

# **ORTHODOX PARISH OF ST AIDAN AND ST CHAD NOTTINGHAM**

## **NEWSLETTER Jan 2012**

When Thou wast baptized in the Jordan, O Lord,  
the worship of the Trinity made its appearance.  
For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee,  
when He called Thee His beloved Son.  
And the Spirit in the form of a dove  
confirmed the truth of the word.

O Christ our God Who hast appeared and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee!

**Holy Theophany Troparion Tone 1**

**THE EDITOR, FR DAVID AND THE PARISH COUNCIL WISH YOU ALL THE  
JOY OF CHRISTMASTIDE AND HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IN THE NEW  
YEAR**

### **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL**

On this day of the Nativity of our Lord, 'the Sun of Righteousness has espoused the daughter of the shadows' (Syrian Liturgy).

Lo, dawn is breaking at the end of the dark night, and Christ illumines all creation, the beauty of which had been overshadowed by the darkness of our transgressions. As, in their time, the shepherds in Bethlehem rejoiced, so we today rejoice hearing the angels announce to us also that 'unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given!' This Son, this Child, is God, come to visit us and in order to do this, taking our flesh.

Through the appearance on earth of the Beloved of the Father, we are no longer alone in the chill of this world 'where those who have no bread want to live, and those who have bread no longer know how to live' (Liturgical Homilies of Jean Corbon).

Yes, our world is cold! It seeks to warm itself with futile and useless warmth. It wants to live in artifice, the sad vanity of which it has discovered so late, and falls asleep curled up on itself, forgetting the hope that is knocking at the door of its heart! But this world is our world, in which we live out all the days that God gives; where men hate and kill, where he who has everything passes by him who has nothing without the slightest concern or compassion; where brother plunders his brother for the 'glory' of being rich, consisting of a handful of old stones, of which, at the end of time, nothing will remain.

'Peace on earth, goodwill among men!' As Christians, what do we make of these tidings proclaimed by the angels? The Nativity of Christ is the time to awaken our hearts, to step out of our routines, pious though they may be. It is the time to reawaken hope, to share it in bringing life to our brethren: like the shepherds, we must proclaim to all, with eagerness, that, with God, all can change, all can be saved!

This hope, and the joy that follows, must shine through us. If everyone were to give a true sign, the true Peace that the world cannot give... If everyone were to show a face alight with love to his brother who is hungry for it... if everyone were to place his cool hand on the feverish forehead of the oppressed... if the love that is in us could flow like clear water, bathing all wounds... if forgiveness could rise up above the anger and hatred aroused by those who should be called 'brother'...

We must be aware of our responsibility for God's gift at this feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is taking place once more: we are ontologically linked with our brethren and sisters on Earth, for the Lord created us 'in His image and likeness', whoever we are. There still remains something of the primal beauty that God has bestowed on us.

Christmas is the wonder that Christ arouses in the shepherds and the magi. Christmas is the dazzled wonder before the icon of the Nativity. Christmas is the joy of children, and of fathers and mothers. But Christmas is also the sadness of being abandoned and forgotten... It is also a cold and hunger that overwhelm the body... It is disfigured humanity that no longer knows how to love... But Christmas is, above all, the Father giving us His beloved Son. And this Son, the Word of God, become Man that man may become God (St Athanasius of Alexandria). And, to do this, He begins to become like us, except without the sin of which He will, however, bear all the consequences till His death on the Cross, to deliver us from sin and death.

So, how should we live Christmas? Let us simply be fully ready to welcome the Love of God! Let us, at the same time, be fully capable of opening our eyes wide to see those who often suffer in innocence... Let us, quite simply, love fully!

The cave of Bethlehem gives hope to us all: 'Hope in God! Take heart and take courage! Hope in God!' (Ps. 26:14). It is with great love that I wish you, dear brothers and sisters, a joyful Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth in the flesh we celebrate today, be the joy of each one of us, and may He send down on us the grace of salvation! Amen.

Christmas 2011 Paris, the Cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky,

+ Archbishop Gabriel of Comana

## **OUR LIFE**

**Pilgrimage.** We had a bustling autumn with visits to both Iona and Holy Island. Iona Orthodox Retreats are available in May and September in 2012. Autumn pilgrimage will

be from 8th to 22nd September led by Deacon Mark McBeth of our deanery and with Fr David as resident priest. Please express your interest to Fr. David.

Margaret Handley is prepared to arrange another visit to Holy Island if there is sufficient interest.

**Extended Coffee Morning.** We shall hold an open day event one Saturday morning in the near future in St Leodegarius. This will be an opportunity to invite friends and others interested in Orthodoxy to meet for coffee ,cakes and perhaps a light lunch. An aim of this will be to give a glimpse of life in the Orthodox Church. Before that the Feast of the Nativity has given an opportunity for many to share with us in our Orthodox worship.

**Learners Group.** This has been discontinued for the time being. All are encouraged to attend the monthly discussion group where the learning experience will continue in the presence of other members of the Parish.

**Discussion Group.** During the next term, we shall usually meet on the Wednesday in the second week of each month:January,15 February, but Tuesday,13 March (3rd week Great Lent). The first evening will be devoted to a study of icons and on Feb 15th Profiles of staretsi of Russia as portrayed in the Russian novel will be discussed. On some evenings we shall meet at Barbara Bates' house to watch a film.

## FR DAVID'S LETTER

The Light of Advent.

I was so impressed by Dr Susan O'Brian's reflections at the Sunday service ( Radio 4 ) from Our Lady and the English Martyrs, Cambridge, on 4th December, that I encouraged our Parish study group to see the film, 'Of God and Men'. I quote from Dr O'Brian's address:

This "was a film about monks that was, to quote one headline, a 'surprise hit' at the start of last Advent. This French film, *Des Hommes et des Dieux*, told the story of a small group of French Trappist monks - monks with an austere life of silence, manual work and prayer - living in Tibhirine in the Atlas mountains of Algeria: a true story based on oral testimony and on some remarkable documents. It was a surprising hit, and soon my students and friends were recommending it to one another as a must-see film.

Tibhirine's monks and their Muslim village neighbours had lived in harmony for many years. But in 1996 civil war in Algiera created religious and political tensions during which perhaps two hundred thousand people were killed. In April of 1996 seven of the monks were kidnapped and murdered - by whom remains a mystery. The film's producer, Etienne Comar, had wanted to make a film not about their dying, to which there was no answer, but about their living: 'it was more interesting to show them living' he said. The film moves slowly; the audience sits alongside the monks as they each, individually, face the darkness of what was taking place in the violence of civil war. Each one, in turn,

enters that even darker place where he has to decide whether to leave for safety, as the political authorities wish them to do, or to stay and face danger, possibly death. Facing death, they face themselves and truth. We feel their fear, hear their disagreements as they debate whether to leave or stay, wait with them, enter the darkness. Into this darkness comes not a rescue, not a removal, not a resolution of the very real tensions in a post-colonial society. Instead, when they decide, individually and together, to stay and to wait, continuing with the rhythm of monastic life that will sustain them in this end-time, to their astonishment as well as ours, comes an experience of freedom, of reconciliation, of light.

No-one seeks to be a hero. But what they find when they say 'yes' is the truth of their love of one another and of neighbour, the truth of their love of God and the truth of God's love for all. This is coming home to themselves and to God in a way that going home to France could never be. Watching the monks' story strangely does not fill us with despair; it sets us free. As one critic wrote, 'Each time I have watched it, frankly, I have become overwhelmed with an emotion I can't possibly describe.' My friends and I were equally overwhelmed. We described our emotion as a sense of the presence of God, of the face of Christ, of the reconciliation of all things through love, of the light shining in the darkness and the darkness not overcoming it. The film ended with death, their story ended in death, but what came into being was life, 'and the life was the light of all people.' The light shines because countless numbers of people have read Christian le Chergé's A-Dieu letter to his mother, a profound Christian testimony, sealed and waiting in case the worst happened. It shines because to this day the Christian-Islamic dialogue group, 'Ribat es-Salam,' Bond of Peace, that had met at the monastery, continues to meet. And it shines because fifteen years after the event local people have safeguarded the monastery, with nothing having been taken from it: their respect and care a steady flame, shining in the darkness that has not been overcome.

In this time of Advent, when the scriptures reminds us to live in readiness for Christ's coming again, we are invited to think again about how we might live as members of our families, as neighbours, as citizens of the world, as a people on whom light has shined. With Christ's coming we have, as Bede's uplifting anthem says, the hope of light that will conquer all darkness.

'Christ is the morning star who when the night of this world is past brings to his saints the promise of the light of life and opens everlasting day.' (Quoted from transcript on BBC website)

It is indeed a very moving film creating a profound resonance in the soul. I commend it to all of you.

Fr David

### **Christ Comes to Take Away the Chill of the World.**

We have celebrated again the greatest event in human history, indeed, in the history of the earth from the very beginning. This is the amazing fact that in His nativity, God came to

live with us and share our lives in fullness. He did so in order to restore communion with Him. He did so to complete the Creation which he had begun at the very beginning of time. Something had gone seriously wrong, very seriously wrong, something had separated us from God, deflecting us from our true purpose in life and so preventing the development of creation as it was meant to be. G.K. Chesterton famously wrote: "Whatever else may be said of man, man is not what he was meant to be". Until, Our Lord stepped in, we were no longer the man or woman we meant to be. St John Climacus (of the ladder) explains this when he says: Before Adam was cast out of Paradise, the body was the servant of the soul. After the Fall, the body was unbridled and nature was reversed. The soul now became subject to the body". Without the guidance of the enlightened soul, the body becomes pleasure-loving and the unfeeling, self-centred and uncaring. This fallen reversed state continues, until the soul is restored to its rightful place at the centre of our consciousness. We are out of kilter until we turn to God.

Our Archbishop Gabriel, in his Christmas message, speaks of *the chill of this world* "where those who have no bread want to live, and those who have bread no longer know how to live" (Quoting Jean Corbon) . He says: "*Yes, our world is cold! It seeks to warm itself with futile and useless warmth. It wants to live in artifice (a clever, cunning, contrivance), the sad vanity of which it has discovered so late, and falls asleep curled up on itself, forgetting the hope that is knocking at the door of its heart!*" This hope arises from the appearance on earth of our Lord Jesus, at Christmas. Now we can be restored to what we were always meant to be with God and our soul at the centre.

And so for those of us who have seen the light of Christmas, the coming of God into our world, we have a responsibility. We who have experienced the joy of Christmas must do something very important. We must share this joy with all. We must proclaim with eagerness that with God, all can change. We must reach out to others to show *a face alight with love*. We must proclaim Peace which the world and man's fallen nature cannot give. As our Archbishop encourages to do, we must reach out to all less fortunate than ourselves.

Quite simply we must love! Love ourselves enough to be restored to God. Love others in their neediness and give them a share of the light. Love enough to challenge the artifice of darkness and, indeed, pour out our love to take away the chill of the world.

May God bless you through the year ahead.

Fr. David.

**Great Lent** begins on Monday, 27th February.

**St. Leo's.** We continue to be made welcome at St Leodegarius. We are grateful for and thankful of the support of Richard Shaw, vicar, Lesley Cameron and Bruce Pink, Church Wardens, the Readers, and members of the congregation there. We were pleased to supply again the Christmas tree for the church as part of our thank you.

**Theophany and New Year Parish Dinner.** To be arranged soon: details from Barbara Bates.

### **Contact List**

Sometimes, through unusual circumstances service times or events are changed from those advertised in the Newsletter. If we have an email list of everybody who might be interested then these changes can be circulated. If you want to be on the list please talk to me or email your address to [f.thompson3@ntlworld.com](mailto:f.thompson3@ntlworld.com). Please note that up to date changes will always be on the website.

### **The Parish Website**

I have been asked to write a short article about the website, <http://www.nottinghamorthodox.org.uk/> .

It has been in existence for about five years, and has a fairly simple structure. There is a homepage which introduces us, giving basic information about who we are and where our worship takes place. Other pages include a Services and Events page, where there is a Google calendar that is regularly updated to show all parish events and other events from time to time. There is a there is a page for writings, including sermons and newsletters. We also have a gallery of photographs, which at present is rather sparse and I would welcome any contributions of photographs to add to this page. Then there is a links page, where you can get to other websites such as the deanery website; phone numbers and contact details of parish council members and clergy are available here. There is also a history page, which describes how the parish began, our early life in Carlton, and other items that may be of some historical interest .

The parish has an e-mail address, [ssaidanchad@gmail.com](mailto:ssaidanchad@gmail.com) , which can be used to communicate with us through the website. I do make it clear that this is not for personal or pastoral matters, but simply to request information or to be put in touch with members of the parish council. This e-mail address can be accessed by other members of the parish council as well as by me as the Web editor. We have had several enquiries about services by this means. There does seem to be a continuing interest in the website; this is evident from the hit counter which now shows that about 9000 hits have been made on the site over the period of its existence.

Recently I have added a donation button on the home page, where donations can be securely made using PayPal without revealing any of the donor's private information to us.

I am open to suggestions for anything else that you think it would be good to have on the website. For example, it has recently been suggested that we should have a books area, where we suggest and review books of interest to us as Orthodox Christians.

It will be obvious that I am not a professional web designer! Therefore I will welcome any help that any techies or whizz kids would like to offer! And I am always happy to receive comments and suggestions.

Barbara

**The Pilgrimage to Holy Island was so successful that it warrants a second report! Herewith....**

### **VISIT TO THE HOLY ISLAND OF LINDISFARNE. Oct 2011**

A long journey then fleeting glimpses of the sea, castles and the place we are travelling to for our pilgrimage - Holy Island.- a three mile causeway past sand hills and vast expanses of wet sand which is covered by the tide twice a day.

Our group of eleven people plus Ripley the dog were staying at Marygate House, a Christian guest house which provides all our basic needs. The house is large and has a sitting room for discussions and a crypt. The crypt was used by us for morning and evening prayers using Celtic prayers chosen by our members. The crypt was warm and peaceful even if the wind was raging outside.

Our time on the island was blessed by sunny weather, even though the wind was cold and the sea was rough. Long and short walks and paddles (in wellingtons) were enjoyed, especially on the beach.

Our time together gave us the chance to discuss, share and enjoy other peoples's ideas experiences and beliefs, and getting to know some of the people from St Leo's congregation.

The Orthodox liturgy was served by Fr David in the Island Church. This was wonderful as the church is so old and beautiful. Some of the local people came to join us.

A positive and enjoyable week where we shared Celtic prayers and thought of the Saints of the North, especially St Aidan. We had a meditation about St Aidan and his statue in the church yard: most meaningful.

Margaret Handley

### **DETACHMENT**

Selfhood is the most important and precious thing we have. All savagery and cruelty, all sins, are ultimately offences against the selfhood of others. Hence love – or at any rate *eros* – is love of particular persons. We love a person not for what he or she has in common with other people but for what makes him or her different from everybody else.

Of course we are enjoined to love all men and women by ministering to their needs, but even here the personal element is strong. It is distress in particular cases that calls forth the most ardent pity. "I am WHO I am" is man's divine credential.

Selfhood inevitably involves suffering. Buddha tried to find a way out of suffering but he could only offer a sort of hopeless, heroic negativism. If we are selfish we suffer whenever we don't get what we want. Well, tough! But those who love suffer too. They suffer *because* they love, *because* they care, because they strive, often enough vainly, to make the world a better place. According to the Gospel, not to do so is to deny the commandment: "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Buddha's answer to the problem of suffering was detachment: the process of disengaging from life. But if detachment suppresses selfish "craving", it also suppresses selfhood. If the cost of disengagement is indifference to other people, to their sufferings, uniqueness and irreplaceability, isn't it just a polite version of the fundamental sin which blights all life?

Detachment violates the logic of creation, which shows life progressing towards greater individuality and selfhood. Also, and crucially, evolution goes hand in hand with a growing awareness of the claims of others. The most primitive forms of life merely devour. The higher we move up the evolutionary ladder the more we find creatures *selving*: expressing themselves in grace, beauty, 'speech' and song; and the more they acquire a capacity to co-operate, care and protect (starting with what is closest to them – ie. their young, the group, the herd). Thus, by infinite gradations, love is born, and the herd becomes a community, ideally at least, bound together by ties of mutual love.

There is one further thing. Detachment, as an Eastern philosophy, denies personal immortality, offering at best a dissolution of the self in a non-personal, all-encompassing 'Soul'. According to this view of things, life, which began with the elimination of individual organisms, will end with the extinction of the individual soul and personal consciousness. But in that case are we not entitled to ask, in the words which Wilfred Owen used to excoriate the senseless slaughter of the First World War:

Was it for this the clay grew tall?  
O, what made fatuous sunbeams toil  
To break earth's sleep at all?

Deacon Ian

### **REALITY OR VIRTUAL REALITY?**

Recently, whilst walking past a charity shop I noticed that the window display included a silver plated candelabrum in good condition – price £10. I looked more closely and spotted a large cut glass lead crystal trifle bowl offered at £5. My first thought was that someone did not know how to price things. Further investigation showed that I was wrong and the present situation is that silver plate, crystal and china tea services have fallen out of favour. The question that then occurred to me was: if these objects have

given pleasure to one generation, should the owners want to inflict their taste on the next generation? Have these objects found their true level?

Some years ago in an antique shop I noticed a wedding photograph c1930 (presumably from a house clearance) now covered in coffee stains and rings from cups showed that it had been relegated to being used as coffee mat. Perhaps the burning of a gypsy caravan and contents on the demise of the owner is not such a bad idea. Gypsy lore does however allow jewellery to be passed on to the next generation.

The present generation are not interested in owning quality glass, silver or china and will not give houseroom to these objects. They are high maintenance or not dishwasher safe or just do not have the desired image. They do not fit in with the life style of today.

I fear for the future of Auntie Mary's china tea service which is now in my care. The cry of the next generation is ' No, we would never use it. Mugs are so much handier than cups and saucers and yet, integrated into that tea service is much family history. People go to enormous lengths to trace their roots from genealogy so an interest in the past is alive and well. A cut glass bowl in my possession which survived after being washed off Auntie Mary's sideboard sometimes appears at Orthodox feasts full of tiramisu. This 'new to us' fair linen cloth on the side altar at St Leo's was also rescued from the Mablethorpe flood of 1953. This tablecloth now has a new lease of life even though it still bears a faint stain from the tidal flood waters.

Silver, crystal and high quality china are things of beauty. Perhaps they will come back into favour in fifty years time. Today the cherished objects in the home seem to be expensive techno objects which are highly desirable for a year or so but quickly become replaced by a newer or more advanced model. These objects do not hold their value. At present neither does silver but I think something which is intrinsically beautiful has more hope of a revival than an outdated mobile phone. Many people live by status symbols and convention and the media makes certain that it is very difficult to be different. Many people do not live by direct experience. They prefer virtual experience.

Situated at Hull is *The Deep* which is a marine study centre/tourist attraction which includes what is said to be the most spectacular aquarium in the world and is home to 3500 fish. As well as the enormous tanks where fish come up to you very close and personal, there are audio visual presentations. Children love *The Deep* but appear more enthralled with the computer screens than watching real live sharks. This seems very odd to me as many of these children must have grandparents who were closely associated with the fishing trawlers and the fish docks. Real fish seem to have joined the list of things no longer relevant to present day life.

Frances

*'In my Father's house are many mansions.'* John: Ch14 v2

Here are a few thoughts or comparisons after a recent visit to India where religion is so much a part of daily life and a living faith.

Modest shrines proliferate in busy streets or along the ghats by banks of a river. Temples are found everywhere – some in clusters, some alone, but all are impressive.

To show that the temple is a very special place just outside the entry often there can be heard the joyful sounds of gongs, drums or bells. It has been said that the church bells in the UK send out the message 'Get out of bed and come to church' but these temple sounds suggest that one is entering the temple precincts, the market place, dust and toil have been left behind and the worshipper is entering a holy place.

The temple can generally be divided into three areas – the first being the equivalent of the narthex. Next, after having removed shoes, and climbing up some steps comes the body of the temple similar to the nave and raised up by some more steps comes the sanctuary. Occasionally this could be down some steps so could be compared with a small crypt. There is a very definite feeling in the temple that devotion intensifies with distance from the entrance. Only Hindus are allowed in some temples.

There are many sacred sites perhaps in caves or at the source of a great river or near a waterfall where in years gone by a sadhu would make his hermitage. The civilisation of India goes back at least 5000 years and whilst we too were living in caves the Indians were skilled craftsmen.

The rivers of India inspire me with awe. I don't need to be told that they are holy. Many stretches of them have so far had no impact from man. This living water, generally flowing with peace and serenity should be allowed to permeate and inspire the soul for ever.

At dusk people often buy or make a tiny boat fashioned from part of a waxy leaf and equipped with a marigold flower and one candle and launch it in the river in memory of a loved one and watch it float away into eternity.

Frances

1010

### **Advance Notice**

The Fellowship of St John the Baptist Conference will take place from 6th to 8th July, 2012 at Belsey Bridge, Ditchingham in Suffolk. The theme of *Death and Eternity* will be explored.

Preceding this, 5th/6th July will be the Psychotherapy Conference where *The Fall* will be discussed.

Our theme will be THE FALL with distinguished speakers:  
Elizabeth Theokritoff - Theological Reflections  
Archbishop Lazar - Emotional Consequences  
Frank Johnson - A sceptics Dilemma: doubts and difficulties  
Tony Clapp - Envy, a Kleinian Perspective

This is a preliminary communication so that you may have the dates firmly in your diary.

## **St. Cuthbert's Prayer**

Circle me, O God  
Keep Calm within,  
Keep Turmoil out  
Circle me, O God,  
Keep Faith within,  
Keep Doubt without.