

THE NARTHEX

July-August 2017

'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 email: fr.chrysostom@gmx.com

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

Deacon: Fr Dc Alexander Tel. 07765417610 email: fr.alexander@gmx.com

Subdeacon David Tel. 01209-217499

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



Reflections

One recent event in our archdiocese is particularly worthy of reflection as it indicates something about the future in our common life in Christ. This was the Archdiocesan Conference at Swanwick at the end of May. Six members of our parish attended the conference which had, as its principal purpose, how liturgical services should be served in the Antiochian tradition.

For most of our people attending services at St Dunstan's, although they might know of the Patriarchate of Antioch, they will be unfamiliar with the characteristic differences in worship. Coming perhaps from a variety of Greek and Slavic traditions and locations, it is natural to think that the way they were brought up to worship in church was 'normal'; indeed, it was for them and there is nothing wrong in that.

The point is, of course, that for *normal* we should read *local*. The problem is, or I should say, the wonderful thing is that, at times, we can have up to nineteen different nationalities at church, as I once recently observed. To a large extent much of that variety has been accommodated among us, as far as possible, but you will understand that the opportunity for utter confusion and chaos is obvious.

To most people in this country Orthodox Christianity, if they actually heard of it at all, is something foreign. For the indigenous population Christianity is primarily associated with The Church of England; for them that is *normal* if largely ignored. Even for educated people Orthodoxy will be associated with Russian Orthodoxy or what they might have come across on holiday visits to Greece. Christianity though, is for them something contained within the narrow limits of Anglicanism as found in Britain. From our perspective things are very different, knowing as we do that the varieties of Christianity found throughout the world are divergent forms that have lost contact with the original root of Orthodoxy: the Christianity of the apostles, the fathers and the councils.

With this in mind, we need to be clear that our faith, though one in mind

(the mind of Christ) and Spirit, with one Lord and one baptism, has a life expressed in local variety. The Orthodox Church is the communion of historical patriarchates and autocephalous churches, each governed by its own Holy Synod of bishops, primacy of place being given to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. That of Antioch ranks third after Alexandria and, as such, like other jurisdictions, has its own ways and traditions. The only test for any of this variety is that it should accord with the Apostolic Tradition.

Our own Archdiocese within Antioch began twenty-two years ago as a deanery under a vicar-bishop in Paris. The problem for many of the founding parishes and missions was that we were dependant for advice and guidance from clergy and others outside the Antiochian Patriarchate. Some commentators looked askance at our situation, questioning the wisdom of establishing such churches with clergy who had not been trained in an Antiochian seminary. It is a fair point but the late patriarch, Ignatius IV of blessed memory, realized that for pastoral reasons and for the mission of the Church, something needed to be done swiftly. On the ground, though, it did mean that we had little guidance for a long time. That situation has now changed with the establishment of our own archdiocese and the leading presence of our own archbishop.

It is, therefore, entirely appropriate that the recent conference should draw our minds to our liturgical life and the ways and customs of Antioch.

As far as has been possible, Fr Dc Filip and I have instituted the necessary changes, so that we hope that all we now do is in accordance with the bishop's direction and is authentic and faithful to the Antiochian way.

Some of the changes recently made might well have passed by the attention of many; others will have observed the changes, perhaps with some puzzlement. Many of the changes concern arrangements within the altar itself, the layout of the furnishings and liturgical items. For example, there are only two lamps on the holy table (not the seven-branch lamp-stand, which is now under the cross). At the back of the Prothesis table, where the Proskomedia is

performed, setting out the bread and wine in holy vessels, most traditions place an icon of the Nativity. Originally, however, it was an icon of the Extreme Humility (the Man of Sorrows) and this is what we now have. Of course, such small changes behind the screen will go unnoticed by the worshippers: more obvious will be the fact that at services like the Liturgy, Orthros and Vespers, the Holy Doors are opened from the start and remain open until the end. In fact, Antiochian customs has the doors open throughout the forty days of Pascha (not just in Bright Week) the curtain alone being drawn across outside service times. (Many churches in Lebanon and Syria have no doors, only curtains.)

Another matter worthy of note is the way that scripture readings are to be done. Here, there is a clear hierarchy: Old Testament lections are read simply; Epistles are intoned on one note, while the gospels are chanted according to an ornate melody. The psalms appointed for Vespers and Matins are also normally read in a natural voice.

Another difference is to be seen at a weekday Vespers. In the Russian tradition, the priest often stands outside the altar in front of the closed doors (curtains open) for the litanies. In Antiochian use, the doors are opened and the priest remains at the holy table.

Baptisms also have been reordered, as required. The changes we now use reflect the rite as ordered in earlier forms. This means there are extra prayers put back in place (two more in the exorcism, for example). Between the Chrismation and the vesting with the new clothes (baptismal robe), the candidate is washed, to remove the excess consecrated oil. This all happens at the back of the Church (Narthex). After the procession around the font, all process into the body of the church for the readings, the tonsure, the final litany and blessing. This reordering provides for first communion after the tonsure but ideally, baptism should be linked to

the Divine Liturgy itself. Ideally, it should be celebrated before the Liturgy on a Sunday morning, so that the newly-illuminated receives the Holy Gifts first, among the usual congregation. Baptism, which takes just under an hour, can be combined with the Divine Liturgy, in which case, the Liturgy starts at the Little Entrance. How this would work out in practice within our own parish needs careful consideration. We are blessed in having many baptisms each year and we should not disrupt our normal Sunday pattern too often. Such an arrangement is certainly appropriate for adult Baptisms and Christmations.

There is another area which needs our consideration as well, that is, in the use of music at services. Coming from the Antiochian tradition, our bishop naturally favours the introduction of Byzantine, as opposed to Russian music in all our parishes eventually. However, what might be wished for as an ideal must come up against the practical realities. Back in 1994, when a group of us met the late Patriarch Ignatius in Paris, he told us that we should use the Russian music, "As it is easier on the English ear." In fact, most of our communities did use it and still do. It might not be the original Christian music but it is accessible to the western mind. Truth to tell, even Byzantine music, as performed today, has evolved from what was originally used, for example, in the great church of Agia Sophia. In fact, Byzantine tones and the plainchant used in the West were originally much closer. Byzantine music does require special training and instruction if it is to be authentic. And there is the added problem that English liturgical texts, translated from the Greek, do not always fit easily into Byzantine rhythms and stresses in the way that they do with the Russian tones.

I do think, however, that we can compromise successfully, perhaps using Byzantine music for when Sayedna visits, especially as it would fit in with the way he chants the service. It might also be used for weekday offices and other services, especially where there is no choir. Russian chant, particularly the Obikhod (Royal Court) chant that we tend to use, loses a lot when there is no harmony, whereas Byzantine tones and monotones are suitable for the single voice.

Even if much of this reordering of worship at St Dunstan's goes unnoticed by many in the congregation, we sincerely hope it does not offend any. It is proper that we be as authentically Antiochian as possible, just as we might expect to find Romanian customs under the Romanian Patriarchate, or Russian ones under Moscow.

Blessed Augustine of Hippo once wrote to St Januarius, "Romanum venio, ieiuno Sabbato; hic sum, non ieiuno." ['When I go to Rome I fast on Saturday, here (in Milan) I don't fast.'] In other

words, when in Rome, do as the Romans, as the old saying has it. The one thing our parish cannot be is an ersatz amalgam of selected traditions, a confusion representing very little.

There is a law in the science of Physics that says where a process cannot go into reverse, chaos must increase. That is to say, without checks and reflections on what is happening, opportunities for disorder inevitably arise. Well, we are taking a step back now after more than twenty years, verifying and correcting, where necessary, in line with the Antiochian tradition used at St Dunstan's. I implement this in proper canonical obedience to my bishop, as I can do no other. This should be a rallying point for us as a parish community, as is, of course, the use of English for the services. Incidentally, there is the matter (which Sayedna has raised before) of whether modern English should be used (as in the Greek Archdiocese) or whether we should keep what is, in fact, as approximation to early seventeenth century English, often called traditional English. The latter might present problems for non-native speakers, finding God addressed as 'Thou (second person singular) as opposed to the modern 'You'. Some translations only use the *Thou* form in addressing God and the saints and use a dignified but modern English otherwise; that seems a happy arrangement. However, traditional English is more immediately comprehensible than, say, Church Slavonic or Koine Greek! I would have a problem serving the Liturgy in the English of the poet Chaucer (14th century). Modern English may be more readily understood but it can be banal, whereas traditional English has innate beauty and is far more sonorous when sung. Truth is beauty and beauty is truth, so I should prefer to retain the traditional. It represents, especially for the un-churched, what we might call a verbal icon of Orthodox Christianity itself, speaking to us of authentic provenance, sublimity and something founded upon the rock.



At the special meeting with the clergy during the Swanwick conference, Metropolitan Silouan thanked us and our congregations for the love he had received since coming to Britain. However, when some of us were with him at table during one of the meals in the dining room, he asked why everyone seemed so nervous whenever he came on a pastoral visit to a parish. I suggested, diplomatically (if not quite so honestly as I should have) that we were in awe of him, a successor to the apostles themselves. The real reason is because any priest is anxious that everything in the altar and in the Liturgy is correct and properly ordered. The other reason, as I have learned by experience, is that, whenever a bishop serves, no matter from which jurisdiction, everything ends up totally lagged in beeswax!

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. Orthros precedes the Liturgy on Sunday morning at 9.30am

July

Sun 2nd 4th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 9th 5th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 16th 6th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 23rd 7th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 30th 8th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

August

Tues 1st Beginning of the
Dormition Fast

Sun 6th The Transfiguration of
our Lord. Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Sun 13th 10th after Pentecost
Leavetaking of the Transfiguration
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Tues 15th The Dormition of the
Theotokos Divine Liturgy
11.00am



Sun 20th 11th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 27th 12th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

[NB Some service dates/times may be subject to change during the holiday season. Please check on our Facebook page for any alterations]