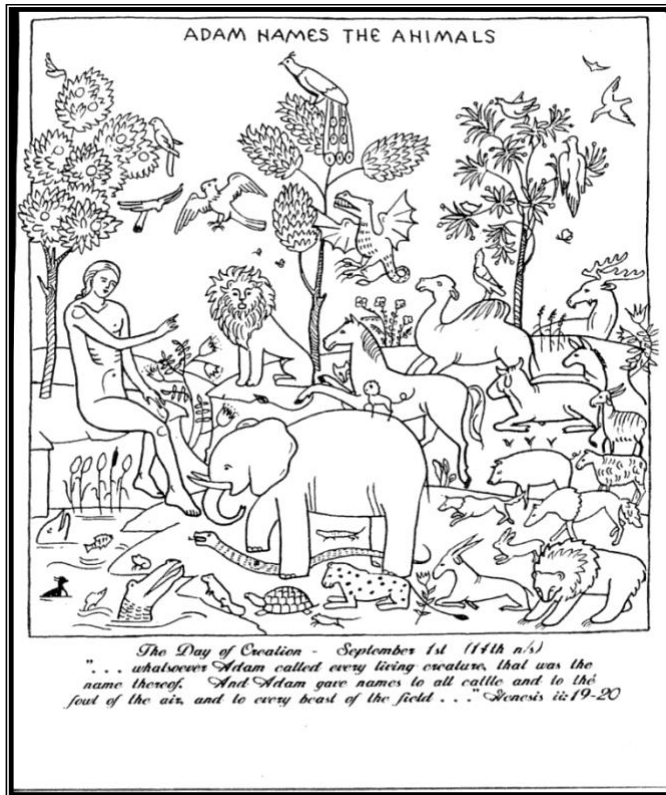


**The Dormition of the
Mother of God (EP)
Parish Newsletter
September 2026**



SERMON by METROPOLITAN ANTHONY

Sunday 28th August 1994.

To-day, during the Liturgy, I was struck with new strength, a new sense of awe at the words we say in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father".

These words have a double dimension. The one which is easily accessible to us and yet by which we live so little, and the other one which is so awesome that we should pronounce the words only after having searched our heart very deeply, very thoroughly and contritely.

We understand "Our Father" always as indicating that these words signify that He is the Father of us all, that we are all His children, His daughters, His sons; and that should be enough for us to create between us relationships of a depth, of a purity, of a generosity which would make the Church an image of the Kingdom of God already come with power. There should be no separation between us, no rifts. The frailties of the ones should be supported by the strength of the others. There should be nothing that mars the world and makes it a place so ugly and at times so terrifying to live in. But even on that level we fall short of this simple understanding: that we are all brothers and sisters because God has accepted us as His children.

But there is another dimension which is more awesome. If you read that passage of the Gospel in which the Lord gives this particular prayer to His disciples, it is clear that when He says: "Say, our Father", He means "My Father and yours". And that means that we should not be daring

enough, arrogant enough to say such words without realising that we claim by doing so, to be brothers and sisters of Christ. Indeed, after His Resurrection, He said to the women: “Go to my brothers and tell them of it”.

Christ recognised us as brothers and sisters. Are we worthy of such recognition? Much less than in the first sense in which I indicated the meaning of these words, can we say that we aim at being with regard to God what His only begotten Son has been. That we are with regard to the created world what the Lord Jesus has chosen to be? To give His life that others may live?

And yet, how often we repeat these words without feeling that they are to us a challenge, a challenge which we must face all the time: Am I at one in Christ? Can I speak to the Father of Christ as my own father because in Christ I have become truly His son or His daughter?

This applies supremely to the way in which we should be able or not, to come to Communion. We come to Communion at times from the very depth of our being, but at times in the traditional way, in a light manner. Saint Paul has a warning for us: if we come and receive the Gifts of God unworthily, they will be to us a consuming fire. ‘Unworthily’ means in a state of sin unacknowledged, unrepented – and by repented I do not mean bewailed, but fought against so that it should no longer be part of our life.

At times we come not in such a condition that makes the reception of the Holy Gifts unto condemnation to us; but we come light-mindedly, easily, because it is a feast,

because it is our name's-day, or simply because it is a Sunday, because all are called.

Yes, but all must respond with understanding and a sense of responsibility. And to those of us who are immature, those of us who come lightly, without understanding, not separated from God by a sin that amounts to being His crucifiers, but simply by our inability to understand what we are doing and what happens to us. Saint Simeon the New Theologian says words that may be up to a point a consolation, but are also a warning. He says: God is merciful and if we come to Him incapable of communing with Him, He steps out of the Holy Bread and the Holy Wine, and we partake of bread and wine, not of His Body and Blood.

But that is not simple. To think that God abandons His creatures of bread and wine because of us, is something very frightening. This bread, this wine, in a mystery of communion, has become what the whole creation is called to be when God shall be all in all, when everything shall be pervaded with divinity, shine with divinity, be divinised. And because of us, this bread which already had entered into this mystery, is deprived for us, falls back into the realm of natural things, of a world which we call natural, but which is simply a fallen world.

So, let us reflect when we say the Lord's Prayers and ask ourselves: where do I stand? On one level, am I a brother or a sister to those who surround me? If I am not, how can I say such words? How can I say: "Forgive as I forgive" if my whole life is a denial of my neighbour? And on the

other hand, ask ourselves: what about my communion with God? How deeply am I at one with Christ? Can I say these words as He said them, because I am at one with Him? And then we may come to communion less easily, but with a new depth, a new faith, and bear fruit of what we will have been given. How wonderful it is that God received us in our frailty, in spite of our sins. But Saint Seraphim says: "Christ will receive you, but do you realise the price He pays for it? Calvary, the Crucifixion, death, the descent into hell".

This is the challenge which is before us whenever we say the Lord's Prayer, or whenever we come to communion. Let us be earnest about it and then we will grow from strength to strength and Christ will be not only with us, but in us. Amen.

THE FINDING AND ELEVATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS OF CHRIST

The pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind. The Emperor Hadrian (117-138) gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Lord, and upon the hill fashioned there to set up a pagan temple of the pagan goddess Venus and a statue of Jupiter. Pagans gathered on this place and offered sacrifice to idols there. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian remains – the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This

occurred under the Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine the Great (306-37) after his victory in the year 312 over Maxentius, ruler of the western part of the Roman Empire, and over Licinius, ruler of its eastern part, becoming in the year 323 the sole-powerful ruler of the vast Roman empire. In 313 he had issued the so-called Edict of Milan, by which the Christian religion was legalised and the persecutions against Christians in the Western half of the Empire were stopped. The ruler Licinius, although he had signed the Milan Edict to oblige Constantine, still fanatically continued the persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the 313 Edict about toleration extend also to the eastern part of the empire. The Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine, having with the assistance of God gained victory over his enemies in three wars, had seen in the heavens the Sign of God – the Cross and written beneath: “By this thou shalt conquer”.

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine sent to Jerusalem his mother, the pious Empress Helen having provided her with a letter to the Jerusalem patriarch Makarios. Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and idol-statues overshadowing Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her searchings remained unsuccessful. Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by

the name of Jude who stated, that the Cross was buried there, where stands the pagan temple of Venus. They demolished the pagan temple and, having made a prayer, they began to excavate the ground. Soon there was detected the Sepulchre of the Lord and not far away from it three crosses, a plank with inscription having been done by order of Pilate, and four nails, which had pierced the body of the Lord. In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Saviour was crucified, Patriarch Makarios alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord was placed to it, the dead one came alive. Having beheld the rising up, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found. Christians, having come in an innumerable throng to make veneration to the Holy Cross, besought Saint Makarios to elevate, to exalt the Cross, so that all even afar off, might reverently contemplate it.

Then the Patriarch and other spiritual chief personages raised up high the Holy Cross, and the people saying "Lord have mercy", reverently made prostration before the Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326. During the discovery of the Life-Creating Cross there occurred also another miracle: a grievously sick woman, beneath the shadow of the Holy Cross, was healed instantly. The elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Kyriakos (i.e. "of the Lord") and afterwards was ordained Bishop of Jerusalem. During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ (commemoration of Priest-Martyr is 28 October).

The holy empress Helen journeyed round the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Saviour – the reason for more than 80 churches – raised up at Bethlehem the place of the Birth of Christ, and on the Mount of Olives from whence the Lord ascended to Heaven and at Gethsemane where the Saviour prayed before His sufferings and where the Mother of God was buried after the falling-asleep. Saint Helen took with her to Constantinople part of the Life-Creating Wood and nails. The Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine gave orders to raise up at Jerusalem a majestic and spacious church in honour of the Resurrection of Christ, including in itself also the Sepulchre and Golgotha. The temple was constructed in about 10 years. Saint Helen did not survive until the dedication of the temple, she died in the year 327. The church was consecrated on 13 September 335. On the following day, 14 September, the festal celebration of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross was established.

On this day is remembered also another event connected to the Cross of the Lord – its return back to Jerusalem from Persia after a 14-year captivity. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Phokas (602-610) the Persian emperor Khozroes II in a war against the Greeks defeated the Greek army, plundered Jerusalem and led off into captivity both the Life-creating Cross of the Lord and the Holy Patriarch Zacharios (609-633). The Cross remained in Persia for 14 years and only under the emperor Herakles (610-641), who with the help of God defeated Khozroes and concluded peace with his successor and

son Syroes – was the Cross of the Lord returned to Christians from captivity. With great solemnity the Life-creating Cross was transferred to Jerusalem. Emperor Herakles in imperial crown and porphyry carried the Cross of Christ into the temple of the Resurrection. Alongside the emperor went Patriarch Zacharios. At the gates, by which they ascended onto Golgotha, the emperor suddenly stopped and was not able to proceed further. The Holy Patriarch explained to the emperor that an Angel of the Lord blocked his way, since He That bore the Cross onto Golgotha for the expiation of the world from sin, made His Way of the Cross in the guise of Extreme Humiliation. Then Herakles, removing the crown and porphyry, donned plain garb and without further hindrance carried the Cross of Christ into the church.

The Elevation of the Cross celebrates the recovery of the Cross by Emperor Heraclius in the seventh century at which time it was “elevated” in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. From this latter event the “universal elevation” of the Cross was celebrated annually in all of the churches of the Christian Empire.

The day of the Elevation of the Cross became, as it were, the national holiday of the Eastern Christian Empire similar to the Fourth of July in the United States. The Cross, the official emblem of the Empire which was placed on all public buildings and uniforms, was officially elevated on this day by the bishops and priests. They blessed the four directions of the universe with the Cross,

while the faithful repeated the chanting of “Lord have mercy”. This ritual is still done in the churches today after the solemn presentation and elevation of the Cross at the end of the Vigil service of the holy day following the Great Doxology of Matins.

The Troparion of the feast which was, one might say, the “national anthem” sung on all public occasions in the Christian Empire of Byzantium and Russia, originally petitioned God to save the people, to grant victory in war and to preserve the empire “by the virtue of the Cross”. Today the Troparion, and all the hymns of the day, are “spiritualised” as the “adversaries” become the spiritually wicked and sinful including the devil and his armies, and “Orthodox Christians” replace the names of ruling officials of the Empire.

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.

Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their
adversaries, and by the virtue of Thy Cross,
preserve Thy habitation (Troparion).

The holy day of the Elevation of the Cross, although it has an obviously “political” origin, has a place of great significance in the Church today. It remains with us as a day of fasting and prayer, a day when we recall that the Cross is the only sign worthy of our total allegiance, and that our salvation comes not by “victories” of any earthly sort but by the only true and lasting victory of the crucifixion of Christ and our co-crucifixion with Him.

When we elevate the Cross and bow down before it in veneration and worship to God, we proclaim that we belong to the Kingdom “not of this world”, and that our only true and enduring citizenship is with the saints in the “city of God” (Eph 2:19; Heb 11:10; Rev 21-22).

The first Old Testament reading of the Vespers of the day tells of the “tree” which changes the bitter waters into sweetness – the symbol of the Tree of the Cross (Ex 15:22-16:1). The second reading reminds us that the Lord chastens and corrects those whom he loves and that Divine Wisdom is “a Tree of life to those who lay hold upon her and trust in her, as in the Lord (Prov 3:11-18). Again the reference is to the Cross which is, as the epistle reading of the day proclaims, “to those who are called ... the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1: 8-25).

The third Old Testament reading is from the Prophecy of Isaiah which tells of the “city of the Lord” where both Jews and Gentiles will live together and “shall bow themselves down” at the place of God’s feet and “shall know that I the Lord am Thy Saviour and Thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Israel” (Isaiah 60:11-16). Here we have the direct reference to God’s city where men shall worship at His feet; and together with the psalm line repeated constantly during the services which calls us to “bow before his footstool,” we have once again the reference to the Holy Cross (Ps 99:5, 110:1 et al)

We venerate Thy Cross, O Master, and we glorify

Thy holy resurrection

This central hymn of the Elevation of the Cross which lasts for eight days in the Church is sung many times. It replaces the Thrice-Holy during the Divine Liturgy.

Thus, at the elevation of the Cross the Christians make their official rededication to the crucified Lord and pledge their undivided allegiance to him by the adoration of his holy feet nailed to the life-creating Cross. This is the meaning of this holy day of fasting and repentance in the Church today.

From The Orthodox Faith (©The Orthodox Church in America).

Fulfilling Our Christian Vocation, What can we learn from the services?

By Metropolitan Anthony
an address delivered at St Basil's House, London,
continued from the August newsletter

When we say that the Holy Liturgy is the prayer of the Church, this prayer implies the intercessory prayer, the intercessory action of the Son of God who has become the son of Man. It implies the presence, the inspiration, the secret intimations within our heart and our mind and our whole being, of the Holy Spirit.

If within the Liturgy we are confronted with all that happened in Christ for our salvation, then the Liturgy is a prayer of intercession and an act of intercession, an act because intercession means to enter into the heart of a conflict or a tragedy. This is what the Incarnation was.

And it is only from within this act of intercession that the prayers of intercession can rise with power and meaning to the throne of grace.

So in the Divine Liturgy it is the whole Church which is in action, the Father who has given us His Only-begotten son, the beloved One, saying to us, as it were, He is My only One, I give Him to you. I have nothing more to give.. . the son, who comes in an act of sacrificial love to share our destiny, to unite u's with the Father, to bring us back into the fold of divine life, to make us ultimately partakers of the divine nature, and the Holy spirit of God, creative, dynamic, which descends like fire, burning out evil, moulding us into a new race of man.

The Liturgy is the point at which, in the mystery of the sacrificial incarnation and the sacrificial death of Christ, in the glory of His resurrection and His ascension, in the love which unites us to Him, in the gift of the spirit which transforms and transfigures us, the whole Church is bringing forth Christ's intercession for the salvation of the world.

To be continued

HOLINESS

(taken from "Creative Prayer – Daily Readings with
Metropolitan Anthony")

It is very important for the comprehension of holiness to understand that it has two poles: God and the world. Its source, its fulcrum and its content is God; but its point of impact, the place into which it is born, where it develops and also where it is expressed in terms of Christ's

salvation, is the world, this ambiguous world which, on the one hand, was created by God and is the object of such love that the Father gave His only-begotten Son for its salvation, and on the other hand, has fallen into the slavery of evil.

This pole of holiness which relates to the world, therefore, has two aspects: a vision of the world as God willed it, as He loves it, and at the same time asceticism which requires us to disengage ourselves from the world and free the world from the grip of Satan.

This second element, this battle which is our vocation, is part and parcel of holiness. The Desert Fathers, the ascetics of early times did not flee from the world in the sense in which modern man sometimes tries to escape its grip in order to find a haven of security; they set out to conquer the Enemy in battle.

By the grace of God, by the power of the Spirit, they were engaging in combat.

TIMETABLE OF SERVICES AT ST ANDREW'S, HOLBORN

(all services are celebrated in Church Slavonic and English)

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 5 th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 6 th	10:30am	Liturgy II Cor. 1:21-2:4; Matt. 22:1-14
Saturday 19 th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 20 th	10:30am	Liturgy Nativity of the Mother of God Phil 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

OCTOBER

Saturday 3 rd	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 4 th	10:30am	Liturgy

II Cor 9:6-11; Matt 18:23-35

Saturday 17 th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 18 th	10:30am	Liturgy

Gal 1: 11-19; Luke 6:31-36

Saturday 31 st	5:00pm	Vigil
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NOVEMBER

Sunday 1 st	10:30am	Liturgy
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Gal 6:11-18; Luke 8:5-15

Saturday 14 th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 15 th	10:30am	Liturgy

Eph 2:14-22; Luk 8:26-39

Parish of St Peter and St Paul worshipping at St Peter's Church, Clapham Manor Street, London SW4 6BX,
<http://www.orthodoxclapham.org>

Community of Saint Simeon and Saint Anna, St Mary's Church, Redbourn, Herts, AL3 7NL. (Contact James Angus on james@angusfamily.org.uk)

Next services:

There is no service in September, October tbc

Community of all Saints of the British Isles, Bromley at Bromley Quaker Meeting House, 46 Ravensbourne Rd, Bromley BR1 1HP (Contact Father Stefan Strekopytov (07424 724 975) st.strekopytov@gmail.com)

<http://www.orthodoxbromley.org>

Saturday 26 th September	9:30am	Liturgy
Saturday 24 th October	9:30am	Liturgy
Saturday 28 th November	9:30am	Liturgy

The Parish of the Dormition of the Mother of God
worshipping at St Andrew Holborn is under the
omophorion of His Eminence Nikitas, Archbishop of
Thyateira and Great Britain, and is part of the Deanery
within the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain

(website: <https://thyateira-deanery.uk>)

(website: <http://www.thyateira.org.uk>).

Parish Clergy:

Archpriest Stéphane Maikovsky

Priest Stefan Strekopytov

Deacon Eugene Gafton

Church Warden

Pierre Kovalev

Parish Website: www.dormition.org.uk