

THE NARTHEX

March-April 2020

'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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How Ironic!

Irony is a subtle mode of speech where words are purposefully used in contradiction to what is really intended. For example, what sounds like praise is really condemnation. Irony has a special place in Anglo-Saxon humour. Before they were famous the comedy duo, Morcombe and Wise spent many nights in bed & breakfast accommodation whilst touring with their act. After staying at one particularly ghastly establishment, they wrote in the visitors' book, "We shall tell our friends."

I cannot help experiencing a sense of irony when I consider much of the western world's response to the very real crisis that is current in the Islamic world, especially as expressed in our public media. It is commonplace to hear the failed *Islamic State* (Isis) being described as a death cult. It was certainly that, sharing certain similarities to the Marxist revolutionaries who, in the past, were prepared to die for their political vision, imagining that they were building a new world. (It must be remembered that in Mohammedan thought, the concept of martyrdom is much broader than in Christianity, where we have no use in our witness for the sword. Christians who died fighting Nazism in the Second World War were not martyrs but had been obliged, necessarily, to choose the lesser of two evils.)

The irony comes in as much as the western media, whilst rightly condemning Isis as a death cult, overtly promote and reflect the current western world's very own version of such a cult, through championing a whole series of social changes through cultural politics.

The first of these ideas, making its own special contribution to the West's very own death cult, is the feverish activism around man-made climate change. With an even greater sense of irony, I wonder whether the *Extinction Rebellion* is more an obligatory fashion choice for many, rather than a rational and properly scientific analysis of the situation. This is in part because there will always be a divide, now, between experts with real knowledge of a particular subject on the one hand, and the general public on the other. In the eighteenth century a well-educated man

might have a sum of knowledge equivalent to what is contained in an issue of one of our more serious, modern newspapers. He might even be regarded as a polymath and a member of a learned society. By now, however, the continuous advance of science and technology in our own day means that no one can justly claim to be a true polymath, with a profound grasp of several sciences. The best we can really have now is a good general education and an expertise in one or two area. But what alarmed me recently was that, in response to the debate around the recent Extinction Rebellion protests, social media have promoted a movement among couples who say they now wish to have no children, so fearful have they become of the earth's future; they cannot bear the idea of bringing children into a world where the environment is too hostile for human life. How ironic; a death cult indeed!

I have mentioned before the perverse political coup, subtly conducted by the LGBT lobby, where autonomous thought among nearly everyone in the great institutions of this nation has been quietly usurped. Alongside the very sinister perverting of children and young people who have been led to imagine that 'they are in the wrong body' (just wait for the law suits against parents that will follow in about twenty years time...) we find another manifestation of the death cult. There is no irony when I say that I know exactly what I mean by a normal family; one that naturally produces children, generally speaking. We need not be surprised that prosperous countries are experiencing falls in their birth rates among their indigenous people, alongside the rise in the proportion of the elderly. Here, perhaps, the pursuit of higher living standards has pushed to the sidelines the perfectly natural urge to reproduce. Particularly over the last thirty years politicians in Europe have tried to deal with this decline in available workers with mass immigration from Asia, taking no account of the cultural and practical consequences. Bearing in mind that these people in turn will require housing, social, educational and medical services, and will themselves eventually grow old,

it all amounts to a giant Ponzi scheme, handing on to any future generation a cultural divide that, I fear, will have overwhelming consequences. Douglas Murray's book, *The Strange Death of Europe*, and the writings of conservative thinker, the late Sir Roger Scruton, point out that this all amounts to the failure of our politicians to believe in the value of European culture, seeing themselves as only managing decline since WWII. This too is part of a death cult. It is as if, following the ironic advice in that poem by Brecht, our politicians had indeed abolished the people and elected another.

This is not to suggest that there should be no immigration, or that foreign cultures and religions should be absent from Europe. The difficulty lies with the sheer number of such arrivals, amounting, in fact, to a colonisation where they have no incentive, let alone possibility, of integration. And what are we to make of the previous government here under Mrs May, who took in a small proportion of young Muslim refugees from the conflict in Syria yet, as a matter of policy, refused Christian refugees? Clearly, as is shown in our own congregation, the Orthodox Church is flourishing here through people from Eastern Europe and elsewhere, coming to work and settle in Britain. They are, of course, truly welcome, and coming by traditionally Christian cultures, fit in well with the British way of life. But it is staggering that our government institutions (unlike certain other western countries) discriminate against the faith that made this nation: another strange manifestation of a cultural and social death wish.

A further example is the legal provision of medical abortion under virtually any circumstance. Europe has long accepted this form of mass-murder as normal whilst, at the same time, couples unable to reproduce naturally spend thousands on IVF treatment, in order to have the baby they so much desire. (How ironic! There's an obvious solution to my mind!) I am of course aware of the

sensitive and personal nature of this particular issue for some, due to their particular circumstances. But it is interesting to see how, in America, it is still a live political matter. How refreshing to see their President (whatever you think of Mr Trump) standing up recently against this particular manifestation of the death cult. If you suspect the President's motives here, he is, nevertheless, on the right side (Compare what St Paul says in Phil.1:15-17).

The final irony in all this is that, in a secular age (where the Christianity that actually created the Europe we know is treated with official disdain) the current western death cult emerges with all the attributes of a religion. It has its world view, its saints and sinners, its seers and prophets; its own virtues and vices, its own orthodoxies and heresies, and of course, it very own apocalyptic visions. From its Gnostic fantasies of pre-existent souls maliciously inserted at conception into the 'wrongly gendered body', to its collective guilt for the despoliation of the planet, it functions as a religion.

So now for the gospel, the Good News! We do not need to be anxious over any of this. It might seem that Christians are caught, Odysseus-like, between Scylla and Charybdis. The threat from terrorism that takes inspiration from the Qur'an and the Hadith, might seem statistically remote, but the death cult infecting our own political and social establishment is an all too present danger. Yet neither of these can have ultimate consequences for those whose faith is in Christ. Those who believe in the Creator, the mystery of Salvation, The Resurrection, the Second Coming, the Final Judgement, and the Kingdom of God, do not need to fear those who kill the body on the one side, or those who have lost faith, even in themselves, on the other. Meanwhile, however, given we have public and social media that are now so 'Woke,' to the point where they are positively insomniac, is anyone bothering to ask the question as to why we have so many young people in anxiety, poor mental health and who self-harm? Or maybe that is what happens when you have a religion based upon phobias rather than faith. We must certainly begin with the fear of God (the beginning of wisdom) but that is all we fear. For the rest, we can put our faith in Him. Meanwhile, as for the death cults, like Eric and Ernie, *we shall tell our friends...*

Fr Chrysostom



Choir Membership

- Are you an experienced singer?
- Are you able to sight-sing from music?
- Would you like to join the church choir, singing at the Liturgy?

If so, please contact Presbyteria Olympias at church or tel. 01202-602628

Building Maintenance

My recent absence from the Church due to health reasons, and inability to take part in meetings, has highlighted the fact that we need more and younger volunteers to help with the tasks of checking, maintaining and renovating such an important building, not only for our Parish, but also for the larger community of Poole and Bournemouth. Currently, the bulk of the work is undertaken by 3 - 4 volunteers, some of whom are over 80 years old!

I would therefore like to ask anyone who can contribute to this task, or who would like more information, urgently to get in touch with one of the Priests, or directly with me through Fr Filip's email address. This would involve giving up about 2 to 6 hours (depending on level of involvement) of your spare time every month. A keen brain, good literacy and numeracy, and dedication, are the main requirements, as well as good computer skills, although technical knowledge of buildings and their maintenance would of course be most appreciated, as would a love for this incredible building which is unique in the UK!

You would be joining a small but dedicated team of both volunteers and professionals. Don't think "I can't do anything for this" as it is more important that your heart is in it than any professional knowledge you might have.
Yours in Christ,
Kh. Annemieke



*With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan,
announcing the start of*

**The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Community
of
Saint Birinus and Saint Thekla
at
Yeovil**

God willing, Father Filip aims to start an Orthodox mission in Yeovil, Somerset, both to proclaim Orthodox Christianity and to minister to the spiritual needs of the Orthodox Faithful currently residing in and around the Yeovil area. The first service will be **Great Vespers on Saturday 14 March at 19.30pm**

By kind permission of His Grace Bishop Declan Lang of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton and Fr Jean-Patrice Coulon, Parish Priest, monthly Vespers will be served at the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Ghost, 75 Higher Kingston, Yeovil BA21 4AR. For further details please contact Fr Filip.

St Birinus, died 650AD, feast day, 3rd December, came from Italy and was the apostle of Wessex.

Holy Protomartyr and Equal-to-the-Apostles, Thekla, (1st cent.) was from Iconium and a disciple of St Paul. Feast day, 24th September.

SERVICES

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

March

- Sun 1st Sunday of Cheesefare
Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Mon 2nd **Beginning of the Great Fast**
- Sun 8th First Sunday of Great Lent
Sunday of Orthodoxy Divine Liturgy and Procession of Icons 10.30am
- Sun 15th Second Sunday of Great Lent
St Gregory Palamas Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Sun 22nd Third Sunday of Great Lent
Divine Liturgy & Veneration of the Cross 10.30am
- Wed 25th The Annunciation
Divine Liturgy 11.00am [No Vespers at 6.00pm]
- Sun 29th Fourth Sunday of Great Lent
St John of the Ladder
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

APRIL

- Sun 5th Fifth Sunday of Great Lent
St Mary of Egypt Divine Liturgy 10.30am
- Sun 12th Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Passion Week

- 15th **Great and Holy Wednesday**
Anointing Service 7.00pm
- 16th **Great and Holy Thursday**
Vesperal Divine Liturgy of the Mystical Supper 11.00am
Orthros of the Twelve Gospels 6.30pm
- 17th **Great and Holy Friday**
Vespers of the Shroud 4.00pm
Orthros (Lamentations Service) 6.30pm
- 18th **Great and Holy Saturday**
Midnight Office, Rush Procession, Orthros and Divine Liturgy of Pascha 10.00pm
- Sun 19th **HOLY PASCHA**
Vespers of Love 2.30pm
- Sun 26th Second Sunday of Pascha
Thomas Sunday Divine Liturgy 10.30pm

