

Fasting Recipe for Advent



Pasta Arrabiata with Aubergine

Prep: 8 minutes; Cook: 35 minutes; Serves 2

1 tbsp vegetable oil; 1 large onion, chopped; 2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped;
1 tsp chilli flakes or a red chilli (finely chopped); 1 tsp smoked paprika; 400g can of
chopped tomatoes or chopped fresh tomatoes; 1tsp vegetable bouillon powder;
1 aubergine, chopped; 150g wholemeal penne or fusili pasta; large handful of basil

Heat the oil in large non-stick pan, add the onions, cover and cook gently for 5
minutes. Remove the lid and cook for 5 more minutes, stirring frequently until
softened.

Add the garlic, chilli and paprika, stir briefly, then tip in the tomatoes and 300ml of
water. Stir in the bouillon and aubergine, then bring to a simmer, cover and cook
for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the pasta in a pan of boiling water for 12 minutes until al dente.
Drain, but reserve 60ml of the cooking water.

Add the cooked pasta to the sauce and toss well with the basil and a little of the
reserved water, if needed.

The Apostle

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St Aidan of Lindisfarne

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The Middle Eastern War



We need to pray for peace and justice.
We need to work for peace and justice.

You and I may feel powerless in the face of a
conflict that has festered for over 75 years.
However, prayer is always called for to
thwart the men of violence and to build
peace among the nations. As Our Lord
taught us:-

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall
be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9)*

Fr Gregory

What's On at St Aidan's ...

Saturday 4th November: 3pm: E-Quip Course in Orthodox Faith and Life starts. All are welcome to these talks with a Q&A and a discussion session afterwards over tea and biscuits.

Sunday 12th November: 9.30 am: Baptism of Julie Foley (Helena).

Saturday 15th November: Advent starts.

Sunday 26th November: 9.30 am: Baptism of Kane Towsey.

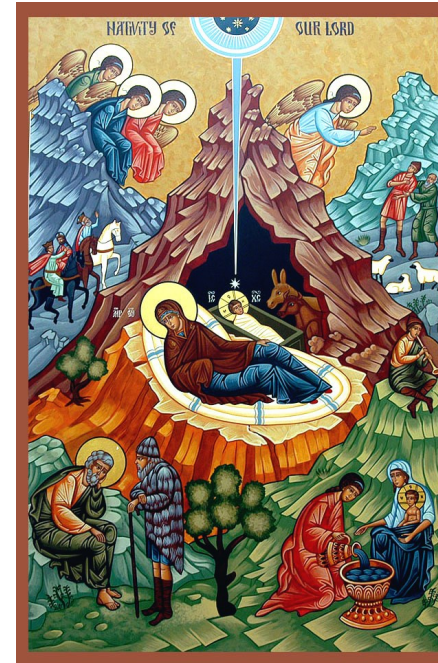
Pray for our Catechumens: Julie, Andie, Beth, Billy, Kermane, Kane and Kitan.



Our Orthodox Christian Education Provision at St Aidan's ... All for you!

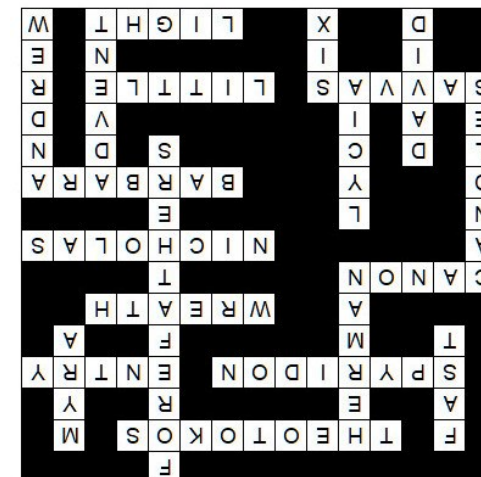
1. Two well stocked libraries (upstairs) and a "mini Library" by the doors.
2. A bookstall with current titles, icons, charcoal, incense, cards and much more besides.
3. A Sunday School after the Sunday Divine Liturgy for all ages (3 to 18).
4. The E-Quip Course in Orthodox Faith and Life, Saturdays at 3pm.
5. A weekly Bible Study by Zoom, Tuesdays, 7.30pm to 8.30pm.
6. Homilies and sermons that we strive in the Holy Spirit to be inspirational, thoughtful, biblical and patristic. We welcome feedback!
7. Personally designed Catechumenate Courses, tailor made to each person and staffed by a team of lay catechists working with the clergy.
8. An informative website incorporating a blog regularly updated with great content for you, your family and friends.

Christmas Services Notice



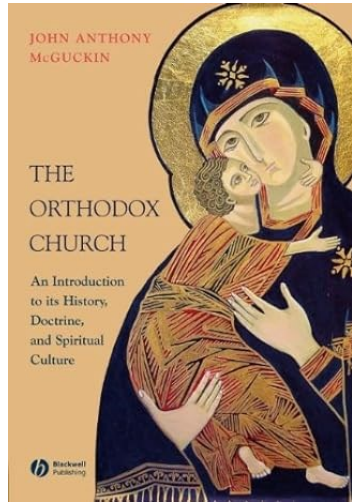
Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year. The usual Sunday services (including Saturday Vespers) will be as set for any other weekend. However, although Christmas Eve is usually part of the Advent Fast, this will be relaxed to a non fast day for the purposes of lunch after Liturgy. For some this will be the only opportunity to receive Holy Communion over Christmas if they are travelling the next day. For those who can attend church on Christmas Day, the Liturgy will be at the slightly earlier time of 10 am.

Puzzle Solution (see page 13)



Book Review

Father John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine and Spiritual Culture*
(Wiley Blackwell, 2011)



This is a remarkable book by Father John—aimed not at scholars but at “English-speaking readers who have come to Orthodoxy by the grace of God and wish to learn more of their own tradition” (p. xi). All 100 entries have been written by Father John himself. He writes that: “Orthodoxy is the living mystery of Christ’s presence in the world: a resurrectional power of life. It cannot be understood except by being fully lived out.... [Christ’s] message is alive in the world today as much as when Jesus Christ

first preached it. The Orthodox Church is, essentially, His [Christ’s] community of disciples trying to grow into His image and likeness by their spiritual assimilation to the Master who continues to abide among us” (p. xi).

“The three chief divisions of the book are the historical context of the Church in its long pilgrimage, the theological task proper, namely the doctrine of God, and finally the several aspects of the economy of salvation, that is, the impact of God’s Kingdom in the world and among the communion of the saints” (p. xii).

The book is expensive at £32. However, an extensive five-page index enables the reader to consult the book again and again on specific topics of personal interest.

Fr Emmanuel

Journey to Orthodoxy: Julie (Helena) Foley



My journey to Orthodoxy was very short with a very long prelude.

I've spent my whole life looking for meaning and a spiritual home in many places, some darker than others. Then in my early 30's I was baptised in a Pentecostal church, but I felt like I was in some kind of performing troupe surrounded by a cardboard cut out of life. I left and spent the next 35 years still searching, not knowing Christ was still there the whole time - behind the closed door I had slammed shut with contempt. Eventually I found meaning living a shamanic way of life.

Then Covid changed the world and things stopped 'adding up'. Research pointed to very deep corruption and evil at work in this world and I realized that everything I had put my weight on in my entire life was an illusion and I was plunged into grief. At this time my eldest son was coming back to live in Manchester after living for 10 years in Bristol. Just before his return he became a Christian. The change in him was miraculous. I began to pray "If you're real show me" and found myself saying the Lord's Prayer and the Jesus prayer. I didn't have a Damascene moment, but a deep peace began

to grow inside. But, I was still a reluctant Christian - I said a thing like: "OK, but I don't want anything to do with going to church" and "OK, but I'm not reading the Bible" - my stubborn arrogance was still grandiose. But the Lord's mercy slowly changed my heart and I knew the only hope for the world was Jesus.

I began to realise I needed a Church and my son talked to me about the Orthodox Church. St Aidan's was the nearest English speaking one. I didn't know what to expect but from the moment I walked in I was captivated by the beauty and the reverence and a quiet 'knowing' that I had found home began to grow. I received the blessing and was flooded with tears of joy and sadness and sobbed most of the way home. Looking back I think I also sobbed with relief and gratitude; it wasn't a concept, His Grace and Mercy and Love was real and alive, even for someone like me.

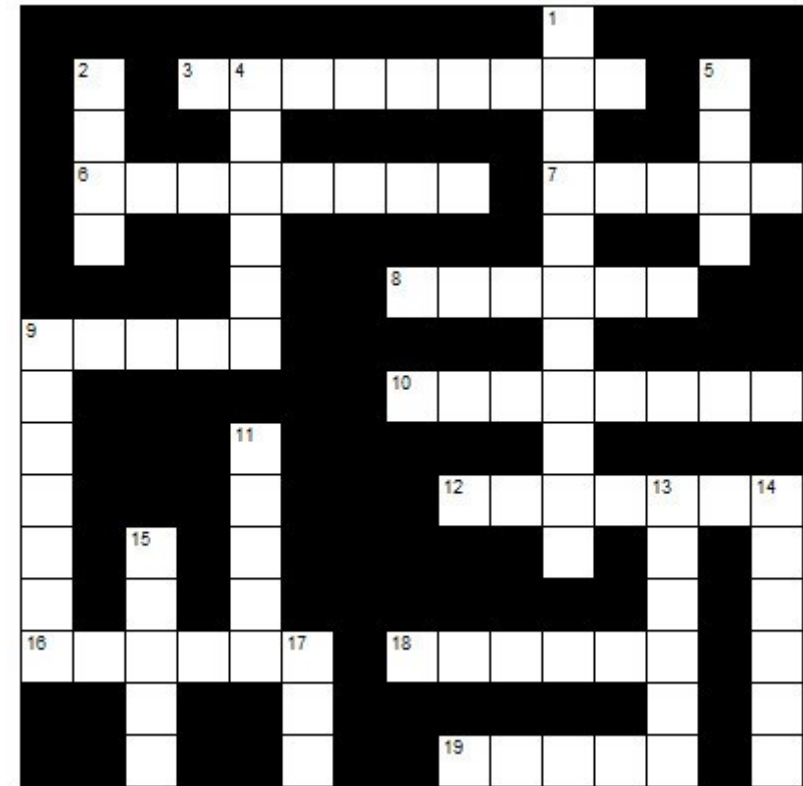
That fateful day was 21st May and at the end of the Liturgy Fr Gregory mentioned that it was St Helena's Day. When I was born I was going to be named Helen but my Dad decided he didn't like the alliteration with our surname, so I was called Julie. Through my tears I thought: 'is this my Orthodox name? the name I was always meant to have??' When I began to read about St Helena I felt at complete peace with her. She was brought to Christ by her son, like me, and her full name had been Julia Helena! The Lord and his ways are splendid and beautiful.

I would like to thank you all at St Aidan's: David's kindness and respect when I nervously walked in, Helen's gentle kindness when I asked about lighting a candle and Photini who humbled me with her devotion and reverence. When I sat behind her and when I looked around at everyone there that day, and the love for Him, I didn't want to be anywhere else.

Better late than never!

Julie Helena (Foley)

Puzzle Corner



ACROSS

- 3: She enters on 21 November
- 6: Celebrated on 12 December
- 7: Abbreviation of 21 November feast
- 8: Holds the Advent Candles
- 9: Collection of hymns sung on Advent Sunday Vigils and on the Feast.
- 10: Patron saint of children and sailors
- 12: Celebrated on 4th December
- 16: Celebrated on 5th December
- 18: How is the Advent fast described?
- 19: Christ, ____ of the world (John 8:12)

DOWN

- 1: Second Sunday before the Nativity
- 2: What we do in Advent
- 4: Celebrated on the 13th December
- 5: City for 10 across
- 9: Lit successively during Advent, Sunday by Sunday
- 11: Region for 10 across
- 13: Latin word for come or coming
- 14: Celebrated on 30th November
- 15: Christ—of which King's line?
- 17: Not 4 but ____ ?

refer explicitly to the birth of Christ. The primary troparion for December 20-23:

“Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all. Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the fruit divine; if we eat of it we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ is coming to restore the image which He made in the beginning. “

In some places, some of the hymns of the Forefeast are used earlier in Advent to create a type of Advent service. This practice of using thematic material that exhorts the Church to prepare for the feast is not unusual. It is similar to the popular Passia service of Great Lent, a Vespers typically celebrated on Sundays that features one of the Passion Gospels from the Matins of Holy Friday. Both instances – Advent services and the Passia office – are instances of drawing from the intensity of the Christmas Forefeast and Holy Week to intensify anticipation of the feasts themselves.

Nativity Eve and Day

Christmas Eve is the most intense liturgical day, marked by a rigorous fast. Churches that observe the complete cycle will celebrate the Royal Hours, Vespers followed by the Liturgy of St. Basil, a Vigil, consisting of Great Compline and Matins, and the Divine Liturgy the following morning. (Note that the services change somewhat if Christmas happens to fall on Sunday or Monday). Not all parishes celebrate this entire order of services, but some do.

The Orthodox Church does not have an official liturgical office that is the equivalent of a festival of lessons and carols in the Western Churches. Eastern Orthodox people have a rich tradition of carols, and the liturgical offices of Christmas Eve feature numerous lessons from the Scriptures (especially the Royal Hours and the Vespers with Liturgy of Basil).

The Church’s official hymnography continues to be used for the liturgical services. Certainly, carols are sung in Church, usually after the services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and in some places, it has become traditional to insert carols – from both the East and the West – into liturgical soft spots.

St Paul the Simple

On 4th October we remembered amongst others, Paul the Simple, a fourth century desert father. One of my all time favourite saints! He didn’t become a monk until he was in his sixties. He went to Anthony the Great who at first refused to accept him as a disciple, but such was St Paul’s obedience, that he eventually agreed.

Now here is the bit that helps me! - One day St Anthony was having a theological discussion with the brothers. St Paul found it difficult to keep up and finally asked, ‘who came first, Jesus or the prophets?’

At this, even the great St Anthony himself was embarrassed and exasperated and sent him out of the room.

But – and this is the bit that challenges me – such was St Paul’s utterly unwavering obedience and faith, that on occasions St Anthony himself could not heal someone and would ask St Paul the Simple to do so.

So, a lesson for me – I don’t need to be clever (though it’s my duty to use what brain I have got) but I do need to act in faith and obedience without hedging it around with diluting excuses...

... and aren’t we Orthodox so supremely fortunate to have such an unbelievably rich record of our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters right back to the time of Christ? There is hardly a day when at least one of the those mentioned for us to commemorate doesn’t comfort and strengthen me.

George (Weymont)



Pilgrimage to Saint Nektarios of Aegina, Greece



I can't remember when and how I learned about Saint Nektarios, but it's likely to be through my mother. She used to read/pray from a prayer book including Akathists of Orthodox Saints. She would have mentioned him randomly, in a conversation over the phone, in the same way she would have had mentioned other saints while we were talking about her wellbeing. In a very subtle way she was trying to make me interested in finding out more about the saint and his life, to read his Akathist and pray to the saint.

My real interest in Saint Nektarios arose when I came across the book of his life. If I am not mistaken, the book should still be in our church library at St. Aidan's. The book impressed me, and for the first time I realised that saints are not something in the past and that these holy people could live among us, not just in the past. It is not living in the old times which made them saints, but rather their dedication to God. We always try to find excuses for ourselves for not praying enough or not leading the life we are supposed to, saying it is more difficult in our times rather than before; thinking that somehow in the past it was different and much easier.

For a long period after this, I read his Akathist and prayed for his help in troubled times but slowly I diverted my attention to other saints and prayers, but never completely forgot about him, as he will always have a special place in my heart.

Greek patristic tradition, as the first song (Ode 1) begins with the words, "Christ is born! Glorify him!" taken from a homily of St. Gregory Nazianus. Orthodox are familiar with this phrase because it also functions as the greeting exchanged among people during Christmastide: Christ is born! Glorify him!

Many parishes do not serve Vigils, and those that pray Matins before the Sunday liturgy often have low attendance. Some pastors have therefore affixed the Nativity canon to be sung as one of the Communion songs on the Sundays of Advent.

Two Preparatory Sundays

There are no special readings for Advent to speak of in the Orthodox calendar, but there are preparatory Sundays: the Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ, and the Sunday before Nativity.

The Sunday of the Forefathers is a robust celebration of the memory of the patriarchs, prophets, and holy people of the Old Testament who prefigured Christ. The people hear about Christ's ancestors primarily through the appointed hymns of the day.

The Sunday before the Nativity features the appointed Gospel, Matthew 1:1-25. To this day, deacons rehearse the Gospel reading to intone and pronounce Matthew's genealogy accurately. It is feast of Old Testament Scripture, and includes mention and honour of the three holy youths in the fiery furnace, from the prophecy of Daniel.

The thematic connection between the Sunday of the Forefathers and the Sunday before the Nativity is quite clear: both Sundays feature Matthew's emphasis that Christ is the fulfilment of the prophets and is the legitimate messiah coming from the royal line of David – in all of its messiness.

The Forefast of Christ: December 20-24

The liturgical intensity picks up with the arrival of the Forefast, described by Archbishop Job Getcha as a series of liturgical offices patterned after Holy Week. The services are particularly powerful in the hymnography, as the Troparia and Kontakia

Orthodox Advent



6 candle Advent Wreath

During the 40 day Orthodox Little Fast before the Nativity of Christ starting from 15th November, 6 Sundays are observed with 6 lit candles, a final white candle being lit on Christmas Eve. In the west, 4 candles are lit and the shorter Advent is not a fasting period. It is interesting to note that in the old Orthodox rite of St Ambrose of Milan, Advent is observed in the same way as the Orthodox do now.

(The following article is adapted from that published by Nicholas Denysenko here: <https://praytellig.com/index.php/2019/12/02/is-there-an-orthodox-advent/>)

A forty-day fast

The forty-day fast preceding Christmas begins on November 15. In practice, it is not as rigorous as the fast for Great Lent. The main challenge occurs during Thanksgiving, and the fast is lifted on that day, and often for a few days, given the inevitability of leftovers.

The Nativity Canon

The main liturgical feature of Orthodox Advent is the addition of the Nativity Canon to the Vigil service on each Sunday and feast, beginning with the Entrance of the Mother of God into the temple on 21 November. The canon is a series of hymns sung during the Matins portion of the Nativity Vigil. In practice, the canon is a popular piece, customarily set to festive music. The hymns themselves are echoes of the

In the same mysterious way, my sister discovered St. Nektarios through a church built in the neighbourhood of our hometown in Romania, Iasi. The church, which was built with great effort, is now one of the many other beautiful churches built in Romania after the fall of the Communist era. What is impressive about it, is that the lead priest who dedicated part of his life to complete this project, was healed by the prayers of St. Nektarios from an illness which was very severe, in an advanced stage, with only a small chance of being cured. As a token of his appreciation to the saint, the priest promised St. Nektarios that he would build a church to venerate his name and through this church, have more people discover the saint, his wonderworking and venerate God for his goodness and love for us. Building it was a long and difficult task, as it took several years but now it is fully functional with an altar and frescoes on the walls of great scenes, as it is in any other Eastern Orthodox Church. Since the start of the church building, many miracles have taken place, among the people who frequently attend the services. As my sister is a regular there, when visiting Romania, she became friends with people helping with the chores and maintenance of the building. Through these people she acknowledges some of the saint's wonderworkings, for example: people resolving difficult issues which at the time seemed there was no solution, people being cured of cancer and other illnesses. This she shared with me and many others.

The idea of a pilgrimage to St. Nektarios of Aegina was her idea also. She, as well as myself and others, have been helped by St Nektarios and in a way, through this trip, she wanted to thank him by putting a little effort into going to the place where he is buried and venerate his relics. I have to admit that my views are different than hers. I believe that saints are everywhere and it's not necessary to visit the place they rest: to say thank you for their intercessions we can thank them from where we are. However, as she persuaded me (paying for the trip²) I decided to go. As it was proved later, the saint helped us get there.

The Church of Saint Nektarios (where his tomb and part of relics are) , is in Aegina, island of Greece. The island is an hour sail from Piraeus, the main port of Greece and it's the largest passenger port in Europe, located near the city of Athens. This port is very busy, with many gates. It is Greece's main gateway, located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. To our surprise (we were under impression that the monastery was close to the shore of Aegina's port) the church was in the island's hills, 20 to 30 minutes' drive, accessible with a car/coach on a narrow road, of the size of one car each direction and there was no pavement for a pedestrians. We found this out just a day before the trip and it troubled us for a while. However, our fears disappeared as on the ferry we met two Romanian coaches and in one of them, the leading priest, was well known to my sister. He offered to take us to the monastery. Many people will call this a coincidence but it certainly wasn't for us. The chance to meet someone from Romania, from your hometown, in Greece, and to have a car and be on the same ferry, on that particular day, with each day having several ferry trips and 365 days in a year! ... it's a bit too much of a coincidence for me?!

St Nektarios is one of the most loved and venerated saints of the Romanian and Greek people. Loads of coaches came during the day with people coming to pray for the saint's intercession to our Lord, people with problems , illnesses or simply coming to say thank you for the help they received. It is a beautiful place, peaceful and tranquil, which brings you peace and joy, making you feel "lighter" at your departure and humble that you had the chance to step on the same ground as a saint once lived.

It was such a pleasant experience and we are looking forward to going again , and next time hopefully not just on our own.

Kh Florentina (Codreanu)

St Nektarios of Aegina

St Nektarios was born on October 1st, 1846 in Silyvria, in Asia Minor. He was known as a great miracle worker, particularly as a healer of every sort of disease. He was also a prolific writer, theologian, philosopher, moralist, educator, poet, ascetic and mystic. Above all Agios Nektarios was a man of deep prayer, and a hard worker who laboured just like everyone else around him; no work was ever dishonourable to him. He was despised by many who mistook his popularity amongst the people as an attempt to become Patriarch. As such he was relegated. Towards the end of his life in 1904, Agios Nektarios founded a monastery for women in Aegina, the Holy Trinity Convent, and this is where his tomb and his relics are. Nowadays it is one of the most visited sites in Greece. The church of Agios Nektarios and the monastery of Agia Triada (The Holy Trinity) is located on a higher level overlooking the church. He gave up his spirit unto God at the age of 74 on 8th November 1920. The Orthodox Church proclaimed him as a Saint on April 20, 1961. His blessed memory is celebrated by the Church on November 9th.



Shrine of St Nektarios