



Prophet Elias News

**News in a time of pandemic for the Orthodox Church of the
Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
20th February – 5th March 2022**



On The Prodigal Son by Father Anthony Hughes

In ways past counting we have left the Father's house. But we are always welcome to return. We cannot go so far as to not be able to return. In fact, we cannot go "far away" at all! God is everywhere. Where can we possibly go where he is not? But to us the road seems long because sometimes it takes years for us to realize the consequences of our crazy choices and once we do, it seems to take much longer than we would like to get ourselves out of them. But really, God is only a change of mind away. Nothing more. He has more patience than Job. It is we who get fidgety.

When a monk was asked what his life was like, he replied, "Falling and rising. Falling and rising." Each fall is an opportunity to rise and return. We must not despair over our falls. Instead, we must rise and go to our Father who will embrace us and care for us just as He did his Prodigal Son. The falls are not what matters. It is the return that matters.

The Holy Fathers knew well what it takes to heal and transform a soul. They knew from personal experience, all of them, to the last man and woman, what it takes to become a new creation. They all experienced the power of repentance and the unconditional compassion of God. St. Peter of Damascus must have been a truly enlightened pastor well acquainted with the realities of human life in this fallen world. He wrote these hopeful words for those who find repentance difficult: "But if repentance is too much for you, and you sin out of habit even if you don't want to, show humility like the publican in the Temple: this is enough to ensure your salvation." Further more, he tells us that the one who does not despair and condemn himself for having sinned is "pure in heart." Pure in heart for being able to show himself the same kind of love God shows those who fall.

Do not think for a moment that God will not forgive. If God can stop forgiving, he can also stop loving - and that is impossible, for "God is love." Even if we do not repent he forgives. He doesn't wait for us to ask. The problem is that we cannot enjoy his forgiveness unless we are willing to receive it and we are not willing to receive it unless we ask for it. He gives even if we aren't ready and even if we don't want it, but we need to be open to receive it. That is our job.

Let me give you two definitions of repentance. One is: repentance is giving up all hope of a better past. The past is what it is and cannot be changed, but we do not have to carry it with us. We do not have to let the past stick to us. Unfortunately, we are like Velcro - everything sticks and we have a heck of a time trying to get unstuck. If we do not allow the past to stick to us, then we are free to move forward in the present.

The second definition is this: repentance is a change from a mindless way of life to a mindful one. It is really as simple as that. It is only when we have lost our minds that we fall into sin. Like when we drive down the road and start day-dreaming. If we don't stop, we will end up killing ourselves or someone else. Our selfish desires blind us. We can know we are caught when all we can think about is me, me, me! The Lord uses a beautiful turn of phrase when he tells us that the prodigal 'came to his senses'. In one moment he stopped thinking about himself and remembered his father's house, the love and generosity he had left behind. That was enough to get him to start the journey home. His mindlessness had made him

oblivious to the obvious: his selfishness got him where he was. His desire for pleasure overrode his reason. Our desires and passions unchecked render us mindless.

Finally, the prodigal woke up. Reality dawned. He opened his long-closed eyes and discovered himself in a pigsty. The pigsty was no place for a child of the Father. Mindfulness is the key to not ending up in a pigpen, just as being awake is the key to not driving into a ditch. If we are aware and present, our eyes wide open and our minds clear, free from attachment to desire, then we are truly free.

The father's generous welcome proves something else. Even while the prodigal was spending his money in riotous living, he was still his father's son. When he had given himself over to sexual abandon, he was still his father's son. No matter what he did, he was still his father's son. The Gospel tells us that even while the prodigal was far off from home his father saw him, ran to him, and the celebration began. In truth, the father was with him all along. As the father cleaned his wounds and clothed him in the finest clothes this message was being transmitted: "You are My son. That is who you are and that is who you always will be. These beautiful robes are your rightful clothes. Those rags are not natural to you. Your sins are not natural to you. I will show you your true identity." And he does. With the greatest compassion and love he shows him his true nature. He re-clothes him in the beautiful robes of human being.

That is exactly what God desires to show each of us if we will allow it. The road to the Father's house is only a change of mind away.

Abridged from a sermon preached by Fr. Antony Hughes of Saint Mary Orthodox Church, Cambridge, Mass. on Sunday, February 12, 2012. Reprinted with permission For full text go to:

[On the Sunday of the Prodigal Son | St. Mary Orthodox Church of Central Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts \(stmaryorthodoxchurch.org\)](http://On the Sunday of the Prodigal Son | St. Mary Orthodox Church of Central Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts (stmaryorthodoxchurch.org))

Make haste to open unto me Thy fatherly embrace,
for as the Prodigal I have wasted my life.
In the unfailing wealth of Thy mercy, O Saviour,
reject not my heart in its poverty.
For with compassion I cry to Thee, O Lord:
Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee.

Sessional Hymn from Canticle Three at Matins for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

News from Uganda

Father Daniel's letter of Christmas greeting dated 15th December arrived only very recently. The envelope had come apart in the post, and was repackaged and sent on by a Francophone postal agency. The cover was addressed to Monsieur Holy Prophet Elias, 32 Barnfield Road, Exeter.

Dear Brethren in Christ

Greetings full of love as always from Saint Cyprian Parish to all parishioners of Holy Prophet Elias. We are very sorry the communication since the outbreak of Covid 19 has not been good.

We were deeply moved by the news of Deacon Peter's death. His memory still lingers in our minds when he visited us with brother Martin and gave a wonderful sermon about a good shepherd. May the good shepherd Jesus Christ forgive him whatever went wrong in his lifetime.

We lost two priests in this epidemic – father Emanuel Sekyewa and Fr Dimitrios Serugunda. Fr Mborabingi and Bishop Silvester Kizito narrowly escaped death of Covid. My family are somehow ok although there are some problems here and there as expected in life.

As we draw near to the Christmas time it is my prayer that God enables you to reach that day happily both spiritually and physically, also to reach the new year 2022 and many more years.

We are having a lot of rain here these days. Seasons have greatly changed; December and January used to be dry months. I have a lot of cassava and banana. Food is not a problem.

We keep you always in our prayers. May the good Lord bless you abundantly for loving us.
Merry Xmas and Happy New Year 2022.

Fr Daniel

This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday February 20th: **SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON** Gospel - Luke 15: 11-32

On Wednesday 23rd: **Saint Polycarp** of Smyrna (167)

On Thursday 24th: First (4thC) and Second (453) Findings of the Honourable Head of the
Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John

On Saturday 26th: **SATURDAY OF SOULS**
Martyr Photini, the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well

On Sunday 27th: **SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT** Gospel - Matthew 25: 31-46
Sunday of Meatfare
Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny) Bishop of Brooklyn (1915)
The first Orthodox Bishop consecrated in America

On Tuesday 1st March: **Saint David of Wales** (6thC)

On Wednesday 2nd **Saint Chad**, Bishop of Lichfield (672)
Saint Nicholas Planas, Parish priest in Athens (1932)

On Thursday 4th: **Saint Owen** of Lichfield (680)
We wish **Owain O** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Saturday 5th: **Saint Piran**, Patron Saint of Cornwall (c480)

Saint Photini

Who was the woman of Samaria? What became of her after her meeting with Jesus? We have no historical information of any value on this. In the Orthodox Church, and also in the Roman Church, she is regarded as a saint and martyr. She is listed thus in the Byzantine Menology of the Emperor Basil and in the *Acta Sanctorum*.

Many legends have grown up around her person and her life: that she had two sons, Saint Joseph and Saint Victor, and five sisters, Anatolia, Phothou, Photis, Paraskevi and Kyriaka; that she preached in Carthage; that she herself converted and baptised Domnina, the daughter of Nero (but there is no historical record of this). These stories may contain some elements of truth, for it is likely that the first and second generations of Christians were interested in the fate of the Samaritan woman and gathered together various scraps of local testimony about her.

Among the many unproven legends concerning the Samaritan woman there is one which has striking symbolical beauty. She who had listened to Jesus by Jacob's Well met her death – because of this – by drowning in a well. Finally one of the sayings of Saint Jerome may be recalled here. He claimed that Jesus, who had asked for water to drink and who had spoken to his disciples of bread which they knew not of, had found food and drink in the faith of the Samaritan woman.

Fr Lev Gillet *Encounter at the Well: Retreat Addresses* by Fr Lev Gillet Mowbray 1988

Advance Notice – Choral Concert

Exeter Choral Society will perform a wonderful programme of **Mozart's Requiem** and **Haydn's Nelson Mass** on **Saturday 9 April** at St. David's Church, Queen's Terrace, Exeter. Seven members of the choir are also members of our parish! We will give a reminder and details of ticket purchase nearer the time, but why not put the date in your diaries now!



Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well

The Parable of the Last Judgement



The Seven Acts of Mercy by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (before 1616)

In Western tradition the Burial of the Dead was added to the commandments in the parable as our Christian duties to our neighbour – hence seven, rather than six, acts of mercy are depicted here. The prisoner is in the stocks (top left) rather than in a cell, while two men are lifting a coffin at top centre-left. By the crowdedness of the scene Brueghel emphasises that there is no shortage of candidates for our acts of mercy.

Ed.

Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life;
Let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, let us clothe the naked,
Let us welcome strangers, let us visit those in prison and the sick.
Then the judge of all the earth will say even to us:
'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.'

Hymn at the Lity of Vespers for the Sunday of the Last Judgement

Metropolitan Kallistos on the Sundays Before Lent (Contd.)

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son

(Gospel reading: Luke 15:11-32)

The parable of the Prodigal forms an exact ikon of repentance in its different stages. Sin is exile, enslavement to strangers, hunger. Repentance is the return from exile to our true home; it is to receive back our inheritance and freedom in the Father's house. But to repent is not just to *feel* dissatisfied, but to take a decision and to *act* upon it.

On this and the next two Sundays, after the solemn and joyful words of the polyeleos at Matins, we add the sorrowful verses of the Psalm 136, 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept...' This Psalm of exile, sung by the children of Israel in their Babylonian captivity, has a special appropriateness on the Sunday of the Prodigal, when we call to mind our present exile in sin and make the resolve to return home.

The Sunday of the Last Judgement

(Gospel reading: Matthew 25: 31-46)

The two past Sundays spoke to us of God's patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who returns to Him.

On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth; no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will *come as our judge*. 'Behold the goodness and *severity* of God' (Romans 11:21). Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the End comes. In the words of the Great Canon:

The end draws near, my soul, the end draws near; yet thou dost not care or make ready.

The time grows short, rise up; the Judge is at the door.

The days of our life pass swiftly, as a dream, as a flower.

This Sunday sets before us the eschatological dimension of Lent: the Great Fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Saviour, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come. Nor is the judgement merely in the future. Here and now, each day and each hour, in hardening our hearts towards others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given of helping them, we are already passing judgement on ourselves.

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware: 'The Meaning of the Great Fast' in
The Lenten Triodion translated from the Greek by Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware Faber 1978

Dates from the Triodion and Pentecostarian 2022

Triodion

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
February 13
✠
Sunday of the Prodigal Son
February 20
✠
Sunday of the Last Judgment
(Meatfare Sunday)
February 27
✠
Sunday of Forgiveness / Expulsion of Adam from Paradise
(Cheesefare Sunday)
March 6
✠
Clean Monday
Beginning of Great Lent
March 7
✠
Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 13
✠
Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas
March 20
✠
Sunday of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross
March 27
✠
Sunday of St. John the Ladder
April 3
✠
Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt
April 10
✠
Saturday of Lazarus
April 16
✠
Palm Sunday
April 17
✠
Great and Holy Friday
April 22
✠
Great and Holy Sabbath
April 23
✠

Pentecostarian

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA
RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST
April 24
✠
Thomas Sunday
May 1
✠
Sunday of the Myrrhbearing Women
May 8
✠
Sunday of the Paralytic
May 15
✠
Mid-Pentecost
May 18
✠
Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
May 22
✠
Sunday of the Blind Man
May 29
✠
Ascension of Our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ
June 2
✠
Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council
June 5
✠
HOLY PENTECOST
DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ~ TRINITY SUNDAY
June 12
✠
Sunday of All Saints
June 19
✠
Beginning of the Apostles Fast / Peter and Paul Fast
June 20
✠
Sunday of All Local Saints
June 26
✠
Feast of SS. Peter and Paul
June 29
✠

Noticeboard

Services:

Saturday February 19th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 20th: **Sunday of the Prodigal Son**

Matins and Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Saturday 26th: Saturday of Souls Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am

Lists of names of the departed for commemoration should be brought before the service or sent to Fr Trayan by email (otrayan@gmail.com) WhatsApp or text message (078 00 644 599) not later than Friday midday.

Sunday 27th: **Sunday of the Last Judgement** – Sunday of Meatfare

Matins Saint Anne's 10.30am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Saturday March 5th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6.00pm

Sunday 6th: Sunday of Adam's Expulsion From Paradise – Sunday of Cheesefare.

Forgiveness Sunday

Divine Liturgy or Typika (to be confirmed) and **Vespers of Forgiveness** Saint Anne's 10.30am

Monday 7th: **First Week of Great Lent**

Great Canon of Saint Anthony of Crete Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Tuesday 8th: Great Canon Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Wednesday 9th: Great Canon Saint Anne's 6.30p

Thursday 10th: Great Canon Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Friday 11th: *Akathist Hymn (Praises) Plymouth 7pm*

Saturday 12th: **No Liturgy – Fr Trayan in Bulgaria** Vespers St Anne's 6pm

Sunday 13th: **First Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of Orthodoxy**

Typika followed by Sunday Vespers Saint Anne's 10.30am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy Torquay 9.30am

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

Friday 18th: *Akathist Hymn (Praises) Plymouth 7pm*

Saturday 19th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 20th: **Second Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas**

Typika and Sunday Vespers Saint Anne's 10.30am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Thursday 24th: Vespers of the Feast of the Annunciation Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Friday 25th: FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

Saturday 26th: Divine Liturgy (Celebration of the Annunciation) Saint Anne's 10.30am

Vespers/Veneration of the Cross Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 27th: **Third Sunday of Great Lent – Veneration of the Cross**

Vespers Saint Anne's 3pm

Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 9.30am Torquay 9.30am

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

Open Thine arms, O Christ, and in loving kindness receive me as I return from a far country of sin and passion.

From Canticle Three of Matins for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son.