

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

DIOCESE OF SOUROZH

CATHEDRAL OF THE DORMITION OF THE
MOTHER OF GOD

67 ENNISMORE GARDENS, LONDON SW7 1NH



Cathedral Newsletter

December 2016 - January 2017

Theophany 6/19 January



Troparion

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness unto Thee, calling Thee the beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed His word as sure and steadfast. O Christ our God, Who hast appeared and enlightened the world, glory to Thee!

Kondak

Though hast appeared today to the universe, and Thy light, O Lord, has been marked upon us, who with knowledge sing Thy praise: Though hast come, Thou art made manifest, the Light that no man can approach.

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Dear Readers,

We are happy to inform you that the Media and Publishing Department of the Diocese of Sourozh now has an online store, Sourozh Publications, where you can obtain the publications of the diocese. You can subscribe to the English or Russian editions of Cathedral Newsletter, and purchase the diocesan journal 'Sourozh' and the Diocesan Calendar and Lectionary. For prices and full information please visit the store at <https://sourozh.myshopify.com>.

Cathedral Newsletter was prepared by:

*Archpriest Joseph Skinner, Elena Kuzina, Elena Petrakova,
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*CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF
E L I S E Y
ARCHBISHOP OF SOUROZH
TO THE PASTORS AND ALL FAITHFUL CHILDREN
OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUROZH
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH*

Dearly beloved in the Lord, honourable pastors
and God-loving laypeople,
dear brothers and sisters!

I greet you with all my heart on the occasion of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

“A strange and most wonderful mystery do I see ...” the Holy Church sings today as she calls us to worship the Christ Child, following the example of the shepherds and wise men of whom we hear in the Gospel, and to join with the angelic choir in glorifying God on high and proclaiming “peace on earth, goodwill towards men”.

The Child was born not in a royal court or a five-star hotel but in a lowly cave in Bethlehem that served as an enclosure for cattle. He became not simply a great prophet or the founder of a world religion. It was not just a great man that was born, one who revealed to people the Divine Law and proclaimed love as the highest value, by his own example inspiring millions of his followers to altruistic service to their fellow men. In the person of the newborn Child was revealed God Himself, the Creator of the whole world, visible and invisible, “God became man, so that man might become god”— so says the holy hierarch Saint Athanasius the Great. The “strange mystery” that is enacted today is the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the ineffable and unapproachable God becomes one of us. He illumines our human, material, created world with the light of divine knowledge. He attains an ineffable unity with our world, establishing it as His world in the person of Jesus Christ, the Divine Child.

Each of us is called not only to accept and to confess this mystery of the profound union of God with the human race, but to enact it in his or her own life. Christ the Lord, as the Almighty God, the King of Heaven and Earth, could use His divine power to change human laws, instincts, thoughts and feelings, but He refrains from doing that, since He awaits from each of us a free and creative response to His love.

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). This historical event, which took place a little more than two thousand years ago, is a providential consequence of the love of God for the world. And just as then people responded differently to the birth of the Saviour, so today one person brings to the newborn Child the gift of his heart and with trembling and joyous wonder contemplates God in Him and experiences mystical divinisation, while another shuts himself up in his fears and grudges, thereby expelling the Saviour from his life.

Today, all over the world and especially in the Middle East, flows the blood of innocent victims, as once did the blood of the infants murdered by Herod. Today also many people become refugees, as once did Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus.

In the year which is now beginning, 2017, we will remember the tragic events of a century ago when, as a result of revolution and civil war, millions of Russian people were forced into exile all over the world. In our prayers we will glorify the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church, who shed their blood for Christ. We shall also pray for those exiled people who brought back the light of Orthodoxy to the countries of the West, including the British Isles. The past year, 2016, was marked by joyful events in the life of our Sourozh diocese: there were the celebrations dedicated to the 300th anniversary of the Russian Orthodox presence in the British Isles; there was the blessed visit to our diocese of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, and there was the consecration of the refurbished Dormition Cathedral in London.

May Christ, the Divine Child Who is born, renew our hearts, so that they might become a dwelling-place for Him Who cannot be contained, as once did the manger in Bethlehem long ago.

+ ELISEY
ARCHBISHOP OF SOUROZH

The Nativity of Christ 2016/17
London



Diocesan News

CONGRATULATIONS TO ARCHBISHOP ELISEY ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION

Dear Vladyka Elisey,

Please accept our sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of your consecration to the episcopate. 'To be a bishop means to live the life of one's flock, to live their joys and their sorrows. The Lord's disciples had every reason to "appear with authority, as the Apostles of Christ, but they were meek" among their flock, "as a nursing mother cherisheth her children"' (1 Thess. 2:7); thus His Holiness Patriarch Alexey of Moscow and All Russia admonished you at your consecration on 26th November, 2006, calling you 'to witness before the peoples of the West of the truth of the Orthodox faith, and to work to strengthen it with the ultimate goal of uniting all in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church'.

We are sincerely grateful for your ceaseless labours, for the warmth and kindness which constantly proceed from your wise and loving heart. You bear a great responsibility for all of us and do not leave a single parish or community, not even the most remote, deprived of your fatherly care.

We prayerfully wish you, dear Vladyka, the divine assistance that strengthens all, spiritual joy, good health, spiritual and physical energy for your arduous archpastoral service for many blessed years!

Asking your holy prayers,

The faithful people of the Diocese of Sourozh



DIACONAL ORDINATION IN OXFORD

On December 18th, the parishioners of St Nicholas Church in Oxford were visited by His Eminence Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh, who celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the parish patronal feast of St Nicholas. During the liturgy, Archbishop Elisey ordained Alexey Kostyanovsky to the Holy Diaconate. We wish our newly-ordained Deacon Alexey many years of blessed ministry.



Cathedral News

HE CAME... HE SAW... HE PRAYED

For the Diocese of Sourozh the year 2016 was very rich with important events and historic visits. The tercentenary of the Russian Orthodox presence in the British Isles was marked by the visit of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, during which he presided at the consecration of the Dormition Cathedral after a recent extensive refurbishment, and the consecration of the bells which were cast especially for the tercentenary.

Another event of no less importance took place on December 13th, when



His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales visited the Dormition Cathedral. His Eminence Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh together with other clergy met His Royal Highness near the church. No bright lights or clicks of cameras bothered us. We were at home and a dear guest came to visit us.

Earlier in the morning after the Divine Liturgy Archbishop Elisey consecrated the bell tower, which was refurbished together with the whole cathedral last year.

The visit of His Royal Highness was both very warm and modest at the same time. Those who attended the event came to the church early: they were the employees of the church, volunteers, pupils of the church school and their parents, and old parishioners. The anticipation was thrilling: we were guessing if The Prince would come on time. “The traffic is horrible, he might be late” – one could hear here and there in the crowd. Nevertheless exactly at the planned time the bells rang and His Royal Highness stepped onto the porch of the cathedral. “Punctuality is the politeness of kings and duty of all gentle people everywhere”, - the French king uttered centuries ago. This launched etiquette in Europe which “all gentle people” still follow, and The Prince is foremost amongst them.

His Royal Highness walked along the

aisle quietly as ordinary churchgoers do, greeting the crowd, and finally taking his seat on a chair in front of the solea, to the left of the centre. In the chair to the right sat His Eminence Archbishop Elisey.

A thanksgiving moleben for The Queen and The Royal family on the occasion of Her Majesty’s 90th birthday was concelebrated by Archpriest Benedict Ramsden and other members of the diocesan clergy. His Royal Highness knew the Orthodox services and “Orthodox subtleties” during the service well. The Prince’s face was attention itself during the moleben: a man of prayer had come to the Cathedral.

Last year a deacon of Coptic Church, Dr. Stephane Rene, told us about one interesting detail regarding The Prince: His Royal Highness is an expert in Orthodox iconography, which is taught at The Royal Drawing School (founded by His Royal Highness) and a patron of icon painting summer schools on Mount Athos. Therefore it was quite natural to see The Prince examining the icons





and the interior of the Cathedral which is a Grade II star listed building. He listened attentively to Fr Stephen Platt and Fr Joseph Skinner, spoke with the parishioners, asked children about their school study, and shook hands with people. Many parishioners mentioned that The Prince had kind eyes and spoke with people in a very warm manner.

During the tour of the cathedral and its premises His Royal Highness saw an exhibition dedicated to his distant relative the Venerable Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth. This exhibition was provided courtesy of the 'Grand Duchess Elizabeth Romanov Society in Great Britain' and its chairman Dr Maria Harwood. She told His Royal Highness about the contribution of the Romanovs to life behind the frontline during WWI, with special emphasis on St Elizabeth and her charitable activities.

The tour was followed by a concert prepared for His Royal Highness by the parishioners, so The Prince and Vladyka Elisey returned to their seats. Opera singer Maria Veretenina

opened the concert with "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal" (Puhtitsa Convent melody). Her deep clear voice rose to the roof and returned into our hearts, filling them with grace. The children's choir conducted by Marina Bezmenova was particularly touching and Archbishop's choir conducted by Kirill Krayushkin was very professional; they sang pieces by Pavel Chesnokov, Dimitry Bortnyansky and Grigory Lvovsky.

In his address to the eminent visitor Archbishop Elisey underlined that Her Majesty The Queen is an example and a source of inspiration for the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church: at 90 The Queen is still strong and vital, devotedly ready to serve her peoples and the countries where Her Majesty is Head of State. The relations between Russia and Britain go back many centuries, and "our Church and Her Majesty are above narrow political interests. The Russian Orthodox Church is open for everyone, and the multinational Sourozh diocese accepts all in the spirit of the Gospel", - said Vladyka.



Before leaving His Royal Highness expressed his thanks and appreciation for the warm welcome to the cathedral and congratulated all those who had been involved with the refurbishment of the building that had taken place since his last visit some 20 years ago. He also expressed his happiness at having been able to meet so many parishioners and to see the flourishing life of the Russian Orthodox community in London. The Prince was evidently touched by the warm messages of congratulation on the Queen's 90th birthday and promised to convey them to Her Majesty.

Archbishop Elisey presented to The Prince of Wales an icon of the Mother of God of Kazan and a photograph of one of the new bells, which commemorates The Queen's 90th birthday.

Vladyka Elisey commented that "the visit to the main Russian Orthodox cathedral in Britain by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales was perceived by us as a sign of a spiritual wish to recover the historically warm relations between the two nations

based on Christian traditions, as a response to the prayers of hundreds of British Orthodox saints". This could be seen in the eyes of everyone who came to the Russian church on December 13th, the day of the Apostle Andrew the First-called, to pray at the moleben for Our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth and her family. May we suggest that prayer for the Queen, divinely-protected Great Britain and its armed forces will become a part of their daily prayers, and not only something heard once a week in church.

Julia Pliauksta



Source - Daily Mail

NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP IN HAMMERSMITH

On the 27th of November before the start of the Nativity Fast, there was a small, but very memorable event. Several people, led by Father Joseph, gathered for an evening meal at the home of one of our parishioners, Yana Reznik.

There was an unforgettable feeling of grace. People who did not know each other closely came together with their children. We prayed and talked about fasting, about the children, asked different questions, told lots of stories, and read a small part of a chapter from the Bible. We also had all sorts of treats, a beautiful dinner and also wonderful playing on the piano and singing. It felt like one big, happy, Orthodox family. After just two hours spent together we felt the strength and profound desire to learn how to pray longer, to attend church, and how to fast correctly. It was

wonderful to see that the children can take things that are true and important more seriously. We saw the children's interest in their eyes and the desire to listen to Father Joseph's stories. The home atmosphere, the spiritual presence and the hospitality is something that will remain in our memories for years to come.

This was our first experience and we would like it to become a tradition. We share this information for you to know that we are open to new things. We want to comply with the rules of the church and we want to learn and improve. We all go to church and take our children to the Russian school as it is an integral part of our lives, but we can also gather together as one big family in a more informal atmosphere, when no one is in a hurry, to pay more attention to God and prayer.

Thank you for organising this group.

Maria and Marika

For Reflection

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Psalm 138, 13 - 17

Notes on the Church calendar for January

FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by the Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine *“those who sat in darkness,”* and *“in the region of the shadow of death”* (Mt. 4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind. The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast.

There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint



The Theophany icon

Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but *“to bury human sin by water,”* to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify *“the nature of water”* and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims

our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Indivisible. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms.

The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible

only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for *“As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ”* (Gal 3:27).

On the day of Theophany, all foods are permitted, even if the Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday.

Source: OCA website, <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2012/01/06/100106-feast-of-the-theophany-of-our-lord-and-savior-jesus-christ>

Legacy of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

CHRISTMAS

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

I wish now to address myself to those of you who do not speak Russian, and beyond the walls of this church to all those who can hear our service and pray with us, and be at one with us.

In a night similar to this one, a winter night, in a manger was born the Son of God Who has come into the world to bring us a new dimension of life, to proclaim to us God’s truth about Himself and God’s truth about men, and not only proclaim it, but to make it possible for us to participate in



*Metropolitan Anthony
of Sourozh*

this mystery of communion between God and man. He has brought us a word about God which is a word of absolute truth, and has proclaimed the greatness of man in terms that are

be a vanguard of His Kingdom. He sends us into this world to proclaim His truth, pure, unstained, He sends us into this world to live in such a way that anyone meeting a Christian, looking into his eyes, into his life or meeting a Christian community should recognise that these people are men and women partaking already of the mystery of eternal life. Short of this we betray our calling. We must each of us and all of us be a revelation to the world of things eternal. We must learn from St Paul both the daring and the wholeness, the integrity of our Christian ways. He says to us: Be followers of me as I am of Christ... He was a persecutor, an unbeliever, and having met Christ face to face, the risen Christ, Who he knew had been killed on Calvary, murdered by his own people, he chose for Him and all his life was changed. Persecution, danger, beatings, rejection became his lot in order for him to be Christ's only; and to be Christ's only as he puts it means that all life is nothing but Christ, what he stands for, what he teaches, what he lived for, what he died for.

And death has no terrors for us, because nothing can deprive us of eternal life and the loss of temporal life is of no account to St Paul. He says: To die is not to divest myself of temporary life but to cloth myself with eternity... He longs to be reunited with Christ, Whom he has persecuted on earth,

and for Whom, for Whose name, for Whose sake he lives and preaches and warns us, telling us not to subtract or add anything to God's own message about man and about God. And he calls us in the face of our longing for eternity to accept to live as long as it is necessary, as tragically as is necessary for others to discover life eternal, the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of love, of that love which Christ has revealed into us, love to the end, love crucified and love risen. Glory be to our Lord, to our God, to our Saviour for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON AT THE VIGIL FOR THE THEOPHANY

18th January 1998

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The day of the Epiphany is the day when the whole world is being renewed and becomes a partaker of the saintliness of God. But at the same time, it is the day when Christ enters on the way to Calvary.

He came to John the Baptist on Jordan, not in order to be cleansed, because he was pure of sin, both as God and in the humanity made pure throughout the history of Israel by those ancestors who had given their lives to God and whose saintliness culminated in the all-purity of the Mother of God, so pure, so stainless that She could be brought into the Holy of Holies, into which



*Holy Theophany, M. Nesterov
(1890-1894)*

*Painting inside St Volodymyr's
Cathedral, Kiev*

even the High Priest dared not come except once a year, and only after a special sanctification.

Christ did not need cleansing. But these waters, into which all the sinners who had come to John the Baptist confessing the evil of their lives had washed themselves, were as it were heavy with the sinfulness and therefore the mortality of mankind. They had become waters of death, and it is in these waters that the Lord Jesus Christ merges Himself on that day, taking upon Himself the mortality resulting from the sin of man.

He comes, immortal in His humanity

and His divinity, and at the same time He vests Himself with the mortality of the sinful world. This is the beginning of the way to Calvary. This is a day when we marvel at the infinite love of God. But as on every other occasion, man had to participate completely in the ways of salvation which God had provided. And this is why Christ comes and becomes partaker of our mortality, to save us. The culminating point will come on Calvary when He will say, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' It will be a moment when God as He was in His humanity will have lost communion with the Father by partaking of the destiny of mankind. This is the ultimate act of divine love.

Let us therefore today wonder and marvel, and worship this love of God, and learn from Him; because He said in the Gospel, 'I have given you an example. Follow it.' We are called, within the limits of our sinfulness and humanity, to carry one another's burdens, unto life and unto death. Let us learn from this. We find it so difficult to carry the burdens even of those whom we love; and practically impossible to shoulder the burdens of those whom we do not love with a natural, direct tenderness. Let us learn, because otherwise we will not have learned the first lesson which Christ gives us when He enters upon His ministry. Amen.

A Word from the Archbishop

HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP ELISEY OF SOUROZH: “WE ALL BELONG TO ONE FAMILY THAT IS HEADED BY CHRIST”.

17th October, 2016

This year the Russian Orthodox Church marks 300 years of its presence in the British Isles. The first Divine service took place in December 1716 in the church of the Dormition of Mother of God associated with the Russian Embassy in London. After the death of Peter I, the Russian parish was of modest means and over three centuries it has changed its location several times. By the year 1962 the number of Orthodox believers in Great Britain and Ireland had increased significantly, therefore the Diocese of Sourozh was established. We have asked His Eminence Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh to tell us about the current situation and what are the special aspects of serving in Britain.

- Your Eminence, there are 20 priests who serve in 47 parishes of the Diocese of Sourozh, which means that there are twice as many parishes as priests. How does this statistic affect the services?

- The parishes are strewn across the British Isles, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, which makes all of our priests missionaries. Many of them serve in several parishes, making long distance journeys

weekly in order to take care of our parishioners. Apart from that, our priests try to cope with many duties: not only do they serve Divine Liturgy and various private services, but they also listen to confessions, visit hospitals and prisons, deal with administrative matters, etc. Many of them also have secular jobs in order to provide for their families, which is why serving in our Diocese is a serious commitment.

-How many parishioners are there in your parishes? Are there more Russian immigrants or British people? What are their relations like?



Strand, next to Exchange Court, through the arch and next to the house no. 419A - is the site of the first Russian Orthodox Church in London.

- Our parishes are different. Some of them consist mainly of Russian speaking Orthodox believers who came to Britain, other ones mainly of local people who converted to the Orthodoxy. The majority of our parishes include people of various ethnicities and backgrounds. Sometimes there are tensions between them, because people are very different and see things in different ways, which is natural. They are united, however, by the desire to find Christ in the Orthodox Church - we all belong to one family, at the centre of which is Christ.

- Tell us, please, about life today in the Dormition Cathedral at Ennismore Gardens, which is the offspring of the first Russian church in London. Who are its parishioners today? Can the Dormition Cathedral still be considered as the Embassy church?

- Today's parish of the Dormition Cathedral in London is much bigger than the original parish that was established in London 300 years ago. On Sundays and feast days hundreds of people come, and we do our best to take care of them. Many parishioners are newcomers to Great Britain who only here discover life in the Church, and this is why we try to devote special care to them. Also there are those who have been our regular parishioners for many years and who serve our church and parish on a daily basis. They are very close with each other. Despite our

parish being large, it is an authentic community. The majority of our parishioners in London are Russian speakers, although there is a small, but steadily growing group of British Orthodox believers.

Of course we have friendly relations with the Russian Embassy in London; the ambassador himself is one of our parishioners. However, we are not the "Embassy church", as it was before the Revolution. Our mission is far more than serving Russian people; we are here to *'preach the gospel to every creature'* (Mark 16:15).

- How many parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad are there in Britain? And what are the relations like between the two communities?

There are few parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. I do not see any reason why we should continue to serve separately. Our faithful are the same and our priests are of similar background. After nine years of being united in prayerful communion under the canonical omofor of His Holiness the Patriarch we have practically merged on the level of the laity and have a common heritage from the emigration that became divided by political factors. There might be some tensions within individual parishes, as I mentioned before, but not between the two jurisdictions. The relations between the clergy are very friendly, the priests often help each other, serve together and support each other in

*Parishioners of the
Cathedral of the
Dormition of the Mother
of God and the Royal
Martyrs (Russian Church
Abroad in London)
waiting for the arrival of
Patriarch Kirill*



their pastoral work.

- Your Eminence, are there any celebratory events dedicated to the anniversary of the Russian Orthodox presence in the British Isles planned in the Diocese?

-To be precise, the festive events have started already. In the beginning of this summer there was our traditional annual Diocesan Conference that also marked this anniversary. Many guests and presenters were invited from abroad, including bishops who previously served in our Diocese as priests before assuming their hierarchical service in Russia. The high point of our celebration is the planned Primatial visit of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Russia, who will consecrate our Dormition Cathedral in London following a major refurbishment. His Holiness will also take part in several important meetings and a festive reception will be organised in his honour.

- The dialogue between the Russian Church and the Church of England

is on-going since the Anglican Church was established in XVI century. We know from history that the first hierarch of the Russian Church who communicated directly with the Anglican Church was Metropolitan Platon (Levshin). What are the relations between the two churches like today?

- Although relations between us remain very warm and friendly we cannot say that things are exactly the same as they used to be during the times of Metropolitan Platon. At this point, it is not possible to talk about the restoration of canonical communion between us, at least as understood by previous generations. There are significant divergences of opinion within the Anglican Communion and today many Anglicans hold views that are difficult, indeed impossible to reconcile with the Orthodox understanding of Christian faith. Nevertheless, there are quite a few members of the Church of England, from the highest hierarchs to simple believers, who express respect, warmth and even love towards the



Liturgy at Dormition Cathedral during the visit of Patriarch Kirill

Orthodox tradition. We have warm relations with them, and there is a sincere friendship between us which is very important to us and we want to keep it.

- Which of the Russian saints are the most familiar to the English people?

- The English have great respect and love for our Russian saints; they especially love the Venrable Saints, Seraphim of Sarov and Siluan of Athos. Local people became familiar with these saints through the books written about them at the beginning of the 20th century by Russian emigrés who came to England, and through the missionary work of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. Some Russian icons are venerated here not only by the Orthodox, but also by Catholics and Anglicans. On walking into an Anglican or a Catholic Church one can often see the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan or Vladimir, or Rublev's Icon of the Trinity. Many Anglicans in this country find the veneration of icons

entirely acceptable.

- What is the destiny of the museum church dedicated to the Holy Royal Passion-Bearers established in Oxford by Archimandrite Nicholas (Gibbs), the teacher of English to the children of the last Russian Emperor? Is it possible to bring it back to life?

- The chapel of Fr Nicholas in Oxford was closed after death of his adopted son George Gibbs in the early 90s. The icons and holy vessels were given away or sold. For a short time a chapel, where some of the icons and holy vessels were kept, was located in the Luton Hoo estate in Hertfordshire, but sadly it was closed a couple of years ago. The estate's owners experienced some financial difficulties and had to sell the mansion. Currently our parish of St Nicholas in Oxford is searching for a permanent place for exposition of the relics, which are precious to us, that were preserved by Archimandrite Nicholas.



Cathedral's interior after the renovation 2016 r



Parishioners of St Nicholas parish in Oxford

- *The monastery of St John the Baptist in Essex founded by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) in 1959 has become a centre of Orthodox pilgrimage in Great Britain. It'ssupranational character is amazing. There are monks and novices from 16 countries and the services are held in six languages: Church Slavonic, Greek, English, French, German and Romanian. A tradition of communal noetic prayer brought from Athos by Fr Sophrony is practised there. The churches are decorated by Fr Sophrony personally and his pupils. A monastic icon painting workshop preserves this tradition. The monastery is under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate*

of Constantinople, but there is no doubt that our compatriots consider themselves entirely at home there. How would you describe the phenomenon of this place? Are there any connections between you and them?

- The monastery of St John in Essex and the spiritual heritage of Archimandrite Sophrony is a crucially important feature of Orthodox life and witness in the British Isles. I would actually say that the significance of this place goes far beyond the question of jurisdiction. Despite the monastery being under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, there is a close spiritual connection between us, especially because Fr Sophrony, as was his elder Saint Silouan, was an heir of the Russian-Athonite spiritual



*Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov
(left image)*

Monastery of St John in Essex (image above)

tradition. He was also of Russian émigré origin. Up to the present day the spiritual atmosphere of the monastery is under the influence of the Elder. We have established a very close connection with the monastery: many of our parishioners often go to Essex as pilgrims. We organise pilgrimage groups consisting of parishioners not just from our parish, but also from the other ones. Conversely, the monastery helps us in many ways. Icons painted in its icon-painting workshop are to be found in many of our parishes and churches.

- How often does the Assembly of Orthodox bishops take place and what topics are discussed?

- The Orthodox bishops who have care of parishes in Great Britain meet twice a year: we look into common

questions regarding pastoral work, discuss ways of supporting each other and strengthening our pan-Orthodox presence. One of the areas we are currently working on is the veneration of the early British Saints (Ss Patrick, David, Augustine, etc) who lived in the first millennium, the time of the undivided Church. The Orthodox of all jurisdictions and traditions living here greatly love and venerate these early witnesses of Christ and His Gospel and this veneration can serve as a testimony to our Orthodox unity.

By Artem Pogosov

Patriarchia.ru

www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4643491.html



British and Irish Saints

VENERABLE FINNIAN, ABBOT OF CLONARD

***Commemorated:
12th/25th December***

St Finnian, a native of Leinster in Ireland, was destined to become one of the greatest fathers of Irish monasticism. The saint was born to a noble family in the second half of the fifth century, probably in the village of Myshall in the present-day County Carlow. When his mother was pregnant, she saw in a dream that a bright flame flew into her mouth and then flew away like a glorious bird, which flew between Northern and Southern Ireland, attracting a huge flock of other birds from all over the country. The woman told her husband about her vision, and he under-

stood that their child would become a great teacher and mentor. All this later came true.

The young Finnian was educated in Idrone. His first teacher was St Fortchern of Trim, a disciple of St Patrick. Some time later, the Saint founded his first three monasteries at Rossacurra, Drumfea, and Kilmaglush.

Finnian may have studied for a short time in the monastic centre of St Martin in Tours in Gaul. Then this ascetic learned the fundamentals and skills of monastic life in Wales, in the tradition of the hermits of Egypt. There his teachers included great fathers of the Welsh Church: Sts David, Gildas the Wise, and Cadoc. This experience proved to be extremely useful for the saint in the future.

Finnian meant to go to Rome after his training in Wales, but an angel appeared to him in a vision and told the saint to return to Ireland, where he was to become “a teacher and tutor of Irish Saints”. Among the future disciples of Finnian was St Columba, one of the greatest early Irish missionaries. After some twenty or thirty years in Wales, Finnian returned to Ireland, where he founded a great number of churches and monasteries, for example, at Aghowle (Wicklow) and Mugna Sulcain. The holy man liked Aghowle very much and wanted to stay there



Icon of St Finnian



*Aghowle church, 12th century
(taken from Visitwicklow.ie)*

forever, but the angel appeared to him again and commanded him to go further.

As was the case with other Irish saints, Finnian became a travelling missionary. On the island of Skellig Michael, not far from the shores of Kerry, which became one of the most famous bastions of Irish Orthodoxy, Finnian founded several churches and monastic communities. After that the ascetic visited the monastery of Kildare, under the great Abbess St Brigid, and remained there for some years. He left Kildare to continue his journeys and finally reached Clonard, situated on the River Boyne (the present-day County Meath). And the Lord revealed that in this very old and pagan place, where there had never been any churches or monasteries before, the saint's main labours were to take place.

At Clonard Finnian built a small cell and tiny church, and in the year 520 founded a monastery, which became the largest and the most important in

Ireland. Finnian became the first abbot of this monastery and organised life there, taking as his model the practices of Welsh monasteries. This form of monasticism was based on the traditions of the holy fathers of the East.

Finnian was venerated as one of the greatest saints of his time. Numerous disciples flocked to him. Some 3,000 monks lived at Clonard at any one time. Monks and laypeople, bishops and priests, poor and rich - everybody came to him for spiritual advice. The fame of Finnian, loved and honoured for his exemplary life, learning, gift of prayer and many miracles, spread all over Ireland and far beyond. Monks and theologians from various countries visited Finnian's monastery. Over the centuries thousands of monks there studied the Holy Scriptures, the works of the Church Fathers, grew in monastic life and were sent as missionaries to distant lands. The rule of Clonard was known for its strictness and asceticism. The brethren slept little and rose early in the morning, prayed frequently and fervently, ate little and worked hard.

Finnian himself used to sleep on the bare, earthen floor of his primitive cell and never put anything under his head. His iron girdle served him as chains in his ascetic labours. The venerable abbot became so emaciated because of his many years of extreme ascetic life that his ribs could easily be seen through his clothes.

The disciples of Clonard established hundreds of churches and monasteries

in Ireland and other countries. Every monk who left the monastery as a missionary took with him a copy of the Gospels, a crozier and a reliquary and later, when building his own church or monastery, placed these relics inside it. Thanks to Clonard and other monasteries of similar reputation, Ireland became known as “The Island of Saints”, and twelve saintly students of sixth-century Clonard are known as “the Twelve Apostles of Ireland”. Under the influence of Welsh saints and St John Cassian, Finnian compiled the first Irish Penitentiary, which, in its turn, influenced St Columbanus, who compiled his more famous version. Finnian had a reputation as a brilliant interpreter of the Scriptures.

The saint died of the plague in 549 (or 552). His relics remained in the monastery church at Clonard until 887. After his main relics had been vandalised by barbarians in that year, a small portion of his relics was kept in a parish church

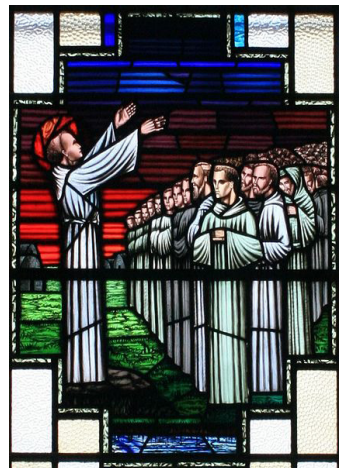
near Clonard till the seventeenth century. The monastery flourished till the ninth century and was considered as the second most important monastery in Ireland after Armagh. Following the attacks of the Vikings from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, the glory of Clonard faded. In the twelfth century two Augustinian monasteries were established in Clonard and one of them existed till the Reformation.

In Clonard today pilgrims can find an old unused Anglican Church of St Finnian; a Catholic Church of St Finnian which contains stained glass of the saint with his disciples; a statue of St Finnian; an old monastic cemetery; a recently restored holy well. In the village of Myshall in Carlow, where Finnian was born, there are ruins of a pre-Norman church, which was ruined under Cromwell in the seventeenth century. In the village of Aghowle there is the twelfth-century monastic church on the site of a monastery built



*Image on the right:
Stained glass 'Building
the monastery' at
St Finnian's Catholic
Church in Clonard
(photo from Wikipedia)*

*Stained glass of
St Finnian and his
disciples at St Finnian's
RC Church, Clonard
(photo from Wikipedia)*





Catholic Church of St Finnian in Clonard
(taken from Mapio.net)

by Finnian. A ninth-century St Finnian's cross along with a tenth-century granite font have survived in this village too. Today there is a Russian Orthodox parish in Belfast in Northern Ireland dedicated to St Finnian.

Dmitry Lapa

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/67125.htm>



A statue of St Finnian
in Clonard
(taken from Wikipedia)

For reflection

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers.

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 1

Holy Places in London

ST PANCRAS OLD CHURCH IN CAMDEN

Camden is a London borough situated north of the City and Westminster. In the Middle Ages it was settled by craftsmen; today its main attraction is the British Library, but Camden's spiritual treasure is its little, ancient Old St Pancras Church – one of the oldest surviving Christian buildings in Britain. The Holy Martyr Pancras/Pancratius (feast: 12th/25th May, patron-saint of children) was born in Phrygia. When his parents died, he and his uncle moved to Rome and were baptised. During the persecutions of Diocletian, the fourteen-year-old Pancras refused to perform a sacrifice to Roman gods. The emperor himself tried to persuade him and promised wealth, but the boy was unshakeable. Then he was beheaded and his relics were placed inside the Roman basilica which bears his name to this day. Late in the sixth century Pope Gregory the Dialogist, who sent St Augustine's mission to England, gave them a portion of St Pancras' relics; thus his deep veneration began in England with many churches dedicated to him, the most famous being those in Canterbury and London.

The exact date of the foundation of St Pancras Church is unknown. Although it is first mentioned in twelfth-century documents, it stood on this site much



*Old St Pancras Church
(source - Mapio.net)*

earlier; according to different versions, from the year 314, from the seventh or ninth century or from the time of the Norman Conquest.

After the Reformation it became a refuge for Catholics and it remained one of two churches where Catholics were allowed to be buried. With time its graveyard expanded and many celebrities found their resting place there along with French emigrés after the Revolution.

Earlier, from the fourteenth century on, the church gradually fell into disrepair because due to frequent floods (the River Fleet flowed nearby) the local inhabitants moved to live in safer areas. By the end of the eighteenth century it held services only once a month. In the 1810s, in connection with rapid population growth it was decided to build the New St Pancras Church in the Neoclassic Greek style in Euston Road

and to renovate the old church. In the 1840s the old church was substantially renewed and restored under the direction of Alexander Dick Gough, though it still looks like a very ancient structure. During the repairs Roman brickwork and tiles and a Saxon inscribed seventh-century altar stone with five crosses were discovered which indicated a very early foundation. Restoration works resumed following the Second World War when the church was damaged by bombing.

Inside the church has features of various periods beginning from the Norman. There are memorials to important parishioners on the walls, many seventeenth-century monuments (including wooden ones), a splendid font-cover, and the main relic is the mentioned Saxon stone let into the communion table.

The surviving part of the churchyard is particularly interesting. Among those buried there are the architect John Soane (remarkably, the beautiful Soane family mausoleum inspired another architect, Giles Gilbert Scott, to design the famous red telephone boxes!); the classical era composer Johann Christian Bach (the younger son of the great Johann Sebastian Bach!); the sculptor John Flaxman (who created monumental sculptures for St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey); the last Governor of the New Jersey province William Franklin (the illegitimate son of Benjamin Franklin); the philosopher, writer and 'forerunner of feminism' Mary Wollstonecraft (her daughter, the

novelist Mary Shelley, swore her love to Percy Bysshe Shelley there beside her mother's grave!). In the 1860s due to construction of the railway and building the (now international) St Pancras railway station numerous remains from this cemetery were cremated and interred together in a common grave under an ash tree, and numerous surviving gravestones were placed around it. This project was undertaken by the young Thomas Hardy, a great writer, who had been trained as an architect. That ash tree still exists and is called 'Hardy tree'. Among the churchyard's unique objects let us mention a memorial fountain and a sundial.

St Pancras Old Church is mentioned in Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and in 1968 the Beatles visited St Pancras gardens on their 'mad day out' and were photographed there!

Concerts are regularly arranged at this church. It is open for visitors seven days a week. This parish belongs to the conservative Anglican tradition known as 'the High Church', they practice



'Thomas Hardy ash tree'
(source - Wikipedia)



Inside Old St Pancras Church
(photo by John Salmon, Wikimedia.org)

burning incense and lighting candles. Masses are celebrated on Sundays and Mondays at 9.30 am, Tuesdays at 7 pm, masses in honour of Our Lady of Walsingham – on the first Saturday of each month. The gardens are open daily from 7 am till dusk.

Dmitry Lapa

Address:

*Pancras Road, Camden Town
London, NW1 1UL*

Nearest tube: King's Cross, St Pancras

Nearest buses: 214, 46

Sacraments of the Church

We are printing a series of short texts about the Sacraments of the Church. They are copied from 'An Orthodox Online Catechism', which is based on the book 'The Mystery of Faith' by Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev). They are presented here by the kind permission and blessing of the author.

PART 3: CHRISMATION

The sacrament of Chrismation was established in apostolic times. In the early Church every newly-baptized Christian received a blessing and the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by an apostle or a bishop. The Book of Acts relates how Peter and John laid hands on women from Samaria so that they could receive the Holy Spirit, *for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been*

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 8:16). In apostolic times, the descent of the Holy Spirit was occasionally accompanied by visible and tangible manifestations of grace: like the apostles at Pentecost, people would begin to speak in unfamiliar tongues, to prophesy and work miracles.

The laying on of hands was a continuation of Pentecost in that it communicated the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In later times, by virtue of the increased number of Christians, it was impossible for everyone to meet a bishop; so the laying on of hands was substituted by Chrismation. In the Orthodox Church Chrismation is administered by a priest, yet the myrrh is prepared by a bishop. Myrrh is boiled from various elements. In

contemporary practice only the head of an autocephalous Church (the Patriarch, Metropolitan or Archbishop) has the right to consecrate myrrh, thus conveying the episcopal blessing to all those who become members of the Church.

In the Epistles the gift of the Holy Spirit is sometimes called ‘anointing’ (1 John 2:20; 2 Cor.1:21). In the Old Testament kings were appointed to their realm through anointing. Ordination to the priestly ministry was also performed through chrismation. However, in the New Testament there is no division between the ‘consecrated’ and the ‘others’: in Christ’s Kingdom all are ‘kings and priests’ (Rev.1:6); a ‘chosen race’; ‘God’s own people’ (1 Peter 2:9); therefore anointing is given to every Christian.

Through anointing we receive the ‘seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit’. As Fr Alexander Schmemmann explains, this is not the same as the various ‘gifts’ of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit Himself, Who is communicated to the person as a gift. Christ spoke of this gift to the disciples at the Last Supper: *And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth’* (John 14:16-17). He also said about the Spirit: *‘It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you’* (John 16:7). Christ’s death on the Cross made possible the granting to us of the Holy Spirit. And it is in Christ that we become kings, priests and ‘christs’



(anointed ones), receiving neither the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron, nor the kingdom of Saul, nor the anointing of David, but the New Testament priesthood and the kingdom of Christ. Through Chrismation we become sons of God, for the Holy Spirit is the ‘*grace of adoption as sons*’.

As with the grace of baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit, received in Chrismation, is not to be passively accepted, but actively assimilated. It was in this sense that St Seraphim of Sarov said that the goal of a Christian’s life is the ‘*acquisition of the Holy Spirit*’. The Divine Spirit is given to us a pledge, yet we still have to acquire Him, make Him our own. The Holy Spirit is to bring forth fruit in us. *‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit’* (Gal.5:22; 25). All of the sacraments have meaning and are for our salvation only when the life of the Christian is in harmony with the gift he has received.

Source: orthodoxeurope.org/page/10/1.aspx#41

The Russian Church in London

THE HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH IN LONDON

Part 11

In 1991 Metropolitan Anthony invited Bishop (from 1992 Archbishop) Anatoly to join him in London. Bishop Anatoly was given the title of another titular see, Kerch. That year His Holiness Patriarch Alexis II visited the Cathedral. Since the early 1990s an increasing proportion of the congregation were newcomers, those who were received into the Church before leaving their homeland, and those who entered the Church after their arrival in Britain. The number of parishioners has increased very substantially in the last 25 years.

In 1991 Metropolitan Anthony gave the blessing for the local veneration within the Diocese of the Imperial passion-bearers Tsar Nicholas II, his wife and children. Every 4th/17th July a moleben to them was celebrated at the Cathedral. Also, from the mid-1990s and way before the rapprochement between the Russian Patriarchal Church and ROCOR seemed possible, Metropolitan Anthony and ROCOR hierarch Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Great Britain were quietly working together, resolving difficult church problems in Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe.



Archbishop Anatoly, Metropolitan Anthony and Bishop Vasilii, 1997

On the 4th August 2003, after 55 years of incessant work on building the Church in Britain, Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh reposed in the Lord. Bishop Basil (Osborne) of Sergiyev was appointed temporary administrator of the Diocese, but in the spring of 2006 decided to move with some of the parishioners under the omophorion of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In 2005, on the Saturday before Pentecost (known as the Saturday of ancestors), when the Church offers special prayers for all who died, the Orthodox faithful from both Dormition parishes gathered after the Liturgy at London Kensal Green cemetery to pray for the repose of the souls of the three London Deans of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries who are buried there – Archpriests Yakov and Evgeny Smirnov and Priest Vasily Popov, and

their families. The memorial services (lity) at their half-forgotten graves were taken in turn by Archpriest Andrey Teterin (Patriarchal parish) and Archpriest Vadim Zakrevsky (Church Abroad parish).

In May 2006 the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church entrusted the temporary administration of the Sourozh Diocese to Archbishop Innokenty (Vasiliev) of Korsun, and in autumn of the same year appointed the newly consecrated Bishop Elisey (Ganaba) of Bogorodsk as temporary administrator. In December 2007 the Synod decided to make Bishop Elisey the Diocesan Bishop of the Sourozh Diocese with the title Bishop of Sourozh. Bishop Elisey also serves as Dean of the London Cathedral.

May our Lord Jesus Christ – through



*Archpriest Michael Fortunato,
1997*

the intercessions of the Most Holy Mother of God, of all the Saints who shone in the lands of Russia and Britain, and of all the saints – protect and establish His Church in London for many years!

Michael Sarni

Cathedral Newsletter 30 years ago

WALSINGHAM PARISH

The newly-formed Parish of the Transfiguration in Walsingham has considered and approved provisional plans for the alteration of the inside of their recently acquired church in Great Walsingham. Drawings of these plans are on view on the notice board in the Cathedral.

The present open rectangular space of this former Methodist Chapel, with its gothic-style wooden roof and pointed windows, is to be converted to serve

the worship of the Orthodox liturgical tradition, both spatially and stylistically, and to present the theology of the Church through the very building. The pews have been taken out, and the entire area will be partitioned into the three traditional parts of an Orthodox church: narthex, nave and altar. A new ceiling will be built over these three areas, giving rise to a central, internal dome over the nave which will let in the light of day coming from above through the existing large east and west windows. The pointed arches of

the side windows will be rounded off to take away the gothic effect, to follow the general lines of the new internal structure. An iconostasis will define the area of the sanctuary and, if possible, the east wall will be extended to create a small rounded apse where the Bishop's throne will be placed. The east wall is not the outer wall of the building, for there is room beyond the altar which will serve as an office. A small dome over the altar will, as in the nave, let in the natural light coming from above. Larger than its mother church, of the Monastery of St Seraphim, the Church of the Transfiguration will have ample room for up to sixty worshippers standing in the nave; the narthex will provide still further space to absorb visitors at times of periodical influx of Orthodox pilgrims to Walsingham. The Parish is most fortunate in having two well-known iconographers among their number, and it is hoped that, in the course of the coming years, the Church will be embellished in the traditional way. The architect who presented the plans under consideration is generously offering his services free of charge and, incidentally, is a pupil of the original

architect who designed the Church of the Shrine in Walsingham 56 years ago.

The new Church and the Parish Room across the road have been purchased against a loan, as has already been reported in the September issue of the Newsletter. An Appeal is currently out to help the Parish become the outright owners of these buildings, and to allow for the necessary repairs and alterations. To date a sum of nearly £11,000 has been collected, much of it from the Parish itself, out of a total of £36,000 required to finance the project and re-pay the loan. There are promises totaling over £10,000, and therefore some £15,000 has still to be found.

'We appeal to all lovers of St Seraphim's and Walsingham to make a thank offering towards the Church of the Transfiguration, a dedication which expresses what pilgrims feel about Walsingham - past, present and to come.'

(from the Walsingham Appeal leaflet)

Patrick Radley

For reflection

God gave people the word "love" so that they could call their relationship to Him by this name. When people misuse this word to refer to their relationship with earthly things, it loses its meaning.

(St. Nicholas of Serbia, Thoughts on Good and Evil)

Paths to Orthodoxy

WELLSPRING FAMILY INTERVIEW

I met Charis and Matthew Wellspring at the most recent Sourozh conference where they were running the children's programme. My 6 year old daughter Elizabeth came out of it so excited about our faith that she had made her first ever handwritten prayer book with the Our Father prayer among others. I wrote to Charis to thank her for the amazing work, and to my great joy learnt that this beautiful and inspiring young lady is a parishioner of the Orthodox Church in Southampton. Besides teaching, Charis and Matthew are running a charity called Wellspring which is dedicated to fighting poverty.

I put the following questions to Charis and Matthew: *(Matthew's answers are in green)*

How and when did you become Orthodox Christians?

Charis: We became Orthodox in 2012 and were chrismated on December 15th, when our daughter was baptised.

Had you been practicing Christians before? Who and what inspired you?

Charis: Yes, we were both bought up in Protestant Christianity, both attending churches which were very charismatic and evangelical in nature. I (Charis) was always very inspired by a more radical, grassroots faith, especially the monastics and asceticism (which, sadly, so much of Protestantism does not embrace any longer).



Mathew and Charis Wellspring

Matthew: We found Orthodoxy in a search for the true New Testament church.

How were you introduced to the Russian Orthodox Church in Southampton?

Charis: Matthew felt strongly that God was calling us to Southampton. When it was time to move from our house in Berkshire, all the doors were closing for us to stay in Berkshire, but all the doors for us to move here were wide open so on the advice of our Spiritual Father and Charis' Godmother, we moved to Southampton. Once here, we searched for a more English speaking community where we might be able to understand at least some of the service. We finally found the Russian Parish via the internet after attending a Greek-speaking parish for some months.

How did your family and friends react to the news that you converted to Orthodox Christianity?



The Wellspring Charity Foundation
Fighting UK Poverty

www.wellspringcharityfoundation.org.uk

Charis: Not entirely positive. Catholic members of my (Charis') family were a lot more accepting and understanding, but we still struggle with the protestant members of our families who have very strong negative reactions to our faith. My family's (Matthew's) approach to Christianity is very much based on feelings and is experiential. They view the Orthodox church as very strict and religious.

What did you find in Orthodoxy you hadn't had before?

Charis: Roots, a feeling of safety from boundaries and the historical authority that we were so hungry for. Having searched in almost all denominations of Christianity for security, it is so incredibly grounding when you discover an institution old enough and strong enough for you to lose yourself in. I think everyone craves that paternal sanctuary where you can rest in something bigger than yourself and experience the security of a trustworthy authority outside of yourself. So much of our secular society thrives on individual self-rule and personal liberty which I believe leads to the rampant stress and anxiety we suffer. This has, unfortunately, filtered through into the protestant church. Just like when we were younger, we need safety in boundaries and the calming awareness that we are not lone-rangers

charged with creating our own moral code. Truth.

How have you accommodated the Orthodox calendar, with its long periods of fasting, into your life?

Charis: With great difficulty! There were no elements of this in our upbringing, so it was and is a huge struggle for us. My spirit rejoices in the self-discipline and the seasonal rhythm now created in my life but my flesh still pushes for a tantrum!

Matthew: I love that the church has kept the memory of all the saints alive through its devotion to each, on every day.

Which saints, holy fathers are most revered by you and why?

Charis: St Hannah, the mother of prophet Samuel is my (Charis') saint and I chose her because of her humility, hope and meekness. Those are qualities I really desire. I also revere St Mary of Egypt for her compunctious attitude.

Matthew: I don't feel particularly attached to any one saint.

Could you tell me about your experience of parish life in Southampton. Do you know other parishioners well? Is there life beyond service?

Charis: We have a small but vibrant parish, with lots of beautiful children who get on really well with each other.

We meet up often with each other between services and have just had an entertaining fundraising evening together, run by the children from the Sunday school, which raised over £300 for the local Children's Cancer Ward!

You and Matthew are both trustees of the Wellspring charity dedicated to fighting poverty. Could you please tell me when and how it was founded, and what motivated you to get involved heavily in charity work?

Charis: The Wellspring Charity Foundation was founded in February 2012. We are one of the only charities in the UK fighting UK poverty not just in a financial sense, but more broadly looking at poverty also as educational, social, emotional and mental. Another ethos of ours as a charity is to 'self-fund' so that we don't have to ask people for money all of the time, so we have our own online store which sells handmade gifts, baby clothing, housewares and greetings cards. Our motivation comes from our strong belief that charity changes lives. After doing a Politics degree (Charis) I felt even more sure that social change was more effective from a grassroots level.

Matthew: As part of our faith, charity is a huge factor and this is a worthy outlet.

Questions for only Charis: You are a Sunday school teacher in the Southampton parish, previously teaching at a Greek Orthodox Parish in Berkshire for 2 years. I got the impression from talking to my daughter that your lessons were

intense and thought-provoking. Who were your teachers? How did you become a teacher? What preparation do you do for each lesson?

Charis: My mother was involved with Sunday school teaching while I was growing up and everything she did was done with every ounce of energy, conviction and professionalism that she could muster. She was a single mother with very little support, but she still ploughed long nights and intense concentration into giving the children as rich a Sunday school experience as she could possibly create. I try my best to emulate that so I prepare very thoroughly for my lessons. Ancient Faith Radio's online podcasts, especially Molly Sabourin and Elissa Bjeletich's 'Raising Saints', are fantastic resources for me generally but for the specific subjects I teach each lesson, I research using a wider variety of resources such as individual priest's sermons, OCA.org and articles on other orthodox churches websites as well as other AFR podcasts.

Your motto is "dynamic exploration of faith". What does it mean?

Charis: Children need to see that the adults around them are enthused by their faith. I try to communicate a zealous and energetic attitude when I teach in order to excite and inspire the children in their faith.

What do you think we should do to bring up our children as true believers?

Charis: I think as parents we all know what we need to do to raise our children in the way they should go. I think many of us, myself foremost, struggle with making excuses for our lack of commitment to our own personal faith. I believe parenthood is a kind of martyrdom. We need to live who we want our children to become.

You hold the job of Postnatal Coordinator, working with mothers affected by stress. It is obviously a very important topic for you, why?

Charis: Postnatal Depression is a nasty illness which can erode or even destroy the bond between mother and child. I can't stress how important that bond is, for the mother's self-esteem and self-worth but also for the child's. It's a silent illness with many mothers frightened to talk about it and ashamed

to admit they have it. These women and their precious children are the nucleus of their family so by helping them, you are serving their family and their community.

How do you juggle work and family life?

Charis: If I was successful at it, I would probably say something like 'I compartmentalise and park tasks of less priority', but I'm not! It's something I struggle with on a daily basis as I am a workaholic but also a full time mum. Of an evening, when I should be tidying my house and organising my children's toys I will often be reading blogs by mums with 9 kids to try and learn how to tidy and organise my kids' toys!

Interviewed by Diana Becktaeva



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Online-version is available via the diocesan website: www.sourozh.org

E-mail: londonsobornylistok@gmail.com

We welcome your stories of finding faith, conversion, pilgrimages etc. If you would like to leave feedback or contribute content to the Newsletter, please contact us at the above address. We are always happy to hear from our readers.

Any donation to support the work of the church, however small, is welcome. You can donate by:

- Cash to the church collection boxes
- Online via the diocesan website www.sourozh.org (click «Donate»)
- A cheque or a bank transfer to Lloyds Bank

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