

# THE NARTHEX

May-June 2019

'And the disciples were first called  
Christians in Antioch' (Acts 11:26)

The Orthodox Church of St Dunstan of Canterbury, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH14 9JG

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## Prophecy

The other day I came across an interesting quotation from Cardinal Robert Sarah, one of Africa's leading traditionalist Roman Catholic prelates. His words strike me as prophetic in the proper sense of that term, as understood in the Church. We shall come to his words later. Prophecy, from the earliest days of Christianity, is a charismatic gift whereby someone can realise and understand what is happening from God's perspective, rather than through our normal experience, clouded by opinion and prejudice.

Prophecy has little to do with merely predicting the future by some arcane ritual process, in order to forewarn or convince someone that their destiny is fixed by an irresistible fate. This is certainly to be found in the pagan superstitions, whether in horoscopes, divination, palmistry or crystal-gazing. But such magical thinking is forbidden and alien to our Faith, rooted as superstition is in anxiety, not hope, and is built upon the idea of gaining worldly power and advantage through foreknowledge.

On the contrary, Christian prophecy is nothing less than it was in the days of the Old Testament prophets: to prophecy is to proclaim the Word of God. In ancient Israel the prophets, whether independent or whether part of the staff that operated within the temple at Jerusalem, presented a unique phenomenon in the ancient world, just as the religion of Israel itself was unique in the Middle East of the time in its understanding of moral purpose, redemption and salvation. In the New Testament we come across the daughters of the Philip who prophesied, and Agabus who knew of the dangers that Paul faced at Jerusalem (Acts. 21:8ff). In the very early Christian text called The Didache (early 2nd century), we read of the dynamic ministry of charismatic prophets, inspired by the Holy Spirit, amongst the first generation of Christians, operating before the, soon to develop, sacred ministry of Bishops, presbyters and deacons.

Being aware of all this, I was struck, therefore, in reading recently the ominous, as well as admonitory words of

Cardinal Sarah, who wrote, "*A West that denies its faith, its history, its roots, and its identity is destined for contempt, for death, and disappearance....civilized man is fundamentally an heir, he receives a history, a culture, a language, a name, a family...Because he refuses to acknowledge himself as an heir, man is condemned to the hell of liberal globalization. I am convinced that western civilization is passing at present through a mortal crisis. It has reached the extreme of self-destructive hate.*"

There might be much in the politics of Africa that we find disturbing, but this perspective, emerging from the same continent, certainly reflects that respect for tradition that belongs to the African view of life. Orthodox Christianity, in the shape of the Alexandrian Patriarchate, has been present on African soil since the time of the evangelist, St Mark and is currently undergoing a vibrant and wonderful expansion throughout the continent.

What particularly strikes me about Cardinal Sarah's words is that he highlights the self-hatred of so many in the Western world; a discovery that they come to the point where they actually loath their own traditions.

Our own Orthodox Christianity is not merely traditionalist, as if *traditionalism* were some kind of virtue. We should not say that the Orthodox Church is *traditionalist*, by way of using a fitting, descriptive adjective. Rather, Orthodoxy *IS* Tradition, Holy Tradition; the two are the same entity, as in the hypostatic union in the person of Christ, being *BOTH* God and Man.

We know very well that, like civilization itself, we too are heirs, having received an inheritance of faith that we reject at our peril. And this is not some simple repetition of what has gone on before, but is actually the voice of God the Holy Spirit, leading us into all truth.

It is no accident or coincidence that what is happening, culturally, in so many western countries now has gone hand-in-hand with the decline of Christian observance. And by 'western' I mean all nations that have inherited European Christian culture in some form or other. Rooted in the rise of the monarchical Papacy in the eleventh

century, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the social destruction wrought by two world wars, Western Christianity has been dying a very slow death. Only now, where once there was at least deference and respect for Christian teaching, it is clear that there is an 'understood' antagonism towards it among influential groups and institutions towards the faith. Now we have even come to the point of having legislation and policy designed to bring about Christianity's eventual euthanasia, as if it were some brain-dead but very rich and elderly relative, drawing inevitably to its end on life-support; the next generation itching to take control of the estate. They have already, of course, largely done that in France, where thousands of often uncared-for and neglected church buildings are under the ownership of the secular state.

Modern Liberalism, having rejected, as Cardinal Sarah says, its indebtedness to the past culture of Europe, has become the victim of globalization and cultural relativism, where everything is to be absorbed, apart from one's own patrimony and inheritance, which is held in contempt. I am not, as you probably realize, a connoisseur of the more demotic forms of entertainment, but I shall stick my neck out here and say, quite bluntly, that nothing in music has surpassed that written in the late Baroque and early Classical periods in western Europe. And yes, it was written by (culturally) Christian white males who are now dead. Though such a status is anathema to modern, liberal-left opinion, anyone who feels obliged to judge music from elsewhere in the world, from any other period, to be of equal artistry or worth, must be a melodic moron. Yet one has only to look, in recent years, at the 'inclusiveness' of the annual Proms Festival from the Royal Albert Hall, to discover that the great and the good of music world have certainly taken such relativism on board!

As an ardent student of History I cannot help viewing our

times in the light of what of past civilizations, especially that of Rome. History does not repeat itself but there are patterns in human behavior. The strange Faustian pact between the Liberal-Left and the followers of Mohammad of Medina, permitted to pour into Europe unhindered by concerns for the consequences, or any knowledge of how Islam must naturally seek, by its very nature, to seize control, recall to my mind how the wandering Goths, similarly, gained entry and sacked the Eternal City in 410AD. True, the old Roman Empire struggled on in Constantinople until 1453, but it was largely undone by the crusading fanaticism, barbarism and avarice still inherent in certain western states.

The truth is, western culture, politics and social structure is in decline, and most governments, especially in this country since World War II, have been largely content just to manage that decline. I think of St Gildas the Wise, writing in sixth century Wales, his *Excidio et Conquesut Britanniae* ('The Ruin and Conquest of Britain') criticising the uselessness and the moral decline of the leaders of his own day. As for the greatest unity project of them all, the European Union, I am reminded of the Roman Tetrarchy under Emperor Diocletian, where sovereignty was combined and order restored, but leading, in the end, to blatant military dictatorship.

Similar attacks on our history and traditions often focus on personalities. The recent disparaging of Winston Churchill on the grounds of some perceived 'racism' in the great war leader (as understood by the modern Left) is a case in point. Apparently, now, unless an historical figure fulfils *all* the current canons of political rectitude, they must fail in everything and be roundly condemned. In Churchill's case, of course, such judgement fails to notice that everyone in the great man's day was 'racist' according to this definition; you won't find anyone in Britain in those days who didn't share the same view of 'Johnny foreigner'!

So, as we pass through Cardinal Sarah's 'mortal crisis', keep let's keep our eyes open, be sober, be vigilant. I highly recommend a web site called *The Conservative Woman*, where a recent article featured a list of the moral values to be found on the now dominant Liberal-Left agenda:

- Gambling – fun.
- Casual sex – normal.
- Abortion – trivial.
- Marriage – passé.
- Adultery – no comment.
- Divorce – inevitable.
- Homosexuality – sacred.
- Transgenderism – why not?
- Men – domineering, probably violent.
- Women – oppressed, permanently.
- White people – discredited.

- Immigration – always beneficial.
- Border control – racist.
- Climate change – indisputable.
- Markets – exploitative.
- Children – expensive, bad for the environment.
- Family – however it comes.
- Disabled people – prenatally screened out.
- Old people – outstaying welcome.
- Wealth – for taxing.
- State – benign.
- Freedom – cover for hate.
- Diversity – never enough.
- Conservatives – bigots.
- Christians – benighted.
- Muslims – victims.
- Brexit – nativist fantasy.
- Democracy – overrated.
- Truth – flexible.

In the end, of course, none of this is of ultimate concern to us, because we have faith in the Resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ. But it is the end of that Christian Europe of which, we ourselves are inheritors. Apart from, or maybe, because of, the grace of God, we are Christian because of our geographical and historical circumstances. We shall, of course, endure to the end, nevertheless, it is deeply sad that, save for some new awakening, the Europe of Athens, Rome and Constantinople, of Agia Sophia, Notre Dame and Durham; of Dante and Shakespeare, Goete, Dickens and Tolstoy; of Tallis, Bach, Mozart and Beethoven; of da Vinci and Rembrandt, of Newton and Darwin, is sinking down to its own dissolution.

This will not be because the great mass of Europeans failed to notice the deliberate selling off of their inheritance for *a mess of pottage*, but because the leaders of opinion and the powerful were unaware of the value of what they controlled through their own utter stupidity.

*Fr Chrysostom*



#### Ordination of Fr Dc Alexander to the Priesthood

Our Archbishop, Metropolitan Silouan will be visiting the parish again. On 5th May, Thomas Sunday, Sayedna will serve the Liturgy and ordain Fr Dc Alexander to the priesthood. There will also be two Readers ordained before the Liturgy, one for St Edward's parish, Athelhampton, and also, Michael Ambrose, to serve in our own parish. Please pray fervently for all three men, that the Lord sustain them in their ministry. It will also be a great joy to welcome Fr Dc Alexander's own parents to St Dunstan's for this joyful occasion. Fr Alexander senior is parish priest of St Helen's Colchester.

The Archbishop will arrive at about 4.00pm on Saturday for Vespers at 5.00pm, after which he will meet with member of the Parish Council.

#### SERVICES

*Vespers is normally served on Saturdays at 5.00pm and on Wednesdays at 6.00pm. Fr. Chrysostom is available for Confession afterwards or by appointment. Orthros is served before the Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 8.45am*

#### May

Sun 5th 2nd of Pascha Thomas Sunday Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and Ordination 10.30am with Metropolitan Silouan.

Sun 12th 3rd of Pascha The Holy Myrrhbearers. Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 19th 4th of Pascha The Paralysed Man. Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 26th 5th of Pascha The Samaritan Woman. Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Mon 27th – Wed 29th Archdiocesan Conference. (Fr Chrysostom will be on holiday from 27th – 30th May)

#### JUNE

Sun 2nd 6th of Pascha The Blind Man. Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Thurs 6th Ascension of Our Lord



Sun 9th 7th of Pascha Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 16th Holy Pentecost Divine Liturgy 10.30am



Sun 23rd 1st after Pentecost All Saints Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Mon 24th Nativity of St John the Forerunner  
Beginning of the Apostles' Fast

Sat 29th Holy Apostles Peter & Paul

Sun 30th 2nd after Pentecost All Saints of Britain Divine Liturgy 10.30am