



# The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church

Sunday 7th June 2026

Sunday of All Saints

Issue 023



## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday the Orthodox church commemorates the Sunday of the All Saints. After this Sunday the Orthodox church has established the fasting period in honour of the Apostles Peter and Paul. This year the fast is long, from Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> of June to 28<sup>th</sup> of June on the eve of the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul. In different years this fast could be very short because it is connected with the celebration of Pascha. When Pascha is very early during the year, relatively the fast is very long, and in the opposite circumstance, in some years the fast could be just few days or even vanished completely. This year we will have the longest fast in the last decade. The fast is not as strict as Great Lent or the Dormition Fast. Most of the time fish, wine and oil is allowed, only Wednesdays and Fridays are strict fasting days.

Very often this fast is neglected. The roots of the Apostles fast go back to the first century of Christianity. After the Lord's Ascension, His disciples lived a lifestyle of continuous fasting and prayer until the day the Holy Spirit descended—the day of Pentecost. After Pentecost, the Apostles also fasted, but this time, the reason was a little bit different. It was the fast of thanksgiving for the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they received. Another reason was to get well prepared for their mission of preaching and spreading the Gospel throughout the world. The Orthodox Apostles Fast was officially established during the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

I encourage and recommend everybody to take part in this fast because this is profitable for our soul and body. Just as Christ fasted forty days after the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, the Apostles also fasted after the day of Pentecost. As we know, the Holy Spirit is now upon us as well. So it makes sense for us to partake in the Fast of

thanksgiving to God. With the Apostles Fast, we meditate on the Glory of God and worship the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Fast is also a great instrument for any Christian to get closer to God and grow spiritually. Throughout the history of the Church, important theologians and saints elaborated on the value of fasting. St. Basil the Great in his Lenten homilies notes that fasting is as old as humanity itself, as it was the first command that we received from God: "You shall not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17). According to Basil, it was a failure to fast that led to the fall in Eden. As such, fasting is among the remedies to rectify our disobedience: "It is because we did not fast that we were banished from paradise. So let us fast that we may return to it" (First Homily on Fasting, 4th century).

If lack of discipline and self-control are signs of immaturity, then practising self-restraint aids the soul in acquiring maturity. Early Christians were adamant that one should always guard against attachment [to worldly things]; for this is what is harmful to the soul (Abba John, 525 AD). In that sense, the more we practice abstinence, the more mature we become, passing from the immaturity of immediate gratification to the maturity of regulated consumption. For fasting is "the companion of sobriety and the craftsman of self-control" (St. Basil.). Self-control in particular, St. Paul identifies as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:23). The Greek word used by Paul is *egkrateia* (ἐγκράτεια) which is composed of two other words, an meaning "from within" and *kratos* from a root meaning "to perfect."

In this text, materials have been used from:  
<https://ccj.org.uk/fastinginorthodoxchurch>

Fr. John

## Upcoming Services

<b>7 June Sun</b>	<b>10.00am 11.00am</b>	<b>Matins Divine Liturgy</b>	<b>Sunday of All Saints</b>
10 June Wed	6.30pm 7.15pm	Vespers Catechesis	Holy Apostle Bartholomew Talk from Theo Andreou
13 June Sat	5.30pm	Great Vespers	Prophet Elisseus
<b>14 June Sun</b>	<b>10.00am 11.00am</b>	<b>Matins Divine Liturgy</b>	<b>Second Sunday of Mathew</b>

### Temple of God



Theo Andreou

### Guest speaker: Theo Andreou

On **Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup> of June**, after the evening vespers at about **7pm**, Theo Andreou will be a guest speaker in our church and will present his book "Temple of God An unbroken vision of the Virgin Mary". Please, come to this event!

The book "Temple of God: An Unbroken Vision of the Virgin Mary" by Theo Andreou delves into the veneration of the Virgin Mary in the early church and its significance in the Orthodox tradition. It explores the Scriptures, apocryphal material, the writings of Eastern and Western Church Fathers, and the ancient liturgical services and iconography of the Eastern Church.

### A story from Fr. Joe's Newsletter

#### A Good Guy, Surrounded by Sinners

I enjoy receiving letters from readers. I'm grateful that people take the time to say "thank you", or to offer constructive advice, or that they take the time to read my articles at all. But on rare occasions, a particular letter stands out with such clarity and power that I'm left in awe. They say what needs to be said, and there's nothing left for me to add. At times like that I realize that my readers are often better writers than I am. This particular letter is full of personal pain and raw emotion. Thankfully, the author gave me permission to publish. He only asked that I don't share his name. So without further ado, here is this man's stunning letter:

Dear Fr. Joseph,  
I've been reading your blog for a few years, and I always enjoyed it. But I recently realized I made a big mistake. Not just when reading your articles, but when reading anyone else's articles, or even the Bible itself.

I always saw myself as the good guy in the story. I saw myself as Noah – a righteous man standing alone in a world of sinners, misunderstood, mocked, doing the right thing while everyone else drowned in their own stupidity. When you wrote about patience, I nodded. "That's me. I am the faithful remnant."

I saw myself as Abel – offering my best, only to be struck down by a jealous brother. When you wrote about suffering, I felt vindicated. "Everyone is against me because I am good, and they are evil."

I saw myself as Job – innocent, afflicted, surrounded by false friends who blamed me for my own suffering. When you mentioned Job, I almost wept. "Finally, someone understands. I am like Job!"

But recently – I don't know how to say this – I realized I had it backwards.

In every story, I am not the righteous man. I am the \*other\* guy.

I am not Noah. I am the man drowning in the flood of my own rage, blaming everyone else for the rising water while I refuse to get in the ark.

The ark was humility. I chose to stay outside and shout at the rain.

I am not Abel. I am Cain. I offer my anger on the altar and call it a sacrifice. And when God does not accept it, I resent anyone who seems more peaceful than me. I have killed friendships with my tongue and called it "speaking the truth."

I am not Job. I am one of Job's friends. I have sat across from people who were suffering – my wife, my daughter – and instead of sitting in silence with them, I lectured them. I blamed them. And when they finally walked away, I called them betrayers.



I remember my daughter's face when she was maybe seven or eight. She had done something small – spilled juice, I think – and I exploded. Later, I found her crying in her room. She said, "Daddy, why are you always so mad?" I had no answer. I blamed her mother. I blamed work. I blamed everyone except the one man in the room: me. She is older now. She doesn't cry anymore. She just stays quiet around me. That silence is a judgment I cannot escape.

This is humiliating to write. I am sweating as I type it. But I have to say it, because I have spent ten years being wrong and calling it righteousness.

Someone once told me that a sign of progress is not feeling less angry, but feeling more \*tired\* of your own anger. I used to think that was weak. Now I realize I am exhausted. Not from fighting the good fight. From fighting everyone. I spent hours in front of the screen playing World of Warcraft and Call of Duty – not because I truly enjoyed them anymore, but because in those worlds, I was always the hero. The one with the righteous cause. The one who could finally win. I leveled up, I dominated, I conquered. And then I would close the laptop and look at my real life – the debt, the broken relationships, the mirror – and the rage would come rushing back because

real life would not let me be the hero.

I wrote long, furious posts online. I called out enemies. I built a whole identity around being the man who would not back down, who saw the truth, who was surrounded by fools and cowards. I called it courage. It was just addiction – addiction to the feeling of being right.

And the worst part? I knew better. I read the Bible. I read your blog. I knew the story of the Publican and the Pharisee. I knew the story of the Prodigal Son. I just never applied them to myself. I was the Pharisee thanking God I was not like other men. I was the older brother, angry at the feast, refusing to go inside because my pride was colder than my father's mercy.

So here is my confession, Fr. Joseph. I am not the good guy. I am the sinner in every parable. I am the man who needs to beat his chest and say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

I don't know how to stop being angry. I don't know how to stop blaming. I don't know how to look at my debt, my empty days, the distance between me and my daughter, and say "I did that" without running back to the old story where I am the victim.

But I know I have to start somewhere. So I am starting with this letter.

I'm not even ready to send this to my own priest yet. Maybe in time I'll be able to do that. I had to get this off my chest and tell someone. But writing it changed something. For the first time in years, I am not defending myself. I am just... sitting in the truth.

If you have any advice for a man who is tired of being the bad guy but doesn't know how to become anything else, I would read it. I might even try it.

But even if you don't write back – thank you. Your articles were not the problem. I was.

And that is actually the first honest thing I have said in a decade.

- A former righteous man  
(who is not righteous at all)

So, that's it. That's the letter that blew me away. May the Lord Jesus have mercy on this man, and bring him true inner peace.

I would offer him advice, if I thought he needed it. But based on what I read above, the Holy Spirit is already working on his heart, and he is already well on the way towards healing.

[https://movingtorussia.substack.com/pla-good-guy-surrounded-by-sinners?utm\\_campaign=email-half-post&r=1ou8t19&utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://movingtorussia.substack.com/pla-good-guy-surrounded-by-sinners?utm_campaign=email-half-post&r=1ou8t19&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

## Synaxarion - Sunday of All Saints



Our most godlike Fathers decreed that we should celebrate the present feast after the descent of the All-holy Spirit, as showing in a certain way that the coming of the All-holy Spirit acted through the Apostles like this: sanctifying and making wise human beings taken from our mortal clay and, for the completion of that fallen angelic order, restoring them and through Christ sending them to God, some by the witness of martyrdom and blood, others by their virtuous conduct and way of life; and things beyond nature are achieved. For the Spirit descends in the form of fire, whose natural momentum is upwards; while dust, whose natural momentum is downwards, ascends on high, that dust which forms our mortal clay, the flesh added to and made divine by God the Word, which a short time before, had been exalted and taken its seat at the right hand of the Father's glory. But he now also draws all those who wish, according to the promise, just as God the Word had manifested

the works of reconciliation and what was the end, most suitable to its purpose, of his coming to us through flesh and of his dispensation, namely that he brings those who were rejected before to union and friendship with God—human nature offering to God the ungrateful people from the nations like first fruits—those who were outstandingly well-pleasing to him. This is one reason that we celebrate the feast of All Saints.

A second reason is because, though many people have been well-pleasing to God, they were through outstanding virtue unknown to humanity by name, or for some human reason or other, but nevertheless have great glory in God's sight. Or again, because there are many who have lived following Christ in India, Egypt, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Phrygia and in the lands beyond the Black Sea, even as far as the British Isles themselves; in short, in both East and West, but it was not easy to honour them all properly because of their vast numbers, in the way that ecclesiastical custom has been received. And therefore, so that we may attract the help of them all, wherever on earth they were well-pleasing to God, and generally for those who would later become Saints, the most godly Fathers ordained that we should celebrate the feast of All Saints, honouring the earlier and later ones, the unknown and the known — all those in whom the Holy Spirit has dwelt he has made holy.

A third reason is this. It was necessary for the Saints who are celebrated individually day by day to be gathered together on one day, in order to demonstrate that, as they struggled for the one Christ and all ran the race in the same stadium of virtue, so they were all fittingly crowned as servants of one God and sustained the Church, having filled the world on high. They stir us also to accomplish the same struggle in its different and many forms, to the degree of power that each of us has to press onwards with all eagerness.

For all these Saints from every age the revered and wise Emperor Leo erected and vast and very beautiful church. This is very near the church of the holy Apostles, within the city of Constantine. He built it originally, it is said, for his first wife Theophano, who was outstandingly well-pleasing to God, which was indeed a marvel in the midst of turmoil and in royal palaces. When he informed the Church of his idea, he did not succeed in making it agree with his wishes

The most wise Emperor, with the approval of the whole Church, dedicated to all the Saints everywhere in the world the building that had been erected, observing that 'Since Theophano is a Saint, let her be numbered with the rest.'

Note that we are celebrating everything that the Holy Spirit, in giving good things, has made holy. I mean the highest and sanctifying Minds, that is to say the Nine Orders; the Ancestors and Patriarchs; the Prophets and sacred Apostles; the Martyrs and Hierarchs; the Priest Martyrs and Ascetic Martyrs; the Ascetics and the Just and all the choirs of holy women and all the other anonymous Saints, with them let there be all who will come afterwards. But before all, in all and with all, the Saint of Saints, the most holy and quite incomparably mightier than the angelic Orders, our Lady and Sovereign, Mary, Ever-Virgin.

At the prayers of your all-pure Mother, Christ God, and of all your Saints from every age, have mercy and save us, for you alone are good and love mankind. Amen.

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

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

## ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ἐβρ. ια´, 33-40, ιβ´ 1-2

Ἀδελφοί, οἱ Ἅγιοι πάντες διὰ πίστεως κατηγωνίσαντο βασιλείας, εἰργάσαντο δικαιοσύνην, ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιών, ἔφραξαν στόματα λεόντων, ἔσβεσαν δύναμιν πυρός, ἔφυγον στόματα μαχαιράς, ἐνεδυναμώθησαν ἀπὸ ἀσθενείας, ἐγενήθησαν ἰσχυροὶ ἐν πολέμῳ, παρεμβολὰς ἔκλιναν ἀλλοτρίων.

Ἔλαβον γυναῖκες ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τοὺς νεκροὺς αὐτῶν· ἄλλοι δὲ ἐτυμπανίσθησαν, οὐ προσδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τύχωσιν· ἕτεροι δὲ ἐμπαιγμῶν καὶ μαστίγων πείραν ἔλαβον, ἔτι δὲ δεσμῶν καὶ φυλακῆς· ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπίρσθησαν, ἐπειράσθησαν, ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρας ἀπέθανον· περιήλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, ὕστεροῦμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι· ὧν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος· ἐν ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσιν καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὅπαις τῆς γῆς. Καὶ οὗτοι πάντες, μαρτυρηθέντες διὰ τῆς πίστεως, οὐκ ἔκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, τοῦ Θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν κρείττονι προβλεψαμένου, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσιν. Τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς, τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων, ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν εὐπερίστατον ἀμαρτίαν, δι' ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα, ἀφορώντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν.

## EPISTLE READING

Heb. 11: 33-40 ; 12: 1-2

Brethren, all the saints through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

## ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος πλ. δ´.

Ἐξ ὕψους κατήλθες ὁ εὐσπλαγχνος, ταφὴν κατεδέξω τριήμερον, ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἔλευθερώσῃς τῶν παθῶν. Ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡμῶν, Κύριε, δόξα σοι.

## RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

*Plagal of the 4th Mode*

You the Compassionate came down from above, you accepted burial for three days, that you might free us from the passions. Our life and resurrection, Lord, glory to you!

## ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Μαθ. ι´, 32-33, 37-38, ιθ´, 27-30

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς· Πᾶς οὖν ὅστις ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐμοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁμολογήσω καγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς. ὅστις δ' ἂν ἀρνήσῃται με ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀρνήσομαι αὐτὸν καγὼ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς. Ὁ φιλῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστι μου ἅγιος· καὶ ὁ φιλῶν υἱὸν ἢ θυγατέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστι μου ἅγιος· καὶ ὁς οὐ λαμβάνει τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω μου, οὐκ ἔστι μου ἅγιος. Τότε ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα καὶ ἠκολουθήσαμεν σοι· τί ἄρα ἔσται ἡμῖν; ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὑμεῖς οἱ ἀκολουθήσαντές μοι, ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ, ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ, καθίσεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπὶ δώδεκα θρόνους κρίνοντες τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ· καὶ πᾶς ὁς ἀφήκεν οἰκίαν ἢ ἀδελφούς ἢ ἀδελφὰς ἢ πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ἢ γυναῖκα ἢ τέκνα ἢ ἀγροῦς ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός μου, ἑκατονταπλασίονα λήψεται καὶ ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσει. Πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι.



## GOSPEL READING

Matt. 10: 32-33, 37-38, 19: 27-30

The Lord said to his disciples, Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Then Peter said in reply, Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have? Jesus said to them, Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first.



## SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

In today's Epistle, we heard that all the great Jewish Martyrs of Old Testament times, who suffered so terribly for the sake of their faithfulness to the true God, received their heavenly reward together with us, thanks to what Christ achieved through his Cross and Resurrection. If we stop for a moment in our busy life, and think about the Martyrs and about the Saviour, we realise how strange our faith must seem to unbelievers.

People who died thousands of years ago under appalling torture are said to be not only alive now, but enjoying a happiness and fulfilment in heaven, such as is unimaginable here on earth. And their victory over suffering and death is due to the fact that God himself chose to become a human being, lived on earth in a remote small country, known to hardly anyone in other parts of the world. And God has become the Saviour of the entire human race by being nailed, naked, on a cross, like a slave, dying under the derision and insults of an on looking mob.

Why did God save the world from violence, sin and death by allowing himself to be despised, rejected, then left to die on a cross among condemned criminals? God, on our behalf, had to drain out of our human nature the pride, the thirst for status and success, so as to transform our human nature and make us all share his humility, forgiveness and love. Christ's demand that we take up the Cross as he did is beyond the strength of nearly everyone. We need to begin by looking at His Cross, and become fully aware that on Easter day, he really did rise in glory, share food with his disciples, and send his Holy Spirit on his Church so that we would have faith in him, do his will on earth, and become in reality children of God.

In a society which has by and large turned its back on religion, we are strengthened in our faith by the great crowd of witnesses: the countless people who died as martyrs and are now glorified in heaven. The majority of Christian martyrs did not suffer only under the Roman Empire in the early centuries, but even up until very recently, in the twentieth century, under the Soviet as well as the Nazi oppressions. In 1935, in Karaganda (at the centre of Kazakhstan), in just one camp of the Gulag, half a million people died in one year, not all, but still many, for their Christian faith. The memory of their suffering, as that of Christ's Passion, does not incite us to hatred of the perpetrators, but trust in God's power to grant eternal life, and forgiveness to all sinners.

May God fill us with the joy of faith, and the determination to be at all times openly followers of Christ. Amen.



**Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)**  
COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.

To learn more visit: [www.coty.org.uk](http://www.coty.org.uk).

Instagram: [COTY\\_org](https://www.instagram.com/COTY_org)



## For your prayers

30 May	Michalis	Laid to rest this time in 2026
31 May	William Peter	Baptised this day in 2026
May & June	Chris Lily-Mae Owen James Ciara	Laid to rest this time in 2026 Laid to rest this time in 2026 Laid to rest this time in 2026 Laid to rest this time in 2026 Laid to rest this time in 2026



## 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 if 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/>

