



Prophet Elias News

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



The Paralytic at the Pool by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

How tragic today's story from the life of Christ is. A man had been paralysed for years. He had lain at a short distance from healing, but he himself had no strength to merge into the waters of ablution. And no one - no one in the course of all these years - had had compassion on him.

The mobile ones rushed to be the first in order to be healed. Others who were attached to them by love, by friendship, helped them to be healed. But no one cast a glance at this man, who for years had longed for healing and was not in himself able to find strength to become whole.

If only one person had been there, if only one heart had responded with compassion, this man might have been whole years and years earlier. As no one, not one person, had compassion on him, all that was left to him - and I say *all that was left to him* with a sense of horror - was the direct intervention of God.

We are surrounded by people who are in need. It is not only people who are physically paralysed who need help. There are so many people who are paralysed in themselves, and need to meet someone who would help them. Paralysed in themselves are those who are terrified of life, because life has been an object of terror for them since they were born: insensitive parents, heartless, brutal surroundings. How many are those who hoped, when they were still small, that there would be something for them in life. But no. There wasn't. There was no compassion. There was no friendliness. There was *nothing*. And when they tried to receive comfort and support, they did not receive it. Whenever they thought they could do something they were told, 'Don't try. Don't you understand that you are incapable of this?' And they felt lower and lower.

How many were unable to fulfil their lives because they were physically ill, and not sufficiently strong... But did they find someone to give them a supporting hand? Did they find anyone who felt so deeply for them and about them that they went out of their way to help? And how many are those who are terrified of life lived in circumstances of fear, of violence, of brutality... But all this could not have overtaken them if there had been someone who have stood by them and not abandoned them.

So we are surrounded, all of us, by people who are in the situation of this paralytic man. If we think of ourselves we will see that many of us *are* paralysed, incapable of fulfilling all their aspirations; incapable of being what they longed to be, incapable of serving others the way their heart speaks; incapable of doing anything they longed for because fear, brokenness has come into them.

And all of us, *all of us* were responsible for each of them. We are responsible, mutually, for one another; because when we look right and left at the people who stand by us, what do we know about them? Do we know how broken they are? How much pain there is in their hearts? How much agony there has been in their lives? How many broken hopes, how much fear and rejection and contempt that has made them contemptuous of themselves and unable even to respect themselves - not to speak of having the courage of making a move towards wholeness, that wholeness of which the Gospel speaks in this passage and in so many other places?

Let us reflect on this. Let us look at each other and ask ourselves, 'How much frailty is there in him or her? How much pain has accumulated in his or her heart? How much fear of life has come in to his or her - or my - existence?'

Let us look at one another with understanding, with attention. Christ is there. He can heal; yes. But we will be answerable for each other, because there are so many ways in which we should be the eyes of Christ who sees the needs, the ears of Christ who hears the cry, the hands of Christ who supports and heals or makes it possible for the person to be healed.

Let us look at this story of the paralytic with new eyes; not thinking of this poor man two thousand years ago who was so lucky that Christ happened to be near him and at last did what every neighbour should have done. Let us look at each other and have compassion, active compassion; insight; love if we can. And then this parable will not have been spoken or this event will not have been related to us in vain.

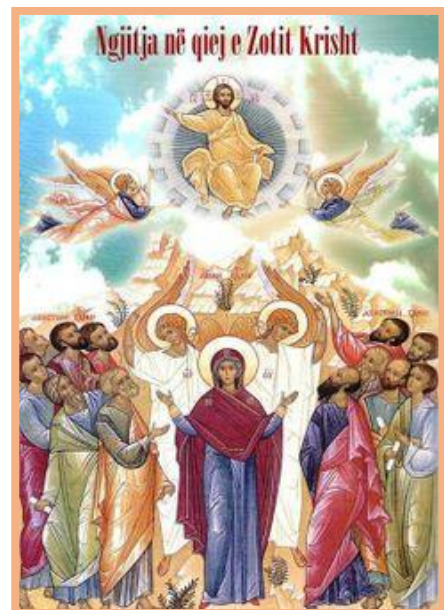
CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!

Sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh on the Sunday of the Paralytic, 21st May 2000.
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On the Ascension by Fr Philip LeMasters

Sometimes we all set our sights too low, expecting too little of ourselves and others. The season of the Ascension is a powerful antidote to such low expectations, for it reveals the great glory and dignity that Jesus Christ has given us. Through His Ascension, we are raised with Him literally to the heights of the heavenly Kingdom.

Forty days after His resurrection, our Lord ascended into heaven. In Him, humanity and divinity are united in one Person; He goes up into heaven as the God-Man. The Son shares in the glory that He had with the Father and the Holy Spirit before the creation of the world. And He brings our humanity into that glory with Him. There is perhaps no more powerful sign of our salvation than the Ascension, for it makes clear that our Lord has raised us not only from the tomb, but into the eternal life of the Holy Trinity. We truly become participants in God, partakers of the divine nature by grace, in our ascended Lord.



And we are reminded by the Ascension that Jesus Christ is not merely a great teacher or example or even an angel or a lesser god. As the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea proclaimed, He is light of light, very God of very God, of one essence with the Father, the only begotten Son of God. Only One who is truly both God and human can bring humans into the life of God.

Unfortunately, some have set their sights too low in how they view Jesus Christ and themselves. If we want a Saviour who merely teaches and models a good life or advances a political agenda, we might become a bit more moral by listening to Him. But human teachers and examples cannot conquer death and cannot raise us with them into eternal life.

Countless martyrs, including Jesus Christ's disciples, did not go to their deaths out of loyalty to a mere human teacher. They looked death in the eye and did not blink because they knew that their Lord was God, that He had conquered death and would share His victory with them in heaven. In a matter of days, Christ's disciples went from total despair and defeat at His crucifixion to the astounding joy of Pascha and Pentecost. These were life-changing experiences that gave them the strength to sacrifice their own lives for the Lord. Teachers and good examples die and are ultimately forgotten; generations of martyrs do not give their lives for them. But the life of the risen and ascended Son of God continues in the Church, especially in the witness of the martyrs who share in a victory that is not of this world.

Indeed, we all share in the eternal life of Christ through His Body, the Church. The Son prayed to the Father that His followers “may be one as We are...that they all may be one, as You, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they may also be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one...”

Here is a very high, very exalted view of what it means to be a human being in the image and likeness of God. In Christ’s Body, the Church, we are to be one in Him, showing forth the unity of holiness and love that are characteristic of the Holy Trinity. Christ has given us His glory, a share in life eternal, the life to which He has ascended as the Saviour of the world. And that glory, that eternal life, is not an individual undertaking; it is the life of unity in Christ, of His Body, of which we are all members by baptism.

Unfortunately, we have all fallen short of the life in Christ. The truth is that we often would rather not ascend in Him to a life of holiness. We prefer to do things which are beneath us, which are not fitting for those created in the image and likeness of God, those who are called to live the life of heaven even now. Instead of dwelling on what is true, noble, just, and pure, we too often dwell on what inflames our passions, our self-centred desires. Instead of recognizing that our salvation is a life together in the Body of Christ, we try to live as isolated individuals, continuing the division from one another that has beset humanity since Adam and Eve.

It might be possible to follow the guidance of a teacher in isolation from others, on our own terms, according to whatever private interpretations seem right to us. But it is impossible to embrace the fullness of life in our Risen and Ascended Lord in isolation or as though our faith means whatever we want it to mean. We can interpret the words of a merely human teacher however we want, but the One Who has conquered death and ascended into heaven requires something different. The point is not to make Him in our image, to water Him down into someone Whom we can accept and understand on our own terms. Instead, the point is to fall before Him in worship, to accept in humility the great blessing of the resurrected, ascended life which He gives us, and to live faithfully in the unity of the Church as we grow in Him.

Let us celebrate the Ascension, then, by embracing the great dignity that is ours in the God-Man Who has gone up to heaven. Let us pay close attention to our thoughts, words, and deeds, and stop doing what is beneath us as those whose are called to the glory of the Kingdom. Let us make of our life in the Church an icon of the Holy Trinity, a Communion of love and holiness.

Sermon preached by Fr Philip LeMasters on 15th June 2013. Reprinted with permission. Pastor of St. Luke Orthodox Church in Abilene, Texas, Fr. Philip is also Professor of Religion at McMurry University and a member of the Board of Trustees of St. Vladimir’s Seminary in New York, where he holds an appointment as Professor of Christian Ethics.

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/easternchristianinsights/author/easternchristianinsights/>

Father Nicanor

For some months before Pascha, Fr Nicanor had been saying he would serve until Paschal Vespers on Easter Sunday, but that after that he would probably retire from active service. Come the event - which was as always a joyful occasion, as befits its alternative title of ‘the Agape Vespers’, or Vespers of Love – he announced with characteristic candour that he wasn’t altogether sure about this talk of retirement, and assured us that he would be happy to go on serving us whenever he could.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Nikitas had heard of Fr Nicanor’s possible ‘retirement’, and had sent him a letter of commendation (see p4), together with a very handsome medal in appreciation of his selfless service to our parish from its very first day 55 years ago when he and Father Barnabas installed iconostasis in the Willand monastery and celebrated Vespers there for the first time.

Ed.



Father Nicanor's Letter of Commendation from Archbishop Nikitas



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA AND GREAT BRITAIN

March 20, 2023

The Rev. Archpriest Nicanor Wilkins
77 Pinnex Moor Road
Tiverton, Devon EX16 6JZ

Beloved Fr. Nicanor,

It is with much paternal pride and love in the Lord that I would like to convey to you the wholehearted appreciation and commendation of the Holy Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, an Eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, for your many decades of fruitful and grace-filled priestly service. You have decorated the ranks of the presbyters, ministering prayerfully and humbly to so many souls - dedicating your time and talents for the building up of the Body of Christ, and leading people to the Ark of Salvation.

In recognition for your many years of worthy priestly service, on behalf of the Archdiocese, I am pleased to enclose the Archdiocesan Medal of Service. Although this honour is nothing in comparison to the joy and refreshment your pastoral heart has granted so many people, it is a token of our collective thanksgiving for your ministry. Axios!

As you begin a new chapter in your life, a chapter of increased prayer, reading, reflection, and refreshment, know that your service will continue to inspire clergy and laity alike, as you have set a high standard and have established a legacy of giving and serving that will remain with us for many more years to come.

Thanking you, dear Fr. Nicanor, for all things "known and unknown" you have done in the service of Christ and His Holy Church, I remain

Paternally yours in Christ,

Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain

Paschal Greetings

From Vassilis and Konstantina in Thessaloniki

May our days be filled with light and life from the Resurrection!

Along with our Resurrection wishes, we would like to share these words with you taken from a book called "Live" by a young Greek priest called Fr. Livios:

"Allow God to dream in your heart,
to write the script of your life in many different ways.
If you want to be the protagonist in the big 'role' of your life,
trust the screenwriter"

From John Thomas

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!

John sends his greetings
and wishes a blessed
Paschal Season to all.

The King of Instruments

On my way out of the Holy Saturday service at St James's (how blessed we are to have the use of this splendid church when we need extra space!) I picked up a copy of their current parish magazine. Although it's not part of our tradition there can be no doubt that the organ is indeed the most magnificent instrument, the one at St James's being a particularly fine example. On page 11 of the magazine I found this announcement:

After its recent major refurbishment St James's organ is now sounding spectacular. There will be a chance to "Meet the King of Instruments" on Sunday 7th May from 3.30pm. This free event will also feature a talk about the organ with an opportunity to see its inner workings from the comfort of your seat, as well as a demonstration of the instrument by our organists, Tom Salmon and Marco Bresolin, supported by a vocal quartet.

In a former existence I found myself having to get to grips (literally!) with the inner workings of a rather less magnificent organ than this one, so would highly recommend this event to anyone interested.

Hugh Allen

Exeter Cathedral Coronation Exhibition and Service of Celebration

Exeter Cathedral is hosting a new exhibition to celebrate the forthcoming Coronation of The King and The Queen Consort. The exhibition will bring together memorabilia from previous Coronations, which have been lent by members of the public from across Devon in response to a public request by the cathedral. The diverse range of items on display will include an Earl and Countess' Coronation Robes, replica Crown Jewels, and drapes from Westminster Abbey, which were commissioned for the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937.

Jonathan Scott, Heritage Engagement Manager at Exeter Cathedral said: "We were keen to tell the Coronation stories of the people of Devon, and we have had an amazing response from our call out for contributions. We have been able to bring together a fascinating and wide range of objects that tell these stories."

The cathedral will also be hosting a special Coronation Service of Celebration to mark the historic occasion on Sunday, 7 May at 4pm. Admission is free of charge, but places should be reserved in advance – go to <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/exetercathedral/t-xmaezzi>

The *Coronation and Our County* exhibition at Exeter Cathedral runs from 22 April until 15 May. Entry to the exhibition is included with the cathedral admission fee.

From Cathedral News

Memory Eternal!

Fr John Musther

Further to our report of Fr John's death in our last issue, there is a very full obituary of this remarkable man, together with an account of his funeral, on the Deanery website at <https://thyateira-deanery.uk/node/436>

Stoyanka Cooke

On 24th April Fr Trayan officiated at the funeral of Stoyanka at Saint Anne's, followed by interment at Topsham Cemetery. Some parish members may remember Fr Trayan bringing Stoyanka to Saint Anne's on a number of occasions some years ago, when she was already very elderly. She died on 26th March, aged 87 years, at Highland Borders Care Home in Heavitree.

This Month We Celebrate

- On Tuesday May 2nd: Translation of the relics of **Saint Athanasios the Great** (373)
Saint Matrona of Moscow (1952)
- On Thursday 4th: **Virgin Martyr Pelagia** of Tarsus (c290)
- On Friday 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 7th: **Saint Nil Sorski** (1508) Leader of the Non-possessors (*nestyazhateli*)
- On Monday 8th: Synaxis of **Saint John the Theologian**
Nameday of **Joanna T – May her memory be eternal!**
- On Tuesday 9th: **Saint Christopher** of Lycia (c250)
We wish **Christopher T a Happy Feast and Many Years!**
- On Wednesday 10th: **The Mid-Feast of Pentecost**
Holy Apostle Simon Zelotes
- On Thursday 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 Sunday 14th: **Martyr Photini**, the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well.
- On Tuesday 16th: **Saint Brendan the Voyager** (c575)
We wish **Deacon Brandon a Happy Feast and Many Years!**
- On Tuesday 23rd: **Holy Myrrhbearer Mary** the wife of Cleopas
- On Thursday 25th: **THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**
- On Friday 26th: The Third Finding of the Honourable Head
of the **Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John** (850)
Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Evangelizer of the English (c605)
- On Saturday 27th: **Holy Confessor John the Russian** (1730)
Saint Melangell, Hermit at Pennant Melangell, Gwynedd (c590)
Saint Bede the Venerable of Jarrow (735)

Noticeboard

- Saturday May 6th: Vespers 6pm
- Sunday 7th: **Sunday of the Paralytic**
Typika 10.30am
- Friday 12th: Vespers 6pm
- Saturday 13th: **Eve of Sunday of the Samaritan Woman**
Divine Liturgy 10.30am *Coffee in Belmont Hut*
- Saturday 20th: Vespers 6pm
- Sunday 21st: **Sunday of the Blind Man**
Typika 10.30am
- Wednesday 24th: Vespers for the Feast of the Ascension 6pm
- Saturday 27th: **Afterfeast of the Ascension**
Divine Liturgy 10.30 *Bring and Share lunch in Belmont Hut*

All services in Saint Anne's

For services in the Romanian parish (Exeter and Newton Abbot) consult

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064673836911> or telephone Fr Julian on **07469 262827**.

Similarly for the Torquay parish either visit https://www.facebook.com/standrewtorquay/?locale=en_GB or telephone Robert Skrivanos on **07971 316416**. For services in Plymouth visit plymchurch.com

Contributions for the June issue should reach the Editors at martinolsson827@btinternet.com
or by post at *Little Linhay, Bondleigh, EX20 2AJ* by **Friday 26th May**, please.

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are entirely those of the named authors or identified sources
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