
THE NARTHEX

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

The Newsletter of Orthodox Church of St Dunstan of Canterbury, Poole BH21 3UP. The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland. 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. 01308-867195 email: frfilipommaert@gmx.com

Subdeacon Emeritus David Tel. 01209-217499

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022

The Barbarians at the Gates

In the year 410 AD the Visigoths sacked the eternal city, Rome itself and left the old empire in deep shock. Many felt this was a punishment from the old gods of the city for Rome's abandonment of its ancient traditions and beliefs in favour of Christianity. Christianity was first tolerated as a licit religion in 315AD and then became the official religion of the

Roman Empire.



To counter this idea that the old gods were punishing the people of Rome, Blessed Augustine of Hippo wrote a response in the form a book that has had a lasting impact on western Christianity, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos* [On the City of God against the Pagans] usually called *The City of God*. The book deals with matters of Theology, defending the truth of Christianity against paganism, the suffering of the righteous and why evil exists, as well as matters of free will, God's power and the western understanding of Original Sin. He argues, of course, that Christianity was not the cause of Rome's downfall: the rot was already there and, in fact, it was faith in Christ that was to give the old city a new lease of life as the first patriarchal see among the five ancient churches founded by the apostles: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

Looking at our own times, we might be forgiven for coming to the conclusion that the same is happening now; that the times are shifting and that our civilisation is cracking up; that the barbarians are not only at the gates but once more, inside, wrecking the city itself.

At least in the past those Goths, Visigoths and indeed, Vandals who, literally as well as metaphorically, wrecked the fabric of the ancient empire, would have shared many of the common values of any ancient civilisation. Those barbarians would still have valued family, clan, tradition, loyalty, religion and the hierarchy of order and shared purpose. Instead, what is evident in so much of western civilisation now is how it has lost confidence and belief in itself.

Christianity in the days of St Augustine, the fourth and fifth centuries, certainly dislodged the old civic paganism. But that paganism was already dying, infiltrated by mystery cults and new religions coming from Egypt and the Orient. Christianity certainly did play a role in that demise, as historians (beginning with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*) antithetical to Christianity, like to point out. In literature, Gore Vidal's historical novel, *Julian*, concerning the life of the apostate emperor, is a good example of that romantic longing and nostalgia for Rome's pagan and classical past and that long-lost sense of civic duty and virtue. (We have recently seen the same attachment in the previous Prime Minister, the classically educated and essentially, neopagan, Boris Johnson).

There is a certain *schadenfreude* manifest among the haters of Christianity, as they witness the decline of adherence to the faith in western Europe: the faith that took down ancient civilisation is now being taken down itself. What is even more remarkable, however, is how the so-called leaders of western Christianity are, themselves, facilitating that decline. From the established church in this country encouraging the teaching of *transgenderism* to five-year-olds in its infant schools (which amounts to a pernicious form of 'grooming') to the leader of the Roman Church criticising Europeans for rejecting illegal mass migration, the fish is clearly rotting from the head downwards. It is ironic when one considers how the present Pope of Rome's predecessors defended Europe from the influx of the followers of Mohammad of Medina. From Charles Martel (battle of Tours 732), through to the Battle of Lepanto (1571) and the siege of Vienna (1683) previous occupants of the Holy See had no illusions about the effect that the teachings of Mohammad would have on European Christian civilisation.

Writing in 2007, the cultural and social conservative academic and thinker, the late Roger Scruton, wrote, '*Almost everywhere in the civilised world we encounter the signs of decay: the decline of religious observance and local customs; the rise of crime and violence; the pornocratic culture of mass media; the desecration of love and marriage; the collapse of education and the retreat of the individual into his private pleasure dome.*'

I have written before about the strange and often, contradictory, alliance between the powerful interests and loud-voiced minority groups who are able to capture so much of the public discourse, influencing and corrupting the fundamental

purposes of once functioning public institutions in Britain: national and local government, the civil service, the mainstream media, education, the Arts, the health service, the police, the defence forces, the Law, the established church, and even charities like the National Trust. This new barbarianism, has been given further energy from that American import called *Woke* (a movement presupposing an infantile sentimentalism that is terrified of open debate). It has largely drawn its ideology from the Left in politics, though I want to stress that terms like Left and right (emerging from the French Revolution) are largely meaningless now and I am certainly not using the term conservative in any party political sense; the difference between Labour on the one hand, and the Tories (more of a tribe than a party, if you understand) on the other, has been minimal, as regards social and cultural issues, for a long time now.

It is significant that the new barbarians come not from the unknown lands of the North, outside the walls of the old empire, but have developed from within, like the Old Adam stretching out his hand to take the fruit of the knowledge of Good and Evil in a immature and precautious bid for autonomy. With the power granted by social media in particular, the new influencers have been able to silence any conservative opposition by use of fear, either of ridicule or by outright intimidation, as has been seen in what pass for universities these days.

The real question here is what kind of society and culture do the new barbarians intend to create? What actual kind of world lies at the heart of their ideology? The answer, of course, is that they do not know themselves, whilst they steam ahead into a multi-cultural, anti-national, unelected, equality-obsessed, eco-maniacal, open-boardered, atomised, amoral, self-identified communities, controlled by globalist and unaccountable technocrats. That is, if they are not outbred by the followers of Mohammad (having given up on normal sexuality in favour of the LGBT+*alphabet-spaghetti*) or dominated by Chinese technology. In as much as they abandoned God first, how significant that St Augustine wrote in *The City of God*, '*Pride is the beginning of sin... And this is undue exaltation - when the soul abandons Him to whom it ought to cleave as its end, and becomes a kind of end to itself.*'

Nevertheless, risking that ridicule and intimidation, I continue to affirm my own belief in tradition, local values, stable families, continence, chastity, order, self-reliance, community, the indigenous culture, political freedom, western arts, scholarship and learning, national boundaries and most of all, Orthodox Christianity. However, according to the judgement of our mainstream media, I am clearly to be classified as a far-right extremist, How about you?

Fr Chrysostom

Financial Alert! Do you want your church to stay open?

The financial situation of the Parish is deeply disturbing and putting the parish at risk. Of course, there is the cost-of-living crisis, as we are all painfully aware. But without the urgent help of our parishioners, we will have to close the church, and maybe have services once or twice a month only.

[In 2020, half the roofs were made watertight at a cost of some £ 250,000. We received a grant of £ 167,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, but still used all our reserves to pay the remaining £ 83,000.]

At this moment, even with a growing number of parishioners attending on Sunday, on average between 100 and 140, our income does not cover our costs and our reserves are almost non-existing.

Please remember that **our priests DO NOT receive a salary**, not from the Government, not from the Patriarchate, not from the Archdiocese; they serve for the love of God. The only payments they receive is the repayment of costs they have incurred (petrol, external supplies). Sticharions for the altar servers are made free of charge by volunteers. Vestments and cassocks are purchased by themselves or donated by parishioners.

[Fr Filip has two jobs during the week to generate an income: part time chaplaincies at Dorset County Hospital and Forston Mental Health Trust. Both Fr Chrysostom (who receives a modest pension from his previous work), and Fr Filip spend a lot of time during the week with parish and parishioners matters, visiting, blessing homes, giving communion to those who cannot attend, preparing services and sermons. Their wives both work during the week too and give their services to the church freely. This means that they too are not a financial burden.]

The financial burdens mainly are buildings insurance, gas, electricity, water and payment to the Archdiocese for the maintenance of the Archbishop.

At this moment we need at least **£ 1,200 per week** just to keep the church open. However, on an average Sunday, the donations and candle purchases by parishioners during the Divine Liturgy are **less than £ 600 which means that parishioners on average donate less than £ 5 per head every Sunday.** *This is not to denigrate those who have set up monthly donations via their bank, for which we are very grateful.*

The rental of the Hall to some charities and one youth group just about covers their use of electricity and water, with a tiny profit, not enough to make up any shortfalls.

And we have an emergency! The boilers urgently need to be replaced. They have served well for some 60 years. The cost for this will at least be £ 81,000, of which £ 13,000 VAT may be recuperated. This is an enormous sum! We will apply for financial help from the UK Churches Trust and other charities, but this a lengthy process.

In the meantime, the heating will not be switched on until the temperature in the church is so low that we must have some heating to protect the building and its furnishings and artworks.

You will understand that this is not a situation which can continue. Considering that a Costa coffee costs between £ 3 and £ 4.15, and Starbucks charges £ 1.90 to £ 3.75, surely some people could have a few less take-away coffees and donate more? Also, please get involved with fundraising efforts that will be organised. Invite your friends to any fundraising activities! Take part in the bake sale we will organise before Christmas. Or even better: organise your own fundraiser. The hall and car park are available if needed!

The Fathers, the Directors of the BPOCF and the members of the PCC are hoping and praying that our parishioners take their responsibility and help to keep Saint Dunstan open. We need to help each other!

The Church and the Young

By Rojeena Wolfenden

One of the most pressing questions posed by Orthodox pastors and parents in these times is the disturbing trend of young people leaving the Church. Unfortunately, we do not live in an Orthodox majority country and only rarely live in tightly knit Orthodox minority communities. The purpose of this document is to outline problems and practical steps the Church might take to support Orthodox youth spirituality. And provide recommendations on how to move forward to further discuss and restructure our approach to Orthodox youth education. In this paper we are focusing on youth aged in the range of 13 - 19 years old due to some adult subjects we are covering. How can we motivate young people to embrace Orthodoxy and carry it into their adult lives? I fear this question posed often and sometimes we are not being honest with ourselves. Children rarely go off in odd directions without taking some clues from those around them, especially their parents. Children follow and learn from our example, whether that example happens to be good or bad. *We form our children into what they become by how we live* our lives. Sometimes they rebel against what they have learned, but even that rebellion is shaped by the very attitudes against which they choose to rebel.

What are our responsibilities as parents or even as adults in the parish community? What kind of witness are we giving to our children? Do we model the behaviour which we wish them to emulate in the right time and space? Do we spend enough time talking and interacting with them to have any influence in their lives during critical times of their lives? How much time is spent watching television or listening to music, talking over the phone with friends, worrying about finishing outstanding work at home, as opposed to the time spent in conversation or reading spiritually profitable material with the children? The average American child has spent more hours watching the tube or TV than he will spend talking to his father or mother in his lifetime. Family meals ceased to exist round the table, everything done in a rush, no attention to details of the child's soul, no listening ear to the child, no time left to teach how to conduct an orthodox prayer together to learn the orthodox daily way of life.

One major problem with our children/youth is that we have abandoned them. Anybody who leaves their child (or even sits with their child) in front of the television more than an hour a day is frankly neglecting their child's welfare, both spiritually and emotionally. People do not interact with one another in any meaningful way as long as the television is on. They effectively become strangers who happen to share the same roof. Many families do not even share one meal together which would give them the opportunity to talk with their children and exchange information in a meaningful way. Children (and adults) learn through TV, YouTube, bad company, among other things, that abortion is necessary, assisted suicide is necessary, the planet is overheating, homosexuality is normal, happily married couples are abnormal, fornication is good, the Nazis were bad, Truth is relative, God is a joke, and angels are silly. There are so few "quality" shows on as to make the whole business of watching network and cable programming a losing proposition all around.

If we truly wish to see our children grow up to be pious and responsible Orthodox Christians, then we must show them what that means. The only way we can do that is to become pious, responsible Orthodox Christians ourselves. A blueprint has been given by the Church Fathers as to how we should live our lives. This blueprint is called Holy Tradition. What does Tradition do for us? Tradition gives us a reference point. We are asked to mould our lives to God's Law rather than seek to make up a law of our own. We are asked to submit our wills to God and thereby eliminate self-will and rebellion from our lives. By showing us how to fast, Tradition teaches us how to control our passions and delay gratification. By directing us to pray, Tradition leads us to develop a rule of prayer in the home and faithful attendance of services at the parish church. By showing us how to confess our sins and reverently prepare for the Mysteries, Tradition lifts us out of ourselves and leads us to seek spiritual transformation to what God intended us to be. Tradition teaches us how to eat, how to dress, how to pray, how to operate *in* the world without becoming a part *of* the world. These are the disciplines and practices which can help our children to withstand the assault of the world and the corrosive effects of pop culture.

Tradition can only work when it is faithfully lived each and every day. To simply pay lip service to these practices will only turn our children further from the Truth. They will revile us as hypocrites and despair that there exists any real alternative to drugs, sex, and rock-n-roll. When parents do not seek to teach their children at an early age to pray or fast or prepare for the Mysteries and yet insist on bringing them to church services, this merely teaches the children contempt for the Church and a lack of respect for her parents. Parents often fall to "protecting" their children from the Church, which ultimately teaches them that the Church is a phoney exercise you put on for a while on Sunday morning and then promptly forget. Orthodox Holy Tradition teaches us humility, obedience, repentance and love. Tradition can only be passed on by example. "Youth Ministers" will not be able to communicate much about Orthodox spirituality unless the kids are actually seeing this happen in the home or at least in the homes of other church members. Somebody actually has to start living Tradition in order for it to be conveyed. It is no wonder that the Greek word for Tradition, *paradosis*, means to pass along or hand down something that is *living and active*.

The discipline and self-control which is instilled in those young people who actually practice Tradition gives them a tremendous advantage over their classmates. By humbly keeping the fasts, blessing their food, dressing modestly and appropriately to their sex, saying their prayers, respecting their bodies, and confessing their sins, they are challenged in a healthy way to become more than what the world says they are. They understand they are created in the image of God and that their bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Those who are born in the bosom of the holy Church through holy baptism are born into a new life. They grow and are brought up in the Spirit of Truth and receive in the spiritual life grace-filled gifts for life on earth, with the promise of eternal gifts for the future life. Thus, to live in the Church is an essential condition for a Christian's moral development.

In order to go by the path that our Lord pointed out in the holy Gospel, we have to take ourselves under control, we must check and test ourselves. Sunday School ignored by parents - The parents should give special attention to keep their children adhere to Sunday School. A special focus on Sunday School as a spiritual functioning in the learning and growing up of the Orthodox Faith. The School should take care of the spiritual nurturing of the children, by bringing them up in the knowledge and fellowship of Jesus Christ and His Church. The Orthodox Church from the very beginning should take utmost care in educating the Children the Values of Christian life, the contents of the Bible and Church history. A child born in the parish should have the comprehensive teachings and materials required to provide the best of the best -- craft ideas, lesson ideas -- that could feed them and strengthen all their lives until adulthood.

Time To Act Youth Education about the Monastic life and hardship, take youth or may be young children to visit them and live with the monks for a week. Unfortunately, these are the times when the attraction to secular life starts to change one's inner balance and weaken one's connection with the church more and more. Youth get in traffic accidents and get involved in conflicts, and then a wave of criticism arises. "This is what happens in the Church!" But what does happen in the Church? Indeed all those youth who are members of the Church are neither heavenly people nor people from another planet or even another country. These are our youth with their own problems and weaknesses who make a good decision to take the path of the world rather than the church! The Lord tells a wonderful parable about a Seed which is the Word of God in the Gospel of Matthew (13:3-8).

Church Duty The Church is neither a dreamland nor an assembly of righteous people, but an assembly of sinners who aspire to become righteous. The Church's aim is to assist the youth in his spiritual growth. If there is no sin at some point of time, it will mean that

history has ended and we are already in another world. But as long as the Church is in this world, it bears the stamp of the world and its sores. However, it remains a community of healing and salvation, where a person is able to find the fullness of life and open the gates to eternity.

“What should the Church do in order to attract and also retain the youth? Should it accept young people’s value systems ?” We know that young people express different behaviour patterns, some of which are diametrically opposed to the Gospel. So the Church cannot justify anything that does not correspond to the Gospel. Another matter is that the attitude of the Church, which aspires to correct this kind of behavioural pattern or a way of life, should always be pastoral. We should not chastise people. We should strive to heal people’s ailments as the Lord did – with love and attention. It means that the display of a certain youth culture should not annoy the representatives of the Church but should rather be a challenge for a pastoral response. We should find the right words to help people, who practice certain behaviours, preserve their moral origin.

What does the Church accept and what it cannot accept? It cannot accept anything that is opposed to the Word of God and to the imperatives of the Church. We need discipline with love. This is the main principle of the Church’s attitude towards any culture the Church comes in contact with, whether it is youth, foreign, or another religion. But I would like to stress that the response to this challenge should be pastoral, because only a word full of love is capable of helping a person understand the beauty of the Gospel.

Sometimes, acquiring knowledge requires one’s full energy and forces the youth to risky behaviour. Everyone has their own threshold and capabilities within which a person is able to test himself and learn about the world. As a result of cumulative efforts, we gain knowledge, based on which we can make life better. However, the most important factor which is capable of changing life for the better is the state of our soul, which we should also get to know and nurture through spiritual struggle in the church.

Youth Committee Aim to develop a more comprehensive approach to Orthodox Youth Spiritual Formation from both theological and practical perspectives. To provide actionable steps and recommendations for furthering this work in a unified manner. The committee is supported not only by parents, clergy, and youth ministers, but also through the entire Body of the Church, on a daily basis in all that we do.

The church needs to develop and provide accessible resources that are connected across ages, jurisdictions, and programs that appropriately support formation of our youth. Our methods of teaching need to become cutting edge and at the same time bring with them the timeless wisdom of the Church. A regular experience of the active involvement of bishops in the daily lives of our churches to inspire the youth from early ages not after leaving the Church. Creating a committee is a huge project which requires a thorough discussion by itself. It has been mentioned in this paper for completion. persuade youth to learn the mysteries of life, the cosmos and other mysterious signs of the Divine Mind? Isn't it better to make life purer and better around oneself?"

An extract taken from the Statement Issued by the Holy Antiochian Synod Balamand, October 18, 2022

The Synod Fathers... addressed the subject of family life and emphasised the essential role of the family as “a little church.” As a follow-up to the Synodal workshop that released the document entitled "Family, the Joy of Life" in October 2019, the Fathers emphasised that the temptations faced by family life today require from the priests and the believers in the homeland and abroad to intensify their efforts. The Fathers affirmed the practice of preserving the family by guiding young people, conducting marriage preparation programs, and giving spiritual care for married couples, for "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). Facing the difficult circumstances in our countries and the decline of human values in general, new initiatives taken by parish priests are vital to embrace the married couple and accompany them in their role as educators to their children. It is important for Priests to raise awareness of the parents’ responsibilities as fathers and mothers. These initiatives are in response to the Lord’s call to his servants: “Do you love Me? Tend My sheep” (John 21:15).

SERVICES

Vespers is served on Saturday sat 5.00pm (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

NOVEMBER

Sun 6th	21st after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	
Sun 13th	22nd after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	St John Chrysostom
Tues 15th	BEGINNING OF THE NATIVITY FAST		
Sun 20th	23rd after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	Forefeast of the Entry
Mon 21st	Entry of the Holy Theotokos		
Sun 27th	24th after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	

DECEMBER

Sun 4th	25th after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	Great Martyr Barbara
Sun 11 th	26th after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	Sunday of the Forefathers
Sun 18th	27th after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy 10.30am	Sunday before Nativity
Sat 24th	Eve of Nativity Vespers 5.00pm		
Sun 25th	HOLY NATIVITY DIVINE LITURGY 9.30AM (note the earlier time)		