

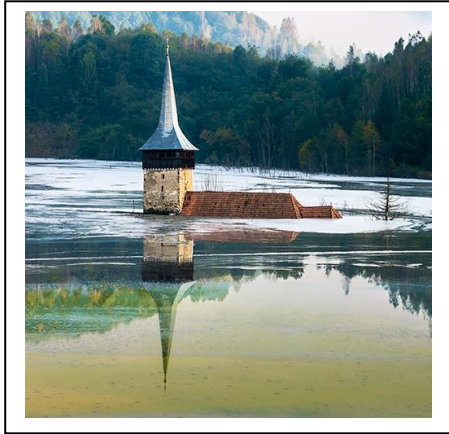


Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self – isolation for the Orthodox Church
of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
31st October – 13th November 2021**



COP26 – 31st October – 12th November



*The fortnight covered by this issue corresponds almost exactly with COP26 - the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This is a matter that should profoundly concern us all. If it is to be successful, we will all have to accept major changes in the way we live. If it fails – if the world's richest countries cannot agree on **and deliver** workable plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero within the next 30 years - the irreversible consequences in terms of human – and animal – suffering will be incalculable.*



Some people have concluded that we are entering the last days foretold by Jesus. This may or may not be the case – ‘about that day or hour no-one knows, not even the angels, not the Son, but only the Father.’ (Matthew 24:36) But even if it is the case, that surely does not absolve us from our calling to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to act accordingly.

It is tempting sometimes to want to give up – to say 'It's all too difficult; nothing I can do will make any difference.' But there is a great deal we can do if we really want to. We can examine and change the way we live our own lives. We can keep our hearts open to the plight of those who are already suffering the violent effects of climate change, including those who have been forced to leave their homes and look to us for help. We can make sure our political representatives know that we want them to make every effort to find workable solutions. And we can pray, for wisdom for the participants in Glasgow, and for ourselves, that God may, in the words of St John Chrysostom, ‘deliver us from every ignorance and heedlessness, from littleness of soul and stony hardness of heart.

Ed.

The Ascetic Vision: An Orthodox Christian Contribution by Elizabeth Theokritoff

A Christian writer from Syria in the sixth century recounts sharing a meal with a wandering monk, and becoming intrigued at how slowly and deliberately the monk was eating. Questioning the visitor later, he was told:

I hope that God will not judge me for having opened my mouth over food which is derived from God's gift without stretching my thoughts to give praise for His bounty. I hope in His name that I shall not be condemned for having stretched forth my hand to my mouth without every time... similarly stretching forth my tongue to praise and my mind to prayer on behalf of those who labour and sweat and toil to supply my need.[1]

If we were to follow this example in our globalised world, where would we start? And how many other sacrifices would we need to include, such as bearing the environmental costs of production, use and disposal of the things I enjoy? Yet just to try thinking in this way would be an illuminating exercise in appreciating the web of interdependence in which we live, our debt and our responsibility to others in every “mouthful”, every action and decision.

There are two aspects to this monk’s practice: prayer for his benefactors, and also *thankfulness*. That is the attitude of one who is conscious of enjoying a free gift, not a right. Gratitude is central to the Christian life: the *Eucharist* sums up our thanksgiving for all God’s gifts, beginning with the creation of the world. “Thine own of Thine we offer...”, according to the Orthodox eucharistic prayer. But the gifts of bread and wine are not simply “nature”; they represent millennia of plant breeding, human skill, knowledge and technologies, and it is all this that we acknowledge as belonging only to God. Christian tradition is adamant that no sort of “property” is absolute, but always a trust to be used for the benefit of all God’s creatures. This is no less true of intellectual property, such as green technologies. The frequent strictures of the Church Fathers against the rich monopolising resources have obvious relevance to today’s global efforts to respond to climate change; but even while having political resonances, the principle remains *personal*. It cannot be reduced to obligations on rich *countries*, apart from the obligations on better-off people everywhere to see that their poorer neighbours and compatriots do not bear the brunt of readjustments. Easier said than done, indeed. That is why *ascetic discipline* holds such an important place in Christian tradition, as the way we learn the practice of love. *Ascesis* (“exercise”) is training for the wrestling match with our self-will, the wants and desires that enslave us and torment us when we cannot fulfil them on demand.

Probably the most familiar ascetic practice is that of fasting. Once integral to the rhythm of life across the Christian world, this discipline is still prominent in the Orthodox Churches: for approximately half the year, we follow a vegan diet (with occasional seafood). Given the environmental cost of heavy meat consumption and the divisiveness of calls to abandon meat and dairy products altogether, it is easy to see why this traditional balance of fasting and feasting might attract attention on purely pragmatic grounds. And indeed, allowing others a fair share of foods that carry a high environmental cost could be seen as a modern form of the “alms-giving” associated with fasting periods. Nevertheless, the aim of Christian fasting is not to eat lower on the food chain. It is to teach us that even something as basic and intimate as what we eat is not just a matter of personal choice and whim: it is part of a relationship, with the Creator and thus with a whole community of His creatures. Such asceticism has far-reaching implications for a time of environmental crisis because it forms persons who are not hostage to their own appetites, but have the freedom to act out of self-giving love.

The present environmental crisis demands changes in aspects of life that we in the developed world have come to take for granted: and this gives a wealth of opportunities to hone that great ascetic tool, obedience. Limitations imposed by limited natural resources or environmental costs give us a way to discipline our wants, to make choices dictated by the needs of others with whom we share God’s world.

Asceticism, then, has to do with seeking obedience and service in our everyday choices, our use of material things. One of its early fruits is a measure of self-knowledge and humility: a recognition of my weakness and my limitations, my utter dependence on God’s grace and mercy. And thus a realisation of our shared creaturely frailty. This makes us aware, certainly, of our fellowship with those less fortunate. But also something else very crucial but less popular: an awareness of fellowship with others who (like us) find change hard, who resent any disruption to the comfortable way of life we have all been led to expect. Humility means recognising that we are not the righteous; nor, in the present case, should we expect to be “pure” of environmentally harmful behaviour, at personal or national level. Imperfections, inconsistencies and falling short are salutary antidotes to self-righteousness, never a reason to stop striving.

Asceticism does not transform only the way we use resources; it radically changes our vision of the non-human creation. As we cease to look at other created things through the fog of our own desire to possess, or even of our own needs, this creates a *space* of wonder and respect that allows each creature to exist in itself and for its Creator. The more we see things in relation to God, the less readily we will sacrifice them to serve our own grand plans – even that of mitigating the climate disruption that we have precipitated.

[1] S.P. Brock, “World and Sacrament in the Writings of the Syrian Fathers”, *Sobornost* 6:10 (Winter 1974), 695.

This article was a contribution to Green Christian’s COP26 campaign, “Why faith matters at COP26” to be found at <https://greenchristian.org.uk/why-faith-matters/> Reprinted with permission.

Making Peace With The Rest Of Creation by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

When we look at the world around us, isn't it terrifying to see that the only reason why all things are not fulfilled, in the way in which the sacraments are fulfilled, the only reason is that **we** stand between all things created and God, while we should be the bridge, the teachers, the masters, the leaders, the High-Priests of this created world, to make it, all of it, sacred and holy. And how terrifying it is to think of the way in which we treat created things as though they have no vocation, no calling, as though they were nothing but dead materiality. I remember asking a young theologian how he would define a tree and his answer was, "A tree? Building material..." Isn't that horrible? And isn't it horrible to think that to us bread is expendable, that we eat more than we need and throw away what is left over, not even thinking that we can feed birds or animals with it. Isn't it a monstrous way in which we treat the animals which are entrusted to us? Isn't it monstrous that we treat the whole created world as beasts of prey instead of treating it as people whose responsibility was to set them free by becoming ourselves free men of God, and so make them enter into the Kingdom of God. We are to create a City of Man which is coextensive to a City of God; a City of Man of which the first citizen could be the man Jesus Christ, true man and true God.

Is that the City of Man which we are creating? And we do not recognize ourselves as guilty; we try to readjust things. Yes, we are aware that if we continue as we are humanity may perish, but that is not a problem; let it perish if that is all there is to humanity, to be brutes, and ever-increasing brutes, more and more fierce, more and more Godless. And I am not speaking of believers as contrasted with atheists, I am speaking of all of us. We have no right to call ourselves believers if all that we believe is that we have a good God whose duty and function is to look after us while we don't look after the myriads of things He called into being in an act of love, to see them in divine joy. We must recognize our guilt, we must recognize it actively, not in order to save our skins but in order to become what we are called to be. And if we recognize it, we must act.

We must humbly treat all things which God has created, treat them as servants treat their masters. The Lord has said to us, that we are not called to be overlords, but to be servants. We are called to be servants of the whole creation, serving it with all our lives, all our intelligence, all our hearts, all our depth, all the degree of participation which we already have to the mind of Christ revealed in the Scriptures, and to the mind of God revealed to us by the voice of the Holy Spirit within us. This is what we are called to be.

And this is reconciliation; we must seek forgiveness by making reparation, because there is no such thing as gratuitous forgiveness. Forgiveness begins with recognition of sin, with exposing oneself to the offended party, asking to be forgiven and undertaking to make reparation, and not only undertaking but actively doing it at the cost it may cost us, paying the price, whatever price it be.

Unless we do this, we will never, never be able to make our peace between ourselves, because humanity cannot be united on the common cause of serving its own advantages. We are called to make our peace by choosing a vocation which is great enough, big enough for mankind; the building of the Kingdom of God that includes our making our peace, not first of all with one another; but first and foremost with the world in which we live. And then we will have a common purpose, and in the community of this purpose, of making the world into what God willed it to be, we will find truly reconciliation with one another. It is not enough to repent, it is not enough to seek forgiveness from God; we must obtain forgiveness in other ways by actively, truly being God's servants and God's messengers in this world.

From Making Peace with the Rest of Creation Address by Metropolitan Anthony
at Saint Alban & Saint Sergius Fellowship Conference 1990

Threats and scourges and destruction hang over us, Lord, because of the multitude of our transgressions; for we have sinned and transgressed and gone far from you, and we are affected and afflicted by dire perils; but deliver us, Lord from dangers that beset us, and keep the whole structure of the earth unharmed, granting equable breaths of wind and ever-flowing springs of water for our safe-keeping and salvation, O Lover of humankind.

From Vespers for the Preservation of Creation [Vespers of Creation, formatted.wpd \(orth-transfiguration.org\)](http://orth-transfiguration.org)

Do You Know Why?

Do you know, my child, why the clouds are closed when the fields are thirsty for rain, and why they open, when the fields have no desire for rain?

Nature has been confused by the wickedness of men, and has abandoned its order.

Do you know, my child, why the fields produce heavy fruit in the springtime, and yield a barren harvest in the summer?

Because the daughters of men have hated the fruit of their womb, and kill it while it is still in blossom.

Do you know, my child, why the springs have gone dry, and why the fruits of the earth no longer have the sweetness that they used to have?

Because of the sin of man, from which infirmity has invaded all of nature.

Do you know, my child, how a mother can feed her children without nourishing them?

By not singing a song of love to them while nursing them, but a song of hatred towards a neighbour.

Do you know, my child, why people have become ugly and have lost the beauty of their ancestors?

Because they have cast away the image of God, which fashions the beauty of that image out of the soul within, and removes the mask of earth.

Do you know, my child, why diseases and dreadful epidemics have multiplied?

Because men have begun to look upon good health as an abduction of nature and not as a gift from God. And what is abducted with difficulty must with double difficulty be protected.

Do you know, my child, why people fight over earthly territory, and are not ashamed to be on the same level as moles?

Because the world has sprouted through their heart, and their eyes see only what is growing in the heart; and because, my child, their sin has made them too weak to struggle for heaven.

Do not cry, my child, the Lord will soon return and set everything right



From Saint Nikolai Velimirovic Prayers by the Lake XXXIX

Turn Not Away Thy Face

Turn not away Thy face even now, O Lord who lovest mankind, seeing Thy world spoiled by our transgressions and passions. Look down from Heaven, O God, and see that the earth is grieving. Trees and plants are vanishing, wild animals; cattle and birds of the air are perishing because of the desecration of those living here. For this cause we fall down in repentance and cry out to Thee, that Thou permit not Thy world to be destroyed and us with our transgressions, but grant conversion to the foolish sons of men and salvation for them and for creation subject to them.

From The Order of a Service of Prayer for the Preservation of God's Creation
[Ecological Moleben \(orth-transfiguration.org\)](http://Ecological Moleben (orth-transfiguration.org))

Brethren, we know that all creation groans and travails in pain until now. And not only creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope were we saved. But hope that is seen is not hope. For how can a man hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8: 22-25

Love All God's Creation

Love all God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light! Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. And once you have perceived it, you will begin to comprehend it ceaselessly more and more every day. And you will at last come to love the whole world with an abiding, universal love. Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and untroubled joy. Do not, therefore, trouble it, do not torture them, do not deprive them of their joy. Do not go against God's intent. Man, do not exalt yourself above the animals: they are without sin, while you with your majesty defile the earth by your appearance on it and you leave the traces of your defilement behind you. Alas, this is true of almost every one of us!

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* - 'The Discourses of Father Zossima'

I Am The Song

I am the song that sings the bird.
I am the leaf that grows the land.
I am the tide that moves the moon.
I am the stream that halts the sand.
I am the cloud that drives the storm.
I am the earth that lights the sun.
I am the fire that strikes the stone.
I am the clay that shapes the hand.
I am the word that speaks the man.

Charles Causley

Jesu Who Ought To Be Praised (Eosai Bu Choir A Mholadh)

There is no life in the sea,
There is no creature in the river,
There is naught in the firmament,
But proclaims His goodness.
Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!
Jesu! Meet it were to praise Him.
There is no bird on the wing,
There is no star in the sky,
There is nothing beneath the sun,
But proclaims His goodness.
Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!
Jesu! Meet it were to praise Him.

*From Alexander Carmichael Carmina Gadelica
[Hymns and Incantations from the Gaelic] Vol.1 No. 14*

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday October 31st: **Holy Apostle Aristoboulos** of the Seventy, First Bishop of Britain (1stC)

On Monday November 1st: **Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian** and their mother
Saint Theodoti (3rdC)

On Wednesday 3rd: **Saint Winifred** of Holywell (Treffynon) (7thC)

On Monday 8th: Synaxis of the **Archangel Michael and All the Bodiless Powers**
We wish **Michail C, Michail N and Mike L** a **Happy Nameday** and **Many Years!**

On Tuesday 9th: **Saint Nektarios of Pentapolis** (1920)

On Thursday 11th: **Saint Martin the Merciful**, Bishop of Tours (397)
We wish **Martin M and Martin O** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Saturday 13th: **Saint John Chrysostom**, Archbishop of Constantinople (407)
We wish **William O** a **Happy Nameday** and **Many Years!**

Important message from Sophia (Roberts) 26/10/21 'I'm writing to ask the community at St Anne's to especially keep me in its prayers at this time, please. Preliminary investigations strongly suggest that I have got pulmonary fibrosis. The results of my recent chest X-ray have been forwarded to a specialist and we await to hear.' Our prayers go to Tony, too.

Noticeboard

Services:

On Saturday October 30th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

On Sunday October 31st: Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

On Saturday November 6th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

On Sunday 7th: Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

On Saturday 13th: Divine Liturgy Saint James' Hall 10.30

On Sunday 14th: Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) Saint Stephen's Church 9am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30 Torquay 9.30

Advance Notice

Subject to confirmation, Father Patrick will be with us to celebrate Divine Liturgy at Saint Anne's on Sunday 28th November at 10.30

In view of the continuing spread of Covid 19 in the South West, we ask that face coverings continue be worn for the time being in the confined space in Saint Anne's.

Children's Summer Camp 24th July to 6th August 2022

Applications for the Children's Summer Camp Wales 2022 are now open.

To apply for a place, go to [Children's Summer Camp - Wales 2022 | Deanery \(thyateira-deanery.uk\)](#)

Opportunities from CTAX (Christians Together Across Exeter)

ST PETROCK'S SHOP (Support for the Homeless)

An exciting new shop is about to open in the city centre on Tuesday 19th October, and they are seeking volunteers and quality donations of clothing and bric a brac, and items for recycling and re-purposing.

More info, including about volunteering, here: <http://stpetrocks.org.uk/shopmanager/>

APPEAL FOR CARERS

An appeal for care workers has been launched by the County Council, as the shortage of care workers gets worse. Care providers are struggling to find enough staff. Many are turning down new requests for help while doing the best they can to care for vulnerable clients.

If you have time to volunteer to help people in your local community, or would consider working in the care sector, we can help put you in touch. More info here: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/council-appeals-for-help-as-care-worker-shortage-gets-worse/>

Mice for Saint Cyprian's



One of our parish members handcrafts these adorable Mice and offers them for sale for charities. She has very generously suggested the parish might sell them to raise funds for orphaned and otherwise disadvantaged children in Father Daniel's parish in Uganda.

The Mice come in two styles. The 'Cuddly Mouse' (left) is made entirely of soft materials and so is safe for babies. The 'Glamour Mouse' (right) has a bead nose and eyelashes and decorative buttons, so is not suitable for under 3's. They measure 30cm (12") tall.

There will be more details about ordering in the next issue, but supplies will not be unlimited, so if you want to get in early, let me know - either by email at martinolsson827@btinternet.com or by phone on

01837 82796.

