

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



NEWSLETTER

March – April 2024



March 20th Spring starts
May 5th 2024 Orthodox Easter

**Orthodox Parish of Saint Aidan & St Chad,
Nottingham.**

Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain

Ecumenical Patriarchate

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

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Fr Julian's Letter:

Pascal's Wager: Are you familiar with 'Pascal's wager?' This is the name for an idea by Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth century French philosopher, mathematician and Physicist. Pascal argued that it is not possible to prove or disprove that God exists and that when it comes to God's existence, we are taking a big risk. Pascal thought it is better to believe that God exists, and therefore to live accordingly.

If God exists, we could gain a lot, like eternal happiness in Heaven, but if God did not exist it would make no difference. For this reason, Pascal said it would be better to believe in God. Pascal's argument is that reason and intellect cannot decide the question of whether God exists or not; therefore, it makes sense to choose the option that would benefit us most should we be right, and harm us the least should we be wrong. Is this how we should live life? Should our belief be a matter of simply hedging our bets? Is there any way we can prove the existence of God?

When people ask for proof, they generally just mean "evidence". Scientists may have lots of "evidence", but will never claim to have "proof," because proof does not exist in science. Proof has a technical meaning that only applies in mathematics. All science can do is provide evidence – lots of it –and, so long as the evidence is consistent with the theory, we consider the theory validated.

But it will never be proven. So, is there a way we can find 'evidence' for the existence of God?

Absolutely, there is! We need to look to Christ's teachings.

If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself (John 7:17).

Saint Nikolai Velimirovich suggests that it benefits little to prove, by human logic and words that the teaching of Christ is the teaching from God. He asserts that the fastest and most reliable way to know that this is truth is to do the will of God in the same way that Christ proclaimed it and testified to it. Whoever does this will know that the teaching of Christ is the teaching from God. If you weep for the sake of God, you will know what a comfort He is. If you are merciful, you will know the mercy of God. If you build peace, you will know how it becomes you to be called a son of God. If you forgive men, you will know that God forgives you. No one can ever know that the teaching of Christ is the teaching from God, except he who does the will of God. Doing the will of God and fulfilling His commandments is the only key for unlocking Paradise, in which God is seen.

As we begin our Lenten journey together, may I suggest that we "...do His will ...", so that we may be sure, "...it be of God". Let us together participate, each day, in the Holy triad; prayer, fasting, almsgiving. And, as we do so, let us also gather evidence, for ourselves and for others of the existence, the love, and divinity of Christ and His teachings, and by our endeavours, fulfil the will of God, in order that we may know God and save our souls. O Lord, all-wise, help us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit to do Thy will.

Amen

Our Life

Theophany 2024

What a superb day!

Thank you to our choir, and to all who helped with our worship, and to all who provided food and refreshments for our time of fellowship; thank you to all who helped make this important feast such a joyful time together.

Wonderful News!

It is with a great deal of joy and thankfulness that, with his permission, I can tell you that our dear brother John Moore has received excellent result from his latest blood tests. The results indicate that the treatment John has received has worked well and that there is currently no evidence of cancer in his prostate. Please continue to hold John and Kate in your prayers.

Thank you, Milen

Preparing the church for our services has been made considerably easier thanks to the casters that have now been fitted to our iconostasis. The casters have been proved, and fitted, by Milen and make the moving of the large icons, that form the iconostasis, so much easier. Again, thank you Milen.

Chaplaincy

Our support of the Chaplaincy teams of Universities of Nottingham (Fr Julian) and Leeds (Fr David) continues.

At UoN this has included:

January 27th marked the annual Holocaust Memorial Day. This is a day for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur.

‘Coffee, Cake and Chat’. This is a safe space for students and staff to join in faith-based conversations over some refreshments.

‘The cost-of-living breakfast’ at Jubilee Campus, Mondays between 8.30am and 10.30 am. where a free hot breakfast is available for students ensuring they could begin their week well and go to lectures with full bellies.

Church Warden

It is with feelings of both profound gratitude and deep sadness that I have to inform you that Tina/Mary has decided that she will resign from the post of Church Warden at our next AGM.

Tina/Mary has held this post for approximately 7 years, and has been a huge support and enabler to both Fr David and especially myself (Fr Julian). She will continue with her roles as Safeguarding Lead, Parish Representative, and if possible, secretary to the trustees; not forgetting, of course, her role of Presbyter!

This means that we will be looking to elect a new Church Warden at our AGM and therefore invite nominations and suggestions for consideration. Please do not hesitate to talk with Fr Julian and/or Tina if you would like details of the responsibilities associated with the role of Church warden.

Moving with the times.

Decades ago, doorstep deliveries of milk and bread plus many other things were the norm. Now it seems to be only pizzas and newspapers by arrangement but newspaper boys and girls are now thin on the ground as very few newsagents now have a delivery service. The problem is not with finding paperboys but more with the legal requirements by the shop – a work permit, insurance and a bank account for payment of wages.

Another concern was that fewer people wanted a paper delivered which meant that the delivery round stretched over a wider area. Parents are now more protective and aware of traffic dangers so by some, cycling is considered too risky. All this, plus red tape resulted in shops stopping their newspaper delivery services.

The corner shop used to be privately owned but now they seem to be part of a bigger organisation such as Spar and must obey the Spar regulations. In many ways convenience stores live up to their name but out-sourcing the paper delivery service is definitely a decline in service. The manager at our local shop tells me that when they did a delivery service their paper boys/girls were reliable and the very few who were not, were shown the door. The good ones had the satisfaction of doing a job well. They had a taste of the working world, some money in their pocket or were able to save it up for something they really wanted. These are important milestones on entry into the adult world.

Frances

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE

According to the newspapers (6th January 2024) NASA could soon be dispatching a swarm of tiny space-craft to our nearest star-system (*Proxima Centauri*, 4.3 light-years distant) to search for signs of life.

Scientists are desperate to find life elsewhere in the Universe. It is, of course, entirely natural that we should want to know more about the Cosmos. Man is an explorer, and since the Earth itself no longer holds any great geographical secrets or mysteries, we find ourselves wanting to explore the mysteries of outer space. Moreover it is now thought possible that space travel could be accelerated by powerful laser beams up to something like a hundred million miles an hour. Quite a thought. Nevertheless,

space travel is horrendously expensive, devouring huge sums of money which could otherwise be spent on things like medical research, defence, or even bobbies on the beat. There are of course spin-offs, for technology invented for one purpose will have applications elsewhere, but the balance sheet is not generally a very healthy one. The suspicion dawns that many scientists and their backers are consumed by one overwhelming obsession. If life exists elsewhere in the Universe (so the thinking goes), then belief in God, or at any rate in a personal, caring God, cannot be sustained. If it could be shown that life exists wherever conditions favour it, then it could be explained as a purely natural phenomenon – the expected consequence of physical and chemical processes. It is a tempting idea, but in fact it would prove nothing – except perhaps that God is more generous than we ever dared to suppose. The real problem is the nature of life itself, and unless we can explain *that*, we are as much in the dark as ever we were.

Life is the greatest of all terrestrial mysteries, for a living creature is a *being*, not a thing. Have you ever thought how miraculous that is? That a body, composed entirely of apparently lifeless particles becomes animate, conscious of itself and its surroundings, capable of thinking for itself (as AI never can do because it is programmed by humans and is therefore merely a highly sophisticated calculating machine)? We now know that even trees have senses and can communicate with and help each other, chiefly, though not entirely, through their root systems. Life is sacred because, like God, it knows itself TO BE. Everything living is a self-organizing entity and thus contains within it a tiny seed of autonomy – another divine attribute. Above the atomic level, everything else in the world seems to obey the laws of thermodynamics and ultimately runs down or ceases to exist. But life is as nearly immortal as anything can be in a Universe conditioned by time and matter because life *reproduces* itself. We take this for granted and don't see how

extraordinary it is – a counter-principle which defies the ordinary laws of matter. Individual life forms perish, but life itself goes on and on, becoming richer, more abundant and more complex. It is a process which makes possible the emergence of spiritual principles like beauty, parenthood, relationships and love. Life is, to a degree, etherealized, and that, when you think about it, is a very wonderful thing. Add to all this the thousands of survival mechanisms implanted in living beings, and what Blake referred to as ‘fearful symmetry’, and ask yourself the question: Is it even remotely possible that life is just a blind material process?

I will praise thee, O God, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made’ - Psalm 139 (KJB).

Deacon Ian

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN. - MOUNT ATHOS

It is always a blessing and a privilege to visit Mount Athos and Iviron Monastery with which I am associated.

On this occasion I had a surprise. I went into the Church (Katholikon) early on Sunday morning. Being unsure of the temperature I was wearing too many clothes, I found the Church very hot and wondered if I should leave to get some fresh air. The next thing I knew, I was lying on the floor, with my legs held in the air by the Father Guestmaster, with two other monks, one each side comforting me after my faint. Fr Leondis, the Guestmaster had noticed me swaying and beginning to wobble, so he grabbed me before I fell and put me on the floor lifting my legs high. After being encouraged to sit for a while, I was escorted back to my room by the three monks and clearly informed that, at my age, I should not come into church before 4.00am. (the services start at 02.30 in winter)

A key word in the monastic life is filoxania, hospitality. I had not only been given hospitality but such loving care, concern,

compassion and excellent First Aid as part of their philoxania. I was also pleased because on previous visits I had given instruction in First Aid and now I was experiencing it first hand, for myself.

I was reminded of a story of Metropolitan Anthony in the most recent book of his writings, *On The Light that Shineth inThe Darkness*. A man in Russia, in Soviet times, who was an unbeliever had never had contact with the Church. One day, he strayed into a church to see what it looked like inside and what sort of people were there. He said that the thing he could never afterwards forget was the sense that all the people who had gathered there, had gathered with good will, gathered with mutual openness, gathered with as much love as they could muster. He had never before met a collection of people in the name of a common faith, with openness and as a result loved each other. He was so impressed by this experience that he developed a need to be with such people who loved each other. At first he went to church, keen to be with such people but in due cause he discovered God and sought to be with Him, He became an Orthodox Christian.

We are told that we are a Light of the World. The man in Bishop Anthony's story reveals a congregation who were the Light of the World for him, whether they knew it or not. In our community, we are also a Light as we welcome all at our Liturgy and to share the food that follows. It is a good expression of Philoxania.

This was my experience on Mount Athos . The monks, for me, were this Light, as they always are. Whenever there is loving fellowship, hospitality, Philoxania , we experience The Light of the World whether on the Holy Mountain, or in our Parish, indeed whenever or wherever it is expressed.

Fr David

Memo for Spring!

In some parts of the world, in some cultures frog spawn is considered as a delicacy and is regarded as being on the same level as traditional fish roe.

The frogspawn should be fried gently and is said to taste similar to caviar. An extra requirement is that it should come from a clean pond. If you are thinking about trying it for yourself, the best way to eat frog spawn is to add it to soups or omelettes, lightly fried.....

If any brave soul tries this, please give me a full report which will appear in a future newsletter!

Misbehavior in Lincolnshire

At Lincolnshire Wildlife Park a group of five African grey parrots became famous for saying inappropriate words to visitors. They were moved to join three other parrots in a different enclosure in the hope it would stop them from swearing. That was a failure as the three birds had picked up the bad language from the original five African grey parrots. The result was that there were then eight swearing parrots. Recently, keepers have moved them into a large enclosure with 100 parrots and it is thought that the parrots' swearing will be drowned out by the noise of the other birds

The park's chief executive says that he thinks the high-risk strategy might work, or "we could end up with 100 swearing parrots on our hands. Only time will tell".

More animal Antics

Stowaway squirrel sails from India to Scotland.

A stowaway squirrel is being cared for by an animal rescue charity after travelling thousands of miles from India to Scotland on board a ship.

It is believed the animal spent about three weeks on the vessel and was finally caught by the crew three days before *Deep Explorer* docked in Aberdeen.

Keith Marley of the North East Wildlife and Rescue Centre said the crew had fed the squirrel and allowed him free range. They had no choice as he was an escape artist. Eventually, near the end of the voyage he was ‘taken into custody’ He had been spotted many times before then but he is faster than a fast thing so it took a bit of effort to catch him said Mr Marley. The speedy animal has been named Zippy.

Greetings from New Zealand from Barbara

Haystacks in February!

I have the great privilege of spending nearly three months in Christchurch, with my older daughter Laura, who very sensibly emigrated here about ten years ago. For the first time in my life, I have complete freedom, to do exactly what I want. As many of you will appreciate, the reason for the freedom is a very sad one, but there it is, as he would say, and here I am, as he would have wished.

The trip has been a while in the planning and there was a lot to think about, to drop out of my life for that long. Happily it suited my younger daughter Anna to move into our house, and she will have sorted out anything I forgot to organise.

I set off for London on the 9th of January, happy to leave behind the British winter. The flight was long and trying; two long legs of 11 or 12 hours each, via San Francisco, and then a shorter domestic flight from Auckland to Christchurch. It’s about the longest trip you can do. I was met by Laura and her friend and driven to Laura’s flat.

She was of course very pleased to see me, but a few days later it became apparent that I had come bearing gifts - lots of little COVID bugs, to be exact - and I generously shared them not only with Laura and her friend but also half of Laura's office! Happily they all forgave me and they are still speaking to me.

So the first couple of weeks wasn't a picnic, what with jet lag as well, but I soon began to feel better and to enjoy this lovely place. Christchurch is close to the sea, so I quickly saw several local, beautiful beaches and indulged myself in taking some very memorable photographs. (However, I reflect that we say 'taking' photographs, and in a way it does feel rather grasping, as if we have somehow stolen a part of the beauty; so I tried to be sensitive to that and to admire the scenery first.)

There was a serious earthquake here about twelve years ago and the central area of the city was thoroughly laid waste. Now I can see so much recovery. It is amazing how resilient these people are. There are lots of new buildings going up all the time, many of them with remarkable hand painted murals adorning them. I would hardly have recognised the city from how we first saw it in 2014.

There are earthquakes pretty much every day here, and all the buildings are geared to this, new ones being as earthquake-proof as possible. Most of the quakes are small, and I haven't felt one yet, but Laura tells me that she has quite often been aware of them.

I've had time to do a lot of relaxing and reflection, after the difficult and heartbreaking couple of years our family has just had, and it's good for me to be out of my usual routine. It's easier to relax when the laundry basket isn't sitting looking at you, and there are not piles of papers to be dealt with.

I've also had a few days in Melbourne, Australia, where I looked round the city and then had three days with a friend. I was astonished at the city; full of the most adventurously

architectural buildings, many echoing the shapes of nature, and bursting with favours sports stadiums (stadia??). I had one full day there and made the most of it, travelling up and down the river an hour each way, and having a ride on the free tram in the centre. It all comes with commentary too. So I now know why the streets of Melbourne were planned to be a hundred yards wide - suggestions on a postcard please.

A New Hobby!

One new unusual ‘hobby’ in our local area is going litter-picking either singly or in a group. The council provides large pink bags, and a litter-picking stick but you must provide your own strong gloves to avoid contact with the litter. The venue and route for a group is pre-arranged so the pickers just turn up at the appointed hour. At the end of a group ‘pick’, a council van collects all the bags for disposal.

Litter can kill: an unfortunate local hedgehog died after getting stuck inside a Pringles tube!

The pickers are told to avoid contact with syringes and broken glass but are asked to note where they are and report the location to the council for collection. One item that seems to turn up regularly apart from all the cans, bottles and empty food containers is an odd shoe kicked off by a toddler in a buggy.

The general public can enjoy tidy open spaces and the pickers feel pleased that they have helped to enhance the area.

The Great British Spring Clean

The Great British Spring Clean is the nation's biggest mass-action environmental campaign.

In 2024, the campaign returns from 15 March to 31 March.

They reported that last year, their incredible Litter Heroes pledged, and achieved, their target of picking up more than 400,000 bags of litter throughout the campaign period.

In 2023 the Litter Heroes focused on the pride they have for their local community. ’

They added that their research revealed that more than 8.5 million adults in the UK have done litter-picking at least once in the past six months. That’s a million more people than the number who watched the end of *Happy Valley*!

The Litter Heroes believe that everyone deserves to live in a community where they can feel proud but, sadly, less than half of UK adults (43%) currently agree that their community is one in which they can take pride.

The good news is that litter-picking is a simple action that anyone can do to make an immediate and visible difference to their area – 85% of those who took part in last year’s Great British Spring Clean reported that taking part made them feel more pride in their local area. And 74% said it improved their mood too!

Local Volunteering opportunities can be discovered by going on the Web.

Information taken from their promotion leaflet:

Volunteering is an incredibly rewarding experience. Not only does it give you the opportunity to help others, but it can also be a great way to meet new people and learn new skill

Are you looking to make a difference in your community? Volunteering is a fantastic way to give back and support causes that are important to you. Whether you have a few hours a week or are looking for a long-term commitment, there are countless volunteer opportunities available in your area. But how do you go about finding the perfect one for you? In this step-by-step

guide, we will walk you through the process of finding the ideal volunteer opportunity in your area.

Consider:

*Be a **Volunteer** & Work in Animal Welfare / RSPCA*

*Search for a local volunteering opportunity - Get Volunteering
getvolunteering.co.uk*

I do not think that community service done by young offenders comes under the umbrella of voluntary work but I do know that those, who under supervision, are allowed into pensioners' homes feel proud to be trusted and hopefully, regain some self-respect and are able to turn their life around

A Strange Coincidence

About a month ago Dn Ian was walking along the footpath outside our house and noticed a £5 note blowing around. There was nobody around who could have lost it so he put it in his pocket. About a week later I was walking along a different path and noticed that again a £5 was lying around so rescued it. Neither of us has ever before found money before apart from a few coppers and find it strange that two £5 notes should appear in quick succession.

A possibility is that I have now become very much more aware of litter. I cannot walk past litter without thinking that a litter-pick is needed because some people have failed to put the rubbish in a bin. If I see a group of people clearing up rubbish I think that possibly, any litter louts who see them just might have a twinge of conscience.

Frances

Lines written in Early Spring

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

William Wordsworth



The photo was taken at Theophany, down at the bridge over the River Leen- just down near the crossing.



Our banner which was produced by Dominic, is attached to the railings outside the church on Liturgy days