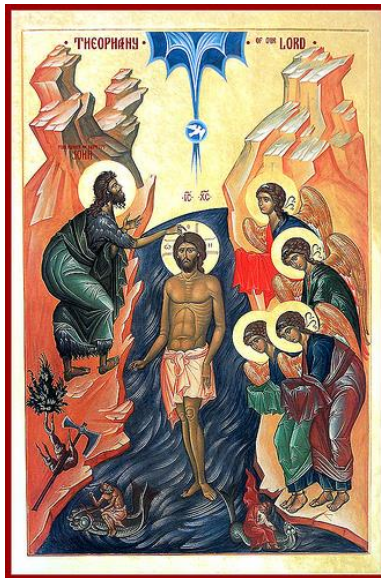


ST AIDIAN AND ST CHAD NOTTINGHAM



NEWSLETTER

Jan – Feb 2024



Theophany, 6th January

The Baptism of Jesus

THE PARISH OF ST AIDAN AND ST CHAD, NOTTINGHAM

Worshipping in the Church of St Aidan, Arnold Road, Basford, NG6 0DN

Priest: Revd Fr Julian Lowe mobile: 07952 174 206

Orthodox Parish of Saint Aidan & St Chad, Nottingham. Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain

Fr Julian Lowe CJN

Priest: Ecumenical Patriarchate

Chaplain: University of Nottingham

<http://www.nottinghamorthodox.org.uk/>

Very Revd Hegumen David (associate priest) 0115 9622351

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Newsletter: Jan - Feb 2024

Fr Julian's Letter

At Pascha we rejoice and exclaim “Christ is Risen” and respond with “He is Risen indeed”. But I wonder are you familiar with the traditional Orthodox greeting for the Nativity? “Christ is born!” exclaims the priest, and we respond with “Glorify Him”, or alternatively, but less often “Truly He is born!”.

The earliest Orthodox reference, I believe, to this phrase comes from St. Gregory the Theologian's oration given on the Feast of the Nativity where he says: ‘Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ from heaven, go out to meet Him. Christ on earth; be ye exalted.

‘Sing unto the Lord all the whole earth; and that I may join both in one word, Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, for Him Who is of heaven and then of earth. Christ in the flesh, rejoice with trembling and with joy; with trembling because of your sins, with joy because of your hope. Christ of a Virgin; O you Matrons live as Virgins, that you may be Mothers of Christ. Who does not worship Him That is from the beginning? Who does not glorify Him That is the Last?’

Today, in the Eastern Orthodox Church, the beginning portion of St. Gregory's oration sermon is sung as a hymn on at least two occasions; one of these being the ‘Irmos’ of

Canticle One, from the first Canon of Christmas/Nativity Matins

“Merry Christmas” is not a bad greeting, as the birth of Christ yielded much joy to the world.

However, “Merry Christmas” for many can simply mean, “I hope you have a fun Christmas season”; “Christ is born, glorify Him” reminds us that the season is about Him.

However, as Angelus Silesius, a German mystic of the Catholic Church, said ‘Were Christ born a thousand times in Bethlehem, and not in thee, thou art lost eternally’, and we must always remember that Christmas must be celebrated in man’s inmost heart, and that our outward celebrations should quicken the impulse whereby we allow Christ to be born in us, in our inmost heart. How? How can we open our hearts to let God in? Jesus wants to come and be born in us, to live in us every day.

The steps we take to let Him into our lives will vary from person to person, but prayer can be a huge help in allowing God to be more and more alive in us. Praying with a favourite passage from the Bible, with the psalms or the Gospels, praying by simply thanking God in a moment of joy, asking His help for a friend in need, taking quiet time in God’s presence at home or at church – all of these are possible pathways of inviting God into our lives each day, for Christ to be born.

One of the most popular Pop Songs of the season is by ‘Wizzard’ and is called “I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday”. Well, it can be!

“As I arise this morn, Christ in me be Born” [Celtic Prayer]

Fr David, Tina (Mary), and I, hope that you have a blessed and Holy Christmas – Christ is Born!

Our Life

Welcome, Fr Nicholas

It was a great joy for Fr Julian and Tina (Mary) to be invited to attend Vespers, on 20th November, to celebrate the patronal feast of Greek Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary Eleousa, Derby Road, and to welcome Fr Nicholas to Nottingham.

The beautiful service was also attended by Archimandrite Christodoulos Kokliotis, from The Dormition of the Theotokos in Birmingham, Father Christos Stefanou, from the Holy Trinity and Saint Luke in Birmingham, and Father Panayiotis Sakellariou, from St Basil the Great & St Paisios in Lincoln. The vespers was sung in Greek with some prayers in English from Fr Julian. Following the vespers we were all treated to a beautiful supper with many Greek delights!

We thank Fr Nicholas and his community for their warm welcome and generous hospitality. We hope, and pray, that this may be the beginning of a closer relationships between our two communities.

Presbytery Meeting & Deanery Assembly

These meetings took place in London at the end of October. They were attended by Fr Julian, Fr David with our parish representatives (Katharine Dryden and Tina (Mary) Lowe) and Barry Dryden (Retiring Deanery Treasurer). Following an address by our Archbishop Nikitas, matters discussed included the annual financial report, the formation of a funding committee, Executive elections, Safeguarding, and the adoption of the Deanery safeguarding policy, and Conference report.

Copies of the minutes of the Assembly meeting are available upon request.

Memory Eternal

It is with sadness that we heard of the repose of Mariamna, the wife of the late Father Michael.

Mariamna reposed on the 22nd November, just a few weeks short of her 94th year!

Her funeral was held on Saturday 25th November, in Vichy, the city near their home, in France.

May the Good Lord grant rest to Mariamna's precious soul with all the Saints, and may her Memory be Eternal.

Chaplaincy

Fr David and Fr Julian continue their work supporting the Leeds (Fr David) and Nottingham (Fr Julian) universities.

At the UoN Fr Julian is currently facilitating the always much appreciated 'Bereavement Journey' with a further course due to begin in early 2024.

Fr Julian has also been invited to join the University's 'Nightline' steering group. Nightline offers a unique listening service, providing emotional support and information to students across the country. It's the only service of its kind dedicated to students in higher and further education. Run by students, the volunteers ensure every 'caller' can talk about their feelings in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

Congratulations

To Kate Moore, who has been awarded her long service award, having worked for a little over 20 years at her local Nursery School, in Melbourne. Many Years, Kate!

Memory Walk

Tina (Mary) and Fr Julian would like to express their sincere gratitude to all who sponsored or supported their participation in the 2023 Memory walk, helping to support people affected by dementia.

Safeguarding

As an Archdiocese and as the “Deanery” we are committed to ensure that all communities adopt the highest standards of Safeguarding for Children Young Persons and Vulnerable Adults and build constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

To this end Tina/Mary and Fr Julian have recently participated in the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) ‘Safeguarding Adults Week 2023. This weeklong event provided seminars, workshops and training which covered a range of topics which included Making Safeguarding Personal; a person-centred approach to safeguarding, Self-neglect, Exploitation, mate-crime and cuckooing, and a DBS Disclosure workshop.

Should you have any questions or safeguarding concerns please speak with our Safeguarding Lead, Tina/Mary, who will be happy to answer your questions or discuss any concerns you may have.

Thought for today:

You never stop learning because life never stops teaching.

LORD GRIMTHORPE AND ST ALBAN'S CATHEDRAL

It is always galling to have to thank someone you heartily dislike. Especially is this the case when the person is not only obnoxious but a (supposed) ignorant amateur who beats the best of the professionals at their own job. Such was the case of Lord Grimthorpe to whom we owe the survival of St Alban's Cathedral.

So who was Lord Grimthorpe and how did he get such a bad reputation? A barrister by profession, he was also a gifted horologist, and is chiefly remembered as the man who invented the clock mechanism for Big Ben. He was also an amateur architect and designed parish churches in Leeds, Doncaster and Burton-on-Trent. Opponents greatly disliked him and portrayed him as an ignorant and interfering busybody, though ignorant he most certainly was not. He was, however, given to interfering; was touchy, cantankerous, utterly lacking in diplomacy, and incapable of keeping his own counsel. In 1868 he was elected President of the Horological Institute on condition that he should not attend its dinners.

In 1885 Grimthorpe published a guide book: *St Alban's Cathedral and its Restoration*, which is still the most detailed account of the damage which the cathedral had sustained, and how it was being dealt with. It is immensely readable, full of biting criticism, and laced with the sort of information which is whispered between colleagues in private. It is only fair to add that it contains much good sense. In some ways one cannot help liking the old sinner, despite the fact that he could

be so abominably rude. At the time of the abbey's restoration he was living in St Albans.

In fact it was Sir George Gilbert Scott, then England's premier architect, who was entrusted with the abbey's restoration. This was in 1856, before it was raised to cathedral status and when it was in a sadly dilapidated condition. Parts of it were threatened with collapse. In 1870 the tower very nearly did collapse and was only saved through the prompt intervention of the Clerk of Works, Mr Chapple. The north-east pier was shattered and was forcing the north chancel wall outwards. It was discovered that the south-east pier had been deliberately undermined, presumably at the time of the Reformation, in order to bring down the tower and render the whole building ruinous.

The west front was also in a state of partial collapse, ruinous, unsightly and patched with brick. In 1875 it was discovered that the western parts of the nave south clerestory and triforium were leaning outwards for approximately 100 feet. They were pushed inwards again using hydraulic jacks requisitioned by Lord Grimthorpe, after Scott's manual jacks had failed to reposition the wall.

Also there was the condition of the nave roof. Either Scott failed to inspect the roof timbers properly or he left the matter to his assistants who reported that there was no cause for concern. It was Grimthorpe, who had begun to haunt the restoration works, who discovered its true condition and took Scott aloft to examine it. Scott was appalled to find that the whole roof was in imminent danger of collapse. This knowledge may have hastened Scott's death, which occurred a few days later.

There was worse to follow. The patched-up west front now showed signs of disintegrating, and no-one could be sure that its collapse would not set off a chain reaction among the nave arches, causing them to fall like a row of dominoes. The restoration of what was now a cathedral had been going on for twenty-three years and the building fund was £3000 in the red. In these circumstances Lord Grimthorpe undertook to complete the necessary works at his own expense, and given the wretched state of the building the bishop had little option but to agree. In all, Grimthorpe is believed to have spent about £130, 000 on the project, or well over a million in present day values.

And he did it – so successfully that, since then, repairs have been merely routine. His rebuilt west front came in for a lot of criticism but most of it is now acknowledged to have been unfair. In particular he realized that the great west window had been the chief cause of the problem, bearing down on the central porch and setting up structural tensions. To prevent it from happening again he came up with a highly sophisticated solution: rebuilding the window with an arched sill and underpinning it with a concealed arch resting on firm foundations. Since then it has never given the slightest cause for concern.

Whether we consider Lord Grimthorpe's alterations good, bad or indifferent, the fact is that he took in hand a colossal, disintegrating building and left it complete and structurally sound. We need to see the wood as well as the trees. Also he financed essential repairs out of his own pocket when there was no immediate prospect of the money coming from elsewhere. Should we not temper criticism with gratitude?

The restoration of any cathedral in late Victorian times was a poisoned chalice and, sad to say, not all of that poison has evaporated. As a typical specimen of the unthinking criticism which has been heaped on a man who, quite literally, grappled with titanic forces and subdued them, how about the following:

He [Lord Grimthorpe] replaced *the beautiful west front* with one of his own design (Pitkin Guide to St Albans, authorized by the Dean and Chapter – my italics of course).

Need I remind readers that the ‘beautiful west front’ was a spalted, brick-filled partial ruin?

Deacon Ian.

Healthy diet of happiness

Happiness is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “*the state of being satisfied that something is good or right*”. We all want to be happy and try to achieve this state by various means. There is no common recipe for happiness, we all are so very different. Studies in neuroscience and cognitive psychology, however, reveal a slightly disturbing fact: our happiness depends on a set of hormones that the body produces in reaction to certain stimuli. One of these hormones is Dopamine, the so-called “trigger of happiness” and “wanting more”. *It is* released when we are expecting a reward and is linked to motivation, memory, mood and attention.

Fluctuations in the levels of Dopamine were studied in monkeys while they were assembling a simple puzzle. The readings showed a surge of Dopamine when the puzzle was almost done, and the animals' brain activity was at its peak. In other words, the highest levels of pleasure coincided with the highest levels of involvement in the task, and were associated not with the completion, but the anticipation of a successful completion of the puzzle. The pleasure levels dropped once the task was fulfilled.

We are not monkeys, but the same applies: we are most actively engaged with something that is nearly finished, and this is when our brain activates the production of Dopamine, which makes us feel happier.

The dose of this “happiness injection” depends on how difficult the task is and how much effort has been put into it. Compare the task of writing a book with that of answering a trivia quiz question. The degree of involvement is totally different, and so is the respective “quota of happiness” received.

Here we come to another disturbing concept: the “Dopamine trap”. We all know about the threats of alcohol abuse, smoking, overeating and so forth. But how about our daily routine of using mobile phones and other gadgets that offer a wide range of entertainment with almost immediate reward? Surfing the Internet, hanging out on social media, playing online games, etc., we receive tiny bits of “happiness”, a brief glow of satisfaction at each “like” under our Facebook post, each completion of a Wordle puzzle, etc. We engage in this “pleasure hunt” because it is nice and simple - minimal effort and minimal achievement. So, what's wrong with that?

At least two things.

Firstly, short-term easy ways of getting Dopamine may become a habit that will repeatedly deplete its resources, and we'll want to get the high again, as soon as possible. It will become increasingly challenging to engage in activities that do not offer instant gratification. More demanding tasks with a much higher level of involvement (and pleasure) will progressively get more difficult to perform because we'll struggle to focus on them for a lengthy period. Our attention span will be shrinking, which will gradually weaken long-term and short-term memory.

Secondly, the roller coaster of Dopamine peaks and troughs will be wearing us out because the highs will be getting lower and lower, dulled by repetition. Have you ever been tired after doing nothing in particular, just playing with your mobile, for example? As it is, the level of Dopamine needs to be balanced: too little as well as too much of it causes problems that can range from depression to obsessive behaviour.

Please don't get me wrong, I love my mobile and can't imagine modern life without it. We just have to be aware of the fact that our brain can get hooked on the continuous consumption of "junk" Dopamine. So, let's stick to a healthy diet of happiness, and try to cut down on the use of our beloved gadgets...

Olga Grishina

Good bye 2023

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"GO OUT INTO THE DARKNESS AND PUT YOUR HAND INTO THE HAND OF GOD.
THAT SHALL BE TO YOU BETTER THAN LIGHT AND SAFER THAN A KNOWN WAY."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

*So heart be still:
What need our little life
Our human life to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low,
God hideth His intention.*

*God knows. His will
Is best. The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears
Are premature; In Him,
All time hath full provision.*

*Then rest: until
God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes,
When, as the sweeter features
Of Life's stern face we bail,
Fair beyond all surmise
God's thought around His creatures
Our mind shall fill.*

God Knows, by Minnie Louise Haskins



Welcome Fr Nicholas to Nottingham

*We wish all our readers
Health and Happiness
Our good wishes to you
For 2024*



Vespers, on 20th November, to celebrate the patronal feast of Greek Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary Eleousa, Derby Road, and to welcome Fr Nicholas