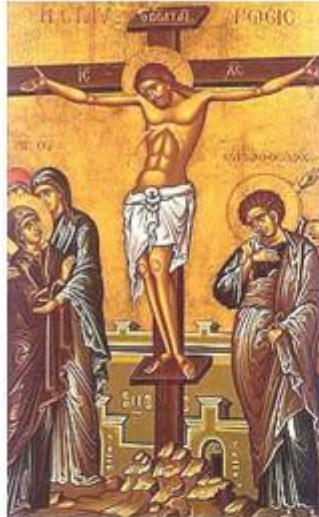


The Apostle

St Aidan's Orthodox Church, Henderson Street, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 2JX

Issue 10: April 2024

<https://www.aidanorthodox.com/>



Dear friends,

During Great Lent at the Wednesday Evening 8pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgies we have 6 themed homilies. The first already took place in March on Fasting and I write this piece on the Wednesday upon which the second will be delivered on Prayer. Our Lord taught that prayer with fasting is especially powerful (Matthew 17:21). How is this so? Powerful prayer must be focussed and energised by the Holy Spirit, which in turn depends on a keen perception. Such sharp perception does not come readily with an overfull stomach. It is aided by a stomach that is somewhat empty (but not excessively so to the detriment of our health). Disciplining our appetites is not only

good for our physical health but for our spiritual health also.

On the other four Wednesdays our homilies cover almsgiving, study, relationships and Christian action. Almsgiving reminds us of our responsibility before God towards the poor; study — the necessity for our Christian formation of attention to the Scriptures (New **and** Old Testaments), the Fathers and the lives of the saints; relationships, so that the quality of these might be enriched by God; Christian action so that we might become stronger disciples of Christ in the world.

It is so easy to neglect one or more of these spiritual disciplines throughout the year ... which is why Great Lent focusses our attention on all of them . Let us pay heed! **Fr Gregory**

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Monthly Notice Board

There are two midweek services during Great Lent:

Wednesday at 8pm: The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts

Friday at 8pm: (first five Fridays only): Akathist to the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

Try, if you can, to attend at least one of these each week.



Men's Lent Group - "Fast Club"

Fast Club is a group for men of all ages over Great Lent. The aim is to spur each other on in asceticism. We have a WhatsApp group where we share fasting recipes and insights from the fathers. We have a book club on Sundays after the Liturgy, discussing our book, "Great Lent" by Fr Alexander Schmemmann. We are also going to pray the Great Canon at least once. All welcome! We particularly have a need for some wiser chaps, most of us are new to the Church and short in the tooth!

Speak to Aaron and Ed for more details.

OFSJB Youth Festival - Philoxenia, The Love of the Stranger

The OFSJB's under-35's wing is organising its annual Youth Festival for 24th-27th May. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet other young Orthodox Christians from around the country and beyond. The location is beautiful coastal Essex, and the speaker lineup will be excellent. Signup is opening soon. Speak to Jess/Anna or Ed for more details.

Young Peoples' Events at St Aidan's

We are planning to run more events for young people at St Aidan's following the success of the Cheesefare Cheeseboard! Watch this space for more details! This is all quite organic and informal, so if you have an idea, go for it!



**Orthodox Christian
Youth** of Great Britain

Orthodox Youth Festival

24th - 27th May 2024



**SAVE
THE
DATE!**



Philoxenia:
The Love of the Stranger

The Spiritual Discipline
of Hospitality

Meetings after the Liturgy:

Parish Council: 7th April

Annual Meeting: 21st April

Palm Sunday and Holy Week:

28th April to 3rd May

Paschal Vigil and Eucharist:

4th to 5th May

*More Details
on the Next
Page ...*

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2024

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 25th	 <i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week MARCH 3rd	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare MARCH 10th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare MARCH 17th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 24th	 <i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 31st	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent APRIL 7th	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHAI</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent APRIL 14th	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 21st	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 28th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY MAY 3rd	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! MAY 5th NO FASTING!	 <i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

Holy Week and Pascha 2024



Lazarus Saturday:	27 th April	10.00 am	Divine Liturgy
Palm Sunday:	28 th April	9.00 am	Matins
		10.15 am	Divine Liturgy (and Procession)
Great and Holy Monday:	29 th April	8.00 pm	Bridegroom Matins
Great and Holy Tuesday:	30 th April	8.00 pm	Bridegroom Matins
Great and Holy Wednesday:	1 st May	8.00 pm	Holy Unction (Healing) Service
Great and Holy Thursday:	2 nd May	8.00 pm	Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil
Great and Holy Friday:	3 rd May	9.00 am	Matins with 12 Gospels
		3.00 pm	Vespers (Deposition from the Cross)
		8.00 pm	Matins (Lamentations)
PASCHA	4 th May	6.30 pm	Great Vespers
	5 th May	7.30 pm	Baptisms and Chrismations
<i>No Saturday morning or late Sunday morning Liturgy – one Paschal Vigil only. Note the different service times. Please bring food to share with you after the Paschal Liturgy.</i>		8.30 pm	Reading of the Acts of the Apostles
		10.00 pm	Night Office
		10.30 pm	Paschal Procession
		10.45 pm	Paschal Matins
		12.00 am	Paschal Liturgy
		1.30 am	Paschal Agape Meal (Bring and Share)

An Explanation of the Services for Great and Holy Week and Pascha



The Services of Holy Week and Pascha are many and a rich source of salvation in our lives through the power and operation of the Holy Spirit. Through these we become more closely conformed to Christ in whom we receive the death destroying life of Pascha from the Father.

Here follows a short guide to the services we celebrate at this time.

On Great and Holy Monday and Tuesday we serve the Bridegroom Matins. This puts our hearts and minds in readiness to receive Christ the Bridegroom, who will come perhaps when we least expect! We should always be prepared to greet Him in vigilance and prayer.

On Great and Holy Wednesday evening we serve the Unction (Healing) Service of Healing. Hearing the seven gospels and imploring the healing grace of Christ, we are anointed and made whole.

On Great and Holy and Thursday at the Vespertal Liturgy we celebrate our Lord's Institution of the Eucharist. *Note:* We serve all Vespertal Liturgies in the evenings, as was their original appointment!

On Great and Holy Friday at Matins we proclaim the 12 Passion Gospels. In this service the Holy and Life-Giving Cross is installed in the nave. (This service is served on Holy Friday morning). At **Vespers** (mid-afternoon) we take down the image of our Lord from the Cross and place it in a white shroud in the altar. Shortly afterwards the burial epitaphion is solemnly processed into the nave where the icon of the crucified Christ is venerated with great devotion. At **Matins** later in the same evening we sing the solemn but joyful funeral chant for our Lord and process with his icon in the epitaphion outside the Church. The people walk under the epitaphion as they come into Church to signify that through the cross they have passed from death to life. They then venerate the Gospel Book and receive a flower from the epitaphion (venerated at the end of the service).

On Great and Holy Saturday there is no Liturgy in the morning but rather in the evening we serve Vespers followed by baptisms and/or chrismations and then the reading of the Acts of the Apostles at a fully restored Paschal Vigil.

The **Night Office** follows which prepares our hearts and minds to enter into the joy of Paschal victory. After this we leave church and make a solemn procession. Upon re-entering we celebrate the resurrection with **“Christ is Risen!”** in many languages - concluding with the famous **Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom.**

There then follows **Paschal Matins and the Paschal Liturgy.** ***ALL Orthodox Christians without exception should receive Holy Communion at this midnight Eucharist.***

The “bring and share” **Paschal Meal** ends our celebration. There are no further services after this service which ends in the early hours of Sunday morning.

The **Gospel of the resurrection appearance to St Thomas**, read in many different languages occurs at the Liturgy on Thomas Sunday, a week later, rather than at Paschal Vespers which we do not serve.



Music & Church

Music has always been something that I've felt drawn to. I'm not 100% sure why but I like it enough to have learned how to play the guitar, write and sing songs.

Years ago I was in a band that at a time harboured aspirations of a possible career in music, in one form or another. As time passed and members of the band started having families (including myself) it became difficult. We still play together from time to time when

busy family schedules will allow, but now it's more for the love of writing and playing more than anything else.

When I first became a Christian back in 2012, convicted by the fact I was going to be a Dad, I decided to go to Church with the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is an evangelical movement that was created by William and Catherine Booth, two ex Anglicans who had a heart for Christ and London's poor. They formed 'the Army' in 1865, to bring the gospel, food and healthcare to the 1 million or so people situated in squalid conditions in London's East End. Since then the movement has grown worldwide.

Music is an important part of Salvation Army life and ministry. You may well have seen a brass band or carol concert being performed by them, particularly near Christmas, at a nearby shopping centre. They're the guys in the smart navy blue uniforms, usually carrying donation buckets. Seeing that music has always been an important part of my life too, The Army was a place that I felt welcome and easily fitted into with my new found love for Christ and my musical leanings. I even joined the worship band as a singer and guitar player (dare I say it? yes, guitars, keyboards and drums in Church).

Fast forward 4 years or so and I became a catechumen in the Orthodox Church, at this very church in fact, St Aidan's. There were many reasons why I was drawn to Orthodoxy; however, there's one reason that always sticks out in my mind... and that is, of course, the music. There is nothing like Orthodox choir music, simply put it's as stunning as it is beautiful. I remember finding Videos on YouTube of Russian, Greek & Ukrainian choirs and being blown away whilst at the same time feeling a deep spiritual connection to God through the music. The Orthodox Church felt like the next step for me and my family and is one which I'm glad I took.



It's great to sing in the choir at St Aidan's (when parental duties allow). It's also great to see how the choir has grown over the last few years.

God bless,
Brad (John Bartholomew)

“[speak] to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord“

(Ephesians 5:19)

The Knotty Problem of Death – Solved!

How do we explain the fact that death has always been around yet our faith tells us that death was brought about by sin (Romans 6:23)?

Death is accounted for by the second law of thermodynamics... that is, disorder increases over time in any physical system having an energy gradient. Open a hot oven in a kitchen and soon both oven and kitchen will be at the same temperature. Death is disorder. Corruption and death are, therefore, embedded in this fallen world order (Romans 8:19-21).

We note that all life has died from the very beginning, from the origin point, maybe a few hundred million years after the primeval earth had coalesced and cooled down from its fiery origin. Such is the nature of all biological life, including human biological life; we all die. Indeed, we have always died biologically speaking.

However, at some point in hominid evolution consciousness emerged with humans being then aware of themselves and the transcendent reality that we call God. Whether this dawning awareness of both self and God first occurred in Homo Sapiens, the Neanderthals, Homo Erectus or some other hominid is entirely inconsequential. We are what we have received genetically from our distant past. We know that this consciousness, endowed at our conception, is at its very heart relational, a communion with each other and with God, both deep and personal, potentially at least.

When we find humans in an Edenic Garden of conscious awareness and relatedness to God and each other, we see them as having the possibility of transcending the legacy of biological death and acquiring immortality to eternal life (rather than eternal death). This is the promised fruit of the second tree in Eden, the tree of life, to become what we choose to be, life in God or, tragically, death in ourselves, apart from Him (Genesis 3:22).

As created beings with the capacity for love and growth we necessarily have freedom of choice; so self-awareness and God-awareness can also be turned inward by the hubris of an autonomous egotism, the temptations of the diabolical “snake”, already present in creation. The *original* or ancestral sin, therefore, was that of Satan, not Adam and Eve. Humans were first led astray by the serpent, suggesting envy of God and rebellion against Him, precisely the same envy that had thrown Lucifer out of heaven. Our human rebellion generated shame, proving that our conscience, unlike that of Satan, remained intact. We knew then that we

were naked, physically and spiritually, so foolishly we hid (Genesis 3:7f). However, we could not hide from God because our mortality exposed our fault.

The *origin* of death, therefore, predated the creation of humanity in the angelic fall. The fall of our "first parents" in acceding to the devil's temptations resulted in a loss of the possibility of transcending pre-existent death. Bereft of the possibility of immortality, humans were expelled from this Edenic paradise, and necessarily, by God to ensure that the Tree of Life would not become for humans a poisoned immortality of damnation and eternal death (Genesis 3:24). The Tree of Life both judges and saves according to the spiritual state of those who partake from it.

When Christ submitted Himself to death on the Cross and then overturned it in the resurrection, He reopened Paradise to humanity (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). We return to Eden if we choose repentance and grow in obedience and loving closeness to the Trinity who has saved us, and who is always saving us. We can now grow closer to God than we ever could have done before in our prelapsarian (pre-Fall) state. Death is no more for us, so we have a head start on a grace-full ability to conquer sin in our lives and enter, eventually, into the full fruits of theosis, deification. At that point, we shall ourselves become the Garden of Eden by His grace. Clothed with our resurrection bodies, our immortality will be perfected in a transformed Cosmos (2 Corinthians 5:4; Romans 8:18-25).

Excursus

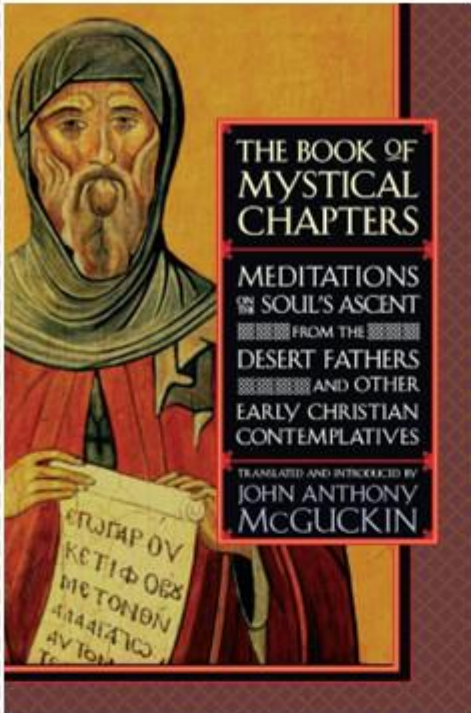
In this article I have unapologetically referenced evolution in the account of human origins and development, incorporating that into the narrative of our creation and redemption. I have been able to do this because evolution simply and only describes the development of life within a fallen creation primordially subject to death. Eden, in this account, is a paradise, a death free zone, but not a place in this fallen world.

The story of Eden in Genesis is profoundly true because it is a myth of how conscious awareness, through the abuse of our freedom in a desire for autonomy, became death for us in our rebellion against God. Our faith, therefore, can - in principle - never be in disharmony with science, because science and religion describe distinctly separate realities. Science reliably describes the fallen world in which we live, whereas theology heralds the world to come, the kingdom of God, already breaking through into this world and transforming it into a New Creation.

Archpriest Gregory Hallam

15th March 2024

Book Review



Father John Anthony McGuckin, "The Book of Mystical Chapters: Meditations on the Soul's Ascent from the Desert Fathers and Other Early Christian Contemplatives"

The title of this book appears daunting, but the text is beautiful and easy to understand, although a challenge to implement. In the Introduction, Father John writes of how quiet moments in our busy lives can be used for prayer to "illuminate a truth about our own heart or the troubles of our friends' hearts or the secret ways that God wishes to develop our seeking soul"

(p. 3). The goal is "the unmasking of the multiple versions of the false self we often construct" and a significant contribution to "the quest for personal psychic calm, integrity and stability" (p. 8). The underlying question is: "What is it that prevents different individuals from advancing beyond their prejudices and repressions, so as to become increasingly illuminated?" (p. 9). 100 short prayers are given. For example:

10: "Before you pray, first forgive all those who have offended you, then pray. Only then will your prayer rise up into the presence of God. If you do not forgive, it will simply remain on earth."

19: "If you are tired and worn out by your labours for your Lord, place your head upon his knee and rest awhile. Recline upon his breast (John 13:23) and breathe in the fragrant spirit of life and allow life to permeate your being. Rest upon him, for he is a table of refreshment (Psalm 23:5) that will serve you the food of the divine Father."

This is a book to read slowly and encourage our prayer lives.

Father Emmanuel