

THE NARTHEX

November-December 2016

'And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch' (Acts 11:26)

The Orthodox Church of St Dunstan of Canterbury, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH14 9JG

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland. Archbishop: Metropolitan Silouan

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. Patriarch: His Beatitude, John X

Parish Priest: Fr. Chrysostom Tel. 01202-602628 e-mail: fr.chrysostom@fsmail.net

Deacon: Fr Dc Filip Tel. 01308-868543 e-mail: flommaert@gmail.com

Deacon: Fr Dc Alexander Tel. 07765417610 e-mail: fr.Alexander@gmx.com

Subdeacon David Tel. 01209-217499

Parish web site: www.saint-dunstan.org Archdiocesan web site: www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk



Teaching the Young

When I was a teacher of Religious Studies I used to make the point to my students that people generally identify with a particular religion or religious tradition because of what their parents were. This cut both ways, of course, as I used to make very clear to them: the reason that most of them had no really identifiable religion was because they came from secularised homes; their atheism or agnosticism was not so much a matter of individual, intellectual choice (as they imagined) as of upbringing. In fact, I suspect it only takes two generations of non-religious practice to remove religion from the public sphere, as has largely occurred in Britain, following the Second World War. Unlike, as in modern Russia, where, since the fall of Communism the Church has revived partly as the bearer and custodian of a nation's identity, Britain's post-war public life has gone on with a diminishing sense of connection to her historical religion. It is also true, I think, that those who do describe themselves as religious (in terms of faith and practice) are to a great extent, drawn from people who have come anew into this country. The great question then is, what will happen to the next two generations of descendants of these immigrants. It might well be that, with a certain detachment we can observe the steady decline of the national, established Protestant church. Its

structural changes, especially in its ordained ministry, that have been so carefully aligned with every conceivable secular whim and movement and were hailed as necessary to the furtherance of the mission of the Church of England, have instead resulted in its continued and steady dissolution in the public arena. The Roman Catholic Church has also declined here, although there are probably more active Catholics in Britain now than there are Anglicans. As for the evangelical Protestant groups, they are far too numerous, febrile and disparate to evaluate and, apart from Methodism at one time, never quite managed to grow in such significance so as to influence the national character.

However, this situation leaves no room for complacency for us Orthodox Christians. There are large numbers of us now in Britain but we co-exist in many different jurisdictions - not necessarily relevant as far as lay church-goers are concerned but these administrative differences serve to diminish our influence and prominence in public life. The public media are largely unaware of Orthodoxy and of its underlying unity. For the media Russian and Greek Orthodoxy represent different churches ministering to separate national identities, whereas, in fact properly, there are no national churches in Orthodoxy, only local ones.

When I was pastor of St Edward's Church at Athelhampton it struck me that within fifteen years the small congregation would diminish, having a very anonymous existence. For that reason we began the mission in the Poole-Bournemouth area in 2006. That planting has borne fruit and God has blest our efforts and given the increase. St Dunstan's attracts a large congregation now and the work to be done on the restoration of our fine building will, I hope, also raise our profile with the public at large. One obviously notable feature in our congregation is the sheer number of young children and that is wonderful to see. So let's ask the question: will they be passing on this saving faith of Orthodox Christianity to their children? The answer, of course, lies with us and let's be very clear: this is not about turning our communities into little Moscow or little Bucharest or little Kiev, Damascus or Athens or any other city you might name. This is very difficult because, indeed, for the first two generations that is precisely what happens, normally; that is certainly the case in the United States. The same, of course, has happened in reverse with the English 'ex-pat' communities in France and Spain where there are Anglican services in English. But this is a church

operating on the level of a chaplaincy, giving spiritual care to defined group of foreigners. Where this has happened, both here and in America, there is a clear trend towards their young people 'drifting away' from the old culture as they assimilate over time. If we are not vigilant this will happen among us as well as it has elsewhere.

Therefore we must begin with ourselves and our own children. How do they handle this, for example, at school, where the peer groups are overwhelmingly children who are not Orthodox Christians, usually not even Christians at all? This makes it very difficult for your children. The schools themselves in Britain can no longer be expected to teach Christianity from a believer's perspective and so your child's Religious Studies will, quite properly, be an exploration of the six major world faiths. This is entirely right and proper, studying religions among the humanities. And there is no point in complaining that they don't teach Christianity alone anymore because, in fact, they never did. The last place I would want any child of mine being taught what purports to be Christianity is in the modern British educational system!

In today's world, it can be difficult to work through this situation. So how do we help our children to grow up and be part of wider British society and yet be secure in their Orthodoxy? Being Christian in contemporary Britain, let alone Orthodox, is challenging on many levels. Just forty years ago Christian mores would have been accepted as the public norm but this is not true now. It is in order to help them deal with this that you will be teaching your children Orthodox Christianity and it is why St Dunstan's parish church itself

must help all who are responsible for the upbringing of our children; family and parish church have a common interest here where our lives are clearly interconnected.

Metropolitan Silouan is very clear that we must establish teaching groups for children and teenagers in our parishes. Here they would be able to meet with young people of their own age who share our Faith and who live our Faith at home every day and with whom they can share their Christian lifestyle and experiences. They could also be taught about our Faith in an appropriate way, suitable to their age. Appropriately qualified teachers and clergy would be able to teach them about Holy Tradition, the Creed, the Bible, icons, the Liturgy the services, and all other matters which they need now and will need in the future to be confident and strong Christians in a world which tries to lure them away from their Faith. This will be a matter for our new Parish Council to organize and where necessary, finance. Teaching the young must still be done in the home - remember, we teach by the example of our own lives - but not just in the home. Being one family we all have the duty to care for and nurture the faith of the young.

But what happens next? Somehow we have to develop a British Orthodoxy (or rather recover that spirit, for Britain was Orthodoxy for the first thousand years AD). If this land is to be hallowed in the name of Christ once again; if these islands which fostered the holy lives of so many saints are again to be called Christian, then we had better teach our children the faith first. Part of the problem with Orthodoxy here is its very anonymity, especially in the media. Moreover, there are non-Christians who need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and there are millions of now secularised souls who need to know what the ancient faith of this land has to offer them.

Fr Chrysostom

SERVICES

Vespers is normally served on Saturday's at 5.00pm in the Saints of Britain chapel. Fr. Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards.

November

Sun 6th 20th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 13th 21st after Pentecost
St John Chrysostom
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Tues 15th **Beginning of the Nativity fast**

Sat 19th Pilgrimage to Whitchurch
Canonicorum Molieben 12.00noon

Sun 20th 22nd after Pentecost
Forefeast of the Entry
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Mon 21st Entry of the Theotokos

Sun 27th 23rd after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am



December

Sun 4th 24th after Pentecost
Great Martyr Barbara
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 11th 25th after Pentecost
Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 18th 26th after Pentecost
Sunday before the Nativity
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Fri 23rd Forefeast of the Nativity
Royal Hours and Typika
10.00am

Sun 25th **The Nativity of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ**
Divine Liturgy 9.30am