

THE NARTHEX

The believers were first called Christians at Antioch

ACTS. 9:26

May-June 2015

The Orthodox Church of St. Dunstan of Canterbury, Poole
The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of The British Isles and Ireland
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
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The Remaining Time

Around the time that this edition of The Narthex appears a great deal will have changed. I am not thinking necessarily of the General Election on 7th May, important though that be. At a more personal and indulgent level I am thinking of the fact that my wife and I shall have retired from full-time teaching and, God willing, we shall have the blessing of more time. In reality, of course, we shall have the same amount of allotted time, as the Lord sees fit, only we shall not be bound to offer up so much of it to our former employer. The spiritual question for all of us, when we consider time, is obviously how best we may use it; what is the right use of our time? You might recall that petition from one of the litanies: *'That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.'*

One thing that I am determined should happen is that our life as a parish community should develop. Naturally, this will centre upon our liturgical life and the services that we shall be able to offer in future, where before, we were restricted with my limited availability. But there are other areas we must consider, particularly in our work of catechising and teaching the faith to the young; of developing our own understanding, dedication and incorporation in our common Orthodox faith and not least, how we may draw in those who do not know Christ.

As, once again, we live and pray through these paschal days, it is good that we should enter in as deeply as we can and own for ourselves the very meaning of this

season and not let it pass as just *another time of year* to be commercially exploited by the manufacturers of greetings cards and chocolate and the supermarkets, selling joints of lamb. Not that there was anything intrinsically wrong with any of these, only, we know them to be peripheral: the heart of Pascha lies elsewhere. It would be easy to look down on those seasonal tokens: chocolate eggs, Easter bunnies, daffodils and young lambs - the same sort of thing happens at Nativity - but we may still bear in mind that they were, at least, for those outside the household of faith a tenuous link to a religion and its central mystery through which to cling onto something *beyond*, something sacred; only part of their cultural surroundings, yet, nevertheless, a possible opening to the reality beyond the time they have left.

You and I, of course, know the mystery of faith; we know that Christ, risen from the dead, ever lives to make intercession for us. That we ourselves were not present on that first day of the week when the holy Myrrhbearers found the tomb empty, matters not at all! We were there at the Paschal Vigil when the resurrection was proclaimed and celebrated. Christ, the ever-living God, was with us just as much as he was with the first apostles, only they had the proof of his risen body, where we have the Liturgy, the holy icons, the sacred ministry, the words of the gospels. Since his glorious ascension, Christ's bodily presence, for us on earth,

has passed over into the holy mysteries of his Church, as Pope St. Leo said in the sixth century. We too have touched and handled Christ, as St. John the Theologian tells us in his epistle.

This is the source of our peace, the peace referred to in that petition from the litany: we may complete rest of our time in peace for we are in Christ, outside of whom there can be no salvation.

But we also need to consider that the apostles did following resurrection: they spent forty days with Christ; they met with him and one another and entered into the mystery, formed their teaching and learned what it meant to be his church. And after the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, they went out into the whole known world - even according to tradition, as far as India eastwards and to Britain in the west.

Think, then, of what we are here for. As this country loses, bit by bit, all links with its ancient faith, we summon everyone to that repentance also mentioned in the litany. Sadly, we are not helped by the trends in the established Protestant church that has recently removed from its new baptismal rite any reference to the rejection of Satan. (How delighted the devil must be!) Taken together with the general avoidance of references to human sin (or the redefining of what acts may be thought sinful at all) in favour of an obsession with global 'issues', the disappearance of the devil is hardly surprising in post-modern liberal Protestantism. Furthermore, the way they are collapsing in the face of social

and secular pressures, changing, for example, the form of their ordained ministries, raises the obvious question in this changeable and anodyne approach to Christianity - why would one need God at all? If we are not sinful, if we do not need to repent and see the world differently, why do we need redemption?

On the contrary, as Orthodox Christians, we call upon all to repent and come to the knowledge of the truth and to spend the rest of their days in peace and repentance.

How we do this as a Christian community is what must occupy us in the days ahead. After all, what is the point of observing the feast of Pentecost if we are not spiritual; if we are not truly Pentecostal; if we are not shown to be *most wise*, as the troparion of the feast says, *drawing the whole world into the net*?

The other momentous change that we hope to see in June is the appointment of our first metropolitan for this archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland. In the 7th Century a monk from the Patriarchate of Antioch was appointed by Pope St. Vitalian of Rome to be Archbishop of Canterbury: St. Theodore of Tarsus in Cilicia. It is wonderful to think that there must soon be another Antiochian Archbishop in these islands. This has important implications for the expanding of our mission. We shall have authoritative rulings and direction on the harmonisation of our liturgical and pastoral practice. It will greatly ease the backlog of ordinations that are due (a sign of our spiritual health and growth). And, not least, it will mean that we and all the Antiochian communities in this country, contribute realistically to the financial support of our bishop and his ministry. I would also hope that with our own metropolitan, we shall be able to increase the public profile of Orthodox Christianity here, if only to make people aware that the roots of British Christian culture were fed in the soil of Holy Tradition that was

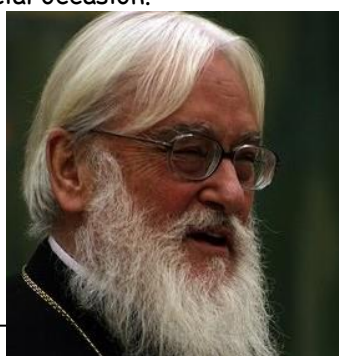
ever proclaimed in the ancient patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

Whatever of that faith remains in the declining established church is to be welcomed and fostered. But if we are realistic, the wrangling within Anglicanism over (among other things) sexual ethics and changes in its historic forms of sacred ministry has allowed them to drift further and further away from us. Only the Roman Church, from whom we have been estranged for a thousand years, presents any realistic prospect of a common purpose here in Britain. So I shall say it once again, as I have often written and preached: the primary reason for existence of the Antiochian Orthodox Church in this land is for the salvation of our souls and for the re-hallowing of this land in its ancient faith. To that end, let us complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance.

Fr. Chrysostom

The Visit of His Eminence,
Metropolitan Kallistos of
Diokleia
(Patriarchate of Constantinople)

Met. Kallistos will serve the Liturgy and preach at St. Dunstan's on Sunday 10th May. As we await the appointment of our own Metropolitan, it is a great honour to be able to welcome Bp. Kallistos from the Greek Archdiocese. This is the first time that we have had a bishop visit our church and it is hoped that as many of the congregation as possible will be present to welcome him on this very special occasion.



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 3rd 4th Sunday of Pascha
The Paralyse Man Divine
Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 10th 5th Sunday of Pascha
The Samaritan Woman
Episcopal Divine Liturgy with Met
Kallistos of Diokleia 10.30am

Sun 17th 6th Sunday of Pascha
The Blind Man Divine Liturgy
10.30am

Tues 19th St Dunstan of
Canterbury

Thurs 21st The Ascension of Our
Lord [service time to be
announced]

Sun 24th 7th Sunday of Pascha
Afterfeast of Ascension. Fr
Chrysostom on Holiday. Reader
led service 10.30am

Sun 31st Holy Pentecost Divine
Liturgy 10.30am

JUNE

Sun 7th 1st after Pentecost
All Saints Divine Liturgy
1030am

Mon 8th Beginning of the
Apostles' Fast

Sun 14th 2nd after Pentecost
All Saints of Britain Divine
Liturgy 1030am

Sun 21st 3rd after
Pentecost All Saints of Antioch
Divine Liturgy 1030am

Sun 28th 4th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 1030am

Mon 29th Holy Apostles Peter &
Paul