

THE NARTHEX

MAY-JUNE 2021

'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

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland. Archbishop: Metropolitan Silouan

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. Patriarch: His Beatitude, John X

Parish Priest: Fr. Chrysostom Tel. 01202-602628 email: fr.chrysostom@icloud.com

Asst Priest: Fr Filip Tel. 01308-868543 email: frfilipommaert@gmx.com

Subdeacon David Tel. 01209-217499

Parish web site: www.saint-dunstan.org Archdiocesan web site: www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk



Job the Long-Suffering

Of all the books in the Old Testament, the Book of Job is perhaps the most challenging in certain ways. Although it reflects much of the wisdom that is found in other books, like the Psalms for example, it nevertheless goes beyond the standard biblical approach to life and mankind's relationship to God.

Job's forty-two chapters might seem a daunting read but it repays serious study. It opens and closes with narrative sections, but its central core is a series of poetic investigations, questions and declarations, featuring Job, a gentile from the land of Uz, his so-called 'comforters,' and the Lord God Himself.

In the story God allows Job to be tested, having permitted Satan to inflict him with terrible sufferings, only he was not to destroy him. In the wake of this, Job's wife advises him to curse God and die, but he follows the usual, yet profound response found throughout the Old Testament: in the face of blessing or disaster, the Lord is to be praised; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord. The question that Job and his friends have to deal with is, why is Job suffering? Throughout, Job affirms his righteousness before God and is genuinely puzzled as to why these sufferings have all befallen him?

For various reasons his friends, after condoling with him, try to explain what has happened, variously suggesting that he cannot be as righteous as he claims, that he must have offended the Almighty in some unknown way, or that he is misunderstanding ways of God. They are, of course, all wrong. What none of them understands, as is made clear at the end when God speaks for Himself, is that Job has undergone a test of his faith.

Whenever the book of Job was written, his character was known to the prophet Ezekiel, where he is cited alongside Noah and Daniel as possessing the power to intercede for others (Ezek.14:14-20). As such, Job is a *type* of Christ from the Orthodox Christian point of view, foreshadowing the redemptive suffering of Our Lord. In one remarkable passage Job begins to question whether death has to be the end of man.

Heretofore, the Old Testament presents death as the final end of all, at best, it posits a belief in Sheol, the place of dead spirits where, once the *ruach* (breath, spirit) has departed, the *nephesh* (soul) just drifts around in a semi-existence, hardly conscious. Frequently, the Old Testament writers pose the questions as to who will praise God in death, in *the land of forgetfulness*? Psalm 87(88) is a good example of this way of thinking. '*Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*'

But in chapter nineteen, Job proclaims a remarkable statement of faith. Defying the derogatory opinions of his 'comforters,' Job asserts that God has wronged him, yet his friends do not really pity him. In verses 23-27, he says, '*Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! ...For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.*'

Not only is Job claiming here that he will be vindicated in the end by God, but that he will see God; that he will stand before his redeemer in the flesh, after he has died. In other words, we have here, a prophecy of the Christian understanding of death, a hint of the general resurrection and prepares the way for the New Testament.

Our own mortal state in this world, our frailty in the face of illnesses, accidents, violence and disasters, our ultimate mortality and demise, are all indications of our sharing the nature of Adam. We have the inheritance of death in his fall, through sin. Through this sin death has entered our world, and it is this death that drives us into sin: '*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*' [Rom.5:12].

Mankind, therefore, without Christ is under the reign of death. This is

the idea is found in the scriptures and is the teaching of the Church. Yet, as St Paul goes on to say, '*So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*' [Rom.5:21] It is that victory of Death and, therefore, over Sin, that we are celebrating at this Paschal season. Even as we were commemorating the burial of Christ at The Vespers of the Shroud on Holy and Great Friday, we heard the last part of the book of Job where his fortune is restored, double what he had before. These blessings being, of course, a figure for what St Paul tells us, God has prepared for us: '*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*'

[Rom.8:18]

And again, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, '*We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written:*

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

[1 Cor.2:7-9]

The book of Job is, of course, part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament; it has much in common with the book of Proverbs and the Psalms. It contains much that shares the questioning, and search for meaning, that is to be found in the book of Ecclesiastes. But it goes beyond these. There is little in the faith of Israel (as recorded in the Old Testament) that knows anything of life after death or an afterlife with God. Life and blessings, as a just reward for a righteous life, were confined to this world only, but it was understood that death was the separation from life and from God Himself. However, there are indications elsewhere in the Old Testament that, eventually, something else was being looked for.

For example, the valley of dry bones found in Ezekiel 37, that is read at the Lamentation Service (Orthros) of the Holy and Great Saturday, not only prophecies the restoration of Israel after the Exile in Babylon but goes further in pointing to the idea of the general resurrection. Actually, such prophecy is what is being referred to when we recite in the Nicene Creed, the words, *'And the third day he rose again according to the scriptures.'* That is, Christ's resurrection is the fulfilment of what had been foretold in the Old Testament, rather than referring directly to the accounts of the resurrection in the New. (See, for example: Hosea 6:1-; 13:14; Isaiah 26:19)

There are many blessings that we receive in this life for which we can praise God, but also, we shall all suffer, for which we shall also bless God. Christianity, as a faith that comes as the final revelation of the Divine mind, does not teach how we may transcend the human condition (as if in some occult initiation, gnostic hierarchical enlightenment, or escape from rebirth). Rather, we teach, as Our Lord taught, that we engage with our fallen condition and suffering, deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow after Him. Even the good things of this present life with which we are blessed, we are to hold onto very lightly. What is very clear from sound, Orthodox Christian teaching, is that, as far as our salvation is concerned, Christ is the only way, truth and life, and that our hope, as given to us by the resurrection of Christ, is firmly fixed to the eternal life that began with our baptism into Him and advances, from glory to glory, until our resurrection in the kingdom of God. For, as He says in St John's gospel, *'And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.'*

Before the advent of Christ, Job can only stare into the abyss and the prospect of his death with hopelessness: *'If I wait for the grave as my house, If I make my bed in the darkness, If I say to corruption, "You are my father, and to the worm, You are my mother and my sister, Where then is my hope? As for my hope, who can see it? a Will they go down to the gates of Sheol? Shall we have rest together in the dust?'* [Job 17: 13-16]

For those separated from Christ and not knowing the power of His resurrection, whatever existence there awaits them beyond this world, is certainly not *Life Eternal*. But the faithful know that they are, even now, entering into what Christ has promised them, as He also says in John's gospel, *'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.'*

Fr Chrysostom

During the **Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council and Directors of the Bournemouth Poole Orthodox Christian Foundation**, owner of the Church building, a number of issues were discussed. The **Consolidated Annual Report** of the Foundation was approved, and it will shortly be published on the websites of the Charities Commission and Companies House. This report contains the accounts of both the Parish and the Foundation. Copies can be obtained from Presbytera Annemieke.

Another topic was the **Maintenance Plan**. This plan was drawn up in June 2019, but due to a lack of volunteers it has never been implemented. Effectively, the only task which has been undertaken was the inspection of the boilers for the heating by an accredited professional. This inspection and certificate are documented in the Maintenance Plan file which is always available in the Church.

However, many more tasks need to be undertaken, and due to the financial pressures resulting from the reduced attendance and donations during lockdown the Parish is not in a position to hire outside companies to carry out these tasks. We therefore hope that **volunteers** will step forward to help us with these tasks.

These are the **tasks for May and June**:

Apply SmartWater to all lead on the roofs. Clear the gutters, (including parapet gutters), hoppers, downpipes, external walls etc of vegetation and debris. This needs to be done by someone who has experience with H&S Working at Height rules.

Make sure that the outlets from the gutters to the downpipes is clear; rod the downpipes if necessary. The gullies at ground level should also be included. This should be very straightforward this year, as all downpipes were repaired during Summer 2020. Report on any damage and inspect and report on flashings and soakers whilst working at high level.

Inspection of brickwork and terracotta, inside and out. A report made for possible repairs by specialist contractors. Inspect the structure and fabric of the building which is visible from inside the building and report any signs of structural movement, falling render, damp penetration or any fungal growth or dry rot.

Inspect exposed woodwork and surfaces, including the furniture, for signs of active beetle infestation. Note any fresh wood dust or any beetles found during the flight season (May to September). Cleaners are vigilant and usually report any suspect wood dust before cleaning it away.

As the church has a great deal of exposed woodwork, both the panelling inside and the oak outside doors, this must be undertaken regularly.

Spring-clean the church including furniture. Check for damage during cleaning.

Although the Church is cleaned every week by a team of professional cleaners, a more thorough spring-clean should be undertaken once a year at least, preferably after Pascha so all wax spills can also be removed.

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. *Fr Filip* is available for Confession by appointment. **Orthros** is served before the Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 8.45am

MAY

Sat 1st Holy & Great Saturday
11.00am Vesperal Liturgy of St Basil With Holy Baptism
9.00pm Midnight Office, Rush Procession and Orthros of Pascha

Sun 2nd Holy Pascha Divine Liturgy 11.00am [NB different time]



Sun 9th 2nd Sunday of Pascha
St Thomas Sunday Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 16th 3rd Sunday of Pascha
Holy Myrrhbearers Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 23rd 4th Sunday of Pascha
The Paralyse Man Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 30th 5th Sunday of Pascha
The Samaritan Woman Divine Liturgy 10.30am

JUNE

Sun 6th 6th Sunday of Pascha
The Blind Man Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 13th 7th Sunday of Pascha
Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 20th Holy Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Sun 27th First after Pentecost
All Saints Divine Liturgy 10.30am

Any weekday festal Liturgies and other services will be announced on Sundays and advertised on Facebook