

# PARISH OF THE HOLY TRINITY



## COMMUNITY BULLETIN

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### *Monthly News & Announcements*

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#### **Prayers & Services**

- ❖ Please pray for the newly departed *Richard, Titu-Ilie and Leo*, and the sick *Vincent, Michael, Philip, Paul, Richard and Monica*.
  - ❖ Saints' days in [Greek](#) and [English](#)
  - ❖ Bilingual texts and music for [all services by date](#)
  - ❖ Archdiocesan Sunday [Bulletins](#) and [Services](#) (Holy Wisdom Cathedral, London)
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#### **Events & Announcements**

Please see the [online calendar](#) or a [PDF download](#) for additional services during Lent.

A special Doxology for the Greek National Day will be held on **Friday 24 March** after the 6.15pm Compline & Akathist services. **Sunday 26 March** our sister parish of the Annunciation will celebrate with a bring-and-share meal after Liturgy — many years!

£554.20 was collected for earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria on the Sunday appointed for this cause. We are also continuing our Lenten appeal for [Unicef in Ethiopia](#) which provides teachers and school facilities for displaced children — please give generously!

On February 25th Fr Ian baptised Alexander Joseph, son of Razvan Angheluta and Mihaela Tudor. Alexander's godparents are Viorel and Ana-Maria Lupascu, Cristi Chiosea and Rodica-Maria Radusca.



## Encounters with Icons

Early in Lent we celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the victory of right belief within the early Church after many members had gone astray in disagreements over the nature of Christ. Confusion about the Incarnation, that is Christ both fully God and fully human, had led to iconoclasm among other errors. An important correction within the Church was the return of icons to liturgical use. With this act Christians reaffirmed the sacred mystery of icons, and holiness expressed materially. We still carry icons in procession to celebrate, but centuries after this controversy perhaps we sometimes take them for granted. There are times when a more contemporary-looking icon, for example, can shake us out of our complacency and reawaken us to the sacred nature and purpose of icons, so fiercely contested in earlier times.

The work of three contemporary iconographers may serve as a starting point, with links below leading to texts and images meant to encourage further thought. Two of the iconographers, [Fr Stamatis Skliris](#) and [George Kordis](#), are discussed in chapters from Bishop Maxim Vasiljević's book *Theology as a Surprise* (SVS Press, 2018: 197–224). The essays and texts by each iconographer can lead us to meditate on issues such as the unique relationship between subject and object found in icons, the effect and meaning of perspective and light in this context, and the challenge icons present to a modern understanding of the purpose of art and reality itself.

Recently completed iconography for the rebuilt [St Nicholas](#) Greek Orthodox Church in lower Manhattan provides another prompt to reflect on the nature and purpose of icons. Originally a tavern converted to a simple parish church for a Greek immigrant community, it has been rebuilt in white marble and now serves also as a shrine and site of remembrance marking the destruction at 'ground zero.' The iconographic programme in the church, completed by [Fr Loukas](#) from the Xenofontos Monastery on Mt Athos, draws on precedents but is nevertheless strikingly topical — the [Platytera](#) sits above a recognisable cityscape of New York, and as [St Nicholas](#) pulls a man to safety, two smoking towers nearby reference the local 'storm' that overtook his namesake parish. Finally, emergency workers have been added to the [Resurrection](#) icon. According to the accompanying essay, 'The inclusion of the figures representing rescue-workers who lost their lives on the tragic day of 9/11 [...] links the site-specific events of an historical moment to our ongoing hope for salvation and participation in the Resurrection of Christ and the blessing of eternal life with Him.'



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

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## St John Climacus and the Sin of Apathy (ακηδία)

'The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise' (Mark 9: 31). With those words of the Lord's, [...] the Church prepares us to mark the events of Great Week and Pascha, while also highlighting the empowering force of prayer and fasting in our spiritual struggle. She also, in her great wisdom, ordained that on this day we should celebrate the memory of St John Climacus of Sinai. St John, who is also celebrated on March 30, was a great and divinely enlightened Father of the Church, who lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. He was tonsured as a monk at a very early age and became Abbot of the holy Monastery of St Catherine of Sinai. He trained himself in ascetic stillness, with prayer, fasting, and the study of Holy Writ. He loved and was loved by everyone, and above all he loved Christ. Through His grace he conquered his sins and passions and acquired many virtues, those uppermost being humility, discretion and brotherly love. He wrote down an account of his profound experiences in the thirty God-inspired chapters of his book *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.

Sins and passions, according to the saint's teaching, drive us away from God, whereas the struggle to acquire virtue brings us steadily closer to Him. Our spiritual struggle is greatly endangered if we fail to pay special attention to the terrible demon of the sin of apathy (ακηδία), i.e. idle indifference to our spiritual lives. Apathy is the worst of all the sins that afflict the soul, because it wears the mask of a virtue, even though it makes such strong warfare upon our souls that it even influences our bodies. It cleverly attempts to knock us off course in our goal of achieving *theosis* (θέωσις, deification), union with Christ. Apathy aims to make us waste all our time tirelessly doing any number of activities except prayer. Look carefully, says the Saint, and you will come to understand how apathy produces all sorts of excuses and impediments, such as drowsiness, sluggishness, fatigue, languor, weakness, headaches and other bodily pains, all intended to weigh our bodies down at the time for prayer and study of Holy Writ, even when we should be going to church or confession and observing the fast. Apathy wants us to abandon everything and neglect the saving of our souls. It constitutes a paralysis of the soul; it is a psychic death, incorporating all the evils.

Apathy can, however, be fought by contemplating our death, remembering our sins, obeying God's will, and anticipating Paradise. It can be killed off completely by prayer, when combined with the sure hope of blessings to come. Prayer, according to St John of Sinai, is our strongest weapon, because its strength has its source in the holy grace hidden in the very Name of Jesus Christ when we appeal to Him. [...] Let us take care, then, not to allow the demonic sin of apathy to lead us astray; let us continuously struggle to imitate St John by practising the virtue of prayer. And let us, like him, love Christ above all others and above everything. In this endeavour we should have a guide, a spiritual father or confessor, to whom we can confide all our sins. Only thus can we come to know and feel the active love of God, and hope to enjoy all that the Lord has promised and prepared for us: 'To him that overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne . . . he will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.' (Revelations 3: 21 and 21: 7).

*Protopresbyter Photios Bithas*

([Source](#), translated by Rosemary BM)

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