



# Prophet Elias News

**News in a time of pandemic for the Orthodox Church of the  
Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
3rd – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2022**



## **Metropolitan Anthony on the Sunday of St Mary of Egypt**

Week after week we feel that we are coming closer and closer to the glorious Resurrection of Christ. And it seems to us that we are moving fast, from Sunday to Sunday as it were, to the day when all horrors, all terrors, will have disappeared.

And yet so easily do we forget that before we reach the day of the Resurrection we must, together with Christ, together with His apostles, tread the road of the Crucifixion. 'So we are ascending to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall crucify Him, and the third day He will rise'. All we notice is that He will rise. But do we ever think of the way in which the disciples went to Jerusalem, knowing that the Crucifixion was at hand? They were not yet mature enough to be those who would give their lives for the message to be spread. They were moving in fear. When Christ told them that they would go now to Jerusalem, return to the city which had then renounced Christ, put Him into danger of His life, they said to Him, 'Let us not go.' And only one disciple, Thomas, said, 'No. Let us go with Him, and die with Him.'

This disciple is the one whom, foolishly I believe, we call the Doubter: the one who was not prepared to give his trust to God, his faith, his life, his blood, without certainty. But his heart was unreservedly given to Christ. How wonderful to be such a man! But the other disciples too would not desert Christ. They walked toward Jerusalem.

And we have today another example of one who went through a tragedy before they met Christ. It is Mary of Egypt. She was a sinner. She was a harlot. She was unfaithful to God in her soul and in her body. She had no reverence for this body which God had created, and this soul. And yet she was tragically confronted with the fact that there was no way for her into the temple of God unless she rejected evil and chose purity, repentance, newness of life.

Let us reflect on the disciples who almost begged Christ not to return to Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was a city where all prophets had died; and they did not want Christ to die, and they were afraid. Let us ask ourselves how much we resemble them. And let us ask ourselves freely today how do we resemble, or not, Mary of Egypt - Mary who had lived her life according to her own ways and desires, followed all temptations of her body and soul; and one day realised that as she was, she could not enter the temple of God.

So easily do we enter the divine temple, forgetting so easily that the church into which we come is a small part of a world that has chosen to be alien to God, that has rejected God, lost interest in Him; and that the few believers have created for God a place of refuge - yes, the church is the fullness of Heaven, and at the same time a tragic place of refuge, the only place where God has a right to be because He is wanted. And when we come here, we enter into the divine realm. We should come into it with a sense of awe, not just walk into it as into any space but walk into it as a space which is already the divine Kingdom.

If we were in that mood we would, when we come to the doors of the church, be, however little, like Mary of Egypt. We would stop and say, 'How can I come in?' And if we did that with our whole heart, broken-heartedly, with a sense of horror of the fact that we are so distant from God, so alien, so unfaithful to Him, then the doors would open and we would see that we are not simply in a big space surrounded with walls but we are in a space which is God's Heaven come to earth.

Let us therefore learn from this experience what it means to go step by step towards the Resurrection, because in order to reach the Resurrection we must go through Calvary, we must go through the tragedy of Holy Week and make it our own, partaking with Christ and His disciples and the crowds around in the horror, the terror of it; and also experience it as a scorching fire that will burn in us all that is unworthy of God and make us clean. And perhaps one day, when the fire will have burnt everything which is not worthy of God, each of us may become an image of the burning bush, aflame with divine fire and not consumed, because only that which could survive the fire of God would have remained is us.

Nadya drew our attention to this thoughtful reflection by the Very Revd Jonathan Greener, Dean of Exeter Cathedral in the weekly newsletter Cathedral Life . **Thank you, Nadya. Ed.**

## How to Respond?

Disagreeing with Bishop Rowan Williams is not something to do lightly. I remember a debate at the General Synod when I was wanting to make a speech about truth versus unity: about how the Church can never compromise truth, even if sometimes that is at the cost of not succeeding in keeping everyone in the one fold. I was beaten to the despatch box by Rowan, at that time Archbishop of Canterbury, who made a powerful case that for the Church, truth and unity are always two sides of the same coin. Consequently, my lovingly prepared words never saw the light of day: as a young-ish priest I didn't have the confidence to challenge him publicly on a question of theology.

This past week, I have reached a position where I think I want to take issue with Rowan once more. This time, about his letter to *The Times* setting out what we might hope to hear from the Russian Church in response to the War in the Ukraine. His careful text is worth repeating in its entirety:

*“Sir, Last weekend Orthodox Christians in many countries celebrated “Forgiveness Sunday”, the day before Great Lent begins. Many will have hoped to hear from the Orthodox Church in Russia some acknowledgement of the shocking – not to say blasphemous – absurdity of Orthodox Christians engaging, at this season of all seasons, in indiscriminate killing of the innocent, insanely reckless attacks on nuclear facilities (endangering their own homeland as well as the wider environment), the unashamed breach of ceasefire agreements, and an attack on one of the most significant Holocaust memorials in Europe.*

*“It is not too late for the leadership of the Church in Russia to call for (at the very least) a credible ceasefire as Lent begins. Those of us who owe a lasting debt to the thought and witness of Christian Russia through the centuries find it hard to believe that all the moral norms of warfare painstakingly explored by Christians in both East and West from the earliest ages onwards have been forgotten.”*

Rowan understands the Russian Church very well. His doctoral thesis from Oxford was on the work of Vladimir Lossky, a 20th century Russian Orthodox theologian, exiled from Moscow to Paris. And, like Rowan, all of us long and pray for the Church in Russia to take a lead in ending bloodshed and promoting a peaceful outcome to this barbaric war. But where I want to take issue with him is whether a letter to *The Times* is at all likely to achieve this. This is of course less a theological issue: more one of pragmatic approach.

I imagine Patriarch Kirill must find himself in a difficult situation in Moscow. It has to be said that his record of challenging Putin's regime is not impressive, even before the present war, but of one thing we are sure: he certainly does not enjoy the same political freedom as our bishops in this country, who can speak in the House of Lords in direct opposition to the Government, and still claim their attendance allowance for doing so.

How then to respond and promote a bolder approach by the Russian Church? I am not at all persuaded that a Letter to *The Times* will embarrass Kirill into making any kind of anti-war declaration. But what we can do in the West, with all the freedoms and relative prosperity we enjoy, is to model what the Church can be and do. And there is now plenty of opportunity to make a difference. We can give to the appeal set up by the [Disasters Emergency Committee](#). The [Exeter Diocese website](#) has a helpful page for those who might be able to offer accommodation. There is a diocesan working group which will offer further advice in the near future. And the Church of England has just published a toolkit which we are working through as a diocese and as a cathedral.

I remember my bishop in Truro saying that it is not draconian divorce laws that make for ideal marriages; rather it is one couple seeing another enjoying a beautiful relationship, and wanting to emulate what they have just witnessed. If the Churches of Western Europe are seen to be at the forefront of sending aid and welcoming refugees, and are faithful in praying for peace, it is just possible that the Church in Moscow will be able to reignite something of its first love and its confidence in the Gospel, and hence begin to be more comfortable and courageous in calling for a ceasefire and working for peace.

# Blessed Are the Peacemakers

A Personal View by Martin Olsson

Like most English people alive now, I have spent virtually all my life in a bubble – if not of absolute peace, then of stability and a large degree of certainty that things were likely to carry on much as they had been. Yes, there were wars, but most were in distant parts of the globe, which then felt a lot more distant than they do now – Northern Ireland being the obvious exception. And yes, our lives were lived in the shadow of the obscene theory of deterrence that came to be known as Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD); but for most of the time (the Cuban missile crisis apart) most of us managed somehow to push that deep into our unconscious and pretend it wasn't there. It was therefore possible for some of us – myself included - to believe in a sort of cosy quasi-pacifism, without having to explore too closely what that might involve.

In recent years, international terrorism and our military adventures in response to it have shaken our complacency, and Vladimir Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine has finally put an end to it. We are in a different world now, and we have to re-examine our place in it, not least in terms of how we can respond as Christians to our changed circumstances. We are effectively in a state of war with the Putin regime – a state which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future – and there is no telling how the world will look in its aftermath.

While the Fordham-Volos *Declaration on the 'Russian World' Teaching* (see last issue - or go to [A Declaration on the "Russian World" \(Russkii mir\) Teaching - Public Orthodoxy](#)) is directed principally at the position taken by the Moscow Patriarchate vis-a-vis the invasion of Ukraine, in its arguments as to how the Gospel message should be applied to the present conflict there are passages that we can equally well usefully apply to ourselves. If we do this – if we strip them of their specific application and shine their light on our own attitudes - we will find some serious challenges.

Item 5 affirms that **'We are called to not merely pray for peace, but to actively and prophetically stand up and condemn injustice, to *make peace* even at the cost of our lives. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9)...Offering the sacrifice of liturgy and prayer while refusing to *act* sacrificially constitutes a sacrifice to condemnation at odds with what is offered in Christ (Matthew 5:22–26 and 1 Corinthians 11:27–32).**

**'We therefore condemn as non-Orthodox and reject any promotion of spiritual "quietism" among the faithful and clergy of the Church, from the highest Patriarch down to most humble layperson. We rebuke those who pray for peace while failing to actively make peace, whether out of fear or lack of faith.'**

It has been all too easy in the past few weeks to console ourselves, as we agonise about feeling helpless to do anything about the Ukraine situation, by saying 'But at least we can pray'. We can, of course, and we must – for those who have died violent deaths without the opportunity to prepare, and for those who have killed; for the bereaved on both sides of the conflict; for those in pain, in hunger and in fear; for the dispossessed and the separated; for those whose hearts are broken because the aggression is being carried out in their name, as well as for those who see the conflict from a wholly different perspective; and ultimately for a change of heart on the part of those who have the power to end this horror.

But praying for peace is not making peace. How are we to become peacemakers? There is clearly no way that we can personally mediate between Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Vladimir Putin, or bring any pressure to bear on either of them. What we can do practically, in the context of this conflict, is offer comfort to those who are suffering, either by financial donations, or donations in kind, and to make our voices heard to ensure that refugees who come here are welcomed. There are links in Dean Jonathan's article on p2 above, or we can ask Larysa (at [L\\_shoot@yahoo.com](mailto:L_shoot@yahoo.com)) what help she needs. Larysa is part of the volunteer group in Exeter which collects humanitarian aid, fundraises to buy medical supplies and pay for the rent of trucks & petrol for the volunteer drivers. Over 50 trucks with aid have been sent so far. For more info about what the group does go to [www.devonforukraine.com](http://www.devonforukraine.com) There are also these Facebook groups with info and opportunity to join:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/280290300845714/?ref=share> (Devon for Ukraine) and

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1172647123476236/?ref=share> (Exeter Friends of Ukraine)

We can also resist the temptation to demonise those who sincerely hold a different perspective from our own, as well as recognising that not everyone in the Moscow Patriarchate is a supporter of what has been described as 'Kremlin Orthodoxy'. (One of the most trenchant condemnations of Patriarch Kirill's position was written by Archbishop John of Doubna, formerly of Chariopoulos, who was our own Archbishop in the last months of the Exarchate before he joined the Moscow Patriarchate.)

But there is a wider context in which we are called to be peacemakers - by developing a frame of mind that is always, in whatever situation, *peace-seeking*. We can keep our minds open to others' opinions; we can look for ways to *defuse* conflict before it hardens; we can develop kindness and rediscover courtesy. And if we persevere in these small ways, acknowledging the presence of Christ in all our dealings with other people, we can ourselves, perhaps, become peaceable.

*In the next issue: Some thoughts on Item 6 of the Fordham-Volos Declaration, on 'Speaking the Truth'.*

## This Fortnight We Celebrate

On Sunday April 3<sup>rd</sup>: **Fourth Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Saint John of the Ladder**

On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Methodios**, Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of the Slavs (885)

On Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Savas the New** of Kalymnos (1948)

Painter of the first icon of his friend Saint Nektarios of Aegina

On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>: **Fifth Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt**

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup>: **Hieromartyr Antipas**, Bishop of Pergamon (92) Disciple of Saint John the Theologian

On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Martin the Confessor**, Pope of Rome (655)

We wish **Martin R** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Friday 15<sup>th</sup>: **Martyrs Vasilissa and Anastasia of Rome** (1<sup>st</sup> C) Disciples of Saint Peter and Saint Paul

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Amphilochios** of Patmos (1970)

### Saint Amphilochios' Advice to a Western Convert

"Do not be afraid because of your Orthodoxy; do not be afraid because, as an Orthodox in the West, you will be often isolated and always in a small minority. Do not make compromises but do not attack other Christians; do not be either defensive or aggressive; simply be yourself."

Related by Bishop Kallistos (Ware), 2000, "The Spiritual Guide in Orthodox Christianity", in *The Inner Kingdom: Volume One of the Collected Works*, St. Vladimir's Press, Crestwood, New York.



### Saint Methodius, Enlightener of the Slavs

Saint Methodius, Equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of the Slavic people, was born in 826 in Thessalonica. The saint and his brother, Cyril, were born into a noble Greek family but decided to renounce their worldly honours to become priests.

While they were living the monastic life on the Bosphorus, the Slavic Khazar peoples asked that Saints Cyril and Methodius come and teach them the ways of Christ. After accepting their request the two brothers converted many, while learning the native language of the people. This knowledge of a Slavic language allowed the two brothers to communicate with another Slavic group, the Moravians. These people had previously been taught Christianity by German missionaries but were unable to understand the mysteries of Christ due to a language barrier. In order for the Moravians to understand Christ's message, they needed people who were able to teach and conduct the Divine Liturgy in their language. Before visiting the Moravians, Cyril and Methodius invented a new alphabet and translated the Bible into the Slavonic language.

When they did visit the Moravians in 863, the Germans mistrusted both their Eastern form of Orthodoxy and their use of the Slavic language. Due to this distrust, the two brothers were sent to Rome, expecting condemnation. Pope Adrian II, instead, applauded their work, sanctioned the Slavonic Liturgy, and ordained Methodius and Cyril bishops, though Cyril died on February 4<sup>th</sup> 869, before the two brothers could return to the Moravians and other Slavic peoples.

Pope Adrian later created the Archdiocese of Moravia and Pannonia at the request of Moravian and other Slavic princes. Methodius was named archbishop of the new diocese, which was independent from the German Church.

German bishops condemned Saint Methodius to prison in 870. After three years, Pope John VIII liberated him and reinstated Methodius as Archbishop of Moravia. Before he could continue his ambitions and teach the Word of God to Bohemians and Poles, a German priest summoned him back to Rome due to his use solely of the Slavic language during the Divine Liturgy. Methodius received papal support and was not subject to any punishment.

The saint later left for Constantinople where he translated all of the Holy Scriptures, except for the Books of Maccabees. He also translated the Nomocanon, or Greek ecclesiastico-civil law. Methodius had to continue struggling against the German clergy until his death on April 6, 885.



## Let Us Draw God into the World

It is in *this* world that we must find God. If God is absent, it is into this world that we must bring Him. Told once of the enormity of the misery in which humankind finds itself, a Hasidic zaddik sat stricken with grief. After a long while he roused himself and announced: 'Let us draw God into the world and all evil will be stilled.' We make the world a dwelling place for God by hallowing it.

Martin Buber: *Tales of the Hasidim* Schocken Books, New York 1975

## Noticeboard

### Services:

Saturday April 2<sup>nd</sup>: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup>: **Fourth Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of Saint John of the Ladder**  
**Divine Liturgy and Sunday Vespers** Saint Anne's 10.30am  
*Another very welcome visit from Father Alexander*

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup>: Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Friday 8<sup>th</sup>: Akathist Hymn of the Mother of God Saint Anne's 6.30pm

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>: Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am**

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>: **Fifth Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt**  
Vespers Saint Anne's 3pm

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

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup>: **Lazarus Saturday** Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>: PALM SUNDAY – ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM**

Typika and Blessing of Palms followed by Matins of the Bridegroom Saint Anne's 10.30am

### Services in Holy Week:

Monday 18<sup>th</sup>: Bridegroom Matins Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup>: Bridegroom Matins Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup>: Rite of Anointing Saint Anne's 6.30pm

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>: Vesperal Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.00am**

Matins of the Twelve Gospels Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>: Vespers **Saint James' Church 3pm**

Matins **Saint James' Church 6pm**

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>: **Vesperal Liturgy Saint James' Church 9.30am**

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>: Paschal Matins and Liturgy Saint James' Church 10pm**

**All are welcome – there will be no need to book places as there was last year**

***There will be a Bring-and-Share Feast in Saint James' Church Hall after the Liturgy.***

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>: Paschal Vespers Saint Anne's 6.30pm

***Covid 19: Please note that while there is no ruling on the wearing of face coverings in Saint Anne's, a supply of ffp2/N95 protective face masks will be available in church for those who feel they need to better protect themselves.***

## **Ikos of Matins for the Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt**

In our hymns we praise you now, all-honoured Mary, as the lamb and daughter of Christ.

Sprung from the stock of the Egyptians, you fled from all their errors and were offered as a precious flower to the Church.

In abstinence and prayer you struggled above the measure of man's nature, and so you were exalted by Christ;

for through your life and actions, all-revered Mary, you were made a bride of the heavenly Kingdom.