

*The believers were first
called Christians at
Antioch
ACTS. 9:26*

The Orthodox Church of St. Dunstan Parkstone, Dorset

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

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SEASONS

Admirers of The late comedian, Eric Morbombe will remember the routine he once did with the conductor, Andre Previn. Eric was supposed to be playing the piano in a concerto conducted by the great maestro. What occurred when Eric came in on time, was a series of notes that completely ruined the piece. "You're playing all the wrong notes!" Previn complained. "No," Eric innocently replied. "I'm playing all the right notes but not necessarily in the right order."

As Orthodox Christians we have always held that 'the right order' lies at the heart of our common liturgical life. For those who have grown up in the Church or have passed through many a liturgical year, a sense of a correct sequence of fasts and festivals will be very strong. Any deviation, like Eric Morcombe's attempt at the piano concerto, will seem very odd. These liturgical seasons have their own rhythm and, from experience over many centuries, the Church knows that this allows the spiritual mind to absorb the ethos and attitude that guides us in the path of salvation.

Conversion to Christ leading to salvation is not a once and for all experience as some might claim. It is true, there might well be a time that someone might cite as the 'beginning' of their new life in Christ. But our salvation is a

long process. Repentance itself (without which we cannot be saved) is something that must run through the whole of our spiritual life, once we have turned to Christ. It might be that someone 'finds God' as they say, after a spectacularly sinful life and they do change. From then on, however, spiritual growth will still entail continuous repentance. St. Paul himself was a classic case in point. Following his conversion experience at Damascus, the rest of his life was spent in the spiritual struggle 'to gain Christ'. It has long been acknowledged by spiritual writers that the closer one comes to God, the more one is aware of our sinfulness, as if the closer we come to the light the more our inadequacies are exposed.

Another reason for the regular pattern of our liturgical year is that it enables us to fix our attention, during each season, on a particular aspect of the story of our salvation proclaimed in the Gospel. As I wrote last time, it is the liturgy of the Church that is the primary point of our encounter with Christ. At the end of St. Matthew's gospel, Jesus is shown commissioning his apostles, sending them out to preach and baptize the world. He also promises them that he will be with them till the end of the age. It has been the experience of the Orthodox Church that this presence of Christ is found, in the first place, through the

liturgical services and especially in the holy mysteries (sacraments). St. Leo the Great (the 6th century Pope of Rome) once stated that, at his ascension into heaven, Our Lord's physical presence passed over into the sacraments of the Church. In other words, his visibility, his tangibility and, as far as we are concerned in this present world, his entire sensual presence is now perceived by the faithful in the symbols of the sacraments. [Remember also, that in the Orthodox Christian understanding, a symbol is not a stand-in for something that is absent; it is the manifestation, the showing of something real and present - just as, for example, the human face is the 'symbol' of the person.]

Other Christian communities and denominations that live a liturgical life will realise this to a greater or lesser extent. For us, the Orthodox, however, *The Liturgy* is indispensable; it is the language of our very conversation with God. I would hesitate to go all the way with Terrance Conran who famously remarked that '*the medium is the message*'; but we come pretty close to that! Liturgical order and ascetic discipline are the distinguishing features of Orthodox Christianity. It is this God inspired liturgical order that gave life to the Church in its times of persecution or severe restriction; whether under Communism or Islamic oppression

in the Ottoman Empire, it was the faithful serving of the Liturgy that proclaimed the light of Christ in the world. All those faithful Christians through the centuries, often in secret, often at great risk to themselves, witnessed to this fundamental idea: that Christ is 'known in the breaking of bread'. Someone might object and say, surely Christ can be found in many ways - in the Scriptures for example. They are right, of course but the Scriptures need to be interpreted in an Orthodox manner; holy texts can be made to say anything - even the devil can quote the Bible, as he does in the temptation of Christ (Matt.4:6). The Holy Scriptures are the books that the Church has canonised, for they too are a witness to the fullness of the apostolic tradition. Books that were not in the Septuagint Old Testament or genuinely apostolic (like the so called *Gospel of Judas*) were rejected. Supremely, the Bible comes into its own in its liturgical use and here, the lectionary (order of reading) takes us through the Church's year in an ordered sequence.

So, each of us is invited to make this liturgical life our own, to embrace it and live from it. This is why you cannot, under ordinary circumstances claim membership of the Church and yet remain absent from her services; the heart soon grows cold. It is the degree to which each individual among us makes this a reality in his or her own life, that defines their closeness to Christ. Participation in the liturgy is inseparable from the

fullness of the real Christian life. How can one participate and have union with Christ without being a member of his Body, the Church? There is no such thing as private Christianity. You might indeed know and be playing all the right notes but they need to be in the right order as well.

Fr. Chrysostom

CHURCH ORGANISATION

With the passage of time, our Orthodox community has begun to establish itself and is becoming better known about Poole-Bournemouth. The good numbers we had present at Holy Week and Pascha certainly suggested this. It will soon be time, therefore, that our Church is run less on an ad hoc basis. We will need a properly elected committee with appropriate officers. We also need to establish the parish itself, separate from the Foundation that owns the building, as a legally constituted charitable trust under UK Law. This will have tax/financial benefits for us.

In the meantime, Sally Parker, who has worked selflessly over many months to help set up the parish, has decided that she can no longer continue (for reasons of time and health) as our unofficial treasurer. I wish to record my profound gratitude for all that she has done thus far. She continues, of course, to help but, temporarily, I have taken over the books. This is not a proper situation and, as parish priest, my duties really lie elsewhere. The administrative role of treasurer is a ministry within the local church and a form of true service but, really, it is a lay-role. If, therefore, you

feel competent to manage our accounts, I shall be very pleased to hear from you as soon as possible. Fr.C

SERVICES

MAY

Sun 7 The Holy Myrrh-bearers Orthros 9.00am
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Wed 10 Paraklesis 6.00pm
Sat 13 Vespers 6.00pm
Sun 14 The paralysed Man
Orthros 9.00am
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
(Coffee in Crypt, not Hall)
Holy Baptism 12.15pm
Thurs Eve of the Feast of St. Dunstan Vespers 6.00pm
Sat 20 Vespers 6.00pm
Sun 21 The Samaritan Woman
Orthros 9.00pm Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Wed 24 Paraklesis 6.00pm
Sat 27 Vespers 6.00pm
Sun 28 The Blind Man
Orthros 9.00am
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Wed 31 Eve of Ascension -
Services to be announced

JUNE

Thurs 1 ASCENSION OF OUR LORD
Sat 3 Vespers 6.00pm
Sun 4 7th Sunday of Pascha
Sunday after Ascension
Orthros 9.00am
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Wed 7th Paraklesis 6.00pm
(ordinary fasting on Wed & Fri begin again in Antiochian tradition)
Sat 10th Vespers 6.00pm
Sun 11th HOLY PENTECOST
Orthros 9.00am
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
Wed 14th Paraklesis 6.00pm
Sat 17th Vespers 6.00pm
Sun 18th ALL SAINTS
Mon 19th Beginning of the Apostles' Fast
Wed 21st Paraklesis 6.00pm