



The Tower

February 2018

The Tower is the Newsletter of the
Orthodox Christian Community of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr,
Overleigh Cemetery Chapel, Overleigh Road, Handbridge, Chester

Parish website: <http://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

Diocesan website: www.thyateira.org.uk

Facebook: [Greek Orthodox Community of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr in Chester](https://www.facebook.com/GreekOrthodoxCommunityofSaintBarbara)

Charity No: 114475

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Annual General Meeting of the Community was duly held on Sunday 17th December last at which the usual reports were presented: President's, Priest's and Treasurer's. There were no real surprises and the accounts showed a slight deficit. Elections were due to be held this year and as there were twelve nominations for twelve places the candidates were duly approved *nem com.* Their names are to be displayed on the church notice board together with the Trustees.

Our Christmas and New Year celebrations were well attended despite the many faithful who visited family in far away places during the joyful festivities. We were pleased to have them all safely back afterwards prepared for the coming year. Thank you to all who contributed to the beauty of the worship: the singers, for the gifts of flowers, those who served and those who cleaned. Bless you all.

Great Lent is soon to be upon us and it will be time to prepare ourselves spiritually and physically to approach Holy Pascha well fitted to receive the Risen Lord in our midst. Please refer to the list of services included with this newsletter and show on the notice board at church. We should all make extra effort to attend some, if not all, of the weekday services which are some of the most beautiful in the liturgical year. May God grant you strength in your preparations.

*With much love for you in as we approach Great Lent
Fr Pancratios & Presb. Anna*

The following Baptism took place recently at Saint Barbara's:

Dec 17 - **Joseph Peter Martin**
Please pray for him, his family and sponsors.



Lent begins early this year and the Sunday of Meatfare - The Sunday of the Last Judgement - occurs on 11th February. The icon reminds us that all will be called to account for the nature of our life: Will we be raised up to eternal life in Christ or will we be cast down into the eternal darkness? The choice is ours.

House Blessings

Time is passing and many of you have not yet fixed a time with Father Pancratios. He is still available to bless your homes, businesses etc. As always, we should have the sanctity of our homes renewed each year through this holy blessing with the Water of Theophany.

Please call father to arrange a suitable time as soon as possible on 01244 659717 or 07850 467675.

Principal Services for February

1st Monday	6.30pm	Vespers	Feast of the Meeting
3rd Saturday	5.30pm	Vespers	
4th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Divine Liturgy	Sunday of the Prodigal Son
7th Wednesday	11.00am	Divine Liturgy	St Parthenios
10th Saturday	4.30pm	Memorial on the Saturday of the Dead	
	5.30pm	Vespers	
11th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Divine Liturgy	Sunday of the Last Judgement: Meatfare Sunday
14th Wednesday	11.00am	Divine Liturgy	St Auxentios
17th Saturday	5.30pm	Vespers	
18th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Divine Liturgy	Sunday of Forgiveness - Cheesefare Sunday
		Beginning of Great Lent	
19th Monday	6.30pm	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete (I)	
20th Tuesday	6.30pm	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete (II)	
21st Wednesday	6.30pm	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete (III)	
22nd Thursday	6.30pm	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete (IV)	
23rd Friday	6.30pm	Divine Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified gifts	
	7.30pm	Akathist to the Theotokos - The Salutations (I)	
24th Saturday	5.30pm	Vespers	
25th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Saint Basil's Liturgy	Sunday of Orthodoxy
		followed by the Procession of Icons & Anathemas 12.30pm	
28th Wednesday	6.30pm	Divine Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts	

Principal Services for March

2nd Friday	7.30pm	Akathist to the Theotokos - The Salutations (ii)	
3rd Saturday	5.30pm	Vespers	
4th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Saint Basil's Liturgy	2nd Sunday of Great Lent - St Gregory Palamas
7th Wednesday	6.30pm	Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts	
8th Thursday	6.30pm	Vespers	Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
9th Friday	7.30pm	Akathist to the Theotokos - The Salutations (iii)	
10th Saturday	5.30pm	Vespers	
11th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Saint Basil's Liturgy	3rd Sunday of Great Lent - Veneration of the Cross
14th Wednesday	6.30pm	Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts	
16th Friday	7.30pm	Akathist to the Theotokos - The Salutations (iv)	
17th Saturday	4.30pm	Memorial for Saturday of Souls	
	5.30pm	Vespers	
18th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Saint Basil's Liturgy	4th Sunday of Great Lent - St John Climacus
21st Wednesday	6.30pm	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete (in full)	
22nd Thursday	6.30pm	Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts	
23rd Friday	6.30pm	Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts	
	7.30pm	Akathist to the Theotokos - The Salutations (in full)	
24th Saturday	5.30pm	Vespers	
25th Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Divine Liturgy	Feast of the Annunciation to our Most Holy Lady
28th Wednesday	6.30pm	Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts	
30th Friday	6.30pm	Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts	
31st Saturday	5.30pm	Vespers	
		April	
1st Sunday	10.00am	Matins	
	11.00am	Divine Liturgy	Feast of the Entry into Jerusalem - Palm Sunday



*Please remember that all parishioners have an open invitation to visit the Presbytery - kettle is almost always on.
Best to phone in advance to make sure we're in!*

Some Further Thoughts on the Life and Traditions of our Orthodox Faith

Saturday!

It is distressing to note that Saturday is so often misused by the faithful. Of course for those who work Monday to Friday, it is, or has to be, the opportunity to complete one's weekly shopping if it cannot be managed on a weekday.*

All well and good but do we pay attention to our faith and our preparation for our attendance at Divine Liturgy on Sunday. Worse our churches have fallen into the habit of willingly arranging 'events' on Saturday evenings, even during the fasts, dinners, dances, discos, cinema and the like. These activities are hardly the best way of preparing to receive Christ in the Eucharist.

Saturday has always been considered a Day of Preparation for the Joy of our presence at the Sunday Liturgy. During the day we may put aside perhaps an hour (longer if we have the opportunity) to be used in prayer, either by oneself or with the rest of the family; to prepare for Confession - and a good confession is in the preparation - and attendance at Vespers where one may make one's confession in an unhurried manner.

Although it is the ideal, it may not always be possible to attend Vespers if we live far from the church. As an alternative, or in addition, we ought to read an *Akathist* to Christ or the Mother of God, or the *Prayers of Preparation* for receiving Holy Communion. A most valuable text is the *Canon of Repentance to the Saviour*[†] and is especially useful in preparing for Confession. In her wisdom, Holy Church has provided these short services for our spiritual benefit and, like the Bible, they will not benefit us if they remain unread in a cupboard gathering dust.

Living the spiritual life is not easy in this present time; there are many pressures upon us, especially those with families, that serve to overwhelm our endeavours to draw near to Christ. Our children especially need to be protected from the demands to conform and the many calls upon them through schools, sporting events, peer pressure and more. Regrettably, these demands also affect their parents - 'mum's taxi' - and wears them down so very easily. The end result is that the family's spiritual life is in tatters and they become easy prey for the evil one.

We approach Holy Communion on a Sunday morning fasting, that is we have abstained from food and drink since Saturday midnight. This is truly the minimum, for we have actually observed a 'three day fast'; for Friday is normally a fast day and Saturday, being a day of preparation, is a day when we eat and drink modestly - simple meals, not grand dinners.

Sunday is the day to fully enjoy God's providence when the Liturgy is over, there is usually no fast and we have the rest of the day with family and friends. This too is the day when we should celebrate Baptisms and Weddings when we are free from fasting and all that goes with it.

** Clergy have remarked to me how they sometimes see parishioners rushing off to the shops and other entertainments the moment Liturgy is over. We should avoid that habit and make use of the rest of the day specially for the family.*

† These texts are readily available, if you have difficulty obtaining them see Fr Pankratios.

There's more to follow ... Fr. Pankratios

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Words to Help ...

Have you ever thought that everything that touches you touches Me as well? For that which touches you touches the apple of My eye. You are dear in my eyes, precious, and I have loved you; therefore it is a particular pleasure for Me to educate you. When temptations arise against you, and the enemy comes like a river, I want you to know—this was from Me.

Your weakness needs My strength, and your safety comes from giving Me the opportunity to fight for you. If you find yourself in difficult circumstances, among people who do not understand you, who do not take what you like into consideration, who alienate you—this was from Me.

Continued over...

I am God, Who arranges circumstances. It was no accident that you find yourself in the place where you are; this is the place I have appointed for you. Did you not ask that I teach you humility? Well, then, look: I have placed you in precisely that place, in that school, where this lesson is learned. Your surroundings and those who live with you are only fulfilling My will.

If you find yourself in financial difficulty, if you find it hard to make ends meet—this was from Me. For I have your material means at my disposal. I want you to call unto me, for you to be dependent upon Me. My reserves are inexhaustible. I want you to be confirmed in fidelity to Me and to My promises. May it not be said to you in your need: “You did not believe in the Lord your God.”

Are you in a night of suffering? Are you separated from your loved ones and those close to your heart? This was from Me. I am the Man of suffering, Who has tasted affliction. I have allowed this so that you would turn to Me, so that in Me you would find eternal comfort.

If you have been let down by your friend, to someone to whom you opened your heart—this was from Me. I allowed this disappointment to touch you so that you would know that your best friend is the Lord. I want you to bring everything to Me and to speak to Me.

Has someone slandered you? Give this to me, and bring your soul closer to Me, your Refuge, to hide from the “Contradiction of the nations.” I shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgement as the noonday.

If your plans have been destroyed, if you are downtrodden in soul and tired—this was from Me. You made plans, and brought them to Me, so that I would bless them. But I want you to leave Me in charge of the circumstances of your life, and then responsibility for everything will be Mine, for this is too difficult for you; by yourself you can not manage them, for you are only an instrument, and not the actor.

If unanticipated problems of life have visited you, and if despondency has seized your heart, then know—this was from Me. For I want your heart and your soul to be always aflame before My eyes; to conquer faint-heartedness of the soul in My name.

If you do not hear from your dear ones and friends for a long time, and in your faint-heartedness fall into despondency and grumbling, know—this was from Me.

By this anguish in your spirit, I test the strength of your faith in the surety of My promise and the strength of your boldness in prayer for these dear ones of yours. Was it not you who entrusted them to the Protection of My All-Pure Mother? Was it not you who once entrusted their care to My providential love?

If serious illness, either temporary or incurable, has visited you, and has confined to your bed, then know—this was from Me. For I want you to know Me even more deeply in your bodily infirmities, so that you would not grumble over this trial sent to you, that you would not try to penetrate My plans through different means for the salvation of people’s souls, but that you would uncomplainingly and submissively bow your neck under My goodness towards you.

If you have dreamed of performing some special deed for Me, and instead have fallen onto a bed of sickness and weakness—this was from Me. Then you would have been immersed in your activities, and I would not have been able to attract your thoughts to Me, for I want to teach you My deepest thoughts and lessons, so that you would be in My service. I want to teach you to recognize that you are nothing. Some of My best co-workers are those who have been cut off from vital activity, that they would learn to wield the weapon of unceasing prayer.

Have you unexpectedly been called to occupy a difficult and responsible position? Go, place it on Me. I entrust these difficulties to you so that the Lord God would bless you for this in all your deeds, on all your paths, in everything that will be done by your hands.

On this day I put into your hands a vessel of holy oil. Use it generously, My children! Every difficulty that arises, every word that insults you, every obstacle to your work that could elicit in you a feeling of annoyance, every revelation of your weakness and inability, shall be anointed with this oil.

Remember that every obstacle is a Divine instruction. Every sting will be dulled when you learn to see Me in everything that touches you. Therefore place the word I have declared to you today in your heart: This was from Me. For this is not an empty matter for you—this is your life.

Translator's note: The above text was distributed from hand-to-hand in samizdat form for several decades, while printed versions include competing explanations of its authorship and origin. The most common attribution is to St Seraphim of Viritsa, who was said to have written it in 1937 to a certain bishop, his spiritual son, who was at the time in prison. It is almost entirely certain, however, that the author is in fact Metropolitan Manuel (Lemeshevsky) of Knibyshev and Syzran (1884-1968). It is known that St Seraphim of Viritsa and Metropolitan Manuel were acquainted, and therefore it could be speculated that this meditation represents the latter's record of the saint's spiritual teaching. Translated from the original Russian by Hierodeacon Samuel, Monastery of Saint Job of Pochaev, Munich, Germany, for OCIC.

Frequent Communion

The healing medicine for what ails us

by Abbot Tryphon, All-Merciful Saviour Monastery, Tacoma

Eternity is an everlasting banquet (the Divine Liturgy) that takes place in the heavenly realm. Every time we participate in the Divine Liturgy we are transported into a place where there is neither time nor space, and participate in that very banquet. As we receive the Holy Mysteries (Christ's very Body and Blood), we receive the healing medicine for that which ails us. Our brokenness in both body and soul are given the healing medicine that we so very much need.

God is everywhere present and fills all things. There is no place where He is not. Hell fire is none other than the Fire of God, burning those who are unloving and unresponsive to His invitation to commune with Him. God does not send anyone to hell, for we sentence ourselves. Eternity with God necessitates a transformation of our souls, that we be purified in order to be engulfed by God's uncreated light. Without transformation the fire of God burns us, not because He desires we be burned, but because our fallen nature can not withstand the presence of God without having been purified.

The Eucharist is the very medicine that God designed for this transformation. Our response should be one of

humble submission to this invitation to commune with the very God Who created us. Holy Communion is meant to be the very agent that changes us, making us whole. The Holy Mysteries give us life. Frequent confession and communion are the means we have for change.

The Eucharist is both mystical and symbolic and is understood to be the genuine Body and Blood of Christ, precisely because bread and wine are the mysteries and symbols of God's true and genuine presence and His manifestation to us in Christ.

The Holy Eucharist defies analysis and explanation in purely rational and logical terms, precisely because it is a mystery. The Eucharist, as is Christ himself, is a mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven which, as Jesus has told us, is "not of this world." The Eucharist, because it belongs to God's Kingdom, is truly free from the earth-born "logic" of fallen humanity.

Saint John of Damascus says, "If you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it is through the Holy Spirit ... we know nothing more than this, that the word of God is true, active, and omnipotent, but in its manner of operation unsearchable".



No half measures! - Theophany celebrations at Valaam Monastery, Ladoga

A Scripture Reading Calendar for February

1	Fastfree	1 John 2:7-17	Mark 14:3-9	Icon of the Theotokos 'Soklosky' (1854)
2	Fastfree	Hebrews 7:7-17	Luke 22:22-40	Icon of the Theotokos 'Dreadful Bee' and other icons in the month
3	Fastfree	1 John 1:8-2:6	Mark 13:31-14:2	Icon of the Theotokos 'Softener of Hardened Hearts'
4		1 Corinthians 6:12-20	Luke 15:11-32	Repose of the Royal Recluse nun Dosithea of Moscow (1810)
5		1 John 2:18-3:8	Mark 11:1-11	Icon of the Theotokos 'Seeking of the Lost' (17thC)
6		1 John 3:9-22a	Mark 14:10-42	Repose of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava (1940)
7	Fast	1 John 3:21-4:11	Mark 14:43-15:1	Repose of Archimandrite Gennadius, ascetic of Roslavl (1826)
8		1 John 4:20-5:21	Mark 15:1-15	Repose of Schema-Abbot Theodore, Valaam Monastery (1937)
9	Fast	2 John 1:13	Mark 15:20,22,25,33-41	Repose of Maria, Desert Dweller of Olonets (1860)
10		1 Corinthians 10:23-28	Luke 21:8-9,25-27,33-36	Icon of the Theotokos 'Areovindus' (Fiery vision)
11		1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2	Matthew 25:31-46	Repose of Archbishop Simon of Shanghai & Peking (1933)
12	Meatfast	3 John 1-15	Luke 19:29-40; 22:7-39	Appearance of the Icon 'Panagia Portaitissa' (Athos, 9thC)
13	Meatfast	Jude 1-10	Luke 22:39-42,45-71; 23:1	Icon of the Theotokos 'Dolinsky'
14	Meatfast	Joel 2:12-26	Joel 3:12-21	Repose of Archim. Barsanuphius of Valaam & Morocco (1952)
15	Meatfast	Jude 11-25	Luke 23:1-31,33a,44-56	Icon of the Theotokos of Dalmatia
16	Meatfast	Zechariah 8:7-17	Zechariah 8:19-23	Synaxis of the 'Cypriot' Icon of the Theotokos
17	Meatfast	Romans 14:19-23; 16:25-27	Matthew 6:1-13	Weeping 'Tikhvin' Icon of the Theotokos (Kozak Skete, Athos)
18	Meatfast	Romans 13:11b-14:4	Matthew 6:14-21	Icon of the Theotokos of Yakhromsk
19	Fast	Genesis 1:1-13	Proverbs 1:1-20	Icon of the Theotokos of Cyprus (392)
20	Fast	Genesis 1:14-23	Proverbs 1:20-33	The 34 Monastics of Valaam martyred by the Lutherans (1578)
21	Fast	Genesis 1:24-2:3	Proverbs 2:1-22	Icon of the Theotokos 'Kolzelshchina' (1881)
22	Fast	Genesis 2:4-19	Proverbs 3:1-18	Repose of Schema-nun Avramia of Kashin (1855)
23	Fast	Genesis 2:20-3:20	Proverbs 3:19-34	Repose of Archimandrite Agapit of Optina Monastery (1922)
24	Fast**	Hebrews 1:1-12	Mark 2:23-3:5	Uncovering of the Relics of St Romanus, Prince of Uglich in 1486
25	Fast**	Hebr. 11:24-26,32-40	John 1:43-51	Repose of St Pashenka of Nizhny Novgorod (1934)
26	Fast	Genesis 3:21-4:7	Proverbs 3:34-4:22	Icon of the Theotokos 'Mezhetsk' at Kiev (1492)
27	Fast	Genesis 4:8-15	Proverbs 5:1-15	Repose of Archimandrite Alypy of the Pskov Caves Monastery (1975)
28	Fast	Genesis 4:16-26	Proverbs 5:15-6:3	Icon of the Theotokos 'Devpeteruv' (1392) [29 th in a Leap Year]

* Wine is allowed on this day

** Wine & Oil are allowed on this day

*** Fish, Wine & Oil are allowed on this day

Sundays are shown in Bold

† Note there are more readings on certain days - If you have no other Calendar, the Diocesan Hemerologion serves as a guide. Alternatively search the internet and download **Menologion 3.0** - a useful perpetual calendar

Thoughts from the New Hieromartyr Daniel Sysoev +2009

A Christian must be both soft and hard: soft with those who strive toward God, and diamond-hard with those who wish to lead him astray from God.

The Scripture is nothing other than instruction on how to receive Heavenly Grace. But if we simply read a set of instructions and do not try to, let us say, put a bookcase together or use a computer program, the set of instructions will remain unmastered and will be soon forgotten... And vice versa, those who attend the Sunday Divine Liturgy and then read the Scripture at home will comprehend meaning in it that they would never have comprehended otherwise.

God [sends evil rulers], He does so in order that people do not get used to it, that they not think that all their hopes should be tied to the country's earthly successes. That is why he sends evil rulers, so that man might be distracted from earthly vanity and instead might seek after the Heavenly Kingdom, which is incorruptible.

Truly, right now the devil wants to divide Christians and then to destroy everything that the Christians depend on. It is because of Christians that God maintains the world. Because of Christians, the Lord gives peace to nations. Why are there wars? It happens when Christians forget about their unity, when they relate themselves to this world...

Priest in Charge: Very Rev'd Protopresbyter Pancratios Sanders

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The Divine Liturgy is served at the Church of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr each Sunday at 11.00am and on all the major Feasts.

Fr Pancratios is *normally* in church during the day on Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays. Check before setting out to avoid a wasted journey.

Church (Sunday) School is held after the time of Communion every Sunday of each month during school term times (except on major feasts).

Pastoral Visits should be arranged by contacting Fr Pancratios.

Weddings, Baptisms, Receptions etc., by arrangement with Father Pancratios.

Confessions before the Divine Liturgy or after Vespers and at other times by arrangement.

Catechism Classes by arrangement with Fr Pancratios.

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ - ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ

Membership Subscription 2017/18 (2/18)

**Greek Orthodox Community of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr
Overleigh Cemetery, Overleigh Road, Chester. CH4 7HW**

Title: _____ Initials: _____ Surname: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Date: _____

Membership is £5.00 per person, per month. Membership applies to those of 18 years of age and over. Fees may be waived for the unwaged.

It is preferable for memberships to be paid by Standing Order on a monthly basis on the First Day of each month. St Barbara's Bank details: Barclays Bank: Sort Code 20-20-46, Account number 33974146. Further details can be found on www.stbarbara.org.uk/membership

Alternatively, membership can be paid using the envelopes available at church at £5.00 per month or £60.00 annual subscription.

I am a UK taxpayer intending tax to be reclaimed on the enclosed donation made under the Gift Aid scheme (please delete if not applicable)

Signature: _____

Please return to the Treasurer with your gift::

John Gale, 40 Ffordd Parc, Bodnant, Prestatyn. LL19 9LJ

Please note that only Orthodox Christians in good standing may hold full membership and be permitted to vote at general meetings. Non-Orthodox Christians are most welcome to subscribe as friends and supporters of the Greek Orthodox Community of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr, Chester.

Please print, cut out, and sent with your donation to the Treasurer. The community is grateful for every contribution received so that the work of the church may continue. In the present difficult economic climate such gifts are a true sacrifice. Please remember that there is a reduction for those not in work and that it is also possible to make your giving quarterly.

Please remember, if you are a UK taxpayer we can recover the tax that you have paid on your contribution to the work of the church – but only if you fill in an envelope (to be found at the church door) and place your gift in it. Especially in these difficult times, the church needs your financial support. As I'm sure you understand, work on our church building is ongoing and expensive, besides our ordinary day-to-day expenses. May God bless you all for your support in these matters and may you seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in forming a regular and responsible habit of giving for the work of His Church.