



The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church

Sunday 13th September 2026

Sunday Before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Issue 035



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We've approached the Sunday Before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. On Monday the 14th of September at 8am we will serve the Divine Liturgy for this Great Feast. This week our Archbishop, His Eminence Nikitatas, will celebrate his name day and His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew will visit our Archdiocese. He will preside the Divine Liturgy served in London at the Cathedral of Divine Wisdom in Bayswater. A small group from our church will be present and will attend the Gala afterwards in honour of our Archbishop. We wish him Many Years of service as Archpastor, and may God grant him good health.

As you may have noticed, we have a new donation station in the church. Please use it! Also, please note that you will be asked to fill a Gift Aid form. If you are a UK tax payer, please submit your email and you will receive a short form. I kindly ask that you to fill this form, it only takes a couple of minutes. Once you've done this, the donation station will recognise your card each time its used and will automatically apply the Gift Aid donation. Gift Aid is very important for our community as it gives us an extra 25p for ever £1 donated by a UK taxpayer which helps make our income more stable. The new donation station also allows you to pay for different items and services such as candles and items from our church shop. This gives us a clear view of every payment so that your donations can be used in the correct and most effective way. Thank you all for your generosity and kindness.

We are now starting preparations for the 40th anniversary of our pilgrimage to Holywell. The walk to the shrine will take place at 2.30am from the church. For the people who plan to walk, please be prepared and if you have any questions, please contact presbytera Vera.

I will need people to help move the liturgical items to the Holywell chapel. If anyone is free

on Friday the 2nd of October and is willing to help, please let me know. More hands are always better. I will also need help bringing the items back from Holywell on the 3rd of October. The people who own the chapel have asked us to be out of the chapel by 4.30pm. I will greatly appreciate any help you can offer on Friday and Saturday.

This year will be our 40th pilgrimage to the shrine of St Winefride. Our community has always hosted this event and we usually gather a lot of people and clergymen from different churches. Please be present at this sacred place. It is important for us to keep running this pilgrimage and to be good neighbours to the other churches and people.

May the Glory of the Lord and His Divine Grace be upon you!

Fr. John

Announcements

- **Reminder:** Our Sunday Services will be starting one hour earlier from now on. 9.00am for Matins and 10am for Divine Liturgy. Please arrive as early as possible. I apologise if that causes difficulties for some of you, but traditionally the Sunday services start early in the morning and finish before midday. Matins and Divine Liturgy are served early in the morning before any other worldly deeds. This change was also directed by our Archdiocese.
- Please speak with the children about the dangerous grave stones in the cemetery and tell them to be very careful when they play out in the cemetery yard. The Council checks the stones regularly and they always find new dangerous stones.
- Please avoid parking around the Cenotaph in the middle section of the cemetery and always leave space for another car to pass around you. Thank you!

Upcoming Services

13 Sep Sunday	9.00am 10.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday Before Holy Cross
14 Sep Monday	8.00am	Divine Liturgy	Elevation of the Holy Cross
16 Sep Wednesday	6.30pm 7.15pm	Vespers Catechesis	
17 Sep Thursday	9.00am	Divine Liturgy	Martyrs Faith, Hope and Love
19 Sep Saturday	5.30pm	Great Vespers	
20 Sep Sunday	9.00am 10.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday After Holy Cross



Announcement

Our **Annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St Winefride** will take place on Saturday the 3rd October 2026.

📍 Holywell, Flintshire, North Wales,
CH8 7LS

Services

10am Matins

11am Divine Liturgy, Procession to the Shrine and Blessing of the Waters followed by a picnic lunch

2.30pm Great Vespers

Pilgrimage Walk

Starting at 2.30am, there will be a Pilgrimage Walk from St Barbara's Orthodox Church, Chester to Holywell.

For more information about this event please contact Fr John.

For more information about the pilgrimage walk specifically, please contact Presbyter Vera.





Synaxarion

The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross

Saint Helen, the mother of Saint Constantine the Great, when she was already advanced in years, undertook, in her great piety, the hardships of a journey to Jerusalem in search of the cross, about the year 325. A temple to Aphrodite had been raised up by the Emperor Hadrian upon Golgotha, to defile and cover with oblivion the place where the saving Passion had been suffered. The venerable Helen had the statue of Aphrodite destroyed, and the earth removed, revealing the Tomb of our Lord, and three crosses. Of these, it was believed that one must be that of our Lord, the other two of the thieves crucified with Him; but Saint Helen was at a loss which one might be the Wood of our salvation. At the

inspiration of Saint Macarius, Archbishop of Jerusalem, a lady of Jerusalem, who was already at the point of death from a certain disease, was brought to touch the crosses, and as soon as she came near to the Cross of our Lord, she was made perfectly whole. Consequently, the precious Cross was lifted on high by Archbishop Macarius of Jerusalem; as he stood on the ambo, and when the people beheld it, they cried out, "Lord have mercy." It should be noted that after its discovery, a portion of the venerable Cross was taken to Constantinople as a blessing. The rest was left in Jerusalem in the magnificent church built by Saint Helen, until the year 614. At that time, the Persians plundered Palestine and took the Cross to their own country (see Jan. 22, Saint Anastasius the Persian). Late, in the year 628, Emperor Heraclius set out on a military campaign, retrieved the Cross, and after bringing it to Constantinople, himself escorted it back to Jerusalem, where he restored it to its place.

Rest from labour. A Fast is observed today, whatever day of the week it may be.

Patriarchal Visit of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

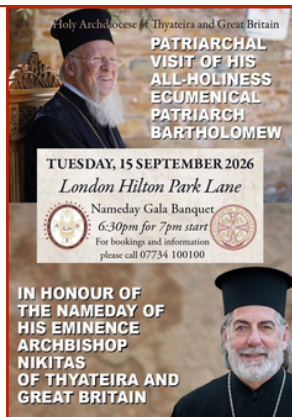
In honour of the nameday of his Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain.

 Tuesday, 15th September 2026

 London Hilton Park Lane

 Nameday Gala Banquet
6.30pm for 7pm start

For bookings and information, please call 07734 100100.



The Church Year: Celebration of Faith – Sermons, Volume 2, pp. 41-44.



On September 14th, for centuries, when the feast of the Elevation of the Cross was celebrated in cathedrals, the bishop would take his place in the center of the church and, surrounded by a great assembly of clergy, would majestically raise the cross high over the crowd and bless the worshippers on all four sides of the church

while the choir thundered in response, "Lord have mercy!" This was the celebration of Christian empire, an empire born under the sign of the Cross on that day when Emperor Constantine saw a vision of the Cross high in the sky and heard the words, "In this sign conquer..." This is the feast of Christianity's triumph over kingdoms, cultures, and civilizations, the feast of that Christian world which now lies in ruins, still crumbling before our very eyes.

Yes, the solemn, ancient rite will once again be celebrated this year. The choir will still be joyfully singing that "the Cross is the strength of kings, the Cross is the beauty of the universe." But today, the tumultuous metropolis surrounding the church does not participate in that hidden triumph and is completely unconnected to it. Its millions of inhabitants will go on with their normal lives and their usual ups and downs, interests, joys, and sorrows, with no reference whatsoever to the goings-on within the church building. Why then do we keep repeating words about universal triumph, and singing over and over again that the Cross is unconquerable? Sadly, we have to admit that many, many Christians are unable to answer this question. They are accustomed to seeing the church in exile and on the margins of life, exiled from culture, life, schools, and from everywhere. Many Christians are content and undisturbed when the authorities contemptuously allow them to "observe their rites" as long as they are quiet and obedient, and do not interfere in the building of a world where there is no Christ, no faith, and no prayer. Those tired Christians have almost forgotten what Christ said on the night He went to the Cross: "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

It seems to me that we continue to celebrate the Elevation of the Cross and repeat ancient words of victory not simply to commemorate an old battle that was won, or to recall a past that no longer exists, but in order to reflect more deeply on the meaning of the word "victory" for Christian faith. It may be that only now, stripped as we are of outward power and glory, government support, untold wealth, and of all apparent symbols of victory, are we capable of understanding that all of this was, perhaps, not genuine victory. Yes, the cross raised above the crowds was in those days covered with gold and silver and adorned with precious stones. Yet

neither gold, nor silver, nor precious stones can erase the original meaning of the Cross as an instrument of humiliation, torture, and execution on which a man was nailed, a man rejected by all, gasping from pain and thirst. Do we have the courage to ask ourselves: if all those Christian kingdoms and cultures died, if victory was replaced by defeat, was it not because we Christians became blind to the ultimate meaning and genuine content of Christianity's most important symbol? We decided that gold and silver would be allowed to eclipse this meaning. And we decided as well that God desires our worship of the past.

To honor the Cross, to raise it up, to sing of Christ's victory: does this not mean, above all, to believe in the Crucified One and to believe that the Cross is a sign of staggering defeat? For only because it is a defeat, and only to the measure it is accepted as defeat, does the Cross become victory and triumph. No, Christ did not enter the world to win outward victories. He was offered a kingdom, but refused. And at the very moment of His betrayal to death, He said: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mt. 26:53). Yet, Christ was never more a king than when He walked to Golgotha carrying His own cross on His shoulders while the hate-filled and mocking crowd surrounded Him. His kingship and power were never more obvious than when Pilate brought Him before the crowd, dressed in purple, condemned to a criminal's death, a crown of thorns on His head, and Pilate telling the raging mob: "Behold your king." Only here can the whole mystery of Christianity be seen, for Christianity's victory resides within the joyful faith that here, through this rejected, crucified and condemned man, God's love began to illumine the world and a Kingdom was opened which no one has power to shut.

Each of us, however, must accept Christ and receive Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our hope. Otherwise, outward victories are all meaningless. Perhaps we needed this outward defeat of the Christian world. Perhaps we needed poverty and rejection to purge our faith of its earthly pride and of its trust in outward power and victory, to purify our vision of the Cross of Christ, which is raised high above us even when neither we nor the world can see it. In spite of everything, the Cross is still elevated, exalted, and triumphant. "The Cross is the beauty of the universe." For in whatever darkness people find themselves, and however great the outward triumph of evil in this world, the heart still knows and hears the words, "Take courage, I have overcome the world."

From Alexander Schmemmann, *The Church Year: Celebration of Faith – Sermons*, Volume 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), pp. 41-44.



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.

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Γαλ. στ´, 11-18

Ἀδελφοί, ἴδετε πηλικοίς ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί. Ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσώπησαι ἐν σαρκί, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα μὴ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διώκωνται. Οὐδὲ γάρ οἱ περιτετμημένοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν, ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῶσινται. Ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· δι´ οὗ ἔμοι κόσμος ἐσταύρωται, καγὼ τῷ κόσμῳ. Ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὕτε περιτομὴ τι ἰσχύει, οὕτε ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις. Καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνη ἐπ’ αὐτούς, καὶ ἔλεος, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τοῦ λοιποῦ, κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω· ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω. Ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί. Ἀμήν.

EPISTLE READING

Gal. 6: 11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ἰωάν. γ´, 13-17

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος· οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὕψωσε τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Οὕτω γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνῃ τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ’ ἵνα σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ.

GOSPEL READING

John 3: 13-17

The Lord said, No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

Today the Church celebrates the birth of the Birthgiver of God, the coming into the world of the one through whom God entered the world as a man. The Fathers of the Church tell us that it was for this very reason God appointed the people of Israel as His chosen nation, because it was this nation that would bring for the blessed Virgin Lady, the person capable of fulfilling the awesome and unfathomable task of bearing God in the flesh, the only person who could have heard the Archangel Gabriel's announcement and answered, *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word"* (Luke 1:38). It is with the arrival of this blessed woman that *"the fullness of time had come"* (Gal. 4:4-7), allowing God the Word, "born of a woman", to unite Himself to His creation and finally bridge the unbridgeable gap that had opened up through the fall of Adam. Israel's unique mission ends in the same way that it had begun: with an elderly, barren woman being granted a child with the promise of salvation; what began with Abraham and Sarah (see Gen.

18) ends with Joachim and Anna. The human race, rendered spiritually barren and fruitless by the fall, would finally be able to bear fruit once again, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecy, *"Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labour! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband"* (Is. 54:1, Gal. 4:27).

The hymns we sang at yesterday evening's service of Great Vespers call the Holy Virgin "a holy throne", "an animate heaven", "a life-bearing plant", "the bridal chamber of the Light and the book of the Word of Life", "the Temple Gate", "the fountain of life", "the burning bush that springs from barren ground and burns with spiritual fire", "Queen of all", "the recreation of Adam and recalling of Eve", and so on. When the hymns and the Tradition of the Church have so much to say about the Holy Mother, one could be forgiven for asking why the Holy Gospels seemingly say so little. However, it would be wrong to think that the Evangelists are ignoring or undermining the importance of the Virgin Mary by their apparent silence. Quite the contrary, her silence in the Gospels speak louder than any word about what she represents and how she became what she is. Others spoke, *"but Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart"* (Luke 2:19), others preached, *"but His Mother kept all these sayings in her heart"* (Luke 2:51). The Blessed Virgin is an image of humility and inner contemplation, of man's encounter with God in the quiet depths of the heart. It was her capacity to keep and ponder the words of God in her heart that made her capable of containing the Word of God in her womb. It was her absolute love and humility that allowed her to become the ladder by which the God of heaven would descend to earth, taking the form of a servant and enduring the *"extreme humility"* (ἄκρα ταπεινότης) of the Cross for our salvation. Having heard all that the Church teaches through the hymns and readings of today's feast, let us keep all these things and ponder them in our hearts. Amen.

"We must chant in the church with understanding and attentiveness"



The Nativity of the Mother of God

For your prayers

7 Sep	Leon Laird Aylin Nicolle Bilibau Steven & Katerina	Baptised this day in 2008 Baptised this day in 2008 Wedded this day in 2025
8 Sep	Seraphima Foulkes (<i>deceased</i>) Marina Matthews	Chrismated this day in 1991 Laid to rest this time in 1989
9 Sep	Athenagoras II of T&GB (<i>Abp</i>)	Laid to rest this time in 1979
12 Sep	Andreas & Megan	Wedded this day in 2021
13 Sep	Anna Sanders (<i>Presbytera</i>)	Chrismated this day in 1992
17 Sep	Phoebe Sterlington Barbara Worth (<i>deceased</i>) Catherine Bromley (<i>deceased</i>) Julie Gallagher	Baptised this day in 2017 Chrismated this day in 1989 Chrismated this day in 1989 Laid to rest this time in 2015

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 a small salary for the priest, all charitable work of the church, and all the fundraisings organised by 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 the envelopes located at the entrance of the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you'd like to Gift aid your payment, please select this option on the card machine once your payment is complete.

Thank you for your continous support !



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