

The Apostle

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The Light of the World

On 2nd February, 40 days after the Nativity, we celebrate a Feast which goes by no less than four different names! These are:

- *"The Meeting of our Lord"* - because the babe Christ is received as Saviour by Righteous Simeon and the prophetess Anna (Luke 2:22-38)
- *"The Presentation in the Temple"* - because the first born male child in Judaism was circumcised and offered to God in the Temple.
- *"The Purification of the Theotokos"* - prescribed by the Law for every woman after giving birth.
- *"Candlemass"* - a British Orthodox title recognising that Christ is the Light of the world. This is why in some churches (including St Aidan's) candles are brought from home and blessed at the end of the Liturgy. Happy Feast!

Fr Gregory

Service Changes at St Aidan's ...



This month our service pattern changes. On the First Sunday of each month, in place of Matins, we shall begin a cycle, repeated every seven months, of the **Unction or Healing Service**. The first Healing Service will be on **Sunday 4th February**; the next on Sunday 3rd March and so on. You can read more about this on page 4.

Pascha is much later than western Easter this year, on **5th May**. Correspondingly, Great Lent also starts later than usual on Clean Monday, **18th March** and the **Lenten Triodion** services, in their preparatory phase begin on **Sunday 25th February**.

With a later Pascha there is some variation across the churches in the pre-Lenten lectionaries. We use the lectionary published by the **Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist** here in the UK.

Also from February we start using a more extensive and restored **Old Testament Reading Lectionary at Great Vespers ...** with thanks to Fr Gregory Palamas Carpenter, a priest in the Greek Archdiocese who compiled it from Orthodox sources.

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! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY 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 PASCHA!</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!



On Sunday 4th February and on the first Sunday of each month (except when that Sunday is Pascha) we shall have the Orthodox Church's Unction or Healing Service. This service can be performed at any time during the year and in an abbreviated form at home or in hospital. We shall be making one minor abbreviation to the complete service by rotating each of the seven Epistles, Gospels and associated Prayers in a monthly cycle. This will confine the length of the service to fit from 9am to 10.15am. At the end of the service, the Matins Gospel of the Resurrection will be read before we then continue with the Great Doxology and the Divine Liturgy. Here are some other details about this new pattern and the Healing Service itself:

1. As a sacrament of the Church, anointing is only to be received by Orthodox Christians—duly prepared by confession of sin at home or before a priest in the sacrament of Confession.
2. Non-Orthodox Christians and Catechumens may attend the service of course but cannot be anointed. Instead, and if they wish, such persons can receive a prayer from the priest through the laying on of hands. Preparation and home confession beforehand apply to these persons.
3. Confessions on the first Sunday will be moved earlier to 8.30 am.
4. As with the full Unction service on the evening of Great and Holy Wednesday in Holy Week, small bottles of blessed oil will be made available for those who have been anointed, as and when required.
5. Lists of the sick who are to be prayed for, but who are not present, should be handed in on arrival at church. This is a separate provision from the Proskomedie lists and should be renewed monthly.

Orthodoxy, the Medicine of God



Many people may answer the question "what is Orthodoxy?" simply by saying "a religion", but if we consider the contemporary meaning of this word, this is not entirely true. Orthodoxy is not comparable to other religions because it is not man's word about God but God's word about man. Orthodoxy is not a human description of a god created in the image and likeness of man, but

the divine revelation about man, created in the image and likeness of God. Orthodoxy is, therefore, the religion, if we consider the original meaning of the word "religion" which comes from the Latin "re-ligare" - of the 're-binding' or the re-connection between man and God. This initial connection was lost because of sin.

Orthodoxy is the correct medical science in that it aims to heal the soul from its existential distortion, from the disease of sin, in order to achieve eternal, personal perfection. So, Orthodoxy is a branch of medicine and not of philosophy, history, sociology or psychology. Although it is a branch of medicine, it does not deal with avoiding pain and postponing death but with the overcoming and understanding of these physical states of our own existence.

Orthodoxy has a global or universal character because with the healing of the soul, the transfiguration also is taking place, the

deification of the body. And through asceticism of the body, the dispassion of the soul is obtained. It is a synthetic and complex approach and not an analytical, divisive one in which human existence is seen as a sum of parts and in which one organ or another is treated separately. The global character of Orthodoxy is also complemented by the fact that man and his or her illnesses are always seen in relation to others and, first of all, to God.

Saint John Chrysostom considers the Orthodox Church as a hospital. What do we find therefore in a hospital? Sick and broken people. So, this is us; whether we like it or not, we are all sick and broken. Just as being a doctor does not imply that he himself is perfectly healthy, even if, theoretically, he has some of the knowledge necessary to acquire health, so also, being ordained doesn't mean that we are already saved. We all have to take the treatment of healing of our souls and bodies extremely serious and personally, a treatment that often has a bitter taste.

Let us therefore look for those Orthodox Christians, the clergy and the saints of the Orthodox Church who are given the gift of healing and are as close as possible to God, so that through their intercession we may find the remedies for our hearts. Let us have the courage to look for those specialist doctors who are able to cure those diseases we suffer from.

In conclusion, we must be aware of the therapeutic character of Orthodoxy so that we can heal ourselves with God's help and with the help of those who were healed before us so that we might be able, by God's grace, to heal those who come after us - but without forgetting that God has the main role in the healing of the human personality. Without Him we can do nothing. *Fr Daniel*

Do You Believe in Miracles?



By Julia Anastasiou

Today marks my son's Alexander's 26th birthday; how did 26 years pass by so quickly? There are certain events in life that etch themselves into our memory, becoming a visceral and cellular experience.

As I write this on the evening of 13th January, I'm reminded of the anticipation and excitement leading up to Alexander's arrival, I knew he was going to be born the next day ... His estimated due date was January 16th, and as stories and advice flooded in, the common theme echoed - first babies are usually late.

The Merriam-Webster definition of a Miracle is 'an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.'

So let's back up a bit. In March 1998, during a family visit to Cyprus, the conversation about starting a family arose during a drive to the Kykkos Monastery in the Troodos mountains. A seemingly typical Greek family inquiry, even though we hadn't celebrated our first wedding anniversary yet... I revealed our efforts and that we were trying, and to Andrew, my husband's surprise- "we are?"

As we stood in the frosty morning at the monastery, surrounded by the scent of incense and the quiet glow of candles, I felt a tingling, spiritual presence. Sophie, my sister-in-law, excitedly shared that Panayia, was weeping, convinced that I would be able to touch the tears. Emotions washed over me as I lit candles.

Sophie ushered me to meet a priest.

Sophie explained our journey to the priest, and suddenly I found myself praying for the miracle of conception. I touched the Madonna's face, feeling the moisture and grittiness like dried salt, and placed my hands on my tummy. The priest spoke in Greek, tears streaming down my face.

What had just happened?

Little did I know then that this was just the beginning of a miraculous journey. Did I believe in miracles? The next month, I was pregnant.

Fast forward to 2015, a family holiday to Cyprus with our two boys. It felt like a pilgrimage of gratitude for me, as we returned to the Kykkos Monastery. A promise I had made to Elisabeth, my mother-in-law, the next time I visited Cyprus, I was to make a donation of Alexander's birth weight, 7lbs 2oz.



This time, the church was full, with a heart full of gratitude, I dropped 72 Euros into the donation box, accompanied by a note about the miracle.

As we all stood before the icon of the Panayia, overwhelmed with emotions, Alexander ran out of the church. I followed him to find him sitting on a stone wall, talking with an elderly Greek lady dressed in black. She asked if he was okay, and he shared his story. To his amazement, she inquired if he was 17 or 18, declaring him a lucky miracle boy. How do you know, he asked? That was the year of miracles, she replied!

On this special day, we celebrate not just a birthday but a journey of miracles, and deep gratitude.

Julia

Our young Basil with his iconographic sketch of St Andrew

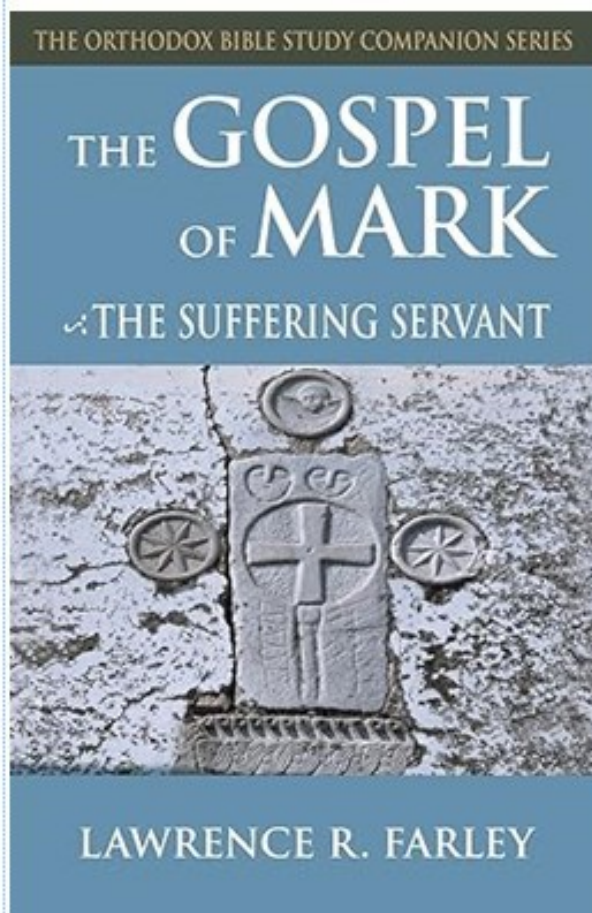
We are all very proud of you Basil ... including your serving in the Altar!



Crossword Solution for puzzle on p. 12



Book of the Month



The Gospel of St Mark by Fr Lawrence Farley, when not for sale in the bookstall, is available from eBay here:

<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/354918454547>

We are using this truly excellent commentary in our weekly Bible Studies by Zoom on Tuesday evenings from 7.30pm to 8.30pm. (Do consider joining us!)

Fr Lawrence Farley is an Orthodox priest in America who has done the Church a great service in making easily understood, insightful and powerful commentaries available to believers who, as they should, take the Scriptures seriously, read them and apply them.

Each section of the Gospel, in easily manageable chunks, comes alive through his ability to fill in the background to each narrative. He does not indulge in abstract technical theology but rather understands the great need of believers to be fed spiritually by the text in its application to daily living. This is his commentary's great strength.

A student of theology will certainly want to dig deeper than this volume allows, but that is no criticism of Fr Lawrence's approach. If you are one of those believers who are a little daunted when faced with reading Scripture, this book will certainly help you to "dive right in"!

A Meditation for Candlemass



The Light of the World (1851–1854) is an allegorical painting by the English Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt (1827–1910) representing the figure of Jesus preparing to knock on an overgrown and long-unopened door, illustrating Revelation 3:20: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"*. According to Hunt: "I painted the picture with what I thought, unworthy though I was, to be divine command, and not simply a good subject." The door in the painting has no handle, and can therefore be opened only from the inside, representing "the obstinately shut mind".

The painting was considered by many to be the most important and culturally influential rendering of Christ of its time. From Wikipedia here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Light_of_the_World_\(painting\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Light_of_the_World_(painting))

Across

- 2 Not Jews
 4 The tribe of 10 across
 6 Usual Orthodox feast title
 7 Why this is a feast of the Theotokos
 8 A cutting prophecy of suffering to come
 10 She was 84
 11 Fall, rising and glory
 12 Revealed and inspired by this one
 14 Where did the Law come from?
 16 10 across - her role
 17 Bringing to 13 down

Use Luke 2:22-38
 Solution on page 9

Down

- 1 Blessed for the light they give
 3 God is uncreated _____
 5 Father of 10 across
 8 Birds offered as _____
 9 What 10 across became after 7 years
 13 The holiest place of Judaism
 15 In his arms

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