



Prophet Elias News

News for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
October 16th–30th 2021



Metropolitan Anthony on Icons

On Sunday October 17th we commemorate the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Council which gave formal expression to the essential place of icons in the Orthodox faith.

An icon is an image, but an image which is meant to be a statement of faith. It is a statement of faith in line and colour as definite, as completely rooted in the faith and experience of the Orthodox Church, as any written statement. In that respect icons must correspond to the experience of the total community, and the artist who paints them is only a hand, who puts into line and colour what is the faith and the knowledge of the Christian body in the same way in which a theologian is the expression of his Church. That explains why one of the rules given to icon-painters when they learn their trade is that they should neither copy slavishly an icon painted before them, nor invent an icon. Because one can neither identify slavishly with the spiritual experience expressed by another person, nor on the other hand can one invent a spiritual experience and present it as though it was the faith of the Church.

Now, an icon is primarily a proclamation of faith in the sense that an icon of Christ, an icon of the Mother of God or of saints is possible only since the Incarnation, because they all relate to the Incarnation and its consequences. The Old Testament taught us that God can not be represented because the God of the Old Testament was the Holy One of Israel, He was a spiritual Being that had never been visibly present face to face with anyone. You remember the story of Moses on Sinai when he asked God to allow him to see Him and the Lord answered, “No man can see My face and live.” He allowed Moses to see Him moving away from him, as it were from the back, but never meet Him face to face. It is in Incarnation, through the historical fact that God became man, that God acquired a human face so that it became possible by representing Christ, the incarnate God, to represent indirectly God Himself.

Now, one thing which is absolutely clear to all of us is that no-one knows what Christ looked like. So an icon is never meant to be a snapshot; it is meant to convey an experience, and this is different, as a snapshot is different from a portrait. Any attempt at saying, “this is what Christ looked like” is fantasy. We have no likeness of Christ, but what we know from the experience of the Church and of the saints is Who He was, and this “Who He was” can be expressed in line and in colour. And this is why so many icons do not aim at beauty, at comeliness. We do not try to represent Christ in the Orthodox tradition as the most beautiful, virile man whom we can imagine. We do not try to represent the Mother of God as the most comely and attractive young woman. What we try to represent or to convey through the icon is something about their inner self.

And this explains why certain features in an icon are underlined out of proportion while other features are just indicated. If you look at a good icon, like the icons painted by the great painters of Orthodoxy, you find that certain things are singled out — the brow, the eyes that convey a message, while the cheeks or the mouth are just indicated as common features. The aim of an icon is not to present you with a likeness of the person but with the message, to present you with a face that speaks to you, in the same way in which a portrait is different from a snapshot. A snapshot is a very adequate image of the person photographed at a given moment, but it leaves out very often most of the personality of this particular person, while a good portrait is painted in the course of many sittings that allow the artist to look deeply into the face of a person, to single out features which are fluid, which change, which move, features which, each of them, express something of the personality. And so that portrait is something much more composite, much more rich and much more adequate to the total personality than a snapshot would be, although at no moment was this particular face exactly as the painter has represented it in the portrait. It is not an attempt at having a snapshot in colour, but of conveying a vision of what a person is.

Now, this being said, we treat icons with reverence, and numbers of people in the West think that to us icons are very much what idols were in older times for pagan nations. They aren't. They are not idols because they do not purport to give an adequate picture of the person concerned. This I have already mentioned abundantly but I will add this: whether it is in words, in theological statements, in doctrinal statements, in the creeds, in the prayers and the hymns of the Churches, no attempt is ever made in the Orthodox Church at giving a cogent, a complete image of what God is. Already in the IVth century St. Gregory of Nazianze wrote that if we attempted to collect from the Old Testament, from the New Testament, from the experience of the Church, from the personal lives of saints, their sayings and their writings, all the features which reveal to us what and who God is and tried to build out of them a completely coherent, a complete picture of God, what we would have achieved would not be a picture of God, it would be an idol, because it would be on our scale, it would be as small as we are - indeed, smaller than we are because it could be contained in our vision, in our understanding.

On Icons I: Sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony on 24th March 1984.
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Man's Task is to Make the World Holy

Nothing is more misunderstood by the West than the Eastern Orthodox attitude to icons. Persistent accusations of superstition against the Eastern Christians are based on their customs and practices connected with the veneration of icons. The analytical Western mind draws a distinction between the object and its name, between the person and his portrait, between spirit and body. The East is more aware of their profound interdependence. To the Eastern mentality the name of a person forms a part of his personality: his portrait also stands in close relation to the man himself. The East believes that the Incarnation revealed the existence of an organic unity between the divine and the human, and that material things, no less than Man's mind and spirit, can be used by God for His purpose. For an Eastern Christian the icons "represent" Jesus Christ, the Mother of God and the Saints, and the very word "represent" implies that one can speak of some presence of the heavenly persons in their images. An Eastern Christian never identifies the person with its representation, but he believes that the spiritual meeting of Jesus Christ and His Saints with the members of the Church on earth is deepened and strengthened in being focussed in the icons.

If the West thinks that the East is superstitious in its veneration of icons, the Christian East suspects that those who object to it are in danger of a heresy which treats matter as something unclean and evil and believes that the highest type of worship can dispense with it and be entirely spiritual. This, for the Orthodox, is a denial of the Incarnation and a misunderstanding of the true purpose of human life. Man's task is to make the world holy, not to get rid of it. Men are not pure spirits; the Church believes in the resurrection of the body, and not in its final destruction.

Such are some of the doctrinal differences between the Eastern and Western Christians. Their roots go deep down into their corporate experience and psychology. Western man has always been more confident than his Eastern counterpart in the power of human reason to penetrate into the mystery of life, and to define with precision the relations between Creator and creation. Hence the labours of Western divines in constructing all-embracing theological systems, aimed at providing authoritative answers to the questions of inquiring minds.

The Eastern Orthodox are no less interested than the Western Christians in theological speculations, but they are aware that many problems remain beyond human knowledge and are not included in revealed truth. However intimate the fellowship between the Triune God and regenerated and sanctified man, the divine essence is impenetrable to the finite mind according to Orthodox teaching and hence the Eastern emphasis on apophatic or negative theology which says that God is beyond all definition and only His manifestations or divine energy is accessible to men.

The Eastern and Western theology represents two distinct attempts to understand the New Covenant and to apply it to the life of a Christian community. In the past both sides were quick to find heresy and distortion in an unfamiliar approach to the same revealed truth. This tendency to mutual incriminations, instead of deepening Christian experience, made for narrowness and encouraged extremes among all confessions. Today there is an increasing realization that the progress of Christianity depends not on the suppression of diverse traditions, but upon the willingness of the divided members of the Church to seek divine guidance together.

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday October 17th: **The Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council** (787)

On Monday 18th: **Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke**

We wish **Luke D** and **Luke K** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Tuesday 19th: **Saint John of Kronstadt** (1903)

Saint Frideswide of Oxford (c735)

We wish **Father Seraphim** and all members of the **Parish of the Annunciation** in Oxford a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

Translation of the relics of **Saint John of Rila (Ivan Rilski)** (1238)

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

On Saturday 23rd: **Holy Apostle James, the Lord's Brother**

We wish **James T** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Tuesday 26th: **Holy Great Martyr Dimitrios of Thessaloniki** (c306)

We wish **Father Gregory Palamas, Presbytera Elizabeth** and all members of the Parish of **Saint Demetrios and Saint Nikitas** in Plymouth a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Friday 29th: **Martyr Anastasia** of Rome (3rdC)

We wish **Anastasia T** and **Anastassia N** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Saturday 30th: **Saint Issui** of Patricio

We wish all **Campers and Helpers** of the Deanery **Children's Summer Camp** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

Noticeboard

Services:

Saturday October 16th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 17th: Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Saturday 23rd: Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am

Sunday 24th: Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) Saint Stephen's, Exeter High St 9am

Tuesday 26th: Saint Dimitrios – Plymouth Parish Patronal Feast
Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 8.30am

Saturday 30th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Service of Thanksgiving at Exeter Cathedral

On Sunday 17th at 4pm Exeter Cathedral will be holding a special Service of Thanksgiving for NHS and social care workers. It's a small way to recognise and thank everyone who has worked in a medical or care setting throughout the pandemic. The preacher will be The Right Revd Robert Atwell, Bishop of Exeter. The service will be livestreamed: you can [WATCH THE SERVICE HERE >](#)

Online International Conference – The Orthodox Church Addresses the Climate Crisis

On Thursday October 21st 9am – 12 noon (BST)

Volos Academy for Theological Studies Online Conference: 'The Good Practices of the Orthodox Church Addressing the Climate Crisis in View of the UNFCCC Cop 26'

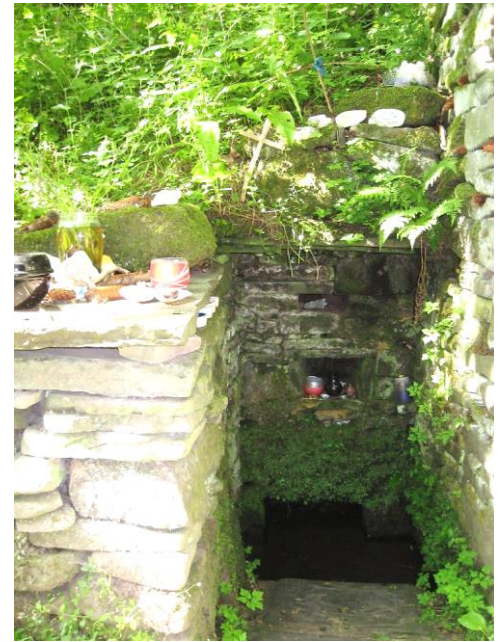
For more details see page 5

Every man on earth is sick with the fever of sin, with the blindness of sin, and is overcome with its fury. As sins consist mostly of malice and pride, it is necessary to treat everyone who suffers from the malady of sin with kindness and love. This is an important truth, which we often forget. Very often we act in the opposite manner: we add malice to malice by our anger, we oppose pride with pride. Thus, evil grows within us and does not decrease; it is not cured – rather it spreads"

St. John of Kronstadt

Saint Issui of Patricio – Patron Saint of the Children’s Summer Camp (October 30th)

The 5th and 6th centuries were a period of extraordinary missionary activity in the Celtic Church, when most of the Celtic saints whose names are known to us were active. Some, like Saint David and Saint Petroc, travelled widely Europe in their preaching of the Gospel. Others were content to settle as hermits in one place, preaching and ministering to the local population and occasional passing travellers. Very often a holy well is associated with their name – possibly they were the first people to build a protecting wall around a natural spring to ensure a supply of pure water, for baptisms as well as to improve the health of local people. Saint Issui would appear to have been one such hermit. Nothing is known about his life other than that he was a holy man, much loved by the local community, who by tradition was murdered by a passing stranger he had sheltered. (He is sometimes referred to as Merthyr (Martyr) Issui.) After his death the well near his shrine became renowned for its healing properties.



Saint Issui’s shrine and holy well at Patricio (? Pater Issio) are very close to the site of the Deanery Children’s Summer Camp at Dyffryn Ganol, and Saint Issui has been ‘adopted’ as the Camp’s patron saint. Each year the children visit the shrine, learn about the saint and sing the troparion and kontakion dedicated to him. An icon banner of Saint Issui resides in the chapel at camp.

After Father Peter’s death, number of campers past and present wanted to mark their recognition of his great contribution to the life of the camps for over 40 years, and commissioned Patsy Fostropoulos to paint an icon of Saint Issui to be presented to the Scorer family in Peter’s memory. This is the icon that stood at the foot of Peter’s grave at the panikhida marking the first anniversary of his falling asleep. MO



This icon is given with much love by many people from the camp to the Scorer Family in memory of Peter and in recognition of his great contribution to the life of the camp for over 40 years.

Memory Eternal

11.9.21

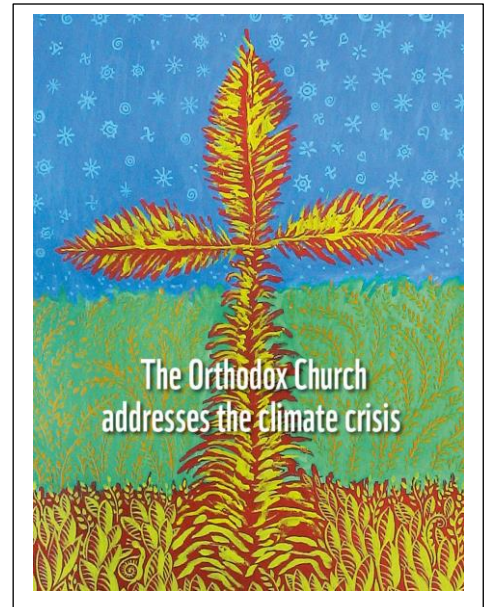
Kontakion in Tone 4

O Holy Father Issui
 missionary of God’s holy word,
 The waters of a spring were
 sanctified through your prayers,
 from whence up to our days
 healing flows;
 You gave hospitality in your cell
 to strangers
 and suffered death at the hands of
 greed and ingratitude;
 Pray to Christ our God to grant us
 His great mercy.

Holy Martyr Issui, Pray to God for Us



VOLOS ACADEMY
FOR THEOLOGICAL
STUDIES



Online International Conference: “The good practices of the Orthodox Church addressing the climate crisis, in view of the UNFCCC COP26”

On October 21st 2021, the Volos Academy for Theological Studies-Research Center, in cooperation with WWF Greece, organizes an International online conference on the general topic: “The good practices of the Orthodox Church addressing the climate crisis, in view of the UNFCCC COP26”. The conference takes place in the framework of the activities of the research program run by the Volos Academy: “Green Parish and parallel activities.”

As witnessed particularly in the Mediterranean region and countries in northern Europe, this summer has been marked with extreme weather events, such as the flash floods that killed hundreds in Belgium and Germany, and the particularly long heatwave that hit the Mediterranean and exacerbated catastrophic mega-fires in Greece, Turkey, and Italy during a prolonged fire season. To stop the crisis, to successfully deal with the greatest challenge of recent history, countries, people but also Churches need to join forces urgently.

Following the Paris Agreement (2015), Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, rightly named as “green patriarch,” and Pope Francis, by means of the *Laudato Si'* encyclical, has undertaken a number of important initiatives aiming to instill in the regional and local Christian churches a sense of urgency in addressing climate change and the broader environmental crisis.

Given this situation, what could the Churches in general, and especially the Orthodox Churches in the Balkans in particular, offer not only to the relevant discussion but also in dealing with certain effects that will arise from these intended changes? In traditional Eastern European countries, where Orthodoxy has historically played a more or less important role in the life and culture of these peoples, the Churches should be ready to timely address the climate crisis and the latest developments in terms of theology and pastoral care.

The conference will revolve around the presentation and application of good practices, which are already taking place in the Orthodox Churches around the world (with special emphasis on the Balkans) and which relate to specific actions in parishes and monasteries, encyclicals and decisions of local Churches, etc. aimed at raising public awareness and addressing the consequences of the climate crisis in view of the forthcoming UN International Climate Summit in Glasgow this November.

The conference will start at 9 a.m.BST and will finish at 12 noon BST. (11am to 2pm Greek Time).
The language of the conference is English with simultaneous translation into Greek

The conference is open to the public.

A priori registration is required:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/9316340223383/WN_vCZu_Fx7QNSNReoU3JDTkA

For clarifications or more information, you can contact Dr. Nikolaos Asproulis, Deputy Director of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies Asprou@acadimia.org.

More Reading on this extremely important topic

<https://www.goarch.org/-/encyclical-ecumenical-patriarch-september-2021>

<https://orthodoxtimes.com/joint-declaration-of-pope-francis-ecumenical-patriarch-and-archbishop-of-canterbury-on-the-protection-of-the-creation/>

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/why-faith-matters/>

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/cop26-reflection-from-elizabeth-theokritoff/>