

PARISH OF THE HOLY TRINITY



COMMUNITY BULLETIN

2 APRIL 2022

No. 57

*Weekly Worship, Events & Announcements —
Submissions Welcome!*

Upcoming Week

- ❖ Please pray for the newly departed *Archpriest Michael, Jack and Emmanuel*, and the sick *Richard, Monica and Peter*.
 - ❖ Saints' days in [Greek](#) and [English](#)
 - ❖ Bilingual texts and music for [all services by date](#)
 - ❖ Archdiocesan Sunday [Bulletin](#) and [Services](#) (Holy Wisdom Cathedral, London)
-

Events & Announcements

Please see parish [website](#) for the most up-to-date schedule of services

Sunday 3 April, a memorial for Patricia Scott will be held. There will be a gathering afterwards in the garden, and Fr Ian will bless the new bench recently purchased with donations from Patricia's friends in the community.

The ongoing collection for Lent this year will be used to help relieve suffering in crisis situations such as the war in Ukraine, through [Disaster Emergency Committee](#) (DEC). Established in 1963, DEC is an umbrella group of 15 British charities including Christian Aid, Save the Children, and Oxfam.

On Wednesday we commemorated Mid-Lent, and it will soon be time to prepare in more practical ways for the Feast of Feasts! Please watch your email for an invitation to help with dyeing eggs, decorating candles, or joining a special cleaning party in the Church. If you are able to take part in any of these preparations, please email events2@holytrinityoxford.org.uk.

Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Confession — the Sacrament of Reconciliation

*Confess your faults one to another,
and pray one for another, that ye may be healed — James 5:16*

What is confession?

Through the sacrament of confession, a person receives the forgiveness of God and is reconciled to the Church by confessing their sins (that is, anything that distances them from God and their fellow man) in the presence of a priest, who is the representative of the Church.

'Can't I just confess to God?'

As St Paul tells us, 'You are the body of Christ and individually members of it' (1 Cor. 12:27), and 'if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it' (v. 26). In other words, all the members of the Church, the Body of Christ, are connected to one another, and my spiritual state affects not just me but the Church as a whole. Therefore, there is no such thing as a 'private sin', no sin that is 'just between me and God'; my sin, however secret, also affects my brothers and sisters in Christ. As such, repentance also is not only a private thing, not 'just between me and God', but must involve our reconciliation to the Church, to the other members of Christ's Body.

What happens in confession?

The priest and penitent will stand before the icon of Christ — a cross and Gospel book are usually also present — in a quiet part of the church where they cannot be overheard. The sacrament begins with a number of petitions and prayers expression contrition and asking for God's mercy and forgiveness. The penitent will then make their confession. The priest may ask questions or make any relevant comments he thinks will be of help, but his primary role is simply to listen, since, as he says to the penitent, 'You are not telling these things to me, but to God before whom you stand'. Once the confession is complete, the priest will read the prayers of absolution over the penitent, concluding with the words, 'As for the sins that you have confessed, have no further anxiety about them; go in peace.'

[[Source](#)]



Registered Charity no. 1011772

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**Please remember
Holy Trinity Parish
in your prayers...**

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SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

(Translation of the [Archdiocesan Bulletin](#), 13 March 2022)

The first Sunday of Lent, the first of the Fast, is called the Triumph of Orthodoxy. The Church ordained this feast in commemoration of the restoration of the holy icons. Historically it goes back to the Iconoclast controversy, a century (or more) during which the spiritual value of icons was doubted, with churches vacillating between their veneration and their removal — a really dark period for our Church, full of feuds, persecutions and destruction of icons. Finally the sober faith of the Fathers prevailed. By the Seventh Ecumenical Synod of 787 AD, they determined that the veneration of icons neither refers to, nor is limited to, the material of the icon, but ‘ascends back to the prototype,’ (John Damascene) meaning directed towards the person of the depicted saint. With this simple but essential formulation, the Church of Christ was released from a period catastrophic for the unity of the faithful, definitively enabling icons to be included in holy worship up to the present day. Therefore, as St Luke of Crimea (1877-1961) taught his faithful followers, ‘When you weep before the Icon of the Mother of God, you are not lamenting in front of a dead piece of wood, but rather weeping before the Holy Mother of God herself, who sees your tears from Heaven and hastens to help you.’

The core problem of the veneration of icons is the relationship of the Christian with materiality. As we know, Christ set that relationship on a new footing, introducing an ascetic and spiritual distancing in our relationship with material things, marked by the distinction between what is necessary, for example food, and what is disproportionate greed for mere matter, i.e. excessive consumption. When in the first century AD the problem arose of food sacrificed to idols, i.e. whether one ought to eat meat from idolatrous sacrificial offerings, the Apostle Paul wisely clarified the proper use of food, permitting the produce offered in sacrifice to idols to be regarded simply as food, while pointing out the possibility that this might cause spiritual offence to those who could not accept such an accommodation in their hearts and minds. With great wisdom he instructed his disciple Timothy, ‘Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving,’ for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4: 4-5). When we make use of material things with thanksgiving and praise, mindful that ‘everything God created is very good,’ then our relationship with matter is not greedy and consumerist, but takes on a spiritual, sanctifying character.

The pen or brush of the icon-painter, prayerfully creating an icon with material substances, can be assisted by the mystical presence of the Holy Spirit, who transmutes the matter into a means of sanctification and true theology. The Orthodox Church ‘divides the word of truth’ with accuracy as regards matter and the material world around us, teaching us how to use matter as offering and sacrifice to the Creator: for example, the candle for worship, aromatic essences for making incense, wood and coloured pigments for icons, culminating in the bread and wine we offer in church for transformation into the Body and Blood of Christ at Holy Communion. That is the highest summit of the use of the material world for God’s worship, and simultaneously as a means of sanctification and perfection for ourselves. Just as we offer these material substances to their Creator, so the mysterious power of our Church offers them back to us, either as the honoured

persons of the Saints, in the case of icons, or as the true Body and Blood of Christ, in the case of bread and wine. During Divine Liturgy, material bread and wine become the mystical Body of Christ, uniting us with Him and preparing us to become full members of His eternal Kingdom, in spiritual communion with all the saints of the Church Triumphant.

Archimandrite Chrysostom Tympas

MIRACULOUS RESCUE OF AN ICON-PAINTER

[From Agapios Landos (c.1580-1664), Cretan monk of Athos, *Αμαρτωλών Σωτηρία* = The Salvation of Sinners, pp. 142-43. This piece is offered as an accompaniment to the first, which mentions icon-painting and praying for help to the Mother of God. Agapios' stories, written in relatively simple 17th-century vernacular, are often entertaining as well as edifying.]

A certain artist, John by name, held the All-Holy Mother of God in great devotion. He was more expert in his artistry than any other, and took special care and great pains, when depicting the icon of the Mother of God, to make her lovelier and more beautiful than the other Saints, so that everyone marvelled at the beauty of his icons of the Mother of God, which he adorned with all the skill and ability of which he was capable. Conversely, when he depicted the Devil, he made him so ugly that nobody had ever seen anything more hideous or fearsome. In so doing he was justified, because just as formerly, while he was an angel obedient to God, he was the Maker's most beautiful creation, so after his transgression, the Devil became the ugliest and most fearsome of all beings. The hater of Mankind was very hostile towards this devout icon-painter, and watched for an opportunity to kill him, not so much because the artist depicted him as ugly, but rather because he envied the beauty of the Mother of God, which stimulated the people to greater devotion. Around that time a lofty church was constructed, and John was invited to decorate it. He went off and brought ladders so that he could paint the highest parts first, as was the custom. And as he was painting the Annunciation of the Most Holy Lady, he saw the Devil in front of him, who said, 'You cannot escape me now! I shall knock you down for painting such a beautiful icon up here in the heights of the church.' With that, he broke the scaffold and cast down the wooden slats where the painter had been standing.

The artist cried out, 'All-Holy Mother of God, help me!' and as he spoke, stretched out his arms towards the wall. Immediately (O excellent miracle!) the icon of the Most Holy Lady held out her right arm and caught the artist by the hand, and did not let him fall to his death. He hung there, invisibly supported, for the time it took for a ladder to be brought; and he climbed down without suffering any injury. The bystanders were astounded. Then John, with copious thanks to the All-Hymned Lady, told them what had happened, and everyone glorified God and the Ever-Virgin Mother of God. From then on the Enemy did not dare to harm him, indeed he had even done him a good turn; his plan to obliterate him turned to the artist's advantage, for everyone held him in great respect, and he was invited everywhere to paint icons.

Transl. Rosemary B-M
