



# The Spring



*Newsletter of the Holy Fathers of Nicea The First Ecumenical Council  
June 2018*



*A group picture of us all together after church, including Fr Themis, Mary, Eleni, George, and Chloe.*

## SIERRA LEONE

10 Years ago, Rev Fr Themis Adamopoulos had a dream:

Arriving in Freetown, Sierra Leone all alone, with just a few helpers, a FAITH filled desire to help the poor through the Orthodox Church & Education, and all in the name of Jesus Christ.

10 Years ago, the first plot of land that was given to the church by the government, is an area called Tower Hill in the city of Freetown.

10 Years later his Dream and Faith are fulfilled thanks to those who support him through Christ.

I stayed at the Tower Hill volunteer accommodation for 12 days during Holy Week, Pascha and Bright week, 2018. George Tsiappourdhi and Chloë Forbes were also with me. At Tower Hill, an orphanage and kindergarten are due to open in 2018. It will cater for the needs of Ebola orphans. A Teacher Training college also exists there, where those who teach kindergarten and lower primary school can gain a formal education. It also provides a venue for lessons with the Orthodox Youth Fellowship. There is a chapel where we had regular services, and where Father administers the Orthodox sacraments to the growing

Orthodox community in Sierra Leone.

We also frequently visited two of the other Orthodox Mission compounds that Father Themis has established during the past 10 years.

Waterloo, is in the rural western district. An uncomfortable hour and a half drive away, where we would pass through such devastatingly poor places and see the aftermath of last year's mud slide, where hundreds died due to the heavy rainfall and hundreds are still buried underneath it all. Maybe even thousands. It was heartbreaking.



*This is the river at Kroo Bay. Clogged up with 4ft of rubbish. This isn't one of our compounds, so I haven't mentioned it in the article. Though Father Themis does give them financial help where he can. When we visited Kroo Bay it was heart-breaking, and this clogged up river causes many deaths in rainy season. Children and adults die from the floods. Mary gave the chief of the area money from Father Themis, to get the river cleaned out from rubbish, before the rains hit. They were so grateful. The rubbish flows from another village higher up, so there isn't much they can do themselves to stop it.*

At Waterloo, we have approximately 600 children in the pre- primary school. Many of them are in extreme poverty; some have lost their parents to the Ebola virus. We also have a disabled community there with free housing. To help protect and care for all the children and families, Father Themis, through his love and compassion, and the generous donations from people and organisations over the past 10 years, has built accommodation for the disabled families. There is also an orphanage, a kindergarten, a primary school and in the future there will be a high school. In the compound there is a medical clinic, a multi function dining hall which will help feed 600 children 3 times a day, and a church. It was beautiful meeting so many of these people during Holy Week and then seeing them attending the services, chanting, praising God and showing us so much love. It was wonderful. I absolutely loved spending time there.

Another compound that exists in town is the Syke Street compound. It is only ten minutes away from Tower Hill. Syke Street gathers many of the locals to our Church. Because of Father Themis's generous works and kind nature; they have converted to the Orthodox faith. It is so beautiful to see. The Orthodox Church in Sierra Leone does not require anything in

return for the aid they give. Father Themis, his sister Mary, and Dr Eleni are there for most of the year, supporting thousands of people, living without an income, without luxuries to support the growth of Orthodoxy and show Christ's love to others.

At Syke Street, the plans are big. An old government school will be knocked down and a new school built (when funds allow). For now, it is old, filthy, and looks more like a prison inside, than a place of learning. Construction work has begun with the aim of opening a kindergarten and a college campus for school leavers later in 2018. The new building at Syke Street will have all the facilities for children from the youngest age of entering education up to the young adult finishing their studies.

We are hoping to generate funds from the UK donations to sponsor the building works and also to contribute to the running costs on a monthly basis.

In the past 10 years donations have been coming in from Australia, America and Greece. We have only got to know Father Themis this past 18 months and the Orthodox Mission in Sierra Leone, West Africa. I was blessed with the opportunity to go and see first hand where all these charitable donations are being spent, and how we can help from the UK. Not only as Orthodox Christians, but as humanitarians, we should always remember those suffering around the world, and remind ourselves of how fortunate we are in every respect when compared with what these people must deal with daily.



*Some of the school children attending the Holy Monday service at our Waterloo compound.*

Our problems are minor, and they mustn't stop us from remembering Christ and these words from Matthew 25-

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the king-

dom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Please consider Joining with Fr Themis to continue his work with the poor; visit <http://paradise4kids.org/>

Also, as Saint John Chrysostom said, 'The rich exist for the sake of the poor. The poor exist for the salvation of the rich.'

Like and follow us on Facebook - United Kingdom 4 Fr Themis

And for any donations you would like to make, please check out [www.paradise4kids.org](http://www.paradise4kids.org).

*Fod Nicholaou*



*The people at Syke Street compound, waiting for Holy Communion on Palm Sunday.*

## STORAGE SPACE

We need temporary storage space for quite a large number of books in boxes. If you have such space or know of someone who has, please contact Fr Stephen.

## G.O.Y.G.B. SUMMER CAMP

Take the chance to spend a day or two in the beautiful South Shropshire countryside (Church Preen SY6 7LH) working in a team to help prepare the Archdiocese camp site for their summer youth camp. It is about 20 minutes drive from our church. This is a chance to meet new people or spend a day with friends. There is a certain amount of physical work: carrying equipment, knocking in tent pegs, pulling on ropes. A picnic lunch will be provided. Don't miss the opportunity to join in!

There have been some important works going on recently. The barn now has a splendid concrete floor and we hope to have drains put in to take away the water from the roof by the end of June. We also now have the trench dug for three new organic lavatories. However we need some help. First of all, to complete the loos, then help for the set-up and take down at the beginning and end of camp. Set up will be from the 20th - 23rd July. Take down will start on 4th August going on until the 6th August. All help will be really gratefully received. If you can help please text Fr Panteleimon on 0746 9157286

## THYATEIRA MIDLANDS ORTHODOX SEMINARY

We shall be running both the Certificate (1 year – ten Saturdays) from this September as well as the Diploma (2 years – twenty Saturdays). The Certificate course is for anyone who wants to know more about Orthodoxy. There will be a lift for people from Shrewsbury or Telford. The cost is £400 but there are bursaries available. The start date is Saturday September 15th and then every second Saturday of the month until June 2019.

“Although I have attended the Liturgy Sunday by Sunday for many years, the depth and richness of the Faith that is expressed in the Liturgy was mind blowing. Thank you to all the inspired lecturers.” *Former Student*

# COMMUNION

## WHY IS COMMUNION SO IMPORTANT FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS?

In the Matins Gospel this morning we read about the two disciples Luke and Cleopas who were on their way to Emmaus. Christ appeared (although they did not recognise Him) and discussed with them about what had happened in Jerusalem and how it was necessary that the Christ should die. "And He opened to them all the scriptures concerning Himself." (This meaning the Old Testament.) However when they arrived at Emmaus the two disciples persuaded Christ to stay with them and they then recognised Him "In the breaking of the Bread". This was the first Liturgy and the first time after the resurrection that anyone had received communion. From that day to this there has never been a Sunday where somewhere in the World the liturgy has not been celebrated and people received Communion. It is therefore true to say that Communion is of enormous importance and central to our Faith. In St John's Gospel, Christ said "Amen, amen, I tell you: unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in you. (Jn 6:53) And the Greek word that he uses is 'fagate' (φαγατε) which means to munch or chew – it is an intensely physical word.

What is happening? Why do we need to do this?

On the cross Christ the Saviour, sacrificed Himself for us. When Christ died on the cross it was God dying to save the world and the people that He had created. This relates directly to the sacrifices that went on day by day in the Temple in Jerusalem. The purpose of these sacrifices was to forgive sin and re-establish the relationship between God and Man. Christ's sacrifice is a new Passover. The first Passover was God setting the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt. The new Passover – Pascha – sets us free from death.

Christ's sacrifice is once, for all time and for all people and it was a death that overcame death. The reason for this is that death is the result of sin. Sin is evil and God has ensured that evil cannot go on forever and is stopped by death. But Christ did not sin. He alone is sinless so that when death took Him it was death that was overcome, destroyed. As we sing at Pascha "Trampling down death by death".

But one of the significant points about the Passover sacrifice was that the people ate the flesh of the sacrificed lamb and burnt what was not eaten. This was a vital part of what happened – the blood, life, was given back to God but the flesh was eaten by the people. It was communion with God. Those who ate the sacrifice became free.

So how does this happen for us? How do we eat His flesh and drink His blood? We do it when we receive Communion because at the Last supper Christ gave bread to the Apostles saying "Take eat this is My Body" and taking the cup saying "Drink all of this for this is my blood of the New Covenant". And he said "Do this in remembrance of me". Now the English word "remembrance" does not properly translate the Greek word that Christ used "anamnesis" (αναμνησιν). This means to make present now, something that has happened in the past. It is not a memorial of something that happened long ago. It is a reality now. We partake of the sacrifice of Christ and note we do not just eat the Body. No! We drink the blood because God is giving us His life which will be fulfilled for us, after our deaths and resurrections in His kingdom. But actually in the perpetual present of God's time we, when we receive communion mystically are transposed from this created time into the resurrection time of God's Kingdom.

God grant that we may become ever more aware of His holy gifts that our lives are transformed in preparation for His everlasting Kingdom. Amen.

## PARKING

Parking continues to be a problem which we are doing our best to resolve or at least make easier. We hope to get help from Shropshire Council but in the meantime we must respect the residents of Dove Close. This is the road that runs from Murrell Way to the church. Please do not park anywhere on Dove Close. This is not a public road though one day it may become one. Please park as before in the lane, but remember this is a public right of way so when parking it must remain possible for somebody pushing a child's buggy to get past the cars and through the gate. The path is well used, mostly by dog walkers but also by people with children and buggies. It is still possible to park in Sutton Road etc. It really is not much further to walk than when the church was in a field. While the ground is hard we can also park the occasional car on the grass by the church but this will of course no longer be possible in the autumn after the ground gets wet again. If for health and mobility reasons it is difficult to get to church please contact Fr Stephen.

## BOOK REVIEW

### **ARCHBISHOP LUKE VOYNO-YASENETSKYI** Saint-pastor and physican-surgeon

by *Metropolitan Argolis Nectarios*

We are all familiar with the icons of the saints which surround us in church and in the 'icon corners' in our homes, and many of us hear readings from the 'Synaxarion', the official record of the saints' lives, on their feast days. It is sobering, even rather frightening, however, to read this full biography of a saint who lived and died in the worst of modern times, 20th century Russia, and whose life and death are associated in our own lifetimes with the miracles of healing and the fragrance of myrrh that we normally think of in relation to a bygone age.



This book spans the years from St Luke's birth (as Valentin Felixovich Voino-Yasenetskyi) in 1877 to his death in 1961 and then onwards, right up to the present time, with his canonization in 1966, the translation of his relics in 1996 and his official rehabilitation by Vladimir Putin in 2000.

In every way, he was clearly very exceptional. Initially intending to be an artist, he attended the Fine Arts Academy in St Petersburg. (His artistic abilities enabled him later on to provide exquisite anatomical illustrations for his books.) Very soon, however, "...I was taken by thoughts wondering whether I had chosen the right road for my life...I decided that I have no

right to occupy myself with what pleases me and that I must devote myself to...the benefit of those who are suffering." And so to Kiev University Medical School, graduating in 1902. In 1916, after feeling that a gospel text had directly spoken to him (Matt 9:36-38 "...the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send our labourers into the harvest") he was ordained to the diaconate and, a week later, to the priesthood (to the amazement and horror of his medical colleagues!) From that moment on, his life was that of both priest and surgeon.

The book gives us an uncompromising account of the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1917 onwards. Not only from outside, but also treacherously from within, from schismatic churches approved by the state, the "Living Church" in 1922 which set aside the Patriarchate and with the help of the NKVD (precursor to the KGB) took over parish churches throughout Russia, and the "Genuine Orthodox Church" in 1960 who tried but failed to assassinate St Luke with a bomb. Toward the surgeon Voino-Yasenetskyi, however, the Russian state always had an ambivalent attitude; on the one hand he was a counter-revolutionary, an 'enemy of the people', a scientist stuck in his religion, the 'opium of the people', but on the other hand he was one of Russia's greatest surgeons, indispensable to the medical services of far-flung provinces and to the wide network of military hospitals, and equally devoted to high-ranking party officials and the poorest peasants. Even Stalin came to recognise his value in 1943 and in 1946 he was awarded the Lenin Prize. The book provides revealing quotations from contemporary well-known authorities such as Solzhenitsin and Pavlov (a devout Orthodox), and a full set of notes collected together at the end of the book provide us with much illuminating social and political background. Unfortunately, the translator is not familiar with English punctuation and makes mistakes in his English vocabulary, sometimes using similar but incorrect words. but the reader quickly gets used to this and neither problem detracts from the value of the book

On the details of St Luke's life, the book is detailed and intimate. We are told about his marriage, his children, his wife's death from TB and the devoted woman who took over the care of his young family. We are brought into the operating rooms where, masked and gowned, he toils over the wounded of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, or the street casualties of the Russian civil war of 1919, or the massed casualties of the Nazi retreat in 1944, or the destitute, diseased and injured flocking constantly to him throughout his long career, even when in exile. We see the icon of the Theotokos set up in the operating room (to the fury of the party officials) and his prayers to the Theotokos for help before each operation. We are shown his simple dwellings, very often bitterly cold and poor during the years

of his exiles beyond the arctic circle.

He toils for many hours each day in the wards and clinics, and late into each night in his study, writing his seminal books on the surgery of pyogenic infections or the techniques of local anaesthesia, both vital areas of research in the economic disaster area that was Russia in the 20th century. He then rises early to spend an hour or two in prayer, sometimes out in the woods for the sake of privacy or even secrecy. This daily medical routine is punctuated by the duties of a priest and the administration of the Church and by visits to medical conferences where he comes to be respected as a leading surgical authority in his field.

So why have I called this book 'frightening'? I think it's because it brings us face-to-face with sainthood with all its superhuman characteristics. The toil, the pain, the courage, the unfailing stamina, the faith which steadies and strengthens at every turn, the bright light of holiness which then shines uncomfortably into the dark corners of one's own self. The first sentence of the author's introduction, a quotation from Abba Isaac, serves as a warning: "The way of God is an everyday cross, because no-one has ever ascended to heaven in comfort."

*By David Lewis*

## HERITAGE WEEKEND

**Friday 14th September & Sunday 16th September**

This is organised by English Heritage and is when the church is open for visitors. We usually get about 200. We need help talking to people, providing refreshments and giving talks. If you can help please contact Fr Stephen

## 16th Orthodox Congress in Western Europe

**" And you shall be my witnesses "**

**1st - 4th Novembre 2018**

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