



# The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Issue 019



## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We've approached the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pascha. This is the Sunday of the Samaritan woman. This time of the year is usually marked as the quiet time of the liturgical year but in the past few Sundays after Pascha we've seen many people come to church and our community is growing at a good pace. A new group of people who are interested in orthodoxy have already formed and we hold our Wednesday evening catechesis gatherings as usual. I keep these gatherings informal and we discuss interesting questions from our liturgical life. Every one is more than welcome to come and join us. We have plenty of space and a lot of tea and coffee and biscuits! In the week between the Sunday of the Paralytic and the Sunday of the Samaritan woman lays the day of the Feast of Mid-Pentecost. It is at exactly 25 days after Pascha and as the name suggest marks the mid point between Pascha and Pentecost. This Feast is "hidden" in the shadow of those two big feast and is usually not very popular between the believers. On the other hand it is a very big feast in the Orthodox church and has a very long afterfeast of seven days. The commemoration of this day – which is meant to be a link between Pascha and Pentecost, was designed to strengthen our faith in the Risen Lord and to focus our attention on the coming of the Holy Spirit and can be traced back to the time of St. John Chrysostom. Both St. Andrew of Crete and St. John of Damascus have provided hymnography for its services.

The gospel lesson for this day is from St. John 7:14-30, which tells us that "Now about the middle of the feast of tabernacles, Jesus went up into the temple and taught;" with Christ instructing the scribes and learned men that "My doctrine is not Mine, but His Who sent Me" and that "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."

Because of this particular reading there is a tradition of performing the lesser blessing of waters on this day and to remember the life-giving water which poured forth from the

barren stone that Moses struck with his staff in the wilderness during the Exodus. It is also interesting to note the fact that this is the Temple Feast of the great cathedral, "Hagia Sophia," in Constantinople.

The Mid-Pentecost icon depicts the 12-year-old Jesus teaching the elders in the Temple (Luke 2:41-49), representing Christ as the Wisdom and Teacher of God. It symbolizes the "midpoint" of the Paschal season, bridging Christ's Resurrection and the coming Holy Spirit, prefiguring the teaching mission initiated at Pentecost.



Fr. John



## Announcements

- On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, on Bank Holiday Monday, you are invited to take part in a Pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Melangell. We will arrive at midday to visit the actual well for the blessing of the waters. Then, in the afternoon we will serve Vespers in the church of St. Melangell. Don't forget to bring warm clothes, a light lunch and dry shoes. The weather in Wales is unpredictable!

*An evening with*  
**the Archbishop**  
The first of a new series of  
*Evenings with the Archbishop*  
Tuesday, 19th May  
6.30-8pm  
Inviting lay faithful  
aged 18 - 35  
to meet His Eminence  
Archbishop Nikitas and one  
another for discussion and  
refreshments  
Limited spaces  
Sign-up required



## Upcoming Services

10 May Sun	10.00am 11.00am	<b>Matins Divine Liturgy</b>	<b>Sunday of the Samaritan Woman</b>
13 May Wed	6.30pm 7.15pm	Vespers Catechesis	Martyr Isidore
16 May Sat	5.30pm	Great Vespers	Andronicus and Junia of the 70 Apostles
17 May Sun	10.00am 11.00am	<b>Matins Divine Liturgy</b>	<b>Sunday of the Blind Man</b>



## Announcement

### Pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Melangell on 25th May 2026

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, on Bank Holiday Monday, you are invited to take part in a Pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Melangell. We will arrive at midday to visit the actual well for the blessing of the waters. Then, in the afternoon we will serve Vespers in the church of St. Melangell. Don't forget to bring warm clothes, a light lunch and dry shoes. The weather in Wales is unpredictable!

## Book recommendation from the Parish Library

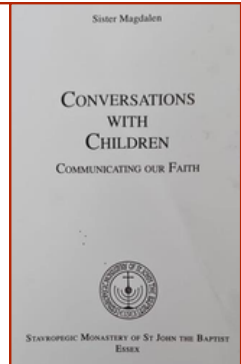
This week's book recommendation is '**Conversations with Children Communicating our Faith**' by Sister Magdalen.

Parents do most of the practical decision-making that affects children, and their influence is the greatest on a child's life. Some parents may find theoretical knowledge more difficult to understand than an appointed catechist or trained teacher or priest. Furthermore, in a book of this kind many statements are generalised, and because varieties of possible application have to be allowed for, specific questions may not be answered. Although I am not a parent, I am familiar with the difficulty of applying principles in specific cases, because I am so often asked what to do.

I have seen, however, that many practical dilemmas arise because parents need reminding to sort out their prior-ities. I have also seen that if parents are motivated by sound principles, whatever they do is all the better for that.

Getting back to basics does a lot to heal any harm already done by parental mistakes. All educators can benefit from principles even if these do not lay out solutions for every case. Some Gospel teaching has this character. Parents especially may need reminding to keep first things first; they are dealing with all the subdivisions of life, and they can more easily get bogged down.

A lot of things in everyday family life go on as a matter of course. When conscious decisions or spontaneous choices need to be made, being a Christian will make a difference, but often a variety of decisions can fit in with Christian principles. Orthodoxy does affect one's lifestyle, but Orthodoxy can live in many different lifestyles. A combination of healthy principles seasoned with common sense means that life goes on organically. If spiritual principles are put first, many decisions make themselves. This book is offered to parents even if they read it piecemeal or in random order; concentrated reading is for many a rare luxury. Every one of us, however, can do something right now to put Christianity into fuller practice, and this will immediately improve our ability to act confidently and wisely as pedagogues.



## A story from our Community

The Gospel which we heard today in the Liturgy describes the encounter of the Samaritan woman, Photini, with the Lord by Jacob's well. Jacob was an Old Testament figure that had struggled to understand the judgments of God and to attract His blessing, and God revealed to him the vision of a ladder which united heaven and earth, and upon which the angels of God ascended and descended. This ladder is Christ Himself, and we marvel to see how, through His divine Word, the Lord grants His ascents to the heart of this Samaritan woman who was completely alienated from God yet expecting the coming of the Messiah. Christ discerned this desire of her heart and lifted up her mind from things earthly to things heavenly. For it is the property of the word of Christ to transfer our mind from things visible to things invisible, beyond the veil that separates heaven from the earth. Today, Christ turned the mind of this woman from the material water to the living, heavenly water, which is His grace, and to the true worship of God 'in spirit and in truth'. Finally, He even revealed Himself as the true Messiah. 'I that speak unto thee am the Messiah'.

Yet, as a good Sower, the Lord continued sowing His seed in the hearts of His apostles as well. When they approached Him saying, 'Master, eat!', He immediately begins to work in them with His word, saying, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.' Thus, He shifted their minds to an invisible realm, which they could not yet comprehend. Then He goes on to do something even greater: In order to serve this woman and accomplish in her the work of His Father, the Master Christ placed Himself lower than her, appearing to be in need of her service and saying, 'Give me to drink.' Likewise, He wants to transmit the same mind in His apostles, saying to them, 'Ye reap that which ye have not laboured for. Others have laboured and ye enter into their labour.' Through this word, He humbles His disciples and stirs up gratitude in their hearts, so that they do not despise the Samaritans and all the heathen whom they will be called to serve. For through gratitude, we do not hinder the

harvest of God.

This Gospel gives us the opportunity to rekindle in our hearts a very precious awareness, that when we began our life in the Church, we entered into the labours of others, we did not find the way on our own. Others have laboured to bring us into the Church of Christ and to give us new life. In our Church we have fathers and children, not masters and servants. St Paul depicts this truth when he says, 'I have given birth unto you through the Gospel in Jesus Christ'.<sup>4</sup> Gratitude for the labours of our Fathers will lead us to a rich harvest in our life. This harvest is the way wherein we will justify their labours. Even the Lord said, 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit'.<sup>5</sup> The Psalm prophesied about the Lord, 'The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up',<sup>6</sup> and His house are we.<sup>7</sup> So much He was consumed by His zeal that He even bequeathed to us His Body and His Blood in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This may sound strange and paradoxical, but man is also able to satisfy God's thirst for our salvation. And we satisfy His thirst and His hunger by opening our heart and offering it to Him. Then, we will not be brought to shame that great and notable day when He utters His judgment saying, '



## Synaxarion for Sunday of the Samaritan Woman



Since on this Sunday Christ openly confesses Himself to be the Messiah, which means “Christ” or “the anointed one” (for *messa* is the Hebrew word for oil), for this reason, the present feast is placed in the week of Mid-Pentecost; and also because, on the previous Sunday, Christ wrought a miracle at the Sheep’s Pool. On this Sunday, He works a miracle at Jacob’s well, which Jacob himself dug and bestowed upon his son Joseph. This was a special place, for here, in the vicinity of Mount Somor, the Samaritans inhabited many cities. Christ came to Sichar, where Jacob once lived with his daughter Dinah and his sons. Sychem, the son of Emmor the Chorraean, lusted after Dinah and raped her; thereupon, her brothers, provoked to zeal, suddenly entered their city and slew everyone, including Sychem and his father Emmor. Jacob lived in that place and dug the present well.

The Hebrews who originally lived on this mountain were not called Samaritans, but Israelites. During the reign of King Pekah, they offended God by falling into idolatry and other iniquities. During the reign of King Hoshea, who became a vassal of the Assyrians and paid tribute to them, the Assyrians came and deported the inhabitants of Samaria, together with their women and children, to their own country. Subsequently, the King of the Assyrians, in order that the land should not remain uncultivated, dispatched men from Babylon and the neighboring regions to settle in the territory of the Israelites; but God sent lions against the heathen, and by His permission, the lions devoured them. On learning of this, the King of the Assyrians wanted to know the reason why. The Israelites held captive in Assyria replied that it was because the settlers did not know the ways of the God of that place. Hence, the King sent them a priest from the Jews to instruct them in the Law of God. They accepted only the five books of Moses, rejecting the Prophets and the rest of Scripture, and continuing to worship their own idols. They were called Samaritans after Mount Somor. They were hated by the Hebrews who returned from captivity, because they were only semi-Jewish; the Jews did not eat with them, regarding them as worthy of abomination. For this reason, they frequently called Christ a Samaritan, on the ground that, like the Samaritans, He supposedly violated certain provisions of the Law.

Jesus, therefore, came to Sichar, and being weary from His journey, sat down at about the sixth hour of the day. A certain woman came from the city to draw water, the Disciples having gone to purchase food. Jesus asked her for water, but she excused herself by saying that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (St. John 4:9); for she knew who He was, both by His accent and by His apparel. Jesus raised their conversation to a higher level by introducing the idea of spiritual water, which connotes abundance and cleansing power, since the Spirit is always likened to water and fire. The woman was sure, from the fact that He had not brought a bucket, that He did not have such water, and added that the well was deep. She then went on to talk about their forefather Jacob, saying that he had dug the well and that he and his children had drunk from it, commending the rich resources of the well, and also its usefulness and the coolness of its water. Christ, however, did not say that He was greater than Jacob, so as not to frighten the woman, but again He spoke about the water, thus proving His superiority; for one who drank from that water, He said, would in no wise be thirsty.

The woman asked for this water, but He told her to call her husband, since His words needed to be more firmly understood. She denied that she had a husband. Jesus, knowing all things, replied: “Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands,” which the Law forbiddeth, and the sixth whom thou now hast, since thou livest with him unlawfully, “is not thy husband” (St. John 4:17-18).

Some interpreters consider the five husbands to be the five books of Moses, which the Samaritans accepted, and the sixth to be the very words of Christ, which were not yet hers, since Grace had not yet been poured out upon her. Other interpreters suppose that they are the five laws given by God—in Paradise, after the banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise, in the time of Noah, in the time of Abraham, and in the time of Moses—and the sixth to be the Gospel, which she did not yet have. There are still others who say that they are the five senses.

The woman replied to Him, calling Him a Prophet, and then asked Him about the mountain where one should worship: should it be in Somor or in Jerusalem? For the Samaritans, being imperfect in their understanding, did not believe that God existed everywhere, but abode only in that place

where they worshipped, that is, on Mount Gerizim, on account of the blessings given by God in that place, or because it was there that Abraham first set up an altar to God. The Jews, likewise, also said that one must worship God only in Jerusalem, and for this reason Jews from everywhere gathered there for feasts. Christ replied that the salvation of the world was of the Jews, but that God is non-material and that those who would be vouchsafed to worship Him would do so, not with sacrifices, as they had thitherto, but in Spirit and truth, and in this way they would not only know God, but would also know Him in the Holy Spirit and in the Son; for the Son is the Truth. The woman then said: "We have heard from the Scriptures that the Messiah cometh Who is the Christ" (St. John 4:25). Jesus, foreknowing the woman's gratitude, said: "I am He." The Samaritans, too, knew about the Messiah from the books of Moses, especially from the verse, "The Lord God shall raise up a Prophet for you" (Deuteronomy 18:15), and many others.

At the conclusion of this conversation, the Disciples returned and were amazed at Christ's extreme condescension in talking with a woman. In the meantime, they besought Him to eat, both because of His weariness and on account of the heat of the day. But He spoke to them about eternal food, namely, the salvation of mankind and how they needed to harvest the labors of the Prophets.

When the woman reached the city and recounted what had happened to her, all the inhabitants were aroused and went to Christ, convinced that the woman would not have reproached herself unless she had come to know something of importance. They implored Him to stay with them and persuaded Him to remain for two days. He worked very many miracles during His sojourn there, which, on account of their multitude, are not recorded by the Evangelists.

The woman in question was the Samaritan woman, who was subsequently named Photine by Christ, and who, along with her seven sons, received the crown of martyrdom in the reign of Nero, after much hardship, in the course of which her flesh was scraped, her breasts were cut off, her hands were crushed, fine reeds were inserted under her fingernails, she was forced to swallow molten lead, and suffered countless other torments.

It should be known that the Emperor Justinian transferred from there with honor to the palace of God the Word, that is, the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, not only the mouth of that well, which he placed on a well outside the narthex, but also the stone on which Christ sat and conversed with the Samaritan woman. To this day, they remain there, healing every kind of disease, and providing remedies especially for those suffering from fevers and chills.

By the intercessions of Thy Martyr Photine, O Christ God, have mercy on us. Amen.

The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.

To access the full bulleting, please visit: [www.thyateira.org.uk](http://www.thyateira.org.uk).



ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA  
&  
GREAT BRITAIN

## EPISTLE READING

Acts 11: 19-30

In those days, those apostles who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord. News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord. So

Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company of people; and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians. Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world; and this took place in the days of Claudius. And the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea, and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.



## GOSPEL READING

John 4: 5-42

At that time, Jesus came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.

Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle? Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw. Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

The woman said to him, I know that the Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ; when he comes, he will show us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, What do you wish? or, Why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city and said to the people, Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? They went out of the city and were coming to him. Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat of which you do not know. So the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought him food? Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and we know that this is indeed Christ the Savior of the world.

## SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

What a marvellous Gospel passage. In today's much-loved pericope we see first-hand, the effect a true and sincere encounter with the Living God has on the person who receives Him who is before all ages, intimately, with a heart softened by awareness of its own sinfulness.

The Samaritan Woman had clearly had a tough life. She was collecting water at the well during the scorching heat of the day, a time when others would not go. Why? To avoid being seen by others. She was, even by her own people, a woman of ill repute, having had relationships with five men.

The Lord saw something more in this woman. He saw not what she was but what she could become by His Grace. A lesson to us when we find ourselves in the company of others.

Christ meets the Samaritan woman at the well. First and foremost, women during the time of Christ were seen as second-class citizens, even regarded as spiritually and intellectually inferior. Not to mention the fact that she was a Samaritan. The Jews would not even touch that which had been touched by a Samaritan. It is for this reason that the Samaritan is surprised that Jesus would ask of her a drink.

Christ condescended to become man. With that comes all that we as humans experience such as hunger and thirst. In the scorching heat Christ was thirsty and so asks the Samaritan Woman for a drink. Here we see the Lord of all humbling Himself before this woman and, as a result, their conversation begins.

We see in the holy people of God this imitation of the Lord. Spiritual people will often use His example and humble themselves to honour the other and allow for the possibility of dialogue, in the hope of guiding another wearied soul to a true encounter with the Word (Dia Logos).

As the conversation between Christ and the Samaritan continues, the spirit moves from the earthly to the spiritual. The woman perceives that there is something different about the Man before her and with that she takes her moment to ask a question about worship. Christ responds by teaching her about the difference between the worship of the Samaritans and the Jews. He goes further by saying there is something still greater, that a time will come when true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. She responds by saying "I know that the Messiah is coming, when He comes, he will show us all things." To this we hear Christ say the awesome words, "I who speak to you am He." She is stunned. But she knows. And now her life will never be the same again.

As with many of the saints of our church, when one comes to a true encounter with the Lord, the whole purpose of life changes; one of the greatest examples of this is Saint Paul himself. Once a chief persecutor of Christians, he became one of its greatest Apostles and defenders!

In the case of the Samaritan woman, in that moment she left her water jar at the well and went into the city. She left what she was doing and immediately wanted to share with others the great gift that she had received. What is of interest is the way she shared her discovery. "Can this be the Christ?" She did not dare to impose. Those she spoke with were free to come to their own conclusions. "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."

May we too be granted the honour of coming face to face with the Lord and receive Him with joy in our hearts. May we too share this joy and love the Lord has for us with those around us.

Presbyter George Tsiappourghi

## For your prayers

3 May	Lewis Rafael Darius	Baptised this day in 2026 Chrismated this day in 2026
11 May	Cosmin Gabriel Pal	Baptised this day in 2019
14 May	Carla Maria Ionescu	Baptised this day in 2022
15 May	Elias Palfreman	Baptised this day in 2011
May	Lazarus	Chrismated this month in 2024



## Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. All our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including the building and all the bills.

Please consider supporting your Parish by donating monthly via standing order:  
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/church-membership>

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance of the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sign it.

Thank you for your support !



Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church  
Overleigh Cemetary, Overleigh Road, Chester, CH4 7HW  
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

