



Prophet Elias News

News and Views for the Orthodox Church of the
Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
May 2022



‘Unless I See...’

Today we are keeping the day of St Thomas the Apostle. Too often we remember him only as a doubter; indeed he is the one who questioned the message which the other Apostles brought to him when they said: Christ is risen! We have seen Him alive!

But he is not one who doubted throughout his life or who remained unfaithful to the fullness of the divine revelation of Christ. We must remember that when the Apostles and the Lord heard of the illness of Lazarus, Christ said to them: Let us return to Jerusalem. To which the others said: But the Jews wanted to kill you there. Why should we return? Only Thomas the Apostle answered: Let us go with Him and die with Him. He was prepared not only to be His disciple in words, not only to follow Him as one follows a teacher, but to die with Him as one dies with a friend and, if necessary, for a friend. So, let us remember his greatness, his faithfulness, his wholeness.

But what happened then when after the Resurrection of Christ, the Apostles said to the one who had not seen Christ risen, that they had actually seen the risen Christ? Why did he not accept their message? Why did he doubt? Why did he say that he must have proofs, material proofs? Because when he looked at them, he saw them rejoicing in what they had seen, rejoicing that Christ was not dead, rejoicing that Christ was alive, rejoicing that victory had been won. Yet, when he looked at them he saw no difference in them. These were the same men, only full of joy instead of fear. And Thomas said: Unless I see, unless I probe the Resurrection, I cannot believe you.

Is it not the same thing that anyone can say to us who meets us?

We proclaimed the Resurrection of Christ, passionately, sincerely, truthfully, a few days ago. We believe in it with all our being; and yet, when people meet us in our homes, in the street, in our place of work, anywhere, do they look at us and say: Who are these people? What has happened to them?

The Apostles had seen Christ risen, but the Resurrection had not become part of their own experience. They had not come out of death into eternal life. So it is also with us; except with the saints, when people see them, they know that their message is true.

What is it in our message that is not heard? Because we speak, but are not. We should be so different from people who have no experience of the living Christ, risen, who has shared His life with us, who sent the Holy Spirit to us as, in the words of C.S. Lewis, a living person is different from a statue. A statue may be beautiful, magnificent, glorious, but it is stone. A human being can be much less moving in his outer presence, yet he is alive, he is a testimony of life

So let us examine ourselves. Let us ask ourselves where we are. Why is it that people who meet us never notice that we are limbs of the risen Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit? Why?

Each of us has got to give his own reply to this question. Let us, each of us, examine ourselves and be ready to answer before our own conscience and do what is necessary to change our lives in such away that people meeting us may look at us and say: Such people we have never seen. There is something about them that we have never seen in anyone. What is it? And we could answer: It is the life of Christ abroad in us. We are His limbs. This is the life of the Spirit in us. We are His temple.

Sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh on Thomas Sunday, April 30th 1995

© Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Foundation

If you have a feeling you have read this before, you are right – we included it as the sermon for the week in our Thomas Sunday issue during the first lockdown. We think it bears repeating though. In his Introduction to Christ is in Our Midst: Letters from a Russian Monk by Saint John of New Valamo, Metropolitan Anthony answers those who had complained that the letters were sometimes repetitive in their advice by asking: ‘And since you read it the first time, what have you done about it?’

Ed.

Our Paschal Celebrations



Pascal Matins in St James Church, Fr Patrick, Deacon Brandon and Alexander serving

Once again Fr Patrick came for the end of Holy Week and Paschal services. He arrived in time for the Service of Anointing on Wednesday evening and stayed until after Vespers on Easter Sunday. This year the parish of St James offered us their church (where the hall is) for our Holy Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter night services, so we had lots of room for visitors, processions and a very lovely choir. After the Easter Liturgy we went from church to next door for the feast. It has been some time since we've been able to hold the Easter feast and it was a joy to fully celebrate the feast of Easter – both services and feasting.



Fr Nicanor leads the Agape Vespers at Saint Anne's



Easter Vespers was a joyous occasion. We were able to celebrate in St Anne's and Fr Nicanor was able to continue the long tradition of him serving at this service. We were also blessed with a multitude of Gospel readers: Fr Patrick in Greek, Fr Nicanor in English and in Russian and Chinese from two lay readers, Victor and Daniel (above right).

Celia

News from CTaX (Christians Together Across Exeter)

2nd – 5th June Queen's Jubilee

We know lots of you have started planning! Exeter City Council is starting to pull together details of planned activities so these can be added to the events listings on their website. Find out more, here:

<https://news.exeter.gov.uk/get-set-to-party-with-jubilee-celebrations/>

This could be a great opportunity to throw a church/street party to connect with neighbours as the nation celebrates HM the Queen – a vocal Christian in her frequent speeches.

The City of Exeter is marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a street party, which will be taking place on Exeter's High Street from 11am-3pm. If you would like to take part in the Community Village please get in touch with Exeter City Council, here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc6f1KRp4MiZhUEHVALqouWVvEu6_hJGmNXX-7CWAstu3t3vg/viewform

Ukraine Coverage

In recent weeks we have posted several articles relating to the conflict in Ukraine. We have felt it important to do this to bring to readers' attention developments they might not otherwise have been aware of. Tragically, two Orthodox nations are at war, and we cannot ignore the difficult issues that this raises. Our intention is not to promote a certain viewpoint, but to inform. Some readers, we know, have felt that our coverage of the Declaration on the 'Russian World' Teaching and some of the responses to it has been one-sided. This was certainly not our intention, and we will be only too happy to publish contributions by readers who disagree with the statement.

Meanwhile, Deacon Brandon has brought to our attention some articles critical of the Declaration. They are too long to publish here in full, but we hope that these extracts from one such article from a Russian viewpoint by Irina Borshch of Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University in Moscow will redress the balance. The full text can be found at <https://orthochristian.com/145475.html>

Other critiques of the Declaration can be found at <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/04/13/some-reflections-on-the-declaration-on-the-russian-world-teaching/> <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/04/12/russian-world-or-holy-world-war/> <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/22/ukrainian-nationhood-russkii-mir/>

Ed.

A Viewpoint from Moscow

“The protest of those Orthodox clergy and laity who signed this document is at once political (in this case the overwhelming majority’s position concurs with the official position of the governments of nations where they hold citizenship and reside) and ecclesiastical. Let us note straight off the extraordinary media success of this composition, which is atypical for a theological text on such a narrow specialization as Orthodox theology. The Declaration was immediately cited in publications on all continents and in various languages, including European languages, with added interpretations by journalists of all different specializations.

From its ecclesiastical position, the Declaration criticizes the teaching of “Russian world” as a form of “ethnophyletic religious fundamentalism”, or the “heresy of ethnophyleticism”, which, as the authors of the text suppose, determines the actions of the Russian authorities in the Russian Church.

We understand that only extreme concern for the humanitarian situation in Ukraine could arouse Orthodox clergy and laity to establish their position in such a sharp, admonishing form. Nevertheless, it is difficult for a Russian Orthodox reader responding to the Declaration to understand the author’s concept of “Russian world” as a heresy.”

“All of this could have been discussed with our colleagues abroad in another time, in the context of peaceful theological dialogue; but at the present moment this seems completely inappropriate. In the heat of an acute military conflict and the frightening vulnerability of a large number of people, it is preferable not to talk about it or discuss it, but to do what our Christian conscience dictates and circumstances allow. Just the same, it is sad that in the moment of an unprecedented crisis, when from all Christians is required efforts toward humaneness and remembrance of God, an accusation of heresy against an entire Local Church gets published, based on the writings of unscrupulous analysts who are very far from the experience and practice of Church life. It seems to us that the people upon whom the noble task is placed to be teachers of others could have acted differently even in the context of a brotherly rebuke, and allow that they could be mistaken due to their basic misunderstanding of the inner life of another Church. Then understanding could be hoped for in the future. This hope of ours is strengthened by the unique ecclesiastical experience of the twentieth century, when religious leaders, divided by the fronts of the First and Second World Wars, later met at conferences and meetings with the sincere desire to overcome all forms of human enmity for the sake of Church and society.

As for the accusation of ethnophyleticism: It must be said that the Declaration contains no citations from texts of the Russian Church, nor to relevant statutes of Orthodox teaching, without which any discussion of heresy is devoid of any theological content. Because of this it is not understood in what sense the authors of the Declaration use the word, “heresy”—in the theological sense, or in the publicist’s or mundane sense (as for example in science or political parties there are sometimes references to “heretics”). The reference to the Constantinople Council of 1872 does not explain this problem, because they are talking about the Constantinople Patriarchate, which had to do with ecclesiastical rule within the Ottoman Empire and never had, nor could have had a general ecclesiastical reception. Its resolutions have no canonical force with regard to the Russian Orthodox Church, which furthermore never recognized the “Bulgarian schism” as a heresy, but to the contrary, found the Orthodox Bulgarians’ demands concerning the language of church services and their fellow Bulgarian clergy quite justified. In Russia the “Greco-Bulgarian schism” was viewed as a schism—doubly sad because it was brought about with the support of non-Christian Turkish authorities from both sides. But in any case, with the nullification of the schism by the Constantinople Patriarchate in 1945, the “Bulgarian question” was finally resolved without any mention in those documents of the renunciation or overcoming of a “heresy”.

When the Balkan situation is insistently projected onto the peaceful, multinational situation existing amongst the peoples of Russia, which even during moments of deep schisms on political grounds (for example, the “Reds” and the “Whites”) did not acquire the nature of an ethnic conflict, we are dealing not with historical science in the service of theology but with political mythology. This is an unsuccessful, unfounded, and unconscionable analogy that doesn’t withstand criticism. The “Balkan projection” is the source of misunderstanding concerning the multinational Russian Church, as well as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In the future, when a meaningful inter-Orthodox dialogue can be continued, these questions could become an important subject for study.

As for the accusations of “demonization of political and religious dissenters and minorities” (the infamous Gay parades, performances in churches, etc.): Because in Russia, Church and State have been separate for over a century, the Church reserves the freedom of faith-teaching and cultural expression as Christian witness. This is simply witness, in no way nationalistic (“phyletistic”), but universal, based on Holy Scripture and centuries-long experience of church life. The Russian Church has no grounds for changing its proclamations and mission; moreover, it has no right to change them wilfully, [so as] to be in step with the reigning worldview and political convictions of the “progressive world”.

This cultural and missionary choice of the Russian Church, which contradicts what could be called the mainstream global world, can be the subject of discussion and public criticism—why not? Only it should be conscientious criticism, *bona fides*. But the Declaration does not in this sense presuppose any aim whatsoever of creating at the very least some semblance of validity. Its description of “Russian world” leaves one with a strange impression of a façade without a building behind it, like a prop in a film studio erected for only one purpose: to effectively burn it down in the final scene.

We can suppose one more explanation for this: The text is in no way shape or form a brotherly reproach directed at the leadership and members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Possibly it is addressed to Orthodox Christians who don’t live in Russia or the countries adjoining it—in the Near East, Asia, and even Africa; and they are the ones who are being urged to renounce the “machinations of the Russian world”. With these readers it may not be necessary to talk about the nuances of Russian history—it’s enough to delineate a clear opposition, albeit by informationally unscrupulous means. The main thing is that they be faced with a choice.

It seems that there is no way out of the current dead end in Orthodox dialogue to one or another political centre of influence. The only way out for the Christian conscience is to choose the Church that illumines the world with the Word and the Sacraments and therefore has no right to depart from the framework of its own calling and take on the responsibilities and aims of the state, thus turning the Church’s message into a political tribunal. We believe that the current misunderstanding will be overcome in the future, when inter-Orthodox cooperation will be dedicated to the common Christian mission in the world, where there is a thirst for the Word and for peace.”

Extracts from Irina Borshch: Declaration on the Teaching of “Russian World” as a Document of a new “Time Of Troubles” Posted 31/3/2022 on Pravoslavie.ru Translation by OrthoChristian.com

‘Voices for Peace in Ukraine and Russia’ by Nicholas Sooy

“One morning a few weeks ago, I was awoken at 4:00 a.m. with an urgent message from a priest in Russia: their anti-war activities had put them on the radar of “Center E,” a secret police unit inside Russia which investigates religious extremism and terrorism. Arrest and imprisonment was a real possibility, a frightening prospect given the many accusations of torture inside Russia’s prisons. This priest is a friend of mine, and a good man who wished harm on no one. However, in Russia it is illegal to oppose the war, with fines of up to \$45,000 and prison sentences of up to fifteen years. Russia had outlawed the seventh beatitude, which blessed the peacemakers.”

“At the same time that I’ve been working with priests in Russia who want to support peace, I’ve been corresponding with peace activists inside Ukraine, including clergy. One of the groups that my organization, the Orthodox Peace Fellowship, has partnered with is *Ethos*, which is running a project called “[God Against War](#).” This is a remarkable group of clergy and Christians who are devoted to peace.”

“It is a testament to the power of faith and the strength of the human spirit that against all odds there are still clergy and other Christians inside Russia and Ukraine speaking out for peace. It is our duty as Christians outside these countries to stand in solidarity with their voices and do all we can to amplify them. To that end, the Orthodox Peace Fellowship has launched two fundraisers, one to support Father Kovalenko and other peace activists inside Ukraine, and the other to support the many priests in Russia in need of evacuation. Father Kovalenko has told me that they need more funds to produce more articles and to flesh out their translation work. The war has been incredibly destructive to their efforts. My contacts in Russia have also spoken to me of their great needs and difficulties in relocating.

I encourage you to spread the word about these incredible people, and if you can, please consider contributing to [Ukrainian Voices for Peace](#) and/or [Russian Voices for Peace](#).”

Extracts from *Activist Priests: Voices for Peace in Ukraine and Russia* by Nicholas Sooy. Posted April 18th 2022 at *Orthodoxy in Dialogue*. For full text go to: [ACTIVIST PRIESTS: VOICES FOR PEACE IN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA by Nicholas Sooy](#)

Nicholas Sooy is a doctoral candidate in the philosophy department at Fordham University. Together with his wife, Oshadhi Sooy, he directs the [Orthodox Peace Fellowship](#) in North America and edits its journal, [In Communion](#).

Noticeboard

Services:

Saturday April 30th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday May 1st: **Thomas Sunday**

Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

Vespers **Saint Peter's Church, Ilfracombe, North Devon 5pm**

Saturday 7th: **Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am**

Sunday 8th: **Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-Bearers**

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

Saturday 14th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 15th: **Sunday of the Paralytic**

Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

Wednesday 18th: Feast of Mid-Pentecost

Vespers Saint Anne's 6.30pm

Saturday 21st: **Divine Liturgy Saint Anne's 10.30am**

Sunday 22nd: **Sunday of the Samaritan Woman (Photini) at the Well**

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

Saturday 28th: Vespers Saint Anne's 6pm

Sunday 29th: **Sunday of the Blind Man**

Typika Saint Anne's 10.30am

At the time of writing Father Gregory has Covid. For the revised schedule of services in Plymouth and Torquay pending his recovery go to: <https://plymchurch.com/services/>

Cultural Madness!

A few weeks ago I went to an excellent students' exhibition at the Sculpture School in Bondleigh. Last year the sculptor was asked to produce a sculpture of Pushkin to be sited near Pushkin House in Bloomsbury, and spent many weeks working on the maquette (right). Now the commissioners don't want the sculpture because they feel there is too much bad press and bad feeling against things Russian.

For heaven's sake! Yes, this present Russian government is dreadful, awful and should be castigated by all decent people. BUT... Pushkin has nothing to do with the war in Ukraine and if the noisy know-all's bothered to learn anything they'd realise Pushkin would not be a Putin supporter.

Why cancel any part of Russian culture which has

given so much to the world and is at the base of European culture. How many ballet-mad little girls have dreamt of being the Sugar Plum Fairy? Ask anyone to name a big book and many people would answer 'War and Peace'.

For non-Russian speakers the words on the plinth mean 'There is no truth where there is no love'. Pushkin's words are more than apt in our present time.

Celia Olsson



Contributions for the June issue should reach us please by **Monday May 23rd**, either by email (in Word, please, not pdf.) to martinolsson827@btinternet.com or by post to
The Editors, Little Linhay, Bondleigh, EX20 2AJ

This Month We Celebrate

On Tuesday May 3rd: **Radonitsa – The Joyful Commemoration of the Dead**

On Wednesday 4th: Virgin Martyr **Pelagia** of Tarsus (c290)

On Thursday 5th: Great Martyr **Irene** of Thessaloniki (1st-2ndC)

We wish **Matoushka Dawn, Matoushka Irina, Irene K, Irina R, Ira S, Irina S** and all **Irenes, Irinas and Irinis** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

New Martyr **Ephraim the Newly Revealed** (1426)

On Sunday 8th: The Holy Myrrhbearers **Mary Magdalen, Mary** the wife of Cleopas, **Salome** the mother of James and John, **Susanna, Joanna,** and **Mary and Martha** the sisters of Lazarus, Righteous **Joseph of Arimathaea** and **Nicodemus.**

Synaxis of **Saint John the Theologian.** We wish **Joanna T** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Monday 9th: Saint **Christopher** of Lycia (c250)

We wish **Christopher T** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Tuesday 10th: **Holy Apostle Simon Zelotes**

On Wednesday 11th: Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles **Cyril (869)** and **Methodios (885)**

Enlighteners of the Slavs

We wish **Kirill G** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Monday 16th: Saint **Brendan the Voyager** (c575)

We wish **Deacon Brandon** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

On Wednesday 18th: **The Mid-Feast of Pentecost**

On Sunday 22nd: Martyr **Photini**, the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well.

On Wednesday 25th: The Third Finding of the Honourable Head of the **Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John** (850)

On Thursday 26th: Saint **Augustine** of Canterbury, Evangelizer of the English (c605)

On Friday 27th: Holy Confessor **John the Russian** (1730)

Saint **Melangell**, Hermit at Pennant Melangell (c590)

Saint **Bede the Venerable** of Jarrow (735)



All the ways of this world are as fickle and unstable
as a sudden storm at sea.

The Venerable Bede

On Hearing the Truth

In our last issue we reflected on the importance of speaking the truth. In Radio 4's *A Point of View* on Sunday April 24th Howard Jacobson, surely one of the clearest and wisest commentators around today, gave a wonderful talk about how essential it is – and how difficult it can be - to accept unpleasant truths. Under the title *The Unlistened-to Story* he argued, by way of Primo Levi's accounts of the Holocaust and stories emerging today from Ukraine, that stories of truth must be listened to, no matter how uncomfortable or challenging we may find them. 'No deceit is ever so perfected,' he said 'that it doesn't require the connivance of the deceived.' You can listen to the talk (about 10 minutes long) at: [BBC Radio 4 - A Point of View, The Unlistened-to Story](#) Ed.

'Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.'

John 4:14: Jesus to the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are entirely those of the named authors or identified sources and should not be taken as representing the views of the parish as a whole.