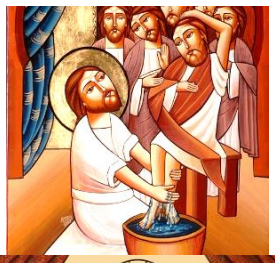
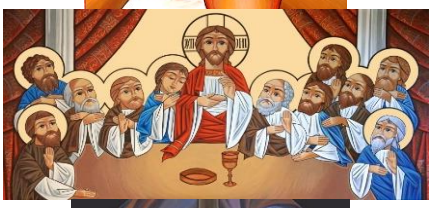
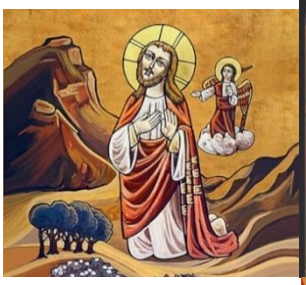
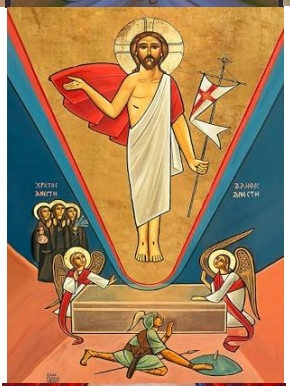
Prophet Elias News

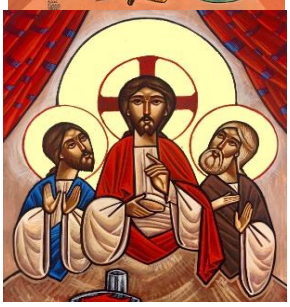
News and Views for the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
May 2024 - PASCHA

For service times see Noticeboard on P4






Easter Message for 1972 from the Most Reverend Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

When Christ first rose from the tomb and appeared to His disciples and the myrrh-bearing women, He greeted them with the word **"Rejoice!"** And then later when He appeared to the Apostles His first words were **"Peace be unto you!"**- peace, because their confusion was very great – the Lord had died. It seemed as though all hope had perished for the victory of God over human wickedness, for the victory of good over evil. It would seem that life itself had been slain and light had faded. All that remained for the disciples who had believed in Christ, in life, in love, was to go on existing, for they could no longer live. Having tasted eternal life they were now condemned to expect cruel persecution and death at the hands of Christ's enemies. **"Peace be unto you!"** proclaimed Christ. "I have arisen, I am alive, I am with you, and henceforth nothing – neither death nor persecution – will ever separate us or deprive you of eternal life, the victory of God."

And then, having convinced them of His physical resurrection, having restored their peace and an unshakable certainty of faith, Christ uttered words which may in the present age sound menacing and frightening to many: "As the Father sent Me, so I send you." Only a few hours after Christ's death on the cross, not long after the fearful night in Gethsemane, the betrayal by Judas when Christ had been taken by His enemies, condemned to death, led out beyond the city walls and died on the cross, these words sounded menacing. And it was only faith, the conquering certainty that Christ had risen, that God had conquered, that the Church had become an invincible force that transformed these words into words of hope and triumphant God-speed.

And the disciples went out to preach; nothing could stop them. Twelve men confronted the Roman empire. Twelve defenceless men, twelve men without legal rights went out to preach the simplest message, that divine love had entered the world and that they were willing to give their lives for the sake of this love, in order that others might believe and come to life, and that a new life might begin for others through their death. (*I Cor. 4: 9–13)*

Death was indeed granted them; there is not a single apostle except St. John the Divine who did not die a martyr's death. Death was granted them, and persecution and suffering and a cross *(II Cor. 6: 3–14).* But faith, faith in Christ, in God Incarnate, faith in Christ crucified and risen, faith in Christ who brought unquenchable love into the world, triumphed. **"Our faith which has conquered the world is the victory."** This preaching changed the attitude of man to man; every person became precious in the eyes of another. The destiny of the world was widened and deepened; it burst the bounds of earth and united earth to heaven.

And now we Christians, in the words of a western preacher, in the person of Jesus Christ, have become the people to whom God has committed the care of other people; that they should believe in themselves because God believes in us; that they should hope for all things because God puts His hope in us; that they should be able to carry our victorious faith through the furnace of horror, trials, hatred and persecution – that faith which has already conquered the world, in the faith in Christ, God crucified and risen.

So let us also stand up for this faith. Let us proclaim it fearlessly, let us teach it to our children, let us bring them to the sacraments of the Church which, even before they can understand it, unite them with God and plant eternal life in them. All of us, sooner or later, will stand before the judgment of God and will have to answer whether we were able to love the whole world – believers and unbelievers, the good and the bad – with the sacrificial, crucified, all-conquering love with which God loves us. May the Lord give us invincible courage, triumphant faith, joyful love in order that the kingdom for which God became man should be established, that we should truly become godly, that our earth should indeed become heaven where love, triumphant love lives and reigns. **Christ is risen!**

https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Antonij_Surozhskij/sermons/30

This Month We Celebrate

On Wednesday May 1st: GREAT AND HOLY WEDNESDAY
Commemoration of the Woman who anointed the Lord with Myrrh

On Thursday 2nd: GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY
Celebration of the Washing of the Feet, the Mystical Supper, the Prayer in Gethsemane, and the Betrayal

On Friday 3rd: GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY
Celebration of the Holy and Redeeming Passion of the Lord

On Saturday 4th: GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY
Celebration of the Burial of the Lord and His Descent into Hell
Virgin Martyr Pelagia of Tarsus (c290)

On Sunday 5th: HOLY PASCHA
THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST
We wish **Lamprini P** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
and **Birthday Greetings** to Fr Nikanor's wife **Val – 97 today!**
Great Martyr Irene of Thessaloniki (1st-2ndC)
We wish **Matoushka Dawn, Matoushka Irina, Irina H, Irina R, Ira S, Irina S** and all **Irenes, Irinas and Irinis** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**
Saint Ephraim the Newly Revealed (1426)

On Monday 6th: **BRIGHT MONDAY**
Celebration of the **Holy, Glorious Great Martyr and Wonderworker George** (from April 23rd)
We wish **George K and Luca George** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Tuesday 7th: **Saint Nil Sorski** (1508) Leader of the Non-possessors (*nestyazhateli)*

On Wednesday 8th: Synaxis of **Saint John the Theologian**
Nameday of **Joanna T – May her memory be eternal!**

On Thursday 9th: **Saint Christopher** of Lycia (c250)
We wish **Christopher T** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

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

On Saturday 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 12th: 2nd Sunday of Pascha – **Thomas Sunday**
We wish **Father John** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years**
on the **50th anniversary of his ordination** on Thomas Sunday, 1974.

On Tuesday 14th: **Radonitsa – Joyful Commemoration of the Dead**

On Thursday 16th: **Saint Brendan the Voyager** (c575)
We wish **Father Brandon** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

On Sunday 19th: 3rd Sunday of Pascha: **Celebration of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women** –
Mary Magdalen, Mary the wife of Cleopas**, Joanna, Salome, Susanna,**
Mary and **Martha** the sisters of Lazarus, together with Righteous **Joseph of Arimathea** and **Nicodemus**

On Tuesday 21st: **Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles** the Emperor **Constantine** (337) and his mother **Helen** (330)
We wish **Eleanora F, Konstantina D, Helen O, Yelena G, Yelena K**
and all **Konstantinas, Konstantinos, Ellens, Elaines, Eleanors,**
Helens, Helenas and **Yelenas** a **Happy Feast and Many Years!**
And we remember **Eleni HL** and **Harriet Elaine O – May their Memories be Eternal!**

On Thursday 23rd: **Holy Myrrhbearer Mary** the wife of Cleopa

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

On Sunday 26th: 4th Sunday after Pascha – Sunday of the Paralysed Man (John 5: 1b-15)
Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Evangelizer of the English (c605)

On Monday 27th: **Holy Confessor John the Russian** (1730)
Saint Melangell, Hermit at Pennant Melangell, Gwynedd (c590)
Saint Bede the Venerable of Jarrow (735)

On Wednesday 29th: **Saint Alexander** Archbishop of Alexandria (328)
We wish **Doug Alexander** a **Happy Feast** and **Many Years!**

Noticeboard

Wednesday May 1st: GREAT AND HOLY WEDNESDAY Holy Unction 6pm

Thursday 2nd:: GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY
Vespers/Divine Liturgy 10am
Matins/Twelve Gospels 6pm

Friday 3rd: GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY
Vespers 3pm
Matins 6pm

Saturday 4th: GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY
Vespers/Liturgy 9.30am
PASCHAL MATINS/LITURGY (at SAINT JAMES' CHURCH) 10pm

Sunday 5th: HOLY PASCHA Vespers 6pm

Saturday 11th: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 12th: 2nd Sunday of Pascha -Thomas Sunday
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Tuesday 14th: Radonitsa – Joyful Commemoration of the Dead

Saturday 18th: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 19th: 3rd Sunday of Pascha - Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Saturday 25th: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 26th: 4th Sunday of Pascha - Sunday of the Paralytic Man
Typika 10.30am
(Weekend of the Deanery Conference)

Wednesday 29th: Mid-Feast of Pentecost

Saturday June 1st: Vespers 6pm
Sunday 2nd: 5th Sunday of Pascha - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

All services in Saint Anne's unless stated otherwise

*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 go to plymchurch.com*

News from Saint Cyprian's

Letter included with Easter card from Fr Daniel (undated – received 18th April)

Dear Brethren in Christ

We warmly as usual greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's now some time since we last communicated. We still have you at heart. We keep the chain of prayer as usual. Thank you for always being with us, keeping the communication in place, the annual commitment of the parish contribution and above all the love for us. Thank you so much for loving us. It is a debt we always feel at our hearts. May the good Lord always pay you abundantly both spiritually and physically.

The Lent period is on. Let us always struggle to get the best out of it. Many times we are overcome by human weakness but our helper is near at hand to help us. He is more than able to help us more than we can pray. (Ephesians 3:20)

Greet all the priests and the loving faithfuls. We pledge always to pray for you. We also badly need your prayers.

May God always bless you.

Fr Daniel Kaddu

In a Country Church

To one kneeling down no word came,
Only the wind's song, saddening the lips
Of the grave saints, rigid in glass;
Or the dry whisper of unseen wings,
Bats not angels, in the high roof.

Was he balked by silence? He kneeled long,
And saw love in a dark crown
Of thorns blazing, and a winter tree
Golden with fruit of a man's body.

R S Thomas

From Collected Poems 1945-1990 JM Dent 1993

The Sixteen: *Choral Pilgrimage 2024*
Thursday 9 May at 7:30pm

The Sixteen return to Exeter Cathedral for their 2024 Choral Pilgrimage celebrating the art of imitation and exploring music from the master of parody, Orlande de Lassus, alongside works by Josquin, Casulana and Bob Chilcott.

'The richly sensual choral music of Renaissance master Orlande de Lassus provides a stunning centrepiece to our 2024 pilgrimage programme. Music that speaks of love earthly and divine, his motets, masses and madrigals were written over 300 years ago. But they still have the immediacy and intricacy to resonate with us today.'

Tickets: £15.00 – £35.00 Book your ticket

Cathedral Life

Corvus Consort sing Rachmaninov:
All-Night Vigil (Vespers)
Friday 10 May at 7:30pm

Join Corvus Consort at Exeter Cathedral for a performance of Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil (Vespers).*

The Vespers were composed as a Christian response to war, and in our own times of conflict Corvus Consort will intersperse the contemplative and devotional intensity of the 15 sections of Rachmaninov's piece with "Songs of Peace from across Europe".

Proceeds from the concerts go to the Exeter Cathedral Music Foundation Trust. For over 30 years, the Music Foundation Trust has provided critical financial support to sustain Exeter Cathedral's musical tradition.

Book Your Ticket >

Cathedral Life

The Servant-Girl at Emmaus (A Painting by Velázquez)



She listens, listens, holding her breath.
Surely that voice
is his—the one
who had looked at her, once,
across the crowd, as no one ever had looked?
Had seen her?
Had spoken as if to her?
Surely those hands were his,
taking the platter of bread from hers just now?
Hands he'd laid on the dying and made them well?
Surely that face—?
The man they'd crucified for sedition and blasphemy.
The man whose body disappeared from its tomb.
The man it was rumored now some women had seen this morning, alive?
Those who had brought this stranger home to their table
don't recognize yet with whom they sit.
But she in the kitchen,
absently touching the wine jug she's to take in,
a young Black servant intently listening,
swings round and sees
the light around him
and is sure.

Denise Levertov

From *New Selected Poems*, Bloodaxe Books, 2003. Reprinted with permission.

Exeter International Café
Every Sunday 4.30-6pm

Exeter International cafe provides a term time friendly welcome to all Internationals from 4:30 p.m. to 6 .00 p.m. on Sunday afternoons.

Opportunity to practise English with native speakers in a supportive environment. Different themes, guest speakers, with helpful information on living in Exeter and the UK.

For venues or more info see:
https://www.stleonards.church/international-english-cafe/
or text 07816 270549 to be added to our WhatsApp international cafe group.

CTaX Bulletin

Yearbook of the French Vicariate

The **Ecumenical Vicariate of Saint Maria of Paris and Saint Alexis of Ugine** is the equivalent in France of our Deanery here, made up of the 27 French parishes of the former Exarchate of Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe who chose not to follow Archbishop Jean of Charioupolis (now of Dubna) when he transferred his allegiance to the Moscow Patriarch following the dissolution of the Exarchate in 2018.

The Vicariate has thrived under the omophorion of HE Metropolitan Dimitrios of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of France, and its monthly newsletter - *La Lettre du Vicariat* - reports on the progress of parishes, pilgrimages, conferences and workshops, youth activities etc. Each year the issues of *La Lettre* are brought together in one yearbook, *Les Cahiers du Vicariat.* The third issue of the *Cahiers*, a 375-page volume reflecting the Vicariate's activities in 2023, has just been published, both in digital format (8 Eu) and hard copy (15 Eu). Either format can be ordered on the website https://vicariatorthodoxe.fr/les-cahiers-du-vicariat-2023/

(The website has a Beta translate option for those whose French is, like mine, shaky at best. Ed.)

Updating Gift Aid Declarations

Many of you generously support the parish by making regular contributions by standing order/direct debit. If you have done so for some years, you may be unaware (*as I was – Ed.)* that a new format for declaration forms for Gift Aid came into effect in 2019. If you have not signed a Gift Aid declaration form since then, or if you are unsure whether you have, please complete the attached declaration* now so that we can continue to secure claims under current legislation. Equally, anyone newly wishing to enhance their contributions with Gift Aid are most welcome to do so by the same means.
(*Please note that Gift Aid applies only if you are a current UK taxpayer).*

Please send completed forms to me as soon as possible at
55 Regents Park Exeter Devon EX1 2NZ

Alice Scorer
Parish Treasurer

* *See next page.*

Your News and Views Please

Prophet Elias News is *your* newsletter, and we are always grateful for any contributions from our readers. 'News and Views' can cover pretty much anything – your thoughts about a particular feast or saint, visits you have made, church events in your home community, reviews of books you think other parishioners might enjoy, news of former parishioners you have kept in touch with – pretty much anything really that you might like to share. (If you want to contribute something specifically for a particular month's issue, please note the deadline date given in the previous issue.)

Ed.

Prophet Elias News *is the newsletter of the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias, Devon, Deanery of Great Britain, Archdiocese of Thyateira (Ecumenical Patriarchate) - Archbishop: His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas (Lioulias)*

Rector: Fr Patrick Hodson – hodson44@btinternet.com Archpriests (retired) Fr John Marks, Fr Nikanor Wilkins
Serving priest: Fr Brandon Gallaher b.gallaher@exeter.ac.uk Tel: 07837 983433
(Fr Trayan Goranov can be contacted at otrayan@gmail.com Tel: 07800 644 599 to arrange confession)
Parish Secretary: Edward Skidelsky hpeliasdevon@gmail.com
Parish Warden: Philip Scorer philip.scorer@gmail.com Tel: 07812 170139

Contributions for the June issue should reach the Editors at martinolsson827@btinternet.com
or by post at Little Linhay, Bondleigh, EX20 2AJ by Friday 24th May, 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.

The Orthodox Parish of St Elias in Devon
Gift Aid Declaration
multiple donation

Gift Aid is the tax reclaimed by the Parish from the tax paid by the donor in the tax year(s) of donation. If the donor pays less Income Tax and /or Capital Gains Tax than the attributable Gift Aid claimed in that tax year it is the donor's responsibility to pay any difference.

I want to Gift Aid all donations made by me to The Orthodox Parish of St Elias in Devon

❑ in the current tax year

❑ in future tax years

❑ in the previous four tax years

At least one box must be ticked

I am a UK taxpayer ❑

Signature_____

Date_____

Title_____

All forenames_____

Surname_____

Home address: Postcode:

Bank details for the creation, variation or cancellation of a standing order –
Bank: Lloyds Bank
Account name: The Orthodox Parish of the Prophet Elias in Devon
Account No: 00169223 Sort code: 30-90-49

Correspondence address for –
- return of this form,
- cancellation of Gift Aid Declaration,
- change of name or home address notification (required),
- notification that donor is no longer paying sufficient tax to cover Gift Aid.

The Orthodox Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
c/o Alice Scorer (Treasurer) 55 Regents Park, Exeter, EX1 2NZ
For and on behalf of The Treasurer, The Orthodox Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon

Christ our Passover – the Holy Saturday Readings

(numbers in [ ] refer to the Hebrew numbering, used in most English translations)

1st Reading: Genesis 1:1-13
2nd Reading: Isaiah 60:1-16
3rd Reading: Exodus 12:1-11
4th Reading: Jonah 1:1-4:11
5th Reading: Joshua 5:10-15
6th Reading: Exodus 13:20-15:19
7th Reading: Zephaniah 3:8-15
8th Reading: 3 [1] Kings 17:8-24
9th Reading: Isaiah 61:10-62:5
10th Reading: Genesis 22:1-18
11th Reading: Isaiah 61:1-9 3
12th Reading: 4 [2] Kings 4:8-37
13th Reading: Isaiah 63:11-64:5
14th Reading: Jeremiah 38 [31]: 31-34
15th Reading: Daniel 3:1-23; Song of the Three Youths 1-66

One of the many memorable features of the Holy Week services is the series of fifteen Old Testament readings at Vespers on Holy Saturday. They give us a profound insight into the meaning of the paschal feast, as well as an initiation into the way the Church reads the Old Testament, as a book about Christ and His Church.

This long series of readings has its origins in a time when Holy Saturday was one of the principal days for the baptism of adult catechumens (reflected also in the use of the verse 'As many as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ' in place of the Trisagion at the Easter Liturgy). Baptisms would have taken place in a separate building, while the faithful were listening to the readings in the main church – and being reminded of the full magnitude of what had taken place at their own baptism. As St John Chrysostom once reminded his neophytes on Easter night, we have been 'received among the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem' – a thought that makes so much of the language in the paschal services fall into place. The Holy Saturday readings present us with multiple images of baptism and of the Church that we enter as we emerge from its waters: creation, new creation, rescue from the forces of destruction, the new covenant, new Jerusalem, the Promised Land... The overall theme is Christ *our Passover*: the Lamb sacrificed for our deliverance, the deliverance which we make our own by being baptised into His death.

The way that the series of readings has evolved over the centuries gives us valuable clues about why certain readings were chosen, and what they are intended to teach us. Our practice today reflects the usage in Constantinople; but the service originated in Jerusalem, and we have Georgian and Armenian church orders that reflect the Jerusalem usage from the fifth century if not earlier.

Four of our readings have been a permanent fixture in their present form. These are the book of Jonah (4), the sacrifice of Isaac (10), Jeremiah's proclamation of the new covenant (14) and the Song of the Three Youths (15). It is not hard to see why. Jonah is the classic sign of Christ's death and resurrection, cited by the Lord Himself (Mt 12:39 etc.). But it foreshadows Christ not simply because the prophet emerged alive after being swallowed by a 'great fish'; Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish (Jonah 2:2-6) evokes all the Old Testament imagery of Sheol and the forces of death, which so often recurs in hymns of the resurrection ('the deep waters surrounded me... the earth with its bars closed behind me forever'). This is an image specifically of Christ's *descent into Sheol*. And it thus reminds us, again, that to go *down into the waters* of Baptism is precisely to be baptised into Christ's death.

Abraham's sacrifice of his only son is another very obvious 'type' – a prophecy in action – of the sacrifice of the only-begotten Son of God. But here Christ, the paschal lamb, is prefigured not only by the son offered for sacrifice, but also by the sheep who actually *was* sacrificed. The baptismal resonances of the story are perhaps less obvious; but Abraham is also a supreme example of one who acted 'by faith' (Heb 11: 8, 17). We who by faith have 'become Christ's' *are* Abraham's promised 'seed', his heirs (Galatians 3:29); and the description of his descendents 'multiplied like the stars of heaven'(Gen 22: 17) definitely evokes the multitude of the newly-illumined, shining white in their baptismal robes, and of the faithful, the 'children of Sion' gathered with their lighted candles (echoed also in the Easter kaon, Ode 8).

Jeremiah 38: 31-34 speaks of the new covenant, the fulfilment of which Christ announces at His mystical supper (Mt 26: 28; John 6:45; Rom 11: 27). And the Song of the

Three Youths in the furnace – to which we will return at the end – is the ultimate type of divine deliverance of those who reject idolatry and put their trust in God.

There are five further reading that are present from earliest times, but with slight but telling variations. Our readings begin, literally, 'In the beginning', with the opening verses of Genesis – just as the paschal Gospel readings begin 'In the beginning' (John 1:1), with the divine Word through who all things were made. To understand the death and resurrection of Christ and the foundation of the Church which is His Body, we must start from the creation of the world. In modern practice, the Genesis reading ends with 'the third day' (Gen 1:13), an obvious allusion to the Resurrection. In early Jerusalem, the reading continued up to the expulsion from Eden,.i.e. a full explanation of why a 'new creation' is needed (this point is now made through the entire structure of Lent, with the expulsion from paradise commemorated on Forgiveness Sunday). By contrast, we also find the practice of ending the reading at Genesis 1:5, 'one day'. This points to the 'first day of the week' of Christ's rising (cf. Easter kanon, Ode 8), which is at the same time the eternal eighth day, the 'day without evening of His Kingdom' (Easter kanon Ode 9).

The second reading is the famous passage from Isaiah that begins 'Shine, shine, O Jerusalem'. This is quoted in Ode 9 of the Easter kanon, which makes clear that it refers to the new Jerusalem, the Church, as well as in Ode 8 when it speaks of the gathering of the children of Sion. In this and other Isaiah readings, we find many themes and images that recur it the Book of Revelation in its description of the heavenly Jerusalem and the final triumph of those who have come through death and tribulation. It is worth noting that when we first encounter this Isaiah reading, it ends at verse 13, 'I will glorify the place of my feet' – a reference to the Cross. Isaiah's description of the City (Isa 60:11, cf. Rev 21:25) is echoed in liturgical practice, where the 'gates' (the Royal Doors into the altar) are 'open continuously' throughout Bright Week.

The third reading, from Exodus 12, concerns the instructions for the Passover meal and the requirements for the lamb, again echoed in the Easter kanon (Ode 4) and elsewhere in the hymns. It ends portentously, 'It is the Lord's Passover'; but originally the reading continued to verse 24, with more details of the selection and slaughter of the paschal lamb. These are details that figured prominently in early paschal homilies, and the sign made with the blood of the lamb on the lintel, which preserved the firstborn from death, is early established as a type of baptism as the 'mark' that preserves those signed with it. The connection between the Crucifixion and baptism as a 'mark' is expressed in the use at feasts of the Cross of Ps 4:7, 'The light of Thy countenance has been marked upon us' ('light' here suggesting baptismal illumination).

The fifth reading also refers to eating the Passover, just before entering the Promised Land and partaking of its produce – a type of Baptism followed by the Eucharist. This passage replaces an earlier reading from Joshua 1, which included the more obviously paschal and baptismal promise that 'within three days you will cross the Jordan and possess the land' (Josh 1:11). The present rather puzzling Joshua 5 passage, seemingly dominated by the appearance of a heavily armed archangel who informs Joshua that he is standing on holy ground, is probably also explained by the emphasis of the early Church on Baptism as entry into the new Promised Land. Thus according to a very early church order attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, the newly baptised would be given milk mixed with honey alongside the eucharistic Bread and Wine (*Apostolic Tradition* 21:27-37).

The sixth reading, describing the crossing of the Red Sea, is arguably the key Old Testament text for this service – even for the paschal feast as a whole. The triumphal refrains attached to it, going back to at least the fifth century, testify to its importance. At that time, the reading began at Ex 14:24, cutting out the preparations for Israel's escape and emphasising the destruction of the Egyptians. This gives the narrative a much more schematic feel, reducing it to a brief outline setting the scene for the song of triumph.

So, what is going on here? If we read it as a historical account of one people enabled to destroy another because 'God is on their side', we might find it deeply disturbing. But the story of the Red Sea crossing is an image, in historical language, of re-creation: the power of

the Lord over the forces of chaos and of death represented by the depths of the sea and the monsters that lurk there, imagery that we have seen already in the story of Jonah. 'Who shut in the sea with doors?', as the Lord challenges Job (Jb 38:8), in a passage that used to be read at Holy Saturday Vespers. God's power over the elemental forces of the sea is a fundamental expression in Scripture of His creative and saving power. We might compare the words of Ps 73[74], a poetic re-telling of the Exodus story: God 'works salvation in the midst of the earth' (which is understood as a reference to the Cross); He divides the sea and 'breaks the head of the dragons in the waters'. What happens in the Red Sea is a type of our re-creation through baptism.

The Red Sea crossing, then, points forward to the Passover that we celebrate through the death of the Lamb of God. In the words of the Easter stikheri, it is 'the Passover that is Christ the Deliverer... that opens to us the gates of paradise'. It is the 'Passover of the faithful': those who come in faith to baptism pass through the waters of death to emerge into life; whereas the forces of death that had held God's people captive, the 'dragons' of Ps 73:13, meet their own destruction in the waters.

After the Exodus reading with its triumphant refrains, 'For gloriously has He been glorified', there is a subtle change of tone. Six of the following readings (7,8,9, and 11,12,13) are somewhat later additions, and their focus is eschatological rather than specifically baptismal. They also show a new interest in resurrection as a discrete event: the only to readings that concern 'precedents' for the resurrection, the raising of the widow's son by Elijah (8) and Elisha's raising of a dead child (12), below to this later stratum. The seventh reading, from Zephaniah, beginning 'Wait for me until the day of My rising for a testimony', neatly combines the Resurrection and the eschatological features of the new Jerusalem, including the gathering of all nations, taken up also in the Easter kanon. It strongly recalls the festive atmosphere of Palm Sunday, where the passage immediately following is read: the exhortation, 'Rejoice greatly, daughter of Sion' is included in both. The 'new' Isaiah readings (9,11,13) take up themes in Isaiah 60, 'Shine, Shine, O Jerusalem...' – restoration, forgiveness, rejoicing. The impossibility of separating eschatological from baptismal themes is very clear in the ninth reading (Isa 61:10-62:5), with its wedding imagery and language of clothing, the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness. Isaiah 63-64 (13th) explicitly looks to a new Exodus, expressed in terms of resurrection: 'Where is he who brought up from the earth the shepherd of the sheep... who led Moses by his right hand...?'

Even when some readings were omitted – when the baptisms were concluded quickly – the readings would always end with the story of the fiery furnace from Daniel and the Song of the Three Youths. This stands alongside the Red Sea crossing as a sign of deliverance, life through death – through fire and water. Both readings are heightened by the addition of sung refrains; but the difference between those refrains is interesting. At the Red Sea crossing, 'Gloriously has He been glorified', the emphasis falls on what God *has* done, albeit of course with the implication that He is therefore able to perform similar works of deliverance and re-creation in the future. With the Song of the Three Youths, the focus is on the present and (eschatological) future: while standing *in the furnace*, the youths take up their hymn of praise in which they call upon all ranks of creatures to praise and glorify their Creator – which is what all creatures other than humans (and fallen angels) are always doing anyway. Originally, in Jerusalem, this final reading marked the moment when the newly baptised would join the rest of the congregation – the latest group of humans to rejoin the ranks of God's faithful servants. At a time when pagan religion was still widespread, this story would have carried an especially powerful message: God has power to save those who place their trust in Him and refuse to worship the creation in His stead. But there is also another challenge to paganism here, less obvious but no less compelling. When the newly-illumined enter the church to glorify the one God, they find that all the ranks of creation are there already – not as the object of worship, but as fellow-worshippers who 'sing to the Lord and glorify Him to all ages'.

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