



Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self – isolation for the Orthodox Church
of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
28th November – 11th December 2021**



The Rich Young Ruler - Holiness Instead of Legalism: Homily by Fr Philip Lemasters

*The Gospel reading for Sunday 28th November – 23rd after Pentecost - tells of Christ's encounter
with the rich young ruler: Luke 18:18-27*

The rich young ruler who asked Jesus Christ what he had to do in order to find eternal life must have thought that he had already met all God's requirements. So when the Lord told him to keep the commandments of the Old Testament, the man said that he had checked them all off, that he had kept them his entire life. This is where the story gets really interesting, for the Lord then gives him a commandment that he could not imagine following: Sell all that you have, give to the poor, and come follow me. This fellow was rich and powerful and loved his comfortable lifestyle, so he became very sad and apparently walked away. The Lord knew how hard it was for people who have it all in this life to enter the kingdom of heaven, for they are tempted strongly to love their possessions and status more than God and neighbour. Still, as the Lord said His stunned disciples, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

What did Christ mean by speaking in this way? He certainly was not simply adding another law that the Jews had to obey. Instead, He challenged this man to stop thinking about his relationship with God as a set of requirements which he could master. Someone who responds to the Old Testament laws by saying, "Oh, I've always followed them since I was a child" has a very shallow understanding of what God requires of us. That would be like someone saying, "I've always been a perfectly faithful Christian since childhood." Oh, please. Get real. We know that is not true of any one of us.

Christ jolted this man out of his delusion, of his false self-confidence, by giving him a commandment that He knew he could not keep: giving away all his beloved money, possessions, and power. Perhaps for the first time, this fellow was challenged to see that eternal life is not something that we can accomplish by our own ability. If we cannot offer to God that which we love most in this life, then we obviously have not fulfilled all that the Lord expects of us.

And since Christ came to unite our fallen humanity with divinity and to conquer sin and death, it is pretty clear that even the most law-abiding person still needs the mercy, grace, and love of our Lord in order to inherit eternal life. By our own power, it is not possible to share in the life of heaven. That is why St. Paul wrote that he boasted in nothing "except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." With Him, all things are possible.

The eternal Son of God was not born at Christmas to add to the burden of the law or to give us the impression that all will be well if we obey a new set of teachings. To the contrary, He became a human being to do what a mere law never could, to bring us into His holiness, to make us partakers of the divine nature, to heal and fulfil our fallen, corrupt humanity, to make it possible for us mortals to put on immortality.

The Lord's shocking statement about giving everything away challenged the rich young ruler to stop thinking of his life before God in legalistic terms. For Christ was not born to bring us what the world calls success. Neither did He come to make us strict legalists who think that holiness can be reduced to a list of "do's" and "don'ts." And He certainly did not put on flesh in order to make His followers the self-righteous judges of others.

The eternal Son of God became one of us for completely different reasons. Out of unfathomable love, He wanted to make possible for us to do what is impossible by our own power. We may take pride in what we accomplish, but which of us can claim credit for the Incarnation? There is no earthly prestige in a Virgin Mother giving birth in a cave to a baby whose cradle was a manger, a feeding trough for animals. The rich young rulers of the world cannot understand a Messiah whose human life begins in such lowly circumstances and ended on a cross. Jesus Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension are not simple human accomplishments or rewards, but truly miraculous manifestations of God's eternal life in our world of sin, death, and corruption. As St. Paul said, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails for anything, but a new creation."

A religion that simply provides more laws to obey could never make us a new creation: a new, holy people who love and serve God and neighbour with every ounce of our being. Laws simply make things worse by giving us more opportunities to judge ourselves and others. It is often when we are ashamed of not measuring up that we are most likely to shift our attention to putting down other people in order to make ourselves feel better. Whenever we do that, we become like the Pharisees who rejected our Lord.

The God-Man Jesus Christ operates in a completely different way, of course, making it possible for everyone, no matter their struggles or failures or social standing, to find true peace through faith, humility, and growth in holiness-- In other words, through our ongoing acceptance of His mercy and healing in our lives.

Extract from a Homily by Fr Philip Lemasters posted on Eastern Christian Insights 23-11-2013. Used with permission. For full text go to:

[Eastern Christian Insights: Holiness Instead of Legalism: Homily on the Rich Young Ruler in the Orthodox Church](#)

Fr. **Philip LeMasters** is Pastor of St. Luke Orthodox Church in Abilene, Texas, Professor of Religion at McMurry University and a member of the Board of Trustees of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, where he holds an appointment as Professor of Christian Ethics.

Letter from Father Daniel in Uganda 14th October

It is so good to hear from Fr Daniel. Strict Covid-19 restrictions have meant he has not been able to get to Kampala either to send or to pick up post for several months.

Greetings full of love to you and your family, and all parishioners of holy Prophet Elias in our merciful Lord's name.

Thank you very much for the communication although you have not been getting feedback. Also, very sorry for the untimely death of our brother Fr Peter. I was really touched by his death. I got the news through your two letters which I got on 14th October 2021. I could not reach the post office before because of the very difficult times of Covid 19. I will always remember your visit on our saint's day when he gave a wonderful sermon about a good shepherd. May the Good Shepherd guide his soul all the way to a place of peaceful rest. May our ever merciful God forgive him whatever went wrong. May our good Lord comfort you, the family, the priests and all the faithfuls.

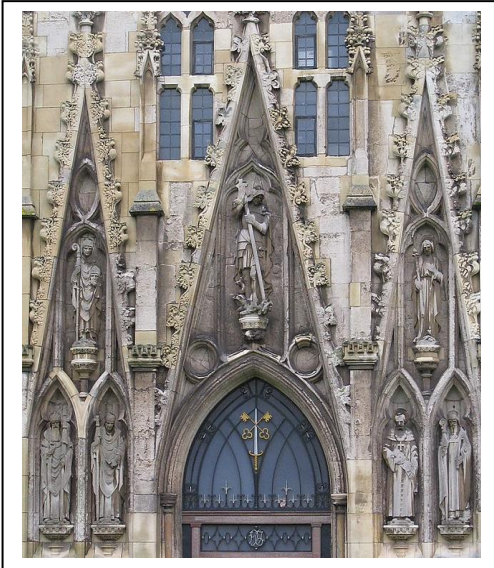
In the same direction we lost our Metropolitan Jonah Lwanga. It was all bad and sorrowful news as he was laid to rest at the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, Namungoona. The patriarch is already in Uganda to pray for his soul and to put things in order.

Life this way just like yours is getting harder, business life is so poor and so are all other areas but thank God we have plenty of food for it has been raining. *[In recent years periodic drought has been a new and increasing problem in southern Uganda.]*

Greet Mama Celia, Fr John, Fr Nikanor and all the faithfuls. May God bless you all.

Fr Daniel

Echoes of Another Culture

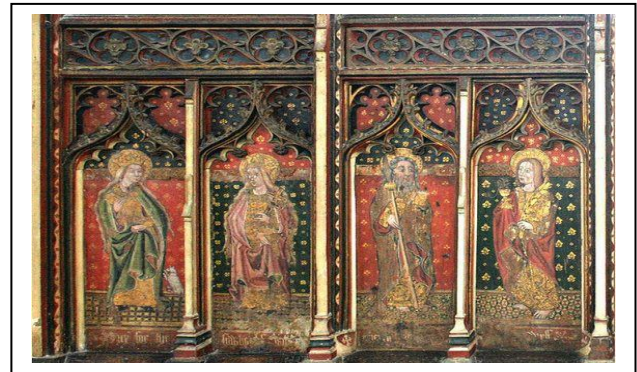


In an earlier issue we reported on the completion of the restoration of the North Porch of Exeter Cathedral, which revealed coloured fragments that suggested that the Porch, like the glorious West Front of the Cathedral, had once been a riot of colour. Shortly afterwards, Nadya drew our attention to the seven (unpainted) statues which had been gifted at the end of World War I by the Archdeacon of Exeter in thanksgiving for the survival of his two sons. The statues represent the patron saints of the seven European allies – England, Belgium, France, Italy, Romania, Serbia and Russia, and filled the empty niches whose previous almost certainly painted figures had presumably been destroyed during the iconoclasm of the Reformation.

At about the same time Celia and I visited Norfolk, where we found in several of the architecturally splendid parish

churches echoes – mostly in the form of painted screens – of how colourful our churches must have

been in the late middle ages, with images of the saints, angels and archangels, gilded bosses, the screen surmounted by a carved group of the crucified Christ flanked by His Mother and Saint John the Beloved Disciple – all painted in bold colours and lit by light filtered through the ubiquitous stained glass or brought to flickering life in candlelight. From the dim echoes that survive – having been whitewashed over by the iconoclasts, or in some instances taken away and hidden by pious parishioners - one can only imagine the effect of this glorious space on people most of whose daily lives were suffused with the colours of mud and dust, unpainted wood, earthenware, subfusc grey or brown clothing – they must have felt that entering a church was indeed a foretaste of the Kingdom.



But it was not only the aesthetic dimension of the Church that was destroyed during the puritan Reformation, but an entire spiritual culture, as is made clear in Eamon Duffy's monumental study *The Stripping of the Altars** - at once a work of meticulous scholarship and an elegy for a lost world. Not only did the reformers break the cycle of observance of feasts and fasts which reflected so fittingly the agricultural lives of the vast majority, but in their forbidding of prayer for the dead they drove a wedge between past and present, between the living and their ancestral forbears, between petitioners and their patron saints.

Those of us who have come to Orthodoxy from a protestant tradition have to accept the fact that inheritors of the reformation – among them Newton and Darwin, Hobbes and JS Mill, George Herbert and TS Eliot – form part of our spiritual DNA, which we cannot deny, nor indeed should we try to. At the same time we will do well to acknowledge an older inheritance in a vibrant religious culture which, while it diverged from Orthodoxy in some important respects, contained much more that was recognizably orthodox. Where vestiges of it are to be found, we need to cherish and celebrate them.

*Eamon Duffy *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* Yale University Press 1995 (2nd Edn 2005) Duffy explored this theme again in *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (Yale UP 2001) - this time at the level of a single small rural parish in Devon. Christopher Trychay, the vicar of Morebath from 1520 to 1574 – that is throughout the turbulent years of Tudor Reformation and Mary Tudor's attempt to overturn it – kept meticulous records of parish affairs, which Duffy presents as a narrative in miniature of the systematic dismantling of vernacular Catholicism in England.

Martin Olsson

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Tuesday November 30th: **Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called**
We wish **Andreas A** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Saturday December 4th: **Great Martyr Barbara and Martyr Juliana** (c306)
Saint John of Damascus (c749)

On Monday 6th: **Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker** Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (c345)
We wish **Bibi M, Nicholas S** and **Scott M** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Tuesday 7th: **Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan** (397)

On Thursday 9th: **Conception of the Most Holy Mother of God by the Righteous Anna**
We wish **Anna C** and **Anna W** and all who worship at **Saint Anne's Church**
a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

Noticeboard

Services in December:

Saturday 4th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 5th: Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

Wednesday 8th: Vespers for the Feast of Saint Anne Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Saturday 11th: Divine Liturgy St James' Hall 10.30am

Celebration of the Feast of Saint Anne

Sunday 12th: Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) St. Stephen's, Exeter High Street 9am

Saturday 18th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

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

Friday 24th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6.30

Saturday 25th: CHRISTMAS DAY Divine Liturgy St James' Hall 10am

Sunday 26th: Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) St Stephen's 9am

Exeter Cathedral Events

Sunday 5 December 2.30pm

Handel's Messiah Concert

Exeter Cathedral Choir with early-music specialists Devon Baroque

Tickets from £15 (£5 for under 18s). All proceeds from this concert will go towards the Exeter Cathedral Music Foundation Trust. **[BOOK YOUR TICKET >](#)**

Sunday 19th December at 3pm, Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st at 7pm

Christmas with the Choir

Exeter Cathedral's renowned choir returns for the most popular Christmas carol concerts of the year.

Early booking is recommended. Tickets from £10

News from CTaX (Christians Together across Exeter)

REFUGEES

Following news that Exeter is now hosting Afghan refugees, please contact Refugee Support Devon if you or your church would like to help with donations, items, or time.

Tel: 01392 682185

<https://refugeesupportdevon.org.uk/contact-us/>

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR ST GREGORY'S FOUNDATION

As in past years, we will have Christmas cards on sale in church to raise funds for the work of SGF in Russia and neighbouring countries. These should be available from this coming Sunday, 28 November.