

PARISH OF THE HOLY TRINITY



COMMUNITY BULLETIN

17 AUGUST 2024

No. 87

Monthly News & Announcements

Prayers & Services

- ❖ Please pray for the newly departed *Maria, Priest Adrian, Pavel, Petya, Zachary and Denise*, and the sick *Elizabeth, Dawn and Valentina*.
 - ❖ Saints' days in [Greek](#) and [English](#)
 - ❖ Bilingual texts and music for [all services by date](#)
 - ❖ Archdiocesan Sunday [Bulletins](#) and [Services](#) from Holy Wisdom Cathedral
-

Events & Announcements

Please see our parish [website](#) for a full community calendar

Our Greek fundraising BBQ took place on a beautiful sunny day, and raised a record **£3,274.90**. We are very grateful to Jimmy X and his family who faithfully cooked and served again this year, and of course to everyone who came and enjoyed this very successful event.

Sunday 18 August (tomorrow) we will hold a memorial service for Metropolitan Kallistos, including the presentation of an icon in his memory (details below).

The schedule of services will be ready shortly, but please note that there will be a **Saturday 14 September** Liturgy for the Exaltation of the Cross at 9am.

Saturday 14 September our community will also participate in the 'Ride & Stride' event led by Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. It is a pilgrimage where walkers and cyclists travel to participating Oxford churches, raising money through sponsorships. **We need a coordinator** to liaise with the Trust and arrange a rota of people to greet visitors — please email community@holytrinityoxford.org.uk for additional information.

Saturday 5 October is the date of our annual Greek Food Fair, a fun and important fundraising and outreach event for the community. Details can be found on the poster below. Please circulate the date and post on your social media accounts — invite friends and family to come and enjoy the day! Offers of help welcome, please email Roula T (roula1@hotmail.co.uk).

Memorial and Icon Blessing

On Sunday 18 August, we shall serve a *Mnimosynon* at the end of the Liturgy for Metropolitan Kallistos, whose anniversary falls on 24 August. We shall also bless a new icon of the Mother of God *Pantanassa* (Queen of All) which has been painted at the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos and given to our church by Alasdair Cross in memory of Metropolitan Kallistos. We will also remember others of our community who have fallen asleep, including Fr Ian's wife Sirrý (Germana) whose anniversary falls on 18 August.



A Blessed Continuing Feast to All!

Behold the Virgin, the daughter of Adam and Mother of God: because of Adam she commits her body to the earth, but because of her Son she gives her body to the heavenly tabernacle above. Let the holy city be blessed! Let it enjoy blessing upon blessing forever!

Let the angels go before the holy tent as it passes on; let them prepare her tomb carefully! Let the radiance of the Spirit beautify it! Let perfume be made ready, to anoint that wholly spotless, wholly fragrant body. Let a pure wave come and bathe it in blessings from the pure spring of blessing. 'Let the earth rejoice' (Ps 96.11), as her body is laid to rest; let the air leap as her spirit ascends!

Let the breezes blow, filled with grace as soft as dew! Let all creation celebrate the ascent of the Mother of God!

— John of Damascus, Monk and Presbyter, *A Discourse on the Dormition of Our Lady, the Mother of God*, Homily III.



Registered Charity no. 1011772

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

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Upcoming Fundraiser

Organised by the Greek Orthodox Community of the
Holy Trinity, Oxford (Registered Charity No. 1011772)

GREEK FOOD FAIR

Saturday 5 October
11am to 3pm

*Come and enjoy authentic
Greek Food to eat in
or take away!*

Wesley Memorial Hall
New Inn Hall Street, Oxford OX1 2DH

Christ's Helping Hand and the Stages of Spiritual Life

The Gospel according to St Matthew [14: 22-34, about Jesus walking on the water] tells us the story of a particularly moving and instructive episode in the short, but spiritually rich, life of Christ with His disciples. In the storms of life He is always present, ready to stretch out a helping hand; all we need to do is appeal to Him, with prayer and faith. That is why Christ, dismissing the crowds he had just miraculously fed with the five loaves and two fishes, ascended the mountain to pray. He wants to show us that 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matt. 4: 4). Prayer is the respiration of the soul, mystically wafting His divine words into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit. When we neglect prayer, we quite simply paralyze its beneficial effects, because we are nourishing ourselves merely on the material food our bodies need.

But even when we are in the habit of praying, there may come moments of perplexity and trials. Christ warned us that 'In this world you will have trouble' (John 16: 33). Our spiritual struggle is not against visible enemies, but 'against the rulers of this dark world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' (Ephesians 6: 12, King James version). Often, however, we struggle against our own dark sides, in the heart's 'hidden and secret' recesses (cf. Psalm 50, v. 6). At such moments we should not allow our faith to weaken, as did Peter when attempting to reach Christ, but stretch out our hand towards Him asking for His Help, laying our soul and our love for Him at His feet, so that he may strengthen us with His power, and grant us to experience His grace.

Let us, however, examine in more detail the stages of that endeavour, as depicted in the Gospel passage. In the life of every committed Christian, even at moments of difficulty, the presence of Christ initially creates a sense of security and hope: 'Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid (Matt.14: 27). That hope impels our hearts to wish to draw closer to Christ; but that is not so easy. We are surrounded by spiritual and psychological obstacles: our inadequate faith, our deficient knowledge of God, our faint-heartedness. Our soul, like Peter, fluctuates with the waves, and even as it strives to get closer to Christ, it sinks into despair. Whereas at first, thanks to His grace, our soul walked upon the waters, at a later stage, relying on its own powers, it suffers with periodic fright, begins to lose hope, and cries out 'Lord, save me!' He does not leave us for long weltering in life's turbulent waves and sinking into despair, but offers His helping hand: 'Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter. 'O you of little faith', he said, 'why did you doubt?' (Matt.14: 31)

Just as the events of Christ's life bring us 'words of spirit and life' (John 6: 63), the notion of an upward movement towards Him readily recalls the teachings of our own St Sophrony of Essex¹ on the stages of spiritual life. The saint was an experienced instructor on the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We know from his writings that there are three such stages: first, experience of the grace and presence of Christ; second, a sense of the withdrawal of His grace, and a time of trial leading sometimes to despondency; and third, the return of our enjoyment of God's grace, on a permanent basis. The stage of the time of trial

¹ Archimandrite Zacharias, *Remember Thy First Love: The Three Stages of the Spiritual Life in the Theology of Elder Sophrony*, Mount Tabor Publishing, 2024 (2nd edition).

is crucial, because it will require us to convert our inclination and desire for our salvation (God's desire for that can be taken for granted!) into action, setting in train the cooperative synergy of both the divine and the human will upon which our union with God depends. Thus we gain a deeper understanding of His unique Providence in our lives; our difficulties, great or small, and our passing fits of despair, when laid at His feet with the appeal 'Lord, help me!', become occasions for the activation of His love. By enduring our difficulties, we show that we love Him with all our heart, at the small sacrificial cost of putting up with the adversities encountered in our brief lives.

By remaining together with Him on the salvation-bringing 'ship of the Church', as it conveys us to His eternal Kingdom, we shall have many opportunities, like His disciples, to confirm for certain that our Christ 'truly is the Son of God!' (Matt.14: 33) To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

By Archimandrite Chrysostomos Tympas

***[Translation from the Archdiocesan bulletin, offered by Rosemary B-M,
[Source.](#)]***
