

THE NARTHEX

September-October 2015

The believers were first called Christians at Antioch
ACTS. 9:26

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

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of Great Britain and Ireland
The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

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Our Archbishop Designate



Archimandrite Silouan

By now, most of you will know that Archimandrite Silouan Oner will be, by God's grace, our archbishop-designate, following his consecration on 30th August. He will be enthroned at London on 28th November as the first Metropolitan of The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of The British Isles and Ireland. This comes twenty years after the original group of us came together to seek entrance into the Orthodox Church; we may allow ourselves a feeling of deep satisfaction and must offer up profound gratitude to Almighty God. Archimandrite Silouan is 44 years old and was born in Latakia in Syria. Trained originally in electrical engineering, he holds a PhD from Thessalonika University. He teaches currently at the Theology faculty of Balamand University in Lebanon and in May was appointed Abbot of the Monastery of St. George in the Valley of the Christians in Syria. He speaks Arabic, Greek and English. With his background and experience, our first metropolitan will have ready acceptance and respect from the other Orthodox hierarchs already present in Britain. In accordance with the Holy Canons which demand that metropolitan bishops live in the principal city of a province, he will live in London. The fact that there are several Orthodox metropolitans living in the same city is, of course, contrary

to the Holy Canons but this anomaly comes from the fact that Britain hosts several Orthodox jurisdictions, all in full communion with one another. It is devoutly to be hoped that, eventually, there will be but one jurisdiction, an Orthodox Church of these islands. But these matters are of principle concern only for those in the sacred ministry and under canonical obedience. Lay people here, quite correctly, go, if possible, to their local Orthodox church, the one nearest to them, whatever the jurisdiction. This is clearly the case with St. Dunstan's, serving the spiritual needs of any Orthodox Christian in the Bournemouth-Poole area. We must remember that there are no national churches in Orthodoxy, only local churches, albeit they become the bearers of historical and cultural traditions for those localities.

Meanwhile, whoever we are and wherever we are from in this congregation, we must pray for our new bishop. He is preparing for his part as our chief pastor and the leader of our mission to re-hallow this land in its ancient Orthodox Christian faith, so that where he leads, we may follow as his co-workers in Christ.

Evidently, from being an archdiocese in name only, the way our Antiochian churches operate will change greatly over the next few years. We shall learn in due course of the way our strategy for mission will operate; of uniformity in matters of liturgy in accordance with the bishop's directions; of what kind of administration for diocesan affairs will be established. These are, clearly, very positive and exciting times for us. So more than anything else that I write here, I want us all to understand that in the first place everyone must make intercession for our coming metropolitan and for our archdiocese and, of course, our parish. This is extremely important and I cannot emphasise this enough. Church life has always attracted people to be involved at various levels:

there are those on the edges, those fairly involved and those at the very centre; concentric circles of commitment and love of Christ. There are those who might imagine that the Church of Christ is a cruise vessel in which they are merely passengers from time to time. Whereas, in fact, she is a merchant vessel, carrying the hidden treasure of the gospel and we are, all of us, members of the crew. We are members of Christ and we are here to labour and the very first of our labours is to continue in prayer. No matter what or who we are, we can all pray; the only obstacle in our way will be sloth and lack of zeal in the heart. Ask also for the prayers of the saints for God's blessing on this venture: of Our Lady, of course and of St. Theodore of Tarsus, patron the archdiocese; of the Forerunner and Baptist, John, whose intercession I greatly believe in when setting out on any new work or project. And naturally, do not forget our patron, St. Dunstan and St. Silouan the Athonite for obvious reasons.

You will recall that in July I attended the Archdiocese meeting for clergy and parish treasurers at Manchester. The dean, Archpriest Gregory made one point very, very clear, that the arrival of our first metropolitan will entail certain practical and certainly, financial rearrangements, not just for clergy and parish office holders but for each household that that is part of our archdiocese. This means that here is something that each of us must also bring into our prayers: our level of giving to the church.

Primarily, this is not a matter of *we must pay for the bishop, so we have to give more money*. To see it in those terms would not be the Christian way. Neither can we say that money has nothing to do with our spiritual lives. Such an idea is entirely wrong, unspiritual and has more in common with the dualism of the Gnostic heresy.

The truth is, how we use money is an indicator of the state of our soul. Our giving to the Church, whether at a local or diocesan level, is part of our ascetic practice. Alongside, prayer and fasting, there is almsgiving, either directly to charity or to the common purse of the Church. Therefore, in praying about this, each one should ask himself how his giving might be done thankfully, joyfully, willingly, sacrificially, generously and regularly. Studying the following passages from the scriptures of the New Testament will help you as you consider these matters:

"... for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God." [2 Corinthians 9:12]

"for God loves a cheerful giver ..." [2 Corinthians 9:7]

"... for they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will." [2 Corinthians 8:3]

"... he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." [2 Corinthians 9:6]

"... and God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work." [2 Corinthians 9:8]

"On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper ..." [1 Corinthians 16:2]

It was agreed at the Manchester meeting that each parish, wherever possible, should send 15% of its income to the archdiocese; yearly the archdiocese will need to find in the region of £70,000. Currently, from parish collections and sales we at St. Dunstan's send around 10% (£100 per month). Personally, I believe we could now afford to raise that to £300 and I shall propose to our parish council that in fact, we do that.

In the end it is a matter for each person/household but it is also a matter that can only be decided after prayer and serious consideration. Be assured, I am *not* saying you must give more! I am saying you must pray about this and then give regularly as the Holy Spirit leads.

In our parish, of course, we must also take into account that we have undertaken the renovation of a beautiful temple which is not just a project



concerned with architectural preservation and of local heritage, important as that is. The repair of our building is part of our spiritual life, as part of our mission to make our building a centre for Orthodox Christianity in this part of Wessex. We can give currently either to the Bournemouth-Poole Orthodox Christian Foundation, the charity which owns the building. Some prefer to do that and through the system of *Gift Aid* the tax can be recovered if it has been paid on those donations. [£2,400 was raised in that way last year, from which we received an extra £600 from the taxman.] The other way is to give regularly during the Liturgy or at other times, placing our money in the collection box or indeed giving to both the parish and the Foundation – It might be eventually, that we shall have but one organisation and one account but currently the present system works well. We also raise a modest profit on the sale of votive candles but it important to remember that each should also give to the maintenance of the church, the ministry and the archdiocese. I, as you know perhaps, do not take a salary from the congregation, just some occasional administrative expenses. There are parishes in the archdiocese, however, that are able to pay their clergy; I do not need a salary as, having retired from teaching, I now have my pension. This, however, might not be the case when I am succeeded eventually as parish priest.

There are many things we do as part of our religious and spiritual life together. We start with the Liturgy but there is also the study of the scriptures and the lives of the saints. There is our daily prayer, Confession, the observing of the liturgical calendar of feasts, pilgrimages and anything else you might name. But with this goes our Orthodox ascetic life which includes our giving, forming within us the likeness of Christ for whom it was more blessed to give than to receive.

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.

SEPTEMBER

Tues 1st Church New Year

Sun 6th14th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Tues 8th Nativity of the Theotokos

Sun 13th 15th after Pentecost [before the Exaltation] Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Mon 14th Exaltation of the Holy Cross (fast with wine & oil)

Sun 20th 16th after Pentecost [after Exaltation] Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 27th 17th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am



OCTOBER

Sun 4th 18th after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 11th 19th after Pentecost Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 18th 20th after Pentecost St Luke Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 25th 21st after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am

