

THE NARTHEX

*The believers were first called Christians
at Antioch*

ACTS. 9:26

FEBRUARY-MARCH
2010

The Orthodox Church of St. Dunstan Poole-Bournemouth

The Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of The United Kingdom and Ireland
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Parish Priest: Fr. Chrysostom MacDonnell 42 Coventry Close, Corfe Mullen,
Wimborne, Dorset BH21 3UP Tel. 01202-602628 e-mail:

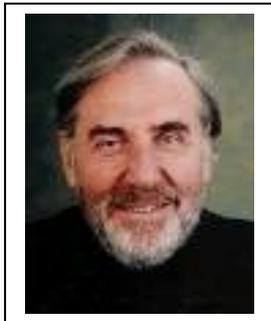
fr.chrysostom@meowmail.com

Reader: David Wallis Tel. 01209-217499

www.saint-dunstan.org

www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk

*Archpriest Michael Harper
1994-2010*



Since our formation as a community in 2006, I believe that Fr. Michael was able to visit us about three times; the last visit was last September. Naturally, many of us would only have known him by acquaintance, just a friendly visitor passing through our midst. For other Orthodox believers in this country he was the public face of our Antiochian Deanery. For those of us who had more frequent encounters with him, there is now a real awareness of his absence and a profound sense of loss. Indeed, for that small initial band of brother clergy, who in 1994 departed the Established Church of this country, Fr. Michael's death has robbed us of a travelling companion on that *pilgrimage* we made towards the one, Orthodox and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. Being present at seminal events is always a great privilege. Such an event happened in September 1994 when, as part of a group of, mainly, ex-Anglican clergy, we met our now Patriarch, His Beatitude, Ignatius IV, in Paris. This for us was the end of a journey as part of an organisation I had begun in the early 90's with the help of an American Antiochian priest, Fr. Michael Keiser. By the time of our '94 meeting in Paris, Fr. Michael Harper was our president and Fr. Michael Keiser our go-between with the Patriarchate. It is hard to express the feeling of relief and completion when the Patriarch, having heard our request to be received into the Orthodox Church, just opened his arms and said 'Welcome home.' From then on, Fr. Michael Harper, having been ordained deacon then priest, was

appointed the first Dean of the of the Antiochian Orthodox Deanery in Britain within the Archdiocese of Western and Central Europe. I am sure that at some time, someone will set to and write a biography of Fr. Michael. An astute writer will be able to point out the remarkable nature of our late Dean's own religious journey: of how he himself became a kind of microcosm of 20th century western Christian experience. Formed in the conservative evangelical Anglican background, he was curate of All Soul's Church, Langham Place, London (*the BBC church*) and became a central figure in this country and abroad within the Charismatic Movement. His entrance into Orthodoxy, of course, surprised many of his erstwhile co-religionists but he represented a radical change of direction in religious experience that many before and since have followed. Calling a halt to the endless and restless searching of western Christianity, he discovered his soul's repose in the timeless Holy Tradition of the Apostles and the living waters of Orthodoxy that had been there all along. This discovery of fulfilment in something so old and yet always renewed, was his authentic experience: puzzling indeed to those he left behind but obvious to us who had been on a similar venture and had made the same discovery. He was perhaps an enigma to many who had been brought up Orthodox, as they pondered his shift in direction; some indeed, even suspicious, wondering whether this was an embracing of Orthodoxy properly for its own sake or merely a rejection of certain trends within post-modern Protestantism. Truth to tell, the last fifteen years are the monument to God's blessing on Fr. Michael's endeavour. Now, his soul has found paradise: God grant us a joyful reunion in the glory of the resurrection.

Fr. Chrysostom

From His Eminence, Metropolitan
John



On the Death of Father Michael

"The just are remembered with praises, but for you the Lord's testimony suffices, O Forerunner."
(*Apolytikion of the holy and glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John*)

In these blessed days, in which our Lord Jesus Christ came from Heaven to our world to be born from the Virgin Mary and to be baptized by John the Baptist for our salvation, two feelings - of sadness and of joy - are combined together. Sadness, because we have lost a very beloved brother and friend, Father Michael Harper, but also joy, spiritual joy, that Father Michael left us at the Feast of Theophany, for the central concern of his life was to proclaim the good news of God made manifest in Christ. One of his last public actions in late November was, I am told, despite rising ill-health, to put down on video the last of three talks he has contributed to our outreach programme, *The Way*, on central aspects of the Orthodox Christian Faith. I cannot forget that last year he asked me to write a prologue to his book *A Faith Fulfilled*, which is being translated into Greek. Appropriately, I wrote my introduction on the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, 2009. We hope also that in the very near future we will have Father Michael's book *A Faith Fulfilled*,

translated into Arabic. Saint John the Baptist, one of the main characters in the drama of the Theophany, is reported as saying of Christ: "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" (John 3:30). However, when the disciples asked the Lord about Saint John the Forerunner, the Lord replied: "*I say unto you, among those that are born of woman there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.*" (Luke 7:28). That is why we sing to Saint John these words: "*The just are remembered with praises, but for you the Lord's testimony suffices, O Forerunner.*" The witness of the Lord and the testimony of Saint John's works were sufficient for people to admire him. So it is with Father Michael: his achievements are enough to speak his praises. Father Michael was the first to manifest what I will call an Antiochian consciousness in heart and mind. Thanks to his efforts and labours, his sweat and tears, we now have a very marked presence in the United Kingdom. He was the first one to join the Antiochian Orthodox Church and then, slowly, slowly, the Deanery was founded, of which he was the first Dean. By God's grace, the Deanery has grown, consisting now of more than twenty-four Fathers in about twenty parishes in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Be sure, beloved Father Michael, that this effective and dynamic presence will keep growing and multiplying, day by day, led by our new Dean, Father Gregory Hallam, who will continue to follow in your footsteps on this path that you first began to walk upon. No words can describe the emptiness that we feel after Father Michael's resting in the Lord. Contrary feelings are in my heart at the same moment: sadness and joy, emptiness and fulfillment, crucifixion and resurrection. *Sadness* because we have lost a very beloved brother and friend, Father Michael Harper, and we miss him; and *joy* because we know that now he is celebrating the Theophany with the Lord Himself in the Heavens. *Emptiness* because we feel the gap that Father Michael has left in the Deanery and in our hearts; and *fulfillment* because we know that Father Michael is living and enjoying the full light and glory of the Theophany in Paradise. *Crucifixion* because our hearts are wounded with the spear of sadness at his death, and *Resurrection* because we

are sure that he is now enjoying eternal life in the bosom of Abraham with all the saints. I can see with the eyes of the heart, that Saint John the Baptist is waiting for Father Michael at the gate of Paradise, leading him by the hand before the divine Throne, showing him the Lord in His glory, and saying: "*Come and see. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*" This is the Lamb that Father Michael used to sacrifice at every Divine Liturgy, giving Him to the faithful, in the Body and the Blood, for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life. Presbytera Jeanne was at Father Michael's side, as always and to the end, praying for him and preparing him for the great journey. She felt the sword of sadness pierce her heart as the Mother of God felt it in her day. But at the same time, in her heart, she was listening to the sweet voice of the Lord whispering to her just as He had said to His Mother: "Do not weep for me, as you see me in a tomb." (Ode 9, Irmos, at Matins on Holy and Great Saturday). From the depth of my heart, I pray to God to receive Father Michael in His Heavenly Kingdom. I ask Him, our good Lord and Lover of Mankind, to grant Father Michael the fulfilment of divine light and glory, to establish his soul in the tents of the righteous, to give him rest in the bosom of Abraham, and to number him with the righteous. In this difficult moment, I can find nothing to say for consolation to all of us better than to tell you what happened when I visited Father Michael in the hospital. Alone I entered his room. Presbytera Jeanne said to him: "It is our beloved bishop". With difficulty he whispered: "I love you". Be sure, Father, that you will be always in my heart, with great love. I greet you, Father Michael, for the last time with the Paschal greeting: "*Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed.*" *May his memory be eternal.*



SERVICES

February

- 7th Sun Sunday of the Last Judgement *Meatfare*
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
14th Sun Forgiveness Sunday
Cheesefare Divine Liturgy
11.30am
15th Mon **Beginning of the Great Fast**
21st Sun First Sunday of Lent
The Triumph of Orthodoxy
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
28th Sun Second Sunday of Lent
St. Gregory Palamas
Divine Liturgy 11.30am

March

- 7th Sun Third Sunday of Lent
Veneration of the Cross Divine Liturgy 11.30am
14th Sun Fourth Sunday of Lent
St. John Climacus Divine Liturgy 11.30am
21st Sun Fifth Sunday of Lent
St. Mary of Egypt Divine Liturgy 11.30am
25th Thurs The Annunciation
27th Sat Lazarus Saturday
28th Sun Sunday of Palms
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
Passion Week
29th Great and Holy Monday
30th Great and Holy Tuesday
31st Great and Holy Wednesday
Anointing Service 7.30pm

April

- 1st Great and Holy Thursday
Vespertal Liturgy of the Mystical Supper 11.00am
2nd Great and Holy Friday
Vespers of the Shroud 4.00pm
Lamentations Service 7.00pm
3rd Great and Holy Saturday
Paschal Vigil : Midnight Office,
Rush Procession, Orthros, Divine Liturgy & Feast 11.00pm
4th **HOLY PASCHA**