



The Tower

January 2014

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](#)
Charity No: 1144751

Dear brothers and sisters,

What a wonderful occasion was the recent arrival in Manchester and Liverpool of the Holy Cross from Jerusalem.

All of us who were able to be present and to venerate the sacred wood will realise what a blessed privilege it was to have this precious relic in our midst that rarely, if ever, leaves its home in the Holy Land. We are led to believe that this may not be the only time that the precious Cross will be brought into our midst. We are most grateful to His Eminence, Archbishop Gregorios, for arranging this blessed and joyful opportunity.

Wishing you a most holy New Year

Fr Pancratios and Presbytera Anna



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Notice of Annual General Meeting Sunday 12th January

*The Annual Meeting of the Community
will be held immediately following the Divine Liturgy.*

Your presence is requested for the presentation of the accounts and parish reports (postponed from December through the arrival of the Precious Cross).

Please note that only those communicants who have paid their parish dues for 2014 are eligible to vote at this meeting. There are no elections to the Board this year.

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House Blessings

Following the Blessing of the Waters (Aghiasmos) at Theophany, Father Pancratios will be available to bless your homes, cars, businesses etc. It is so important that we have our homes blessed following Theophany every year so that our homes and ourselves are sanctified for the year to come. Call me as soon as possible: 0151 639 6509 or 07850 467675

If you wish me to come at a certain time, please speak with me beforehand otherwise I will turn up on the doorstep! As usual, I will try to telephone in advance where possible to save a wasted journey. Likewise, it is always helpful to know who I can visit during daytime hours as this leaves more time to visit those who are at work during the day.

Holy Communion and Confession

a reminder



It is perhaps appropriate, at the beginning of a new year, to remind ourselves how we should approach the Sacred Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The information given below is that which is common throughout our Orthodox Church and can be found in the Year Book (**Ημερολόγιον**) of our Archdiocese. We should all take it to heart and act upon it - living to the best of our ability our Christian faith and placing our sure hope in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the great gift of His Body and Blood.

It is the duty of every Christian to partake of Holy Communion, since it is by this Sacrament that we become one with Christ and with one another. We ought to partake regularly, if possible whenever the Divine Liturgy is served (and not simply two or four times a year), and be fasting from midnight of the day on which Holy Communion is to be received. Regular reception of Holy Communion is especially beneficial - although this must not become the cause of disrespect towards the Body and Blood of Christ.

For worthy participation of the Sacrament, we ought:

- (i) to have an unshakeable faith in Christ our Saviour and in the teachings of the Orthodox Church;**
- (ii) to attend church regularly, and to pray regularly;**
- (iii) to cleanse our consciences from evil deeds, hate and injustice, forgiving all those who have injured us from the depths of our hearts; and we ought also to have peaceful relations and charity even towards those who are our enemies; &**
- (iv) to make a sincere confession of our sins and offences in the presence of a spiritual father (especially a hierarch or a presbyter especially appointed for this task).**

It is forbidden to receive Holy Communion without the prior permission of a spiritual father; and the ideal is that it should be preceded by Confession, which is a second Baptism cleansing the stains on our souls and restoring our relations with God.

Needless-to-say, Holy Communion may only be received by members of the Orthodox Church - that is to say, those who are members in good standing of Churches in eucharistic communion with the Oecumenical Patriarchate.

It is a common difficulty in our scattered communities, both in Britain and elsewhere, that travel delays or fractious children, or any number of other things, can lead to us being late to arrive in church. We should do our best to be prepared for these eventualities and leave home in good time to arrive by the start of the Divine Liturgy or, better still, for the start of the preceding services.

With the best will in the world, occasionally we will arrive so late that we miss the reading of the Gospel. In case that we do not hear the Holy Gospel proclaimed, we ought not approach the chalice for Communion that day.

The Myrrh-Bearing Women arrived at the Tomb *early in the morning* ... let us follow their example so that we too may truly meet the Risen Lord!



Archbishop Gregorios' Encyclical for the Feast of the Nativity

To the Clergy and lay leaders and all members of the holy Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

The divine grace and boundless mercy of our God, who is worshipped and glorified in Trinity, has accounted us worthy to celebrate the most holy feast of Christmas, the Birth in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem of Judea.

This commemoration and unique event is honoured, celebrated and hymned by all: "Christ is born, give glory! Christ comes from heaven, go to meet Him! Christ is on earth, be exalted!" It is not without reason that human memory devoutly bows before the cave of Bethlehem and with profound faith and joy declares: "I see a strange and extraordinary mystery" – a mystery which was revealed "when Augustus reigned on the earth". This mystery has been recorded and preserved by the divinely inspired hand of the holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew stresses the event as a mystical act of the Holy Spirit. "For that which is born of her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:20), and He "will save His people from their sins". He describes the star, which led the Magi to worship the Divine Child, and the slaughter of the infants by King Herod and the flight of the holy family into Egypt (Matt. 2:1-20).

Mark says nothing of the Nativity, but describes the Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan" (Mark 1:9).

Luke places the Nativity of Christ in a broad historical context, and so writes that it took place in the days of "Augustus Caesar", that He was born in a stable, and how Mary, the Mother of God, "brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). He describes the Shepherds, who hastened to worship Him, and the Angels, who praised the Divine Nativity: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth, goodwill among men" (Luke 2:14).

John describes the Birth of Christ with great theological acumen: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

This is the truth and joy which the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church has always celebrated and proclaimed to all the world. Our hymns are an invitation to all people to rejoice and glorify the Only-begotten Son and Word of God, who lowered the heavens and came down in order to raise humanity into heaven:

"Bethlehem, welcome the Mother City of God; for she has come to give birth in you to the light that never sets. You angels, marvel in heaven! People, give glory on earth! Magi from Persia, bring your three glorious gifts! Shepherds

abiding in the fields, sing the thrice-holy hymn! Let everything that has breath praise the Maker of all!"

Again this year we are celebrating this holy day. Young and old, rich and poor, leaders and nations, will gather together to praise the cause of this distinctive joy. We give thanks in worship and song for our spiritual fathers and ancestors, who preserved the history of Christmas and bequeathed it to us in great faith and wisdom.

Perhaps more than any other time, all societies of the world are facing immense challenges. Wealthy civilizations, such as Europe and America, are under great economic, social, moral, political and religious strain. These problems are reflected in the daily life of citizens, and in spite of all the noble efforts of government, they remain unsolved. We should all pray and work together for their resolution, for the keeping of the peace, for harmony and collaboration amongst individuals and populations. Let us not forget the Nativity and our Master, Christ, who brought joy and peace and certain and veritable truth to the human race. We Orthodox living in this hospitable land should cherish as the apple of our eye the Tradition of Faith of the Nativity. Let us go to church and receive Holy Communion, and let us forgive in all humility ourselves and one another, and devoutly rejoice, bearing in mind the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, coming in the likeness of men" (Philipp. 2:7).

This month, before Christmas, we experienced the special joy and blessing of having among us the Precious and Life-giving Cross, which His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, permitted to come to the United Kingdom for the sanctification and edification of our people. The faithful hastened with devotion to venerate it and to bask in its divine grace, to pray before it for their wellbeing and the forgiveness of their sins, for the welfare of their families and for the peace of the world.

It is within this spiritual and sacred climate that we are celebrating Christmas. Like the saints and martyrs of our Faith, we confess our belief in Christ as "Saviour, Redeemer and Benefactor, who blesses and sanctifies us" and all the created world.

I wish you, the faithful of his biblical eparchy of the Ecumenical Throne of Constantinople, a blessed and peaceful Christmas. May our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Divine Nativity we are commemorating, bless your lives and works, visit your homes and sanctify your families, and grant a New Year 2014 that is rich with good works that are pleasing to God's holy and venerable Name. To Jesus Christ our Lord belong glory and dominion and boundless mercy, forever and ever. Amen.

Christmas 2013

Gregorios, Archbishop of Thyateira & Great Britain

Principal Services for January / February

Divine Liturgy every Sunday: Prayers of Preparation 10.30 am -- for Divine Liturgy 11 am

Feast Day and other Services during January

Wednesday 1 st	Feast of the Circumcision; St Basil the Great	Liturgy 11am
Sunday 5 th	Eve of Theophany; 28th Sunday after Pentecost	Liturgy 11am
Monday 6 th	Feast of the Theophany of Our Lord	Liturgy 11am, Blessing of Waters
Sunday 12 th	29th Sunday after Pentecost (St Tatiana at Rome)	Matins 9.30am, Liturgy 11am
Sunday 19 th	30th Sunday after Pentecost (Monk Makarios the Great)	Liturgy 11am - Parish Lunch
Sunday 26 th	31st Sunday after Pentecost (Monk Xenophontes and his family)	Matins 9.30am, Liturgy 11am
Wednesday 29 th	Synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs	Vespers 6.30pm

Feast Day and other Services during February

Sunday 2 nd	Feast of the Meeting of our Saviour, Jesus Christ in the Temple	Liturgy 11am
Sunday 9 th	Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (St Pancratios of Taormina)	Matins 9.30am, Liturgy 11am
<i>Beginning of the Triodion</i>		
Sunday 16 th	Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Martyr Pamphilus at Caesarea)	Liturgy 11am - Parish Lunch
Sunday 23 rd	Sunday of Meatfare - of the Last Judgement (Hieromartyr Polycarp)	Matins 9.30am, Liturgy 11am



Progress so far!

Not a lot to report for the last few weeks. The roofing contractor has completed his work and the entire roof should be good for another hundred years - God willing! It doesn't seem a lot has been done for £2400 but much of that was the 'invisible' cost of the scaffolding.

The most noticeable difference is the 'hedgehog' that now peeps over the tower guttering. This is rather like a giant bottle brush that lays in the gutter (and is strapped in place) which allows the water to flow into the gutter but stops the leaves from clogging up the gutters and downspout. At least, that's the theory, but hopefully it will relieve us of the potential and substantial maintenance cost of clearing the gutters every year or two.

Additionally, the small amount of rot has been cut out and replaced in the weatherboarding and the whole of the exposed timber around the tower has been painted. A number of damaged ridge tiles and slates were replaced, the gable timbers were painted and the mortar fillets under the edge slates hacked out and re-pointed.

While the scaffolding was in place, I took the opportunity to remark all the lead with our anti-theft code. It also gave me the opportunity to inspect the tower and spire and I'm pleased to note that the spire slatework and the brick and stonework and their pointing are in good order and shouldn't need any attention for years to come.

All-in-all, our church building is now in good order for the foreseeable future so long as we continue with routine maintenance. We are very fortunate in having a building a century old that has not been spared much attention for decades to be in the condition it now is.

We must now turn our attention to the provision of a porch door and some means of roof insulation to improve security and make the best and most economical use of our heating facility. These issues will be discussed by the Board and Trustees in the near future.

Fr Pancratios.



Random Jottings

All who listen to the depths of the gospel and live it so completely that none of it remains veiled from them care very little about whether the end of the world will come suddenly and all at once or gradually and little by little. Instead, they bear in mind only that each individual's end or death will arrive on a day and hour unknown to him and that upon each one of us the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

Origen, Commentary on Matthew 56

God is so close to us. He is the joyful heartbeat of our hearts when we feel love. He is with us, when we enjoy the beauty of the created world. He is with us, when we contemplate human creations, inspired by His power, His creation. He is with us when we do good deeds, and He is with us especially when we pray.

Patriarch Kiril of Moscow

Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, Nobel laureate physicist presents this argument in favour of the science of creation: ... I can not imagine the universe and human life without some conception of the beginning without a source of spiritual "power" lying outside of matter and its laws. Perhaps this sense can be called religious.

55 Maxims for Christian Living

1. Be always with Christ.
2. Pray as you can, not as you want.
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer that you do by discipline.
4. Say the Lord's Prayer several times a day.
5. Have a short prayer that you constantly repeat when your mind is not occupied with other things.
6. Make some prostrations when you pray.
7. Eat good foods in moderation.
8. Keep the Church's fasting rules.
9. Spend some time in silence every day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly
12. Go to confession and communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings. Cut them off at the start.
14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings regularly to a trusted person (Spiritual Father).
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books a little at a time.
17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person.
19. Be polite with everyone.
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, and a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all, with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, and then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful in all things.
30. Be cheerful.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and be attentive.
35. Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. When we speak, speak simply, clearly, firmly and directly.
37. Flee imagination, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, mumble, murmur or whine.
40. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
41. Don't seek or expect praise or pity from anyone.
42. We don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend or justify yourself.
45. Be defined and bound by God alone.
46. Accept criticism gratefully but test it critically.
47. Give advice to others only when asked or obligated to do so.
48. Do nothing for anyone that they can and should do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice.
50. Be merciful with yourself and with others.
51. Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God and light, not on sin and darkness.
53. Endure the trial of yourself and your own faults and sins peacefully, serenely, because you know that God's mercy is greater than your wretchedness.
54. When we fall, get up immediately and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear and without shame.

Fr Thomas Hopko, the author of these Maxims, is one of the most respected Orthodox theologians living today. He served as Dean of Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in the USA until his retirement in 2002.

Why not print this out and keep it in your Icon Corner – and in your wallet or purse as well?

Saint Meletios of Lardos

A New Saint for Our Times

On Tuesday, November 27, 2013, the Sacred and Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate decided the formal inclusion in the List of Saints of the Orthodox Church of elder Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia (see next month's Tower) and of venerable Meletios of Lardos.

Saint Meletios was born in the village of Lardos, Rhodes, during the difficult time of Turkish Occupation. At baptism he received the name, Emmanuel. He travelled through life with little worldly learning, but held a wealth of grace, virtue, purity, innocence and great love for God.

Saint Meletios was a man of prayer. He discovered the deserted places about Lardos, while shepherding his father's sheep, and calming his soul with prayer and zeal for the monastic life.

On one of his excursions he had a vision which showed the icon of the Virgin Ypseni at the root of a certain tree. Following this vision, and led by the grace of the Virgin, he decided to follow the monastic life and dedicate himself to God. So, he built a Church in the place where he found the icon, dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God. The Metropolitan ordained him a Priest-Monk and made him Abbot of the Monastery.

He lived a strict ascetic life... In the evenings he escaped to a cave near the monastery and prayed and during the daytime he heard confessions of the Christian faithful, giving them strength to keep their faith throughout those difficult times. God also gave him the gift of healing and he cured sick and spiritually troubled souls.

He was slandered by the Turks and a price put on his head because of his work amongst the Greek Orthodox faithful. In the end, the Saint proved his innocence before the Metropolitan and then gave his last breath.

He was honoured as a saint by the Christians of the island and his relics, which continually gave off a sweet smelling fragrance, were shared out to various places. A piece of the Holy Relics is kept in the Holy Monastery of Ypseni as a priceless treasure and source of healing and blessing for all those who venerate them with devotion.

Since Saint Meletios' day of actual repose is not known his feast is celebrated together with that of his namesake Saint Meletios, Bishop of Antioch on the 12th February.

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Dates for your Diary:

Cutting of the Vasilopitta

We celebrate this time-honoured Feast of Saint Basil with the cutting of the Vasilopitta (Saint Basil's Bread) on Wednesday 1st January. If you wish to make your own for this occasion, ask for a recipe from Presbytera Anna.

Holy Theophany

At the Feast of Theophany on 6th January, we celebrate Divine Liturgy at 11am followed by the Blessing of Water at the River Dee at Eccleston Ferry as usual.

This will be followed by lunch at the Grosvenor Hotel, Pulford, afterwards (good food and moderate prices)



'Memorial for unborn children'

A monument to the unborn – murdered in the womb.

A 1984 work sculpted by artist Martin Hudáček in Slovakia

As an art student, Martin Hudáček of Slovakia was moved to create a sculpture to draw attention to the devastation abortion can bring to the woman, and to the fact that through the love and mercy of God, reconciliation and healing are possible.

The sculpture shows a woman in great sorrow grieving her abortion. The second figure in the work is the aborted child, presented as a young child, who in a very touching, healing way, comes to the mother, to offer forgiveness.

Martin, who named the work “Memorial for Unborn Children,” said the sculpture also “expresses hope which is given to believers by the One who died on the cross for us, and showed how much He cares about all of us.”

Click “like” if you want to [end abortion!](#)

Remember, that abortionists care not a fig for the devastation heaped upon the woman through their actions, a devastation that almost invariably endures for the rest of the life of the would-be mother. And now the Belgian Government has approved a law to permit the euthanasia of children in addition to the law previously enacted for ending of the life of adults. Please visit our parish Facebook page [Greek Orthodox Community of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr in Chester](#) (two posts on 16th December), for further information on this horrendous development. We should never forget that this is exactly what the Nazis of the Third Reich perpetrated so successfully, not only against Jews and Gypsies but against 'mental defectives' the elderly and the 'useless'.

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Patriarch Bartholomew's Christmas Letter

+ *Bartholomew*

By God's Mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church: Grace, mercy, and peace from the Saviour Christ, born in Bethlehem

Beloved brothers and sisters, children in the Lord, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." (Isaiah 9.5)

Many centuries ago, the Prophet foresaw and announced with enthusiasm and joy the birth of the child Jesus from the ever-Virgin Mary. Naturally, even then, there was no period of census by Augustus Caesar, no place to stay for the safety of the Holy Virgin who was carrying a child by the Holy Spirit. So the holy Joseph as her betrothed and protector was obliged to lead her to a cave, a manger with animals, "in order to give birth to a child."

Heaven and earth received them, offering thanks to their Creator: "The angels offered the hymn; the heavens a star; the wise men gifts; the shepherds a miracle; the earth a cave; the desert a manger; and we the Mother Virgin." The shepherds were keeping watch over their flock, protecting them throughout the night, while the angels were witnessing the Mystery in ecstasy, singing hymns to God. (From Vespers of the Nativity)

The sweetness of the Holy Night of Christmas once again embraces the world. And in the midst of human trial and pain, of unending crises, of passion and enmity, of concern and despair, it presents the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word as a genuine and timely solution. For He descended as dew in a field of cotton inside the womb of the ever-Virgin Mary in order to give rise to righteousness and much peace. (See Ps. 71.7)

In the silence and peace of that sacred night of Christmas, Jesus Christ – being without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, immaterial, ever existing and the same – enters the drama of history bearing flesh, being insignificant, simple, poor and unknown. At the same time, he comes as a "wonderful, counsellor, almighty, prince of peace, everlasting father." (Is. 9.6) Indeed, he comes as a human being, born of a Virgin Mother, to solve the complexity of sin and grant resolution to the impasse of life's anxiety through His grace and mercy, while providing destiny, value, content, as well as an exemplary ethos and model for the human adventure.

The Lord assumed and sanctified all of human nature. The pre-eternal God condescended to become for us an embryo and be borne inside the womb of the Theotokos. In so doing, He both honoured human life from its earliest stage and taught us respect toward humankind from its earliest conception. The Creator of all accepted to be born as an infant and be nurtured by a Virgin. In so doing, He honoured both virginity and motherhood, spiritual and natural. This is why St. Gregory the Theologian exhorts: "O women, be as virgins, so that you may become mothers of Christ." (*Homily XXXVIII on Epiphany*, PG36.313A)

So the Lord appointed the marriage of male and female in the blessed family. The institution of Christian family constitutes the cell of life and an incubator for the spiritual and physical health and development of children. Therefore, the manifold support of the institution of the family comprises the obligation of the Church and responsibility of leadership in every country.

In order for a child to be raised in a healthy and natural way, there needs to be a family where man and woman live in harmony as one body, one flesh, and one soul, submitting to one another.

We are certain that all spiritual and ecclesiastical, much like the vigilant shepherds of old, but also the leaders of our world, know and accept this divine truth and reality, which we once again proclaim from the Ecumenical Patriarchate during this Christmas period. We must all encourage the creation and function of natural families, which can produce citizens that are spiritually healthy and joyful, filled with sentiments of security, based on the feeling of safety provided by a strong and protective father as well as a nurturing and loving mother. We need families where God might find rest. We invite and urge the entire plenitude of our holy Orthodox Church to live in a manner that is worthy of their calling and do everything that is possible to support the institution of marriage.

Brothers and sisters, "the night is far gone; the day is at hand." (Rom. 6.12) The shepherds are already headed toward Bethlehem in order to proclaim the miracle. They are inviting us to follow them "like other star-gazing wise men filled with joy" (From the Christmas Troparion of the 4th Ode), bringing "worthy gifts" "such as fine gold to the King of ages, incense to the God of all, and myrrh to the immortal that lay dead for three days." (Anatolios, *Vesperal Hymn at Christmas*) That is to say, the gifts of love and our faith, which test us as Christians, especially as Orthodox Christians, in the ethos and tradition of the family, the Fathers, and the Church, which has always practiced the Orthodox way through the centuries and to this day holds together our blessed society, whose cell for sacred life and growth is the family.

Beloved brothers and sisters, children in Christ,

- ◆ 2013 years have passed since the birth of Christ in the flesh
- ◆ 2013 years have passed and, like then, Christ continues to be persecuted in the person of the weak by Herod and all kinds of contemporary Herods
- ◆ 2013 years have passed and Jesus is persecuted in the person of Christians in Syria and elsewhere
- ◆ 2013 years have passed and Christ still flees like a refuge not only in Egypt, but also in the Lebanon, Europe, America and elsewhere, seeking security in an insecure world
- ◆ 2013 years have passed and the child Jesus remains imprisoned with the two hierarchs in Syria, Paul (Yazigi) and Youhanna (Ibrahim), as well as the

Orthodox nuns and many other known and unknown Christians

- ◆ 2013 years have passed and Christ is crucified with those who are tortured and killed in order not to betray their faith in Him
- ◆ 2013 years have passed and Jesus is daily put to death in the person of thousands of embryos, whose parents prevent from being born
- ◆ 2013 years have passed and Christ is mocked and ridiculed in the person of unfortunate children, who experience the crisis of the family, destitution and poverty.

It is this human pain, sorrow and affliction that our Lord came and once more comes to assume during this Christmas

season. After all, He said: "As you have done to one of these, the least of my brothers and sisters," you have done to me." (Matt. 25.40-41) It is for these that He was born of a Virgin, for these that He became human, for these that He suffered, was crucified and arose from the dead. That is to say: for all of us. Thus, let each of us lift up our personal cross in order to find grace and mercy when we seek His assistance. Then, the born Emmanuel, our Saviour and Lord, will "be with us." Amen.

*Christmas 2013
+ Bartholomew of Constantinople
Your fervent supplicant before God*



The Ways of God

That we should bow to the inscrutable ways of God, and in humility look at all his actions, and how, on the contrary, we so often boldly murmur against Him. This should not be, for the ways of God, though inscrutable, are always beneficial for us and always lead to good results as the following story reveals.

A hermit once asked God to give him to understand his way of Providence. However, God did not reveal to him what he wanted to know. The monk did not cease to pray, and finally the Lord heard him in the following way:

The hermit planned to visit one who lived far away, and an angel appeared to him in the guise of a monk and offered to be a companion. The hermit welcomed the proposal and the two went together. Towards evening, they stopped for the night at the home of a godly man, and he took them in with honour, offering them food on a silver platter. But here's a surprise! Immediately after the meal, the angel took the dish and threw it into the sea. The old hermit was perplexed, but said nothing.

They went on and stayed for another day at the home of another godly man, who greeted them with joy, and washed their feet, and gave them attention. But again trouble! For then the host brought his son to the hermit

and the angelic monk to bless him. But, instead of a blessing, the angel, touching the boy, took his soul. Neither the elder nor the father could utter a single word, whereupon the Elder ran out and his satellite, this angel in the guise of a monk, followed him.

On the third day they had no place to stay, but found shelter in a dilapidated and abandoned house. The elder sat down to partake of food, and the satellite, to his amazement, began again to do strange things. He destroyed the house, stone by stone, and once destroyed, began to build it again. Seeing this, the old man could not resist: "What are you: a demon or an angel? What are you doing?" he railed at his satellite.

"Yes, I do what I do?" said the angel. "Like what?" continued the old man, "three days ago you took the dish of a good man and threw it into the sea, yesterday you took the life of a child and today, what you destroyed, you again began to build up?"

Then the angel said to him: "Do not despair, old man, but listen to what I tell you. The first though pleasing to God acquired the dish by fraud and so I threw it into the sea, that God would not destroy him through his ill-gotten reward. The second also was pleasing

to God, but if his young son grew, he would have been a terrible villain, so I took his soul, for the good of his father, so that he was saved."

"And here, what did you do?" asked the old man. The Angel continued, "The owner of the house was a wicked man, and hid in the walls a sum of gold before departing this life. Some others came to know of the secret, wherefore, I devastated the house so that henceforth no one would search for the gold and by this means shall not perish."

The angel concluded his speech: "Return, old man to your cell and do not suffer these temptations" and departed invisibly from him. Thunderstruck, the old man repented of his error, and then told everyone what had happened to him.

Being humbled, the hermit would never again seek to understand the incomprehensibility of God. How could it be otherwise, when our mind is limited and also darkened by sin, and God in all His perfections is infinite, His conduct and wisdom have no borders. Our business is to follow the will of God, kiss the hand of God and by striving in the virtues maintain devotion to God's will. Amen.

Christ was born in History, but He may be born or may die every moment in any person. Feasts come to renew His birth in us, and not just to remember it. The Nativity of Christ this year must be a cradle and not a grave of Christ in our lives. "Christ has come from heaven, receive Him. Christ has come on earth, be lifted up." As one of the saints cried in astonishment: "I see God on earth and man in heaven!"

His Eminence Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo, kidnapped and still missing in Syria

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Good News

We are delighted with the news that Meletios of Sardis has been canonised, that is, recognised as a Saint in eyes of the Orthodox Church and faithful, together with the elder Porphyrios the Kapsokalivite, whose life will be published in the February edition of The Tower. It has also been advised that elder Paisios (Eznepidis) the Athonite is to be canonised within the next few days. Some time later the canonisations

of elder Amphilochios (Makris) of Patmos, elder Sophrony (Sakharov) of Essex, and elder Ephraim of Katounakia will follow.

The canonization of elder Joseph the Hesychast, an ascetic who is widely venerated in the Orthodox world, is not far off as well.

Source: *Hellas-Orthodoxy*.



The Russian Orthodox Holy Trinity Cathedral is the largest wooden church in Russia and is also the only cathedral in the Chukotka Region. It was consecrated in 2005. Its height is 25 meters, the 9 gilded domes and crosses are supported on a copper roof. The city of Anadyr is a port on the Bering Sea in the far North East of Siberia, a mere 500 miles from the coast of Alaska. The city is famed for its multicolour apartments and houses and is home to the largest bronze of Saint Nicholas in the world.

Holy Trinity Cathedral is one of some 25,000 churches and cathedrals, restored, reopened or new-built over the past 25 years. Across Russia, three churches are being opened every day (Compare that with what is happening in Britain and parts of Western Europe!) while the 20 active monasteries at the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1988 have grown to number over 800 today.



Troparion for the Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs (Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysotom)

In that you share the ways of the Apostles, O teachers of all the world, entreat the Master of all, that He grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

Scripture Reading Calendar for January

1	Fastfree	Colossians 2:8-12	Luke 2:20-21,40-52	St Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea (379)
2	Fastfree	Hebrews 5:1-10	John 3:1-15	Righteous Juliana of Lazarevsk (1604)
3	Fastfree	Romans 6:3-11	Mark 1:9-11	St Genevieve of Paris (5thC)
4	Fastfree	1 Timothy 3:14-4:5	Matthew 3:1-6	St Theoctistus, Abbot of Cuocomo in Sicily (800)
5	Fast**	1 Corinthians 10:1-4	Mark 1:9-11	St Syncletica of Alexandria (c350)
6		Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7	Matthew 3:13-17	Venerable Macarios of Mount Athos (1431)
7		Acts 19:1-8	John 1:29-34	New Martyr Athanasios in Smyrna (1700)
8	Fast	Romans 6:3-11	John 3:23-33	Martyr Abo of Tbilisi (786)
9		2 Timothy 2:1-10	Luke 3:18-22	Hieromartyr Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow (1569)
10	Fast	Acts 13:13-24	Luke 3:19-22	St Antipas the Hesy chast (Romania 1882)
11		Ephesians 6:10-17	Matthew 4:1-11	St Michael of Klops Monastery, Fool-for-Christ (c1453)
12		Ephesians 4:7-13	Matthew 4:12-17	Hieromartyr Basil Solovskiy (Estonia 1919)
13		Hebrews 8:7-13	Luke 20:27-44	St Maximos of Kavso kalyvia (Mt Athos 14thC)
14		Hebrews 9:8-10,15-23	Luke 21:12-19	Hieromartyr Platon, Bishop of Talinn (1919)
15	Fast	Hebrews 10:1-18	Luke 21:5-8a,10-11,20-24	St Paul of Thebes (341)
16		Hebrews 10:35-11:7	Luke 21:28-33	Blessed Maximus, Priest of Totma & Fool-for-Christ (1650)
17	Fast**	Hebrews 11:8-16	Luke 21:37-22:8	St Makarios of Patmos (1737)
18		Ephesians 5:1-8b	Luke 13:19-30	St Marcian of Cyrrhus in Syria (c388)
19		Colossians 3:4-11	Luke 17:12-19	St Makarios of Alexandria (c394)
20		Hebrews 11:17-31	Mark 9:42-10:1	St Theodore of Tomsk (1864)
21		Heb. 12:25-27, 13:22-25	Mark 10:2-12	St Maximus the Greek (1556)
22	Fast**	James 1:1-18	Mark 10:11-16	Monk Martyr Anastasius the Persian (628)
23		James 1:19-27	Mark 10:17-27	St Dionysios of Olympus (1540)
24	Fast**	James 2:1-13	Mark 10:23b-23a	St Neophytos the Anchorite, of Cyprus (12thC)
25		Colossians 1:1-6	Luke 16:10-15	St Mares the Singer, of Syria (c430)
26		1 Timothy 4:9-15	Luke 19:1-10	St David IV, King of Georgia (1125)
27		James 2:14-26	Mark 10:46-52	St Elias II, Patriarch of Jerusalem (c787)
28		James 3:1-10	Mark 11:11-23	St Theodosius, Addot of Totma (1568)
29	Fast	James 3:11-4:6	Mark 11:22-26	Hieromartyr John Pettai (Estonia 1919)
30		James 4:7-5:9	Mark 11:27-33	New Martyr Hatzı-Theodore (Mytilene 1784)
31	Fast	1 Peter 1:1-2:10	Mark 12:1-12	New Martyr Elias of Kalamata (1686)

* 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

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.

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42 Withens Lane, Wallasey, Wirral. CH45 7NN
(Telephone & email as above.)

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

The Vespers Service is normally served each Saturday at Fr. Pancratios' home (please check time before travelling any distance).

Fr Pancratios is *normally* in church during the day on Tuesdays & Thursdays. Please phone him 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. In Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays 5.30 - 6.30pm and at other times by arrangement.

Catechism Classes by arrangement with Fr Pancratios.

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ - ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ

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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.