



# Prophet Elias News

**News in a time of pandemic for the Orthodox Church of the  
Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
9<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2022**



## **Metropolitan Anthony on Gratitude**

*The Gospel reading for Sunday January 16<sup>th</sup> is the Healing of the Ten Lepers – Luke 17: 12-19*

Ten lepers came to the Lord; ten men who were ritually unclean and therefore, ritually rejected by their community, unable to attend the common worship of the Temple, unable to come near the habitations of men; and unclean also in the eyes of men because their sickness could be transmitted to others: others could become impure, others could be sick unto death.

They came to Christ and stood afar off because they knew that they had no right to come near, to touch Him as had done the woman who had an issue of blood and who had been healed. From afar off they cried for mercy, and the Lord healed them; He sent them to the priests in order to be ritually cleansed. Ten of them went, and nine never came back. One of them, discovering on his way that he was healed, let go of every other concern but his gratitude to Him that had restored him to wholeness. He came back and thanked the Lord, and the Gospel tells us that this man was a Samaritan, a man who was outside of the Hebrew community, a man who had no rights within the people of Israel, a man who was not only a stranger, but a reject.

Why is it - and Christ Himself asks the question - why is it that nine of them never thought of returning? Because they felt that now that they were clean they were restored to the wholeness of the people of Israel; they needed nothing more, they had everything. The Samaritan knew that he had been cleansed, healed, made whole without having any right to this love of God and this act of Christ.

Isn't it true that gratitude springs up in our hearts more powerfully, more gloriously when what we receive is undeserved, when it is a miracle of divine and human love? When we think that we deserve something and receive it, we receive it as our due; so did the nine Jews. But the Samaritan knew he had no right to the mercy of God, no right to this miracle of healing, and his heart was filled with gratitude.

Does this not apply to us? Do we not all of us feel that we have a right: a right to human concern, to human love, a right to everything which the earth and human relationships can give - ultimately, a right to God's care and love for us. And therefore, when we receive a gift we are superficially grateful, we say a perfunctory 'thank you'; but it does not transform our relationship, either to God or to those who have been merciful to us. We receive it as our due, and we are grateful to those who were instrumental in conveying to us what 'naturally' we had a right to have.

The first Beatitude speaks to us in that respect very clearly: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.....Who are the poor in spirit? It is not those who are simply poor; poverty does not call out the great virtues simply by itself. The poor in spirit are those who in their heart and mind, in their whole self, know that they possess nothing which is not a gift, and deserve nothing of what gratuitously is given to us. Let us reflect one moment on this.

We did not come into being of our own volition; God brought us into being, not by command, by an act of power, but by an act of love; He loved us into existence. By doing this, He says to us: 'I love you! Without you, the world which I have created would be incomplete in My eyes. But also, I have faith in you that you will not betray My trust. I put my hope in all the good there is in you; My love will never falter, My faith and hope in you will remain unshaken - respond to them!' The wonder is that however little we believe in God, God believes in us. Is not this a marvel, a wonder? And we exist only because of this faith of God in us, because of this hope and love He has vested in us.

And if we think further we do not only merely exist - we are alive, alive with the breath of God that makes us akin to Him, capable of knowing Him! And He has revealed Himself to us in so many ways, but ultimately in the Incarnation. God Himself has become man for us to see how much we are loved, and how great we are in His eyes, and indeed how great we are potentially in our humanity; we can all

become by communion in Christ the sons and daughters of the Living God, partakers of the Divine nature

Is not that enough for us to be grateful, to be grateful before any other particular gift is bestowed: the love of our closest, and of other people that care, the security of life, food, air, health! But we all take this for granted; we are not poor in spirit - we take it as our due. Why should we be grateful that we are given what is our right? Why shouldn't God give us all that is His obligation to give. This is our attitude - we don't formulate it so crudely, but we live by it.

The Samaritan did not; he had no right to share anything that was the right of Israel - and he was given it! And his gratitude was aflame, aglow! Can we not learn something from him? And also, can we not realise how wonderful it would be if out of gratitude we lived in such a way as to give God joy, the joy of knowing that He has not created us in vain, that He does not believe in us in vain, that He has not put His trust in us in vain, that His love has been received, is now incarnate, not only in emotion, but in action!

Let us reflect on this; let us learn to live out of gratitude, out of the joy of being loved, out of our communion with God, but knowing that it is an act of gratuitous generosity, that we have no rights - and yet we possess all things. Each of us could be such a rich person in our utter poverty, rich with all the love and power and richness of God. Let us reflect, and let us give God, in an act of gratitude not only spoken, not only dimly felt, but lived in every action of our life: let us give Him joy, and the certainty that He has not created us in vain, not lived and died for us in vain, that we are truly disciples who have understood and who want to live His Gospel.

Sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1989 (*Abridged*)  
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If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'Thank you', it will be enough.

Meister Eckhart

### This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Monday January 10<sup>th</sup> :

**Saint Gregory of Nyssa (395) and his wife Saint Theosevia the Deaconess (385)**  
**Saint Theophan the Recluse (1894)**

On Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Theodosios the Great (529)**

On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Tatiana of Rome (c230)**

On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Hilary of Poitiers (367)**

**Saint Just of Cornwall (6<sup>th</sup>C)**

**Saint Kentigern (Mungo)**, first bishop of Glasgow and Strathclyde (c612)

We wish **Father John** and all in the **Parish of Saint Bega, Saint Mungo and Saint Herbert**  
in Keswick a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Friday 14<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Nina**, Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia (c339)

**Hieromartyr Platon of Tallinn (1919) and all the New Martyrs of Estonia**

On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>: **Veneration of the Precious Chains of the Holy Apostle Peter**

**Saint Fursey of Burgh Castle**, Enlightener of East Anglia (650)

On Monday 17<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Anthony the Great (356)**

We wish **Eddie B** and **Tony R** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup>:

**Saint Athanasios the Great (373) and Saint Cyril (444)** Archbishops of Alexandria

On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Makarios the Great of Egypt (391)**

**Saint Breward (Branwalader)** of Cornwall and the Channel Islands (6<sup>th</sup>C)

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup>: **Saint Maximos the Confessor (662)**

**Virgin Martyr Agnes of Rome (c304)**

We wish **Max S** and **Agnes O** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

## Noticeboard

### Services:

**Saturday January 8<sup>th</sup>: Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am\***

**Celebration of the Feast of Theophany.**

*Fr Trayan will bring blessed water for distribution – please bring your own containers.*

*Please take a Covid test beforehand if you can.*

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>: Matins and Divine Liturgy (in Romanian) Saint Stephen's, Exeter High Street 9am

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>: Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am**

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

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>: Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am\***

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>: Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am**

*\* Please note that these services will start promptly. We are hugely grateful to Father Trayan for coming to serve the Liturgy for us; he is on a tight schedule on Saturdays and needs to get away in good time.*

For times of January services in Plymouth and Torbay go to: <https://plymchurch.com/services>

### Chrismation, Baptisms and an Anniversary Celebration

On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December **Joshua Feyi-Waboso** was received by Chrismation by Father Nikitas at the Church of the Archangel Michael and the Holy Piran at Laity Moor near Truro. Josh worshipped with us as a catechumen through Lent and Easter last year when he was in his final year at Exeter University Medical School. He is now working as a junior doctor in Cornwall. His sponsor was another doctor well known to us, Salem Murjaneh, who worshipped with us at Saint Anne's when he was based at the RD&E.



On Christmas morning at Saint James' Hall Father Trayan baptised **Kyle (Symeon) and Rachel Leitch** and their son **Zachariah** before the Liturgy. Deacon Brandon and Michelle were sponsors. Kyle's work meant that the family had to leave the next day for Northern Ireland, but they have promised to return whenever they can.



And on December 27<sup>th</sup> **Father Trayan** celebrated at Saint Andrew's Church in Torquay the twentieth Anniversary of his ordination in Saint Nicholas' Church in his home town of Lom in Bulgaria. (See next Page)

We wish Joshua, Kyle Symeon, Rachel, Zachariah and Father Trayan **Many Years!**

## 20 Years in Priesthood

*An Address given by Father Trayan on 27 December 2021 in St Andrew's Church - Torquay.*

The idea was implanted into my head while I was at an Orthodox student camp in Romania, probably it was the year 1994. At that time I was a student of Economics, my parents hoped for me to become a banker, but my heart was away from business. So two Romanians who didn't know each other, from the two ends of the country, both said to me: Think about working for the Church. I lost contact with both of them, otherwise today they could be here and invited to my celebration. So, as soon as I graduated in Economics I enrolled in the Theology Faculty in Sofia in 1996. In the Faculty I met my wife. My son was born during our studies, probably that's why now he studies Theology.

On 27 December 2001 in my hometown Lom, in the church of St Nicholas, with severe snow and cold outside, Metropolitan Dometian of Vidin ordained me as a deacon. Two days later in Vidin in St Theodore Tyron church (Θεόδωρος ο Τήρων) I was ordained a priest. For two months I was attached to the local priest in my home town to train me, then the Metropolitan sent me to serve in a very small town, 25 km away from home, called Brusartsi. The church is dedicated to St Paraskeva. My heart remained forever there, and I said to my children: when I die, I want to be buried there behind the altar.

After two years serving in Brusartsi, pushed by my wife, I moved to her region, but the Metropolitan of the local diocese put me some 50 km away from her home town. Arguments raised between us. I stayed in the village of Dragoyново for just two years (2003-2005) and asked both Metropolitans for permission to go back to Brusartsi.

Everything was nice and smooth in my life till 2010, while one day I was chatting on Skype with my fellow student from my third education - Albena Stoyanova, now living in Exeter. She said she came to work in England and I jokingly said to her: Ask your bosses if they need me also. Next day she phoned me and said: Do come. I wasn't ready to go anywhere. I asked Metropolitan Dometian to let me go for a year, which he agreed to. But the longer I was staying here, my will to go back was dissolving in the air. I needed to find a local church. Bulgarians didn't know of one, but Michael, Albena's friend, told me he heard of an Orthodox Church in Totnes. In those days I was living in Seaton, I didn't have a car so one day I took a bus and went to Totnes. I couldn't find Fr Benedict. I asked a lady to give him my phone number, but he never rang back. After several months I managed to see him there. He asked me to bring a release letter from Metropolitan Dometian. On my first visit to Bulgaria I went to see the Metropolitan, and he said: I can't stop you, but you are always welcome to come back.

After several months the diocese of Vidin sent me this letter. Again I couldn't find Fr Benedict. At that time I found St Anne's chapel in Exeter where deacon Peter was very welcoming to me. He asked me to give him this release letter. What happened next I still don't know till now. At that time, 2011, Archbishop Gabriel of the Exarchate was on his deathbed. After he passed away, a new Archbishop was elected - Job of Telmesos. In 2014 he came to the patronal feast of St Elias in Exeter and verbally said I should start concelebrating. I thought that my documents had been processed, until two years later when Archbishop Jean replaced Job and it was said to me by another clergy that I need to stop celebrating. I didn't know what had happened and I was patiently waiting for a solution.

Finally in 2018 +Jean came to the patronal feast in Exeter and told me that he asked Vidin and there was no answer. I didn't know what to do because Metropolitan Dometian had just passed away. For several months I was trying to get in contact with the Bulgarian Metropolitan for Western Europe. I was ready to establish a Bulgarian parish. But I was also very lucky at that time that Fr Gregory found me and took me under his wing. He was and is a great help for me. I will forever remember the good that he has done to me. He wrote to Archbishop Gregorios (of a blessed memory) about me, that he wanted me to concelebrate in his two parishes in Plymouth and Torquay. So, another year I needed to wait for my documents to be processed. And since Pentecost of 2019, the birthday of the Church, you know me serving here. At the beginning I was thinking to myself: Greeks and Cypriots will not welcome me because I am Bulgarian. I was totally wrong. This is a very welcoming parish whose laypeople deem Orthodoxy as universal, not national. I can't express my gratitude to you, my dear friends. I feel at home now. I don't want to go back to Bulgaria. **I love you!**

The Lord is on the Cross. Stand in front of Him in your thoughts and ponder, how would the Lord meet you once He comes down from the Cross? Keep thinking about this for some time, and your conscience will clearly tell you the truth.

Saint Theophan the Recluse



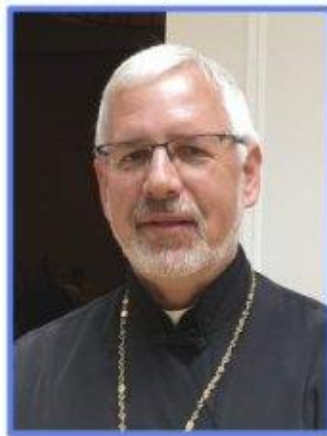
The Orthodox Theological Society in America

## Annual Lecture in Honor of Georges Florovsky

Given by:

Very Rev. Dr. John Jillions

Former Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA)



“Preserve the Fullness of Thy Church”:  
Fighting Fundamentalism, Defending Dialogue  
And Reclaiming Catholicity

Friday, January 14, 2022  
7:30 pm (EST)

Registration is Free and Open to the Public

<https://www.otsamerica.net/rsvpmaker/2021-22-florovsky-lecture/>

*Friday 7.30pm EST = Saturday 00.30am GMT - Ed.*