

THE NARTHEX

May-June 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 e-mail: fr.chrysostom@gmx.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



The Be-What-You-Want Heresy

In recent years one of the most peculiar aspects of current social life in western societies has been the emergence of identity politics. This has focused particularly on demanding political and social rights for people who project themselves as belonging to what, strangely, are called 'communities'. In the past, particularly around the 1970's, commentators and academics generally tended to concentrate their attention on society as a whole, uncovering its persuasive and coercive powers in the control of human behaviour. It is interesting that on focusing now on separate communities, we can see a symptom of the fragmentation of the modern western world.

A community might be defined as an interest group and clearly, now, social, published and broadcast media are fascinated by the strident and, at times, raucous demands for recognition from these communities. There are interest groups for every conceivable human activity. Even once noble professions such as research and academic science or the law, medicine or teaching now regard themselves as communities with special needs requiring recognition by society at large.

Strangest of all, of course, concerns people's sexual identity which, once having been treated with discretion, has now entered the public domain with its tendency to verge on the ridiculous. There is, apparently, an 'LGBT community' (don't ask me where they live!) with ever more and more demands to be regarded as normal and must be accepted on pain of being regarded as a social pariah. The height of their effectiveness - and clearly, as self-publicists they are very successful - was the so called 'gay-marriage' legislation, a legal fiction propounded by a Conservative (!) administration on the grounds that this concerned equality.

Alongside this has come the notion that people should now even be free to choose their sexual identity. Interestingly, they call it 'gender identity' albeit that *gender*, to my mind, is actually a grammatical term, but that's just me. This trend has hit certain universities in a big way to the extent that not recognising and using a

peculiar set of neologisms can result in sanctions on one's academic progress. There is no surprise that this should begin in our highest academic institutions: after all, the proverbial fish rots from the head downwards.

This in fact all started with the simple use of Ms instead of Miss or Mrs in English and has since ballooned into a creative industry of ersatz titles and means of address. It is now seeping down into our schools (parents, be aware!) and reached the height of absurdity recently when an august medical body advised its practitioners not to refer to their expectant patients as 'mothers' any more. Am I missing a trick here or has biology fundamentally altered?

What has this to do with us as Orthodox Christians? The simple answer is nothing at all, meaning we must have nothing to do with it. More than being just a worrying trend, I think we can be very clear that this kind of identity politics is not only unscientific but also downright heretical and I shall explain why.

As a movement 'gender politics' has come from the Left. Having lost the intellectual and political battle over economics by 1989, it was the single idea of equality that has gripped the campaigning imagination of a certain kind of political activist. The old French revolutionary slogan of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity has now been reduced to a simple idea: all identities are equally valid and have the same rights. So at the risk of sounding 'Monthly Pythonesque', although a transgender man can't have babies, we must agree to his right to have babies.

As for our *Liberty* to challenge this idea: this is now curtailed by political correctness and all sense of *Fraternity* is now impossible for social outcasts like ourselves who hold to an Orthodox Christian understanding of human relationships.

Obviously, our argument from Holy Tradition is that the intention of the Creator was to make us either Man or Woman, male or female, as in the narrative of the Creation and that theological idea has a parallel in the evidence from the science of biology, where the binary system of reproduction is an obvious fact: human

beings reproduce by sexual intercourse. As Margaret Thatcher once said, 'You can't buck the market.' Well, you can't buck biology either. Society has no actual interest in homosexual relationships but it does have a real interest in heterosexual ones: they produce children. No doubt scientists are already hard at work to enable homosexual couples to have offspring but such artificial tactics merely serve to prove my point.

To argue that sexual identity is a matter of choice or personal preference, even in small children whose minds have not developed, is nonsense at best but I fear it is, in fact, dangerous nonsense. In a fallen world, warped by ancestral sin, people can end up in a muddle but it is heresy to contradict the divine order and demand that the fallen state has somehow to be elevated as fundamentally good, in the same way that the Creation is fundamentally good. That which God has not blessed is sin and we do not grow to the fulness of the stature of Christ, our true humanity, by equating a false understanding with truth.

It has been argued, for example, that same-sex attraction is determined by genetics and that therefore society must accept homosexual relationships as equal in all aspects to heterosexual ones. The problem with this idea is that those attracted to paedophilia might claim the same defence and, quite rightly, we have laws against such practices. This is not an argument for the re-criminalisation of homosexuality but it begs the question as to what natural function it can have if it be genetically determined. Nature in this actual world is all about reproduction, the passing on of genetic information, limited by available space and resources alongside the reducing factors of predation, disease, accident and violence. In this way (as long as the environment does not alter) species numbers can reach a balance. One might argue that on an overcrowded, small planet with over seven billion souls, that genetically

occurring homosexuality is another of Nature's ways of keeping the population down. But Nature cannot have it both ways; it cannot have its cake and eat it, as we say. In the logical world of genetics there is either reproduction or there isn't. Yes, the function of sex, however presented, culturally, is reproduction. That is the biological fact of the matter. Theologically, though, what we know by Revelation, is that the union of male and female is blessed by God, is sacred and therefore points beyond itself towards a spiritual communion in the kingdom of God. This, of course, cuts no ice with the gender politicians - there is no reason why it should - as they are not believers in Orthodox Christianity. But it works for us and it profoundly affects the way we regard identity politics of our own day.

When someone says, for example, that they were born in the wrong body, does that mean our sexuality pre-exists somehow, somewhere and that the person finds themselves incarnated wrongly by divine error? This begins to sound like the heresy of the pre-existence of souls! No, let's be honest: when someone claims that they were born in the wrong body, the problem is not actually in their body, it's in their head; *you cannot buck nature*.

Orthodox parents with children at school will need to be aware of all this in years to come. There will be increasing pressure to conform to gender politics and its bizarre world-view. We have, however, our own defence against these dark arts and that is sound Orthodox Christian teaching with which to equip and protect our children.

When examined at a spiritual level, the current identity politics show the marks of Antichrist in the proper sense of being *against Christ*; it is fundamentally demonic and a delusion. Moreover, there is perhaps a hint of irony in all this, for the 'oppressed' sexual minorities are keen to blame society for their woes, seeing what they call 'gender' as a social-construct, something conveniently made by and for society in general in the past. From this perspective it is oppressive for society to tell someone that they are male or female. But now (and here's the rub!) their very fashionable status (not least on the BBC) invites many more people to imagine they are part of this 'community.'

I have only to recall in my own life-time how moral attitudes have changed to realize that the past is indeed a foreign country now. We have indeed reached the point where the tail is currently wagging the dog and this at a time when our population is growing older, with more and more people feeling they have to 'come out' in all sorts of directions and sex has become a recreational rather than reproductive activity. For many (if not for the persuaded majority), this is the evidence of progress towards a more equal society. But that will be at the expense of our liberty to believe otherwise and the

laws will increasingly bring pressure to bear on all contrarians like ourselves. It will also be an end of fraternity and any idea that we have a place among their self-absorbed communities. Yet, there again, as St Paul says, *'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness.'* [2 Cor.6:14]

So long may our Orthodox Christian 'community' go on having babies. As the current western civilization goes into decline, absorbed in its one death cult, we can eventually replace them.

Fr Chrysostom



Sunday 7th May

*The Visit of our Archbishop
His Eminence, Metropolitan
Silouan
Of the Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Archdiocese of the British
Isles and Ireland*

Divine Liturgy at 10.30am
And bring & share reception afterwards
in the church hall



29th – 31st May

*Archdiocesan Liturgical Conference
at Swanwick in Derbyshire*

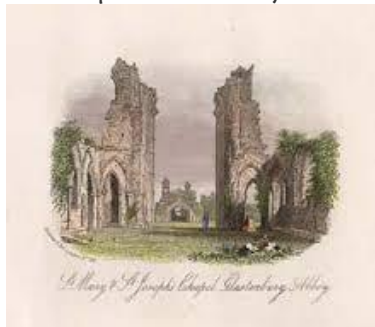
Our clergy and lay representatives will
be attending



2nd – 3rd June

Parish Pilgrimage to Glastonbury

Near where St Dunstan was born and
where he was later to be abbot of the
famous monastery before becoming
Archbishop of Canterbury in 959AD



SERVICES

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

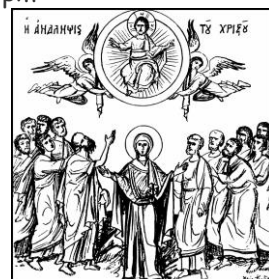
MAY

Sun 7th 4th Sunday of Pascha
Visit of His Eminence,
Metropolitan Silouan
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 14th 5th of Pascha
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 21st 6th of Pascha
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Thurs 24th Eve of Ascension
Day Vesperal Divine Liturgy
7.00pm



Sun 28th 7th of Pascha
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

JUNE

Sat 3rd NB *No Vespers*
Sun 4th Pentecost Sunday
Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Sun 11th 1st after Pentecost
All Saints
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 18th 2nd after Pentecost
All Saints of Britain
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 25th 3rd after Pentecost
All Saints of Antioch
Divine Liturgy 10.30am