to defile her. A large rock split open when St. Thekla called on Christ the Saviour to help her, and the rock covered her as she offered up her soul to the Lord.

The Protomartyr Thekla, a prayerful intercessor for ascetics, is also invoked during the tonsure of women into monasticism.



OrthodoxWiki

Saint Peter the Aleut – Martyred 1815

Saint Peter was from Kodiak, Alaska; his Aleut name was Tchounagnuk. During a trading mission to California he was arrested, tortured and put to death by the Spaniards because he refused to convert from Orthodoxy to Catholicism. Throughout his suffering he insisted 'I am a Christian. I will not change my faith.'

Both in his sufferings and in his steadfast confession of the Faith, Saint Peter is the equal of the martyrs of old, and also of the New Martyrs who have shone forth in more recent times. Now he rejoices with them in the heavenly Kingdom, glorifying God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, throughout all ages.

Holy New Martyr Peter, pray to God for us!



Source: [St. Peter the Aleut · All Saints of North America Orthodox Church · Phoenix, Arizona \(arizonaorthodox.com\)](http://arizonaorthodox.com)

Today the faithful celebrate the feast with joy
illuminated by your coming, O Mother of God.
Beholding your pure image we fervently cry to you:
"Encompass us beneath the precious veil of your protection;
deliver us from every form of evil by entreating Christ,
your Son and our God, that He may save our souls.

Troparion of the Feast of the Protecting Veil

Sad News from Uganda

Father Daniel and all our Orthodox friends in Uganda are mourning the passing of their beloved Bishop, Metropolitan Jonah of Kampala and All Uganda, who died on September 5th in Athens, where he had gone for medical treatment.

Jonah Lwanga was born on 18 July 1945 in the village of Ddegeya, Lwengo District, Uganda. His grandfather, Obadiah Basajjakitalo, was one of the two initial leaders of the Orthodox Church in Uganda along with Ruben Spartas Mukasa.

From 1964 to 1968 he studied at the Ecclesiastical School of Crete. From 1968 to 1978 he held a degree in Theology and Philosophy from the University of Athens. He was ordained priest in 1982, and appointed Bishop of Bukoba in 1992. On 12 May 1997, he was elected by the Holy Synod as Metropolitan of Kampala and All Uganda.

Metropolitan Jonah was active in interfaith dialogue, and respected by members of all faiths in Uganda. Supreme Mufti Ndirangwa said of him 'Our brother Jonah was a great leader. He was full of love and goodwill for all Ugandans, irrespective of their tribe, social status, religious creed or political affiliation.'

Our medical student Dimitrios emailed 'Am sure your already know the sad news of our Beloved Archbishop. It's a very sad moment for the Orthodox Church in Uganda and the entire world, in Uganda he is a hero who stood for the freedom of the oppressed Ugandans. That moment when I got the news even my phone fell out of my hands as I was in too much shock. Personally am still in denial just thinking maybe he is coming back.'

May his memory be eternal!

For a full biography of Metropolitan Jonah go to:

<https://www.ugandaorthodoxchurch.co.ug/biography-of-metropolitan-jonah...>

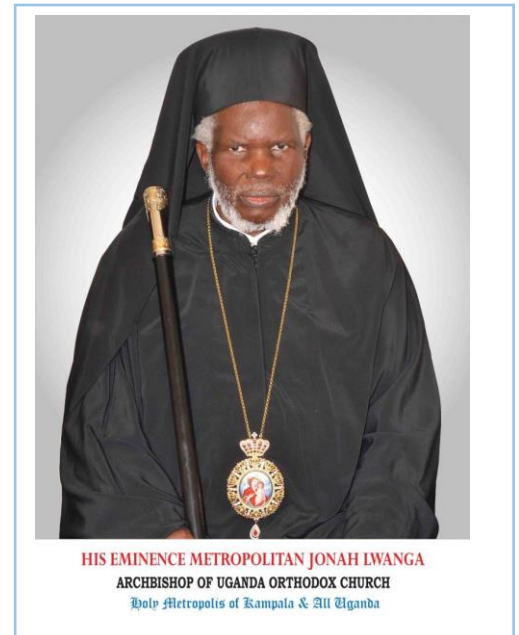
Saints Cyprian, Justina and Theoctistus

Cyprian, known by the title of "the magician" to distinguish him from Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, received a liberal education in his youth, excelling particularly in astrology and sorcery, after which he travelled widely through Greece, Egypt, and India to improve his skills. Eventually he settled in Antioch as a professional sorcerer.

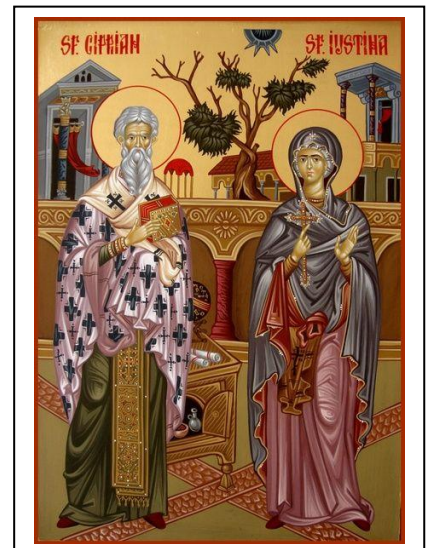
Justina was a young Christian woman who had taken a private vow of chastity. A would-be suitor sought a magic charm from Cyprian to induce Justina to marry him, but none of Cyprian's spells had any effect on her as she continued her life of prayer and fasting. Brought to despair, Cyprian made the sign of the cross himself, and in this way was freed from the toils of Satan. He was received into the Church, was made pre-eminent by miraculous gifts, and became in succession deacon, priest and, finally, bishop, while Justina became the abbess of a convent.

During the Diocletian persecution, both were seized and taken to Damascus, where they were tortured. As their faith never wavered, they were brought before Diocletian at Nicomedia, where at his command they were beheaded on the bank of the river Gallus. Executed at the same time was a man named Theoctistus, who declared himself a Christian on observing the martyrs' unwavering faith in the face of death.

After the bodies of the saints had lain unburied for six days, they were taken by Christian sailors to Rome, where they were interred, first on the estate of a noble lady named Rufina, and later in Constantine's basilica.



HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN JONAH LWANGA
ARCHBISHOP OF UGANDA ORTHODOX CHURCH
Holy Metropolis of Kampala & All Uganda



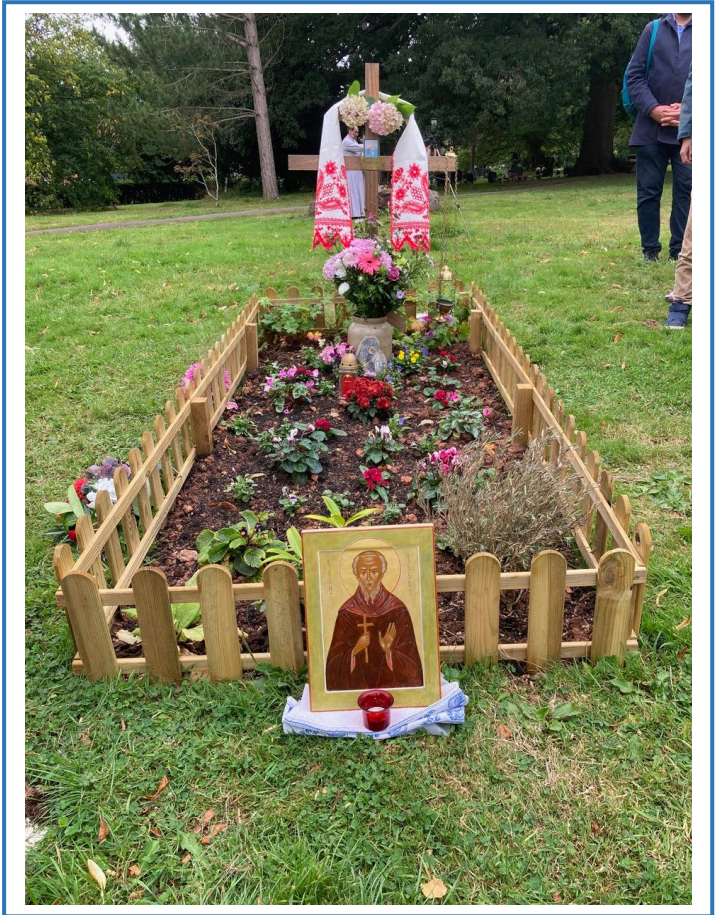
Panikhida for Father Peter

On Saturday September 11th some forty family members and friends of Father Peter met at his graveside in Exeter Higher Cemetery to sing a panikhida to mark the first anniversary of his death.

Although the sky was grey the rain held off as we gathered around the beautiful garden which is his grave. Father Alexander led the service, and spoke movingly of his long friendship with Peter. In conclusion he said, 'Father Peter was someone who all his life faced God-ward, and in doing so he inspired us also to face God-ward. During his long service as a Deacon, he led us in our liturgical prayer and processions. And now in our own lives, may we follow his example which reminds us to face at all times God-ward!'

At the end we sang the troparion for Saint Issui, the patron saint of the Children's Camp in Wales, whose icon – commissioned by campers past and present - stood at the foot of the grave during the service, a recognition of the important part Camp had played in Peter's life.

The sun came out as we returned to share a meal in the garden at Barnfield Road, where the parish has so often met on more joyful occasions. In these so familiar surroundings the sense of Peter's presence was almost palpable, as, at the same time, was the still shocking awareness of his absence.



Later in the day, Philip posted on Facebook, 'Today we held a Panikhida for Peter who died one year ago today. Family and friends gathered around the grave, those unable to attend were there in spirit. A day with sorrow but also joy in being together and each having known Peter who we all loved.'

Last year we sat at his bedside, we sang songs, we sat in silence, we prayed, we were together in sorrow and love for Peter and one another. We were confronted with the tragedy of mortality, the parting of a loved one, the sorrow for our personal loss and for the loss that we all felt. We were in communion with a shared love for Peter and each other. A time when the world shrank away from the sanctity of the moment leaving only a fearful, painful beauty.

In the morning the undertakers came and wrapped him in a white shroud and we sang Memory Eternal as he was taken away.

He rested for a short time St Anne's church where he served, we sang prayers and loved ones visited to say farewell.

He lay in an open coffin in the sunshine, we sang and prayed.

He was put in the ground and we sang Memory Eternal.'

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With the Saints give rest O Christ, to the soul of Thy servant, where sickness and sorrow are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting.

Thou only art immortal, Who didst create and fashion man. For out of the earth were we mortals made, and unto the earth shall we return, as Thou commandedst when Thou madest me, saying unto me: 'For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'

Whither therefore all we mortals wend our way, making our funeral lament the song:

Alleluia.