

THE NARTHEX

September-October 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

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Team JC

When I was young there were at first just two channels on television. This must sound pre-historic for a generation brought up on satellite television with an astounding variety of channels. Whether such choice, however, represents greater quality programmes is perhaps debatable. There was, though, an obvious problem with having just two channels and that was when summer came along and summer meant sport. Whether it was Cricket or Wimbledon, the Olympics or the football World Cup, choice was restricted even further.

For sports fans this must have been 'very heaven' and now, of course, there are whole channels dedicated to showing nothing but sport in all its variety. On the other hand, if your interests lay elsewhere, having just two channels meant a summer of television misery or at least, boredom.

Here, I must make a confession: sport leaves me cold; I have no interest in sport. I do not despise or loathe it, neither would I criticise those who derive great joy from watching or participating in sport. It is only that it does not excite my attention, interest or fascination in any way.

It has also struck me in recent years that sport has the power to bring out in its adherents a communal, even tribal loyalty and it clearly has great sociological significance. Yet it brings to my mind a statement of the first German chancellor, Bismark. "War", he said, "was diplomacy by other means." I have come to the conclusion that sport is war by other means. And in as much as that might be true, it is probably a good thing on the whole, though its actual capacity to prevent real armed conflict I suspect is negligible.

Having said all this, I have no

objection to the diversion of ordinary games, which I quite enjoy or to taking exercise of which I thoroughly approve. It is only that I realise that my interests have been for many years of a thoroughly cerebral nature which finds very little amusement in sport in its modern competitive form.

Despite all this, it is natural to admire, at least, the sheer dedication, training regimes, psychological preparations and scientific analysis involved in the performance of any athlete or player. The same is true, of course, for many areas of human endeavour: space exploration, medical scientific research, the musical and dramatic arts, whatever it might be, they all require dedication and commitment.

St Paul noticed this in writing to the early Christians at Corinth. Set in the midst of the ancient Hellenic world, the very culture that had produced the Olympian ideal, the apostle remarked that: "*Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*" (1 Cor. 9:25-27)

St Paul could see in athletics an ascetic approach to life necessary if one were to win in the contest and that on for a reward that fades with time. Truly great athletes may well be remembered, even somehow immortal, in the halls of fame. But Paul is pointing to something else. He is saying that, if they, the athletes do this for their sport, surely we Christians should show the same dedication and personal discipline when it is a matter of our own salvation. Having taught Christian ascetic discipline in the churches he founded, he says that he

must live without hypocrisy and practise what he preaches.

Elsewhere he writes, "*Train yourself in godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds the promise for the present life and also for the life to come. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God...*" (1 Tim.4:7-10)

So even I can learn something from the sporting endeavour, inasmuch as it serves as a metaphor, an illustration of why we should bother to strive in the ascetic life, serving not the body in its performance but Christ as our master. Our life of prayer, vigils, fasts and retreat from the headlong rush to a life of hedonism, far from being an end in itself (as if it were some post-modern 'lifestyle choice') is rather the means towards the redemption of the body and the salvation of our soul. For though we strive and so often fail, yet in proportion to our dedication, our commitment, our faith and our longing, the grace of God will supply all that we might lack to win the prize.

"*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...*" (Heb.12:1-2)

But this endeavour that we are engaged in is not an individual competitive sport; we are called to play as a team. And the team here is the Church, whether it be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church that we confess in the

Creed, or the Church that subsists and is manifested in the local Orthodox congregation. British competitors at the Olympics certainly won their individual medals but they also competed as part of Team GB, knowing their success reflected back on the country as a whole. The same by analogy is true in the life of the Church, for among us, the saints reflect the glory of their victory in Christ over sin and death back onto us who still struggle and strive. With their prayers for us they are like runners in a relay race who, having finished their part, cheer us onward from the side of the track. And more that, we who are yet battling to enter the kingdom of heaven are called to help and work with each other. There is no such thing as private Christianity, as if it were some pastime or leisure activity, away from the public domain. No one can come to church as a private, solitary individual, as if going alone to watch a performance in a theatre: our salvation is social.

From this it follows that all who in any way profess to be Orthodox Christians cannot ignore the expectation that we should play our part in our local church community according to our abilities. One simple case, by way of example, will be the formation of the new parish committee following the election of the members. We might ask ourselves whether we might stand for election; whether we know people who would make worthy members and could propose them for election. There are also three spaces to fill on the board of directors of our charitable foundation (BPOCF). There are existing areas of our common life - and certainly others which we should develop - in which we need to consider whether we are playing our part. In short, in serving one another, we serve God. Our service starts at the liturgy and extends from there in an outpouring of grace to those who share our lives. It is through our service in church whether in the altar, the choir or standing in the nave, through prayer and intercession for others, in acts of assistance and charity, through organisation and administration, in teaching and direction of the young, in our regular and committed, proportional giving, though our own ascetic struggle; whatever it might be, that we become team players.

Fr Chrysostom

Grant Application News

We have received further news from the Heritage Lottery Fund regarding our application for a grant. After further inspection by, and consultation with, Historic England's and our architects, it has been decided to change our application to extend the project over two years, 2018 and 2019, so there would be two grants, which would be easier not only for the HLF, but also for the execution of the works. New calculations have been made, and the outcome of these is that we will have to contribute £60,000 to the overall project. In September, after the election of a new Parish Council and new Directors of the Foundation, there will be more news about the fundraising plans.

Ride & Stride

On 10 September the Annual Ride+Stride fundraising event takes place, organised by all the English Historical Churches Trusts. This year, for the first time, Saint Dunstan is one of the many churches participating in the event organised by Dorset Historical Churches Trust. It is great fun, visiting churches of all denominations along a route of your own choosing, on foot, by bicycle on indeed on horseback! Given that we have already received £1,000 from them for urgent electrical repairs, and that all funds raised by participants from our Parish are evenly divided between DHCT and ourselves, I trust we will have a good turnout for this, the starting event of the massive fundraising efforts we will have to make over the next 24 months in order to raise the £60,000 needed as our own contribution to the restoration of our wonderful church building.

We will also need some volunteers to serve refreshments to the participants visiting us. The idea is to have a roster with people doing two-hour shifts between 10.00am and 6.00pm. For all further information including participation packs (digital or in print), contact Diaconissa Annemieke.



SERVICES

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

September

Sun 4th 11th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Thurs 8th The Nativity of the Theotokos

Sun 11th 12th after Pentecost
Sunday before Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Wed 14th Exaltation of the Holy Cross



Sun 18th 13th after Pentecost
Sunday after Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 25th 14th after Pentecost
St Sergius of Radonezh
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

October

Sun 2nd 15th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 9th 16th after Pentecost
Holy Apostle James, Son of Alphaeus
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 16th 17th after Pentecost
Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 23rd 18th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Holy Apostle James, Brother of the Lord
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 30th 19th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am