



Prophet Elias News

**News and Views for the Orthodox Church
of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
March 2023**



***Extracts from An Introduction to Lent*
by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh**

Contrary to what many think or feel, Lent is a time of joy. It is a time when we come back to life. It is a time when we shake off what is bad and dead in us in order to become able to live, to live with all the vastness, all the depth, and all the intensity to which we are called. Unless we understand this quality of joy in Lent, we will make of it a monstrous caricature, a time when in God's own name we make our life a misery. This notion of joy connected with effort, with ascetical endeavour, with strenuous effort may indeed seem strange, and yet it runs through the whole of our spiritual life, through the life of the Church and the life of the Gospel. The Kingdom of God is something to be conquered. It is not simply given to those who leisurely, lazily wait for it to come. To those who wait for it in that spirit, it will come indeed: it will come at midnight; it will come like the Judgement of God, like the thief who enters when he is not expected, like the bridegroom, who arrives while the foolish virgins are asleep. This is not the way in which we should await Judgement and the Kingdom. Here again we need to recapture an attitude of mind which usually we can't manage to conjure up out of our depth, something which has become strangely alien to us: the joyful expectation of the Day of the Lord - in spite of the fact that we know this Day will be a Day of judgement.

It may strike us as strange to hear when in Church we proclaim the Gospel - the 'good news' - of judgement, and yet we do. We proclaim that the Day of the Lord is not fear, but hope, and declare together with the spirit of the Church: 'Come, Lord Jesus, and come soon' (cf. Rev. 22.20). So long as we are incapable of speaking in these terms, we lack something important in our Christian consciousness. We are still, whatever we may say, pagans dressed up in evangelical garments. We are still people for whom God is a God outside of us, for whom his coming is darkness and fear, and whose judgement is not our redemption but our condemnation, for whom to meet the Lord is a dread event and not the event we long and live for. Unless we realise this, then Lent cannot be a joy, since Lent brings with it both judgement and responsibility: we must judge ourselves in order to change, in order to become able to meet the Day of the Lord, the Resurrection, with an open heart, with faith, ready to rejoice in the fact that he has come.

Every coming of the Lord is judgement..... But judgement is not simply something that falls upon us from outside. Yes, the day will come when we will stand before God and be judged; but while our pilgrimage still continues, while we still live in the process of becoming, while there still lies ahead of us the road that leads us towards the fullness of the stature of Christ, towards our vocation, then judgement must be pronounced by ourselves. There is a constant dialogue within us throughout our lives. You remember the parable in which Christ says: 'Make your peace with your adversary while you are on the way' (Mt. 5.25). Some spiritual writers have seen in the adversary not the devil (with whom we cannot make our peace, with whom we are not to come to terms), but our conscience, which throughout life walks apace with us and never leaves us in peace. Our conscience is in continuous dialogue with us, gainsaying us at every moment, and we must come to terms with it because otherwise the moment will come when we finally reach the Judge, and then our adversary will become our accuser, and we will stand condemned. So while we are on the road, judgement is something which goes on constantly within ourselves, a dialogue, a dialectical tension between our thoughts and our emotions and our feelings and our actions which stand in judgement before us and before whom we stand in judgement. But in this respect we very often walk in darkness, and this darkness is the result of our darkened mind, of our darkened heart, of the darkening of our eye, which should be clear. It is only if the Lord himself sheds his light into our soul and upon our life, that we can begin to see what is wrong and what is right in us. There is a remarkable passage in the writings of John of Kronstadt, in which he says that God does not reveal to us the ugliness of our souls unless he can see in us sufficient faith and sufficient hope for us not to be broken by the vision of our own sins. In other words, whenever we see ourselves with our dark side, whenever this knowledge of ourselves increases, we can then understand ourselves more clearly in the light of God, that is, in the light of the divine judgement..... This is the first step, which we must accept and which we find so difficult to accept: we must face our true situation, not consoling ourselves with the thought that we have some sort of life within us that can replace divine life. We must accept that we are in darkness as far as the light of God is concerned. And then we must do something about it.

First of all we must become aware of the fact that without light we are lost, because the darkness in which we are left is death, the absence of God. But when it comes to doing something, there are two things that stand in our way. First of all, we will not act unless we are aware that we are in a desperate situation. If we are not aware that it is really a question of life and death, of the only thing that matters, then we will do nothing. We will pray to God to do something. We will hope that even though we are not even praying, he will come and act. But it is only out of a sense of deadly urgency that we can begin to act, like blind Bartimaeus, whom no one could stop from crying out, shouting for help, since he knew that this was the decisive moment. Christ was passing by. In a minute he would be gone and the darkness would become permanent, irremediable.....

The last step on our way towards Lent is one which is shown to us in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. It sets before us the following problem: what are we going to judge and to be judged about? And the answer is absolutely clear. In all this process of judgement we may have thought that we will be judged on whether we have a deep knowledge of God, whether we are theologians, whether we live in the transcendental realm. Well, this parable makes it absolutely clear that God's question to us, before we can enter into any kind of divine reality, is this: have you been human? If you have not been human, then don't imagine that you will be able to become like God-become-man, like the God-Man Jesus, who is the measure of all things. This is very important, because the type of judgement which we are constantly making is a falsified judgement. We notice how pious we are, how much knowledge of God we have, questions belonging to the realm of what an English writer has called 'Churchianity' as contrasted with Christianity. But the question which Christ asks us is this: Are you human or sub-human? In other words, are you capable of love or not? I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was in prison, I was ill. What did you do about it? Were you able to respond with your heart to my misery, were you able to respond at a cost and with all your humanity - or not?

At this point we must remember what we have said before concerning the Pharisee and the Publican. Christ does not ask us to fulfil the law. He will not count the number of loaves of bread and of cups of water and the number of visits we pay to hospitals and so forth. He will measure our heart's response. And this is made clear from the words of Christ in another part of St John's Gospel, where he says, 'And when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants'. The doing means nothing. We become human at the moment when, like the Publican, like the Prodigal Son, we have entered into the realm of broken-heartedness, into the realm of love which is a response both to divine love and to human suffering. This cannot be measured. We can never, on that level, say, 'I am safe. I will come to the judgement and be one of the sheep', because it will not be a question of whether or not we have accomplished the law, but whether this law has become so much ourselves that it has grown into the mystery of love. There, at that point, we will be on the fringe, on the very threshold of entering into that spring of life, that renewal of life, that newness of all things, which is Lent. We will have gone through all these stages of judgement, and will have emerged from blindness and from the law into a vision of the mysterious relationship which may be called 'mercy' or 'grace'. And we will be face to face with being human. But we must remember that to be human does not mean to be 'like us' but 'like Christ'. With this we can enter Lent and begin to experience through the readings of the Church, through the prayers of the Church, through the process of repentance, that discovery of the acts of divine grace which alone can lead us towards growth into the full stature of the likeness of Christ. I have brought you to the gate. Now you must walk into it.

This talk was given by Metropolitan Anthony to the London Group of the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius and their friends on Saturday, 17 February 1968. Published in Sourozh No.27 (1987) Pp. 3-13

The full text can be found at [AN INTRODUCTION TO LENT. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh \(mitras.ru\)](#)

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Sincere Repentance

Fire and water do not mix, neither can you mix judgment of others with the desire to repent. If a man commits a sin before you at the very moment of his death, pass no judgment, because the judgment of God is hidden from men. It has happened that men have sinned greatly in the open but have done greater deeds in secret, so that those who would disparage them have been fooled, with smoke instead of sunlight in their eyes.

* * * * *

Forgetting offences is a sign of sincere repentance. If you keep the memory of them, you may believe you have repented, but you are like someone running in his sleep. Let no one consider it a minor defect, this darkness that often clouds the eyes even of spiritual people.

Saint John of the Ladder

He Waits for Us Until We Come

When our blindness or weakness makes us fall, then our kind Lord gently touches us, prompts us and calls us. He wants us to look at how wretched we are and humbly face up to it. But he does not want us to stay like that, preoccupied with self-accusations and wallowing in self-pity, but he wants us to turn quickly to him. He stands all alone and waits for us, sorrowfully and full of grief, until we come, and then hurries to bring us back to himself. For we are his joy and delight, and he is our salvation and our life.

Mother Julian of Norwich (1343-?1416)

Noticeboard

Services:

- Saturday February 25th: Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Sunday February 26th: Forgiveness Sunday Vespers **3pm**
Monday 27th: Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete 6pm
Tuesday 28th: Great Canon 6pm
Wednesday March 1st: Great Canon 6pm
Thursday 2nd: Great Canon 6pm
Saturday 4th: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 5th: **First Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Orthodoxy** Typika and Vespers 10.30am
Friday 10th: Vespers 6pm
Saturday 11th: Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Sunday 12th: **Second Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas** Vespers **3pm**
Saturday 18th: Vespers of the Cross 6pm
Sunday 19th: **Third Sunday of Lent – Veneration of the Cross** Typika and Vespers 10.30am
Saturday 25th: FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION Vespers 6pm
Orthros and Divine Liturgy Plymouth 8.30am Torquay 9.30am
Sunday 26th: Fourth Sunday of Lent - St John of the Ladder. Celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation **Divine Liturgy (with Fr Alexander) 10.30am**
Wednesday 29th: Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete 6pm
Friday 31st: Akathist 6pm
Saturday April 1st: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 2nd: **Fifth Sunday of Lent – Saint Mary of Egypt** Typika and Vespers 10.30am

All services at Saint Anne's unless otherwise stated.

Renaissance: Sound and Light Show at the Cathedral

Take a sound and light journey through the Renaissance at Exeter Cathedral from 21-25 March. ***Renaissance*** is a fully curated sound and light show created by celebrated artistic collaboration, **Luxmuralis**.

It invites visitors to become immersed in the greatest paintings and artworks of the 14th-17th centuries. More info at:

<https://www.exetercathedral.org.uk/whats-on/events/renaissance-sound-and-light-show/>

Cathedral News

‘Utterly Staggering’ Poetry Reading

Thursday 30th March 12.30pm
St Stephen’s Church, EX4 3LW

Richard Skinner will give a reading of ‘Utterly Staggering’, his poem based on the gospel accounts of the first Easter, complemented by poems from Helen Evans and music from Bee Harley.

Drinks from 12.30pm. Free entry with donations for Exeter Food Action.

CTaX Bulletin

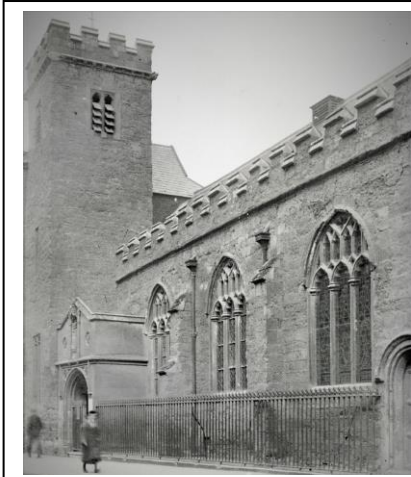
(Richard Skinner is Martin’s poetry mentor. Ed)

An Exeter Pilgrimage: Part 3

by Hugh Allen

We start this final part of the pilgrimage outside the city walls at the church of **St Sidwell** in Sidwell Street, named for the sixth or seventh century martyr whom we regularly commemorate in our parish, and who in former times had a popular cult throughout Devon. The original pre-Schism church contained her shrine; it has been rebuilt several times, most recently in the 1950s following severe wartime damage. A prominent feature of this rebuilding was an impressive mural by Hans Feibusch on the interior east wall, although the church's subsequent conversion into a community centre has resulted in this artwork being lost to view. However, significant activities are carried on here for the benefit of a not notably prosperous part of the city, which may St Sidwell's prayers prosper.

Former versions of this church played a notable part both in the Prayer Book rebellion of 1549 and in the cautious reintroduction of Catholic externals in the 19th century Church of England. So in this matter did our neighbouring church of **St James** (in its earlier, Victorian, incarnation, on what is now the football club car park; this too was a WW2 casualty). Let us thank God for all who in any way dignify and beautify churches both eastern and western – architects, icon painters, vestment makers, composers and singers, flower arrangers and all the rest – and pray that their work will always be worthy of Him in Whose honour it is undertaken.



St Lawrence's Church, destroyed in the Exeter Blitz 1942
(photo courtesy of Richard William Parker)

Continuing into High Street we pass through the site of the Roman East Gate, more or less level with Boots. A short walk down the right-hand pavement brings us to the site of the church of **St Lawrence**, commemorated by a plaque at the entrance to the Co-operative Bank – in fact we're walking through it, as the authorities took advantage of bomb damage to demolish the scanty (and not so scanty) remains on this side of the road and considerably widen it (compare how wide it is here with the next section, where the Elizabethan frontages of Lakeland and its neighbours have been preserved, even if their inner parts haven't). The dedication has survived in a post-war replacement in Hill Barton, one of the new suburbs developed in the 1950s to rehouse former city centre residents. St Lawrence is one of the best known early Roman martyrs; pray here for those who even today surrender their lives for Christ and the faith, and ask the prayers of the martyrs for courage and steadfastness in adversity.

Just across the road is **St Stephen's**, which survived because that side wasn't being widened. Cleared of Victorian pews and other impedimenta, this light and airy church is often used for exhibitions and suchlike. The space above the "bow" was originally a mezzanine-level side chapel, dedicated to St John the Baptist, the main altar having been on the lower level at the head of the nave. After temporary resting-places in St Olave's and the former parish church of Whipton, St Stephen's is now home on two Sundays a month to the Romanian congregation while they raise funds for the acquisition of their own premises, so let's remember them and their priest Fr Julian.

Across the little square behind the church are the remains of the chapel and almshouse of **St Catherine**, of fifteenth century date, another victim of wartime bombing and of later municipal destructiveness (the walls were significantly higher before the council levelled them down). I think the dedicatee here was Catherine of Siena, a late mediaeval Italian saint canonised by the Roman Pope at much the same time as its foundation and associated with the Dominicans or Black Friars, who had a house nearby, as did the Augustinian Canons. (The other Katherine, the early 4th century martyr of Alexandria, gave her name to the Benedictine nunnery of Polsloe, a significant portion of which survives behind Morrisons' supermarket.) The site is preserved as a memorial to those killed in the bombing raids on Exeter – pray for them, and for all victims of war and civil unrest.

In the nearest corner of the Cathedral Close is the church of **St Martin**, much of whose rather plain furnishings date from around 1700 and are typical of Anglicanism at that period. "St Martin the Merciful" is well loved in our tradition – let his example inspire us to be merciful in all our dealings, and never to forget those in any kind of need.

Our final ports of call are in South Street. Instead of going through the Cathedral *Yard* (what lies between this corner and the exit to the top of South Street), turn left and walk through the Cathedral *Close*, which takes one past the mediaeval canons' houses and out towards Southernhay. Passing under the ornamental iron footbridge go down the steps on your right and follow the path; you are now walking alongside a very well preserved section of the Roman wall, which continues to the far end of South Street and the site of the South Gate (the footprint of one side of it is marked in the formation of the pavement on the opposite side of the road).



St Stephen's, with Christmas shoppers



Holy Trinity and the end of the wall near the South Gate

The former church on your right is **Holy Trinity** (built 1818), the earlier version of which was attached to the gatehouse; it served the area between here and St Leonard's (originally a rural hamlet with a chapel of ease belonging to Exminster, so not part of the city at all). Its rather grander neighbour (a Wetherspoon pub, although the porch still bears the name **George's Meeting House**) was built for a Unitarian (i.e. Trinity-denying) congregation – an interesting conjunction, and one which should make us consider the importance of the central doctrine of our faith, God Who has revealed Himself as Three Persons in One Substance.

Return up South Street to the ruins of the **Hall of the Vicars Choral**, minor cathedral clergy who lived in cottages along the (now gated) lane alongside and for whom this building was their common room and refectory; it's another

wartime casualty. Immediately opposite stood the church of **St George**, founded in the 10th century but demolished for road widening in 1843. A doorway and a small portion of wall were discovered and together with a commemorative plaque were moved to the remains of the Vicars' Hall when that part of the street was being rebuilt in the 1950s (the name survives in George Street behind the new shops, as well as in St George's Hall). Here remember that St George is our national patron, and pray for the King, his Government and all who serve in the armed forces.



Surviving section of wall and doorway from the Saxon church of St George, re-erected in the ruins of the Vicars' Hall

To conclude, a word about how I've chosen what to include and what to leave out. Most (all?) of the parishes within the walled city were in existence before the eastern and western churches separated in the 11th century and commemorate saints venerated by both, even if there's little or nothing left of the original church buildings. I think I've included all of them, even those whose buildings have disappeared completely. In addition to the parish churches, mediaeval Exeter had a large number of non-parochial chapels and religious houses, a few of which have been mentioned in passing, as have some post-Reformation churches and other institutions which are of particular interest and of which at least something survives.

Many thanks to Hugh for all three parts this fascinating guide to the churches of mediaeval Exeter. Ed.

Appeals from CTaX (Christians Together Across Exeter)

Toy Library for Ukrainians

Merry Go Round Toy Libraries (Registered Charity Number 1100532) are keen to provide support to Ukrainian refugee families and their hosts. If you know a hosting family that would benefit from the loan of toys from our Toy Library then please do contact my.mgrtoylibrary.org for a free membership voucher. We have a large range of toys and resources to suit children of all ages.

Sewing Machines for Afghan Refugees

Do you have - or do you know anyone who has - a sewing machine in good working order that you (or they) would be willing to donate? Some of our clients from Afghanistan, who are currently living in hotels and have very little to do, are highly skilled at making their own clothes and would very much like to have the opportunity to do so again. If you can help please e-mail us at info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk or call 01392 682185. Many thanks!

A Message for Forgiveness Sunday

I would ask you, brothers, and sisters, to forgive me if I have offended you in any way, and for a comment I made which was printed in a publication that had an alternative viewpoint of the crises of the past few years.

As Father Peter wrote at the beginning of the lockdown, crisis is the Greek word for judgement. Should this not spur us on to cleanse ourselves through prayer and fasting during the coming season of Lent.

John Thomas, Ilfracombe

Congratulations!

Many congratulations to Sophia Murjaneh, Salem and Julia's daughter, on being awarded BBC Spotlight's **Young Reporter of the Year** for her reporting on the experience of refugees and evacuees past and present.

On Fasting

If you fast but do not watch over your mouth so that it speaks no word of wickedness or anger, no lie, no perjury, if you speak ill of your neighbour - even if it comes from the mouth of a faster - your fasting will be useless and will be wasted effort . Saint Athanasius of Alexandria

Memory Eternal

Archpriest John Musther of our Deanery, who founded the Orthodox Church of St Mungo, St Bega and St Herbert in Braithwaite, Cumbria, died peacefully on Saturday, February 4 at the age of 82. Despite suffering from Parkinson's disease, which affected his balance and caused his hands to shake, he had continued to serve at the Sunday Liturgy until he fell ill. His devoted wife Jenny Bega, a former nurse, had been caring for him at home, and was with him in his final moments.

Among many accomplishments, Fr John will be remembered for his determination to revive the practice of veneration of our British saints, which found expression in his Synaxarion of the Saints of Great Britain and Ireland, featuring information about the Saints, icons and troparia where available, and places of pilgrimage. The Synaxarion website can be found at <http://www.synaxarion.org.uk/>

Tributes to Father John can be found at

[Tributes paid to the late Keswick orthodox priest John Musther | News and Star](#)

and an extended interview he gave in 2015 at [An Interview With Fr. John Musther of Cumbria](#)

Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon died in Athens on February 2nd at the age of 92. Widely regarded as one of the most influential theologians of the last hundred years, his *Being as Communion* (1981) has become a modern classic of Orthodoxy. As Metropolitan of the Ecumenical Throne, he represented the Orthodox Church as president or member in various bilateral inter-Christian dialogues, while his work on the Eucharist and ecology was a primary influence on the Patriarch of Constantinople's teachings on creation care and climate change.

The person is otherness in communion and communion in otherness. The person is an identity that emerges through relationship; it is an 'I' that can exist only as long as it relates to a 'thou' which affirms its existence and its otherness. If we isolate the 'I' from the 'thou' we lose not only its otherness but also its very being; it simply cannot be without the other.

John D. Zizioulas *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*

The Wisdom of the Bee

'Words of a Wise Man' in the last Newsletter raised some questions about 'roots' and the sources that nourish our church life, which I want explore further.

The statement that 'our roots are not Russia. Our roots are in the revival created by the Parish School...' clearly had a particular context, within which it doubtless made a valid point. Taken out of context and generalised, however, it risks feeding into the sort of Russophobia that seems to have gripped this country since the invasion of Ukraine. And such a narrative, with its stark contrast between Russia and 'Western values', may not be entirely reassuring to Orthodox of any stripe.

The experience of displacement and political powerlessness in the Russian emigration was undoubtedly an important element in the rediscovery of what it means to be the Church. But the ability of many of the emigres to use the catastrophe creatively had much to do with what they *had* been able to bring with them from Russia – a theological and philosophical vision. The Paris 'revival' was less a root than a flowering, and one hard to imagine without its own roots – the 1917-18 Council and the remarkable cultural, intellectual and spiritual ferment of nineteenth-century Russia which preceded it. Openness to learning from the West, from its culture and its intellectual life, was itself part and parcel of that movement. How the renewal in theology and church life might have played out within Russia had it not been rudely interrupted by the revolution, we can never know: but the seeds were all there.

Whenever we talk about the 'roots' of a particular Orthodox community, we are of course talking about adventitious roots – the taproot being that of the Vine which is Christ. But adventitious roots are also important and valuable, *and varied*. Another image that may be helpful for the way Christians draw on their cultural environment is the one used by St Basil when talking about the uses of classical literature, that of the bee. The bee visits a variety of flowers, with discernment, homing in on the nectar and leaving whatever is not beneficial to it. Inspired by Basil's appeal to natural history, we might go further, and remark that over-specialisation is not a prudent strategy for any creature, however impressively adapted it may be to its habitat or food source. The wisdom of the bee thus lies in recognising what is good and nourishing wherever it is found, and knowing how to separate it from the poisonous or indigestible.

So the wisdom of the 'rational bee', I would suggest, lies in garnering the riches of *all* the various traditions that have nourished us - in expanding, not restricting, the great and sometimes tangled network of 'roots' that we acknowledge as vital to our life and growth.

Elizabeth Theokritoff

‘Whatever You Ask, This Will I Do.’

I am writing this on the Sunday of the Last Judgement, when the gospel reading (Matthew 25: 31-46) makes it quite clear that our fitness to inherit the Kingdom will be judged not on how many prostrations we have done, nor whether we fully understand the Definition of Chalcedon, but on our response to those in need – the hungry, the destitute, the homeless, the sick and those in prison.

The coming week will mark a year since the beginning of the fratricidal war in Ukraine. The recent earthquakes in Turkiye and Syria have left thousands grieving and millions homeless in sub-zero temperatures. In Yemen, Myanmar, South Sudan, Northern Nigeria and many other places, apparently endless civil wars are destroying lives and entire communities. We are appealed to constantly to give practical help. We do what we feel we can by sending money for food, clothing, shelter and medicines, and some of us are able to offer a welcome for displaced strangers. But the daily updates on the extent of the need are sometimes overwhelming, and it is so easy to feel helpless. What can we do?

The Gospel makes it quite clear: we must believe that if we pray, our prayers will have some effect. Jesus said: ‘Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:12-14; cf also Matthew 7:7-11; 18:19-20; 21:21-22; John 14:12-14; 15:7; 16:23-27.)

If we can reach out in our prayers to those who have died, to the injured, the grieving, the cold, the hungry, and the dispossessed, if we can believe in our hearts that those prayers will somehow make a difference, even if we cannot conceive how, then we can surely take comfort in what Jesus has told us: “For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” (Matthew 7:11)

Martin Olsson

Peace and Freedom

by Fr Alexis Struve

From 10th to 15th January, 400 Orthodox people from all continents — theologians, pastors and members of the faithful involved in their communities — gathered in Vólos to work on the theme of the Church's mission in today's world. We cannot fail to welcome this tremendous opportunity for meetings, debates and exchanges between Orthodox people from different jurisdictions across all the divisions, all the walls that are being constructed in our Church. Inevitably, in the majority of the workshops the question of the war in Ukraine was raised. At the time of publication of this *Lettre du Vicariat*, it has been a year since the land of Ukraine was violated, human life there desecrated. More than ever we need to send up our prayers to ask for peace.

"You had a slave and I send you back a brother," the apostle wrote in his letter to Philemon (Phil 1:16). In these days, it seems to me essential, in addition to peace, to place the question of freedom at the centre of our prayers. Today, on our continent, human freedom is once again being outraged and disfigured. And, as we know, peace without freedom is nothing. Christian freedom is above all a gift from God. If Christ refused to change stones into bread (Mt 4:3-4), if He voluntarily accepted the Cross, it was to lay the foundations of our freedom. The whole life of the Church is built on freedom and love, lived in the breath of the Holy Spirit.

The Protestant theologian Jacques Ellul, who has written often about hope and freedom, reminds us that in Jesus Christ freedom knows no bounds, other than love of neighbour and the search for the glory of God. Despotism is incompatible with peace, because its logic is that of the negation of the greatness of man, of the negation of freedom. This freedom is the answer to the impasse in which our Church often finds itself, especially that of fundamentalism and of servility to Caesar, but also the impasse of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, whose intention is to kidnap our freedom.

Olivier Clément, in his text on "The Courage of Freedom" (Anachroniques, DDB, 1990, p 74), reminds us that "Christianity must be an invigorating breath of responsible and creative freedom. The purpose of the Church, of the Mother-Church, is to bring into the world men thus liberated, who will know how to reinvent among men love, beauty, culture. A few words sum up everything here : non-possession, inner poverty, the courage of holiness."

This courage of holiness is essential today. On several occasions during the Vólos conference, personalities were mentioned such as St. Alexander Schmorell, the German soldier who paid with his life for his fight against the Nazi regime, canonized by the Russian Church Abroad, or Saint Mary of Paris for her action during the occupation. What would she think of being transformed today into a medal, into a "decoration", to flatter the pride of men? Today, once again in our Europe, men and women are taking the risk of freedom to express their opposition to a war that no one understands. Today, not only is the Church slow to defend these men and women, but she is sometimes complicit in their oppression. So, when today we send up our prayers to the Lord for all the victims of war, let us not forget to include in these prayers those who refuse to support the indefensible and are deprived of liberty for doing so. To be an apostle of peace requires above all to be an apostle of freedom.

This Month We Celebrate

- On Wednesday March 1st: **Saint David** of Wales (6thC)
We wish **David W** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
- On Thursday 2nd: **Saint Chad**, Bishop of Lichfield (672)
Saint Nicholas Planas, Parish priest in Athens (1932)
- On Saturday 4th: First Saturday of Lent - Commemoration of **Saint Theodore the Recruit**
We wish **Bojidar P** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
Saint Owen of Lichfield (680)
We wish **Owain O** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
- On Sunday 5th: **First Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Orthodoxy**
Saint Piran, Patron Saint of Cornwall (c480)
- On Monday 6th: **Discovery of the Precious Cross** by the **Empress Saint Helena** in Jerusalem (326)
- On Wednesday 8th: **Saint Felix**, Enlightener of East Anglia (c648)
- On Thursday 9th: **The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste** (c320)
Saint Constantine of Cornwall (6thC)
- On Saturday 11th: Second Saturday of Lent: **Saturday of Souls**
- On Sunday 12th: **Second Sunday of Great Lent - Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas**
We wish **Fr Gregory Palamas** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
- On Tuesday 14th: **Saint Benedict** of Nursia (543) Patron Saint of Europe.
Established the Benedictine Rule of monasticism at the Monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy.
- On Wednesday 15th: **Apostle Aristoboulos** of the Seventy, First Bishop of Britain (1stC)
- On Friday 17th: **Saint Patrick** of Armagh, Apostle to the Irish (461)
- On Saturday 18th: Third Saturday of Lent: **Saturday of Souls**
Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (386)
Saint Edward the Passionbearer, King of England (c978)
Saint Nicholas (Velimirovich), Bishop of Zhica (1956)
Prolific writer, most famously of the *Prologue from Ohrid* and *Prayers by the Lake*
- On Sunday 19th: **Third Sunday of Lent – Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross**
- On Monday 20th: **Saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne** (687)
- On Tuesday 21st: **Saint Seraphim of Vyritsa** (Russia 1949)
- On Thursday 23rd: **Saint Nikon of the Kyiv/Kiev Caves** (1088)
- On Saturday 25th: **THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY, MOTHER OF GOD AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY**
We wish all **Marias** who celebrate their Namedays today a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
- On Sunday 26th: **Fourth Sunday of Lent – Sunday of Saint John Climacus**,
Author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*
Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel
We wish **Sofia Gabrielle** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!!**
- On Thursday 30th: **Saint John of the Ladder**, Sinai (7thC)
- On Friday 31st: **Saint Innocent of Alaska**, Apostle to the Americas (1879)
Saint Maria of Paris, New Martyr (1945)
We wish **Maria G** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

Lists of Names for the Liturgy

Father Tryan asks that lists of names to be read during the Liturgy of Preparation should be handed in by 10am, so that he can offer them with the particles from the prosphora. If this is not possible, names can be texted to him the previous day, or before 9.30am on the day of the Liturgy, when he switches off his phone. Alternatively, lists and prosphora books can be left on the oblation table to be read at the next Liturgy. Father Tryan's phone number is: **+44 78 00 644 599**

Some Memories of Joanna

In these days of constant bad news, to hear of Joanna's death stood out as truly shocking. She was one of those people who is always there, even if she can't make it to church. I have so many happy memories of her friendship, especially when we were two broke single mums. When we had celebrations of major feasts in Combe Martin she and Irene would come to stay overnight with Emma and I in Tiverton. They would arrive by bus (she didn't have a car in those days) and we drove up to Combe Martin for the Vigil and then again for the Liturgy and feast the next morning. The back of my small car was loaded with Irene, Emma, our labrador Ferdy, and the feast food – and on one occasion Fr Nicanor (then a deacon) when his bike had broken down outside South Molton. They were wonderful journeys taken up with sorting out the world, discussing some theological point, and laughing. And that for me was the essence of Joanna – intelligent conversation, wide interests and a great sense of humour. Essences I treasure: may her memory be eternal.

Celia

Johanna was one of the kindest, most discreet and gentle persons I have ever met.

She would embrace us and give us the traditional 3-kiss greeting when we met at St Anne's. May we next embrace one another in Heavenly Jerusalem, where she has gone to prepare a nice place for us all, together with our beloved Fr Peter and Aidan our emblematic churchwarden.

Condolences to James (I have sweetest memories of Johanna bringing him along on Sundays - still a school boy- to serve in the altar).

Memory eternal!

Andreas Antonopoulos (Patras, Greece)

I moved to teach in Exeter in 1978 and began to attend the services at St Anne's. Very soon I was asked to sing and was encouraged to gather a group together. After a while Joanna Taylor joined us; she had become an Orthodox Christian in Canada. So we had weekly practices at our home in old Tiverton Road and I spent many hours writing the music in manuscript form. It is still in my filing cabinet.

Elizabeth and I became friends with Joanna; I remember driving to Sidford and walking around an earthwork near her home. The bracken was high and there were brambles all around, but we made the circuit. I lost contact with her after moving schools and changing to the closer Orthodox Church in Torquay. When we met at the burial of Eleni Harris, we shared experiences of our Church chanting days. Memory Eternal!

Fr Gregory Palamas

We are very sad upon losing the lovely soul of Joana Taylor. Let's pray for her soul that God may receive it back back with open hands. As we love the good ones so does God and I believe that he calls her back home because she was a good person.

I pray for the entire family most especially Irene and James, may God keep them strong through these trying moments of death.

Please kindly extend my condolences to the entire family and thank them on my behalf for great work that our mother has done for us in order to be what we are right now.

Dr Dimitrios Kkunsa, Uganda

Dimitrios' medical training was funded by the Bishop Spartas Trust, of which Joanna was a dedicated and enthusiastic Trustee.



Joanna enjoying one of many leisurely Sunday lunches at Combe Martin.

Photo by Shusha

We were very sad to hear that Joanna had died. Our prayers and deepest sympathies are with James and Irene and her family.

Our abiding memory of Joanna will be her ever welcoming presence. Joanna was the kindest of people, unfailingly generous and loyal, and we were struck on occasion to hear of her contacting people who had long since left the parish with news that would concern them. Certainly her Name Day cards seemed to come as a gentle reminder as if from the Church, always, without fail, even during her final illness. Joanna's lovely, gentle soul will be sorely missed - as John Donne's bell tolls again. Memory Eternal!"

With love,
Sophia and Tony xxx

Joanna was such an unassuming person that it is easy to forget how important a part she played during her many years of service to the life of our parish. She was, at one time or another, churchwarden of Saint Anne's, parish diocesan and deanery representative, parish secretary (and meticulous minute taker), choir member and enthusiastic participant in parish pilgrimages. More than that, she always remembered people's namedays, and kept in touch, by phone or by letter (always hand written), with members of the parish who couldn't get to church. This was particularly true during the Covid lockdowns, when we knew that we could rely on Joanna to know how somebody was if we were worried about them, and that when we were unable to hold services at all, Joanna would be at home reading the Hours or the Canon for the day. So many people have commented, on hearing of her untimely death: 'But Joanna has always just *been* there.' She will be hugely missed.

Personally, in addition to her unfailing friendship, I will miss her reassuring presence and wise counsel as Treasurer of the Bishop Spartas Trust, as well as her infectious delight when there was news of good progress from our Ugandan students.

Martin O

She was my good friend. We used to share a car going to Combe Martin for services. Last time I saw her was last year, about this time, when I drove the first and last time to her home in the village of Yarcombe. After the lunch she prepared we went by my car shopping for her in Chard's Sainsbury's. A year ago she didn't look ill.

God rest her in peace!

Father Tryan

Joanna was a faithful member of the parish for many, many years, and in her time served successively as Parish Warden, Secretary and (until prevented by ill-health) PAC minute-taker — I couldn't have survived as Secretary without her help. Always modest and unassuming, her faithfulness in public worship and daily prayer was both an example and a spiritual support for the community in both Exeter and North Devon. Namesdays and other special occasions were unfailingly marked by a card from Joanna, and a phone call from her (in which church and world were put to rights to our mutual satisfaction) was always a joyful event. We will miss her, but we can be sure that her support for the parish will now be redoubled!

Hugh

Contributions for the April issue should reach the Editors at martinolsson827@btinternet.com or by post at *Little Linhay, Boodleigh, EX20 2AJ* by **Friday 24th March**, please.

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.

Some Notes on Joanna's Background

Born 02.09.47 in Pinner, Middlesex to Leslie and Olive Taylor and moved to Ickenham aged two where her formative years were spent.

Leslie was a sign painter and worked as such for the TAs in WW2. (I believe he painted the sign over the gateway to St Anne's, I have a memory of him doing this when I was very small which would have been early 90s?)

Olive was a very keen gardener (a trait mum inherited and kept all her life) winning medals with the RHS which mum kept after she passed in 1988.

First encountered Orthodoxy when a school trip to Greece in 1965 coincided with Easter celebrations. Remembers the Archbishop and King Constantine coming out with lighted candles to announce the resurrection!

Read Geography at Aberystwyth University.

Emigrated to Canada in 1969 with her life long friend Daphne where they fell in with like-minded young people from the Youth Hostelling Association. New hobbies included snow-shoeing but more importantly it was here that she converted to Orthodoxy and her first child Irene was born in 1976.

Returned to England after eight years and moved to Devon where Leslie and Olive had moved to on their retirement and where she discovered and become a member of the Orthodox Parish there.

James

Health Update form Sophia Roberts

Thank you all for your love and prayers. After a tough eighteen months, including three general anaesthetics and a six day stay in hospital (for a day case) I think I'm as well as I'm going to be, for the time being. The good news is that my fibrosis has stabilised; *ergo* it isn't getting any worse. This may mean that it was induced by the long term use of medication that I stopped taking over a year ago. As the only diagnostic tool to establish this and to possibly reverse the damage is a prolonged intensive course of steroids that I'm not inclined to take—for reasons too numerous to go into in this space—I anticipate that I will be signed off when I see my pulmonary consultant in early March. If it is anything more sinister time will tell. In the meantime minor heart surgery has eased my breathing problems so I'm better than I was. I'm not as well as I was in 2021 but I can at least countenance leading something resembling a normal life. I'm looking forward to it; and to coming back to my community at St Anne's!

