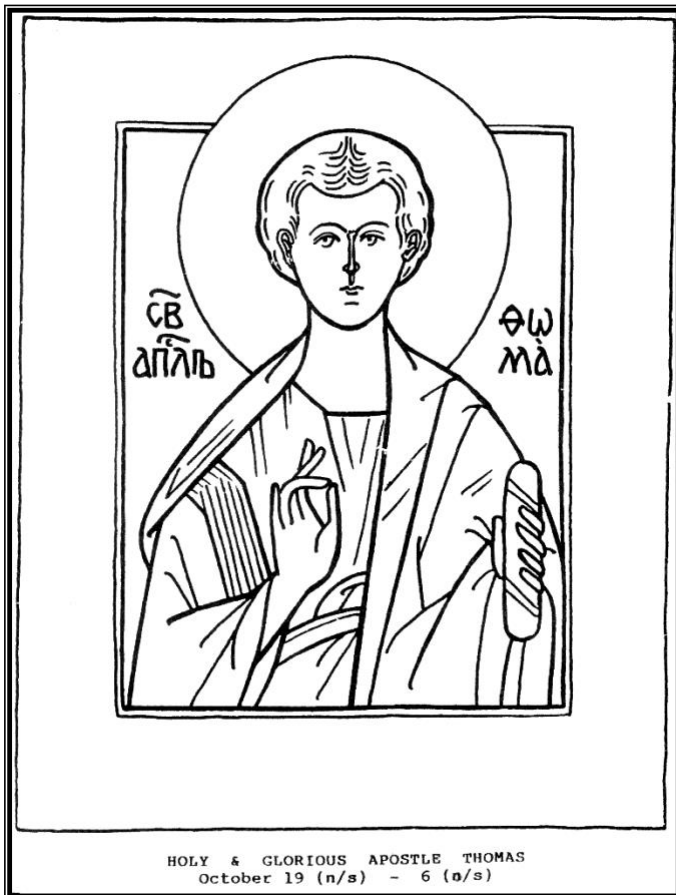


**The Dormition of the Mother of
God (EP) Parish Newsletter
October 2026**



SERMON GIVEN BY FATHER JOHN SEPTEMBER 2011

“The Beheading of John the Baptist”

The Crucifixion of Christ and the Beheading of John the Baptist, although separate events, share certain features. Both events would seem to prove that the two men involved were failures and both were punished publicly and severely to prove it. The two instruments of execution were the sword and the cross.

The official who greatly desired the execution, however, was one man, Herod Antipas, his name synonymous with every sort of debauchery. The palace was rife with intrigue and murder... and it would be a brave man who would dare to speak out. John the Baptist was such a man.

By right and custom John should have followed his father, Zacharias, as a priest of the Temple but we are given no indication of when or why he chose otherwise. We meet him in the desert, dressed in rough camel hair clothes and carrying a staff and we see that his main work is preaching – but then we come a bit unstuck – preaching what? Not what Jesus preached – they had probably never heard one another – no, what John preached was straight out of the books of the prophets, especially Isaiah, in which the Jewish people are warned about the punishments due to those who disobey God. The people flocked to see and hear him – for several reasons: one was that he had supposedly risen from the dead – this was a feature of Jewish spirituality long before Christ’s

speaking of it and the people believed that such things had happened... and that it had happened to John... so they wanted to see him. There were other reasons the people came to him, some so simple they have been forgotten. For one example: almost all ritual in the Jewish Temple was for men and boys, but John was baptising men and women... unheard of! His baptism of repentant sinners is how they spoke of him then and it is how we refer to him now. John the Baptist, the first saint to be named after we address the Mother of God.

The Beheading of John the Baptist is one of the most vile episodes recorded in the New Testament. Seated at dinner the king calls for entertainment and the daughter of Herodias is ordered to dance. Salome knows the drill and asks her mother what she should seek in repayment and her mother says: "Ask for the head of John the Baptist on a charger." And so it was carried out. The severed head was then borne into the dining area for all to see and as Livy, the Latin historian has written: "Cruel and atrocious crime, committed in the midst of food and drink."

Perhaps Herod Antipas was ashamed since early records tell us that he allowed the body to be taken away for decent burial and that many were converted to the early Christian movement because of the event. (St Jerome's writings)

We, in our modern day, know all of this because it is a matter of historical fact. Jesus Himself, when asked questions about John, said:

“What did you go out to see? A reed, shaken in the wind? A man clothed in soft garments? Those in soft garments live in the houses of kings and princes. What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. Amen, I say to you, of man that is born of women there is none greater than John the Baptist.”

We are all fairly clear in our minds now about this great saint – Christ’s opinion, the evangelist’s opinion, the Church’s opinion – and we probably would all say Amen. But we must always remember, however, that Jesus did not choose John – it was the choice of His heavenly Father. Jesus did, however, choose Judas – Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him. Did Christ, who was God, not know that here was the follower who would tell the soldiers where to find Him? No theologian nor historian could say for sure on this – some would insist that Christ knew that this was the man who would betray Him, but also knew that this was foreordained by God the Father and that meeting John and Judas and Pilate for that matter were part of God’s plan that He could not escape, did not really wish to escape despite His prayer that: “this cup should be taken away”... as He said “Not My will but Thine be done.”

John was beheaded mainly because he knew of and spoke against Herodias and her daughter, of the vile state of Herod’s court and household and above all the flouting of God’s law on every front.

Christ and John the Baptist knew the consequences but did not hesitate to proclaim the truth and warn society of what the outcome would be. It is also our duty to live by the law and to speak of the sadness that would be the result of not doing so.

Amen

**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 September newsletter

We can compare our presence in the Liturgy to the presence of the apostles on the Mount of the Transfiguration, face to face with Christ, shining with divine light revealed in glory, and we may say, 'It is good for us to be here', as Peter said on the Mount. But in the Liturgy there is more than what the apostles underwent on the Mount of Transfiguration. On the Mount of Transfiguration something happened to Christ, or rather His apostles saw Him as He always was and as He could not be seen habitually. But they remained the same. Only they had experienced something which they could never forget. They had seen the divine glory, the resplendence of God shining in Christ and through Him. But they did not partake in this glory. In the Holy Communion service something greater happens because we are now in a world in which Christ died, Christ rose, Christ ascended to His Father, Christ sent us His Holy, life-

giving spirit, and we are united to the mystery of Christ, we commune with the gift of the Holy Spirit as the apostles could not yet commune either with their Master or with the Spirit on the Mount of Transfiguration. And yet there is something in common between the two experiences. We could also say: "It is good for us to be here." Why return to the tensions, the turmoil, the pain and tragedy which holds the world in its grip? And to us also Christ says 'No. let us go back into the valley'. At the end of the Roman Mass as it was in the past there were words of great significance: 'Ite, missa est': Go, this is the dismissal - the dismissal meaning 'It is time. for the gathered community to scatter; it is time to leave this place and to go into the world.'

A modern French writer, Cesbron, has translated these words as 'Go, here begins your mission'. This is correct in substance: the time has come for you to be sent out. This echoes so clearly the words of Christ spoken to His disciples when He first appeared to them on the night of His resurrection when He spoke to them and said: 'As my Father has sent Me even so do I send you'- on the same terms, to give your life that others may live, possessed of eternal life so that you need not be afraid of losing your temporary life, on the same terms as an act of love in which, through which, for the sake of which you will lay down your lives for others. When we receive Communion this is what we should be aware of, that we accept the community of life with the Lord Jesus Christ, a total community of life. We are always open to receive from Him an increase of light and of faith, of spiritual

understanding and of love and joy. We are always prepared to receive from Him power, ability to partake in life eternal. But when we have shared with Him this eternal life, when we have become through communion to the Body and Blood consubstantial with Him, when, however incipiently, we have become this new humanity, then we must be prepared to walk into the world on the terms on which Christ came into the world to share with Him His historical destiny. We know what this historical destiny was. As He was ascending towards Jerusalem to meet His last trials, the misunderstanding of the people, the boasting and the denial of Peter, the treason of Judas, the loneliness in which He was left by John and James and Peter and the other apostles, ultimately the agony in the Garden and the death on the Cross, the dereliction which fills His words, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me', as He was going towards His tragic destiny He spoke of it to His disciples and ended with one word: And on the third day I will rise. And then James and John, forgetting all the tragedy He had been speaking about, clutching at the words of glory and victory, asked Him that when He comes as a king that they should sit on His right and left hand in His Kingdom. They, like us, overlooked the cost and longed for the glory, indeed they dismissed the cost, left it to Christ and asked for the fruits but not for the bitterness of it. And Christ turned to them and asked them. 'Are you prepared to drink the cup which I am going to drink' the bitter cup of suffering and death and dereliction - rejection by men and dereliction from God? Are you prepared to be merged in the ordeal

which shall be Mine? And when they said they were, Christ gave them a promise. not a warning, not a menacing warning, but a promise: 'My cup you shall share with Me, you shall drink it. The ordeal to which I am going you shall partake in'. And this He says to each of us. The Liturgy which unites us in such a way to the Living God is also the point at which we are sent into the world as Christ was sent into it by the Father. Unless we accept the Liturgy on such terms we will be the kind of Christians which we are so constantly: beggars and not givers. We will need to come back again and again begging for more support, for more joy, more consolation, more grace, more mercy, more forgiveness. At the turn of the first and second centuries St Justin the Martyr, who proved that he believed what he said by his martyrdom, said that it would be enough, if we were faithful, to receive once in our lives baptism, the gift of the spirit and communion, and being thus united to the whole mystery of the Church, we could then live out this mystery without ever coming back for more. Far too frequently Christianity has become parasitic on God. parasitic on the church, weak, begging, and not because people in our days are not endowed with the same grace, but because we have lost sight of our vocation to be as the Church of God – 'the Body of Christ broken for the salvation of the world', to use a phrase of Patriarch Alexis of Moscow. This is our vocation. Our vocation is not yet to live on the Mount of Transfiguration, it is not yet to enter into the eternal peace of God. Our vocation is to be those people who can give all they are and all they have, that others may

find their way into the knowledge and the love of God.
Amen

Saint LUKE the EVANGELIST

18th/31st October

When we hear of Saint Luke, our first thought is of his writings: his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. He is the third of the Evangelists, a Gentile from Antioch in Asia Minor of pagan parents, who became a physician. He is the only Gentile whose writings are recorded in the Bible. One tradition brings him to Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion and identifies him with Cleopas' companion on the road to Emmaus on Easter Day, meeting the Lord and recognising Him when breaking bread with Him. Another tradition places him in Thebes in about the year 42, encountering Saint Paul there and accompanying him on his further journeys. He remained in Troas to build up the infant congregation there, and joined Paul again on his last journeys, being in Rome at the time of Paul's arrest and death. He then travelled around the north of the Mediterranean, in Italy and Macedonia, before becoming Bishop of Thebes, where he ended his earthly life being crucified on an olive tree. Many years later, in the time of Constantine the Great's son Constantius (C4th), his relics were taken to Constantinople and placed in the Church of the Holy Apostles.

His Gospel contains many of the tenderest and most-loved passages. Many of the Nativity stories are from his pen, and some of the most vivid parables: the Sower, the

Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son among many others. He strongly emphasises Christ's compassion for sinners and records most fully the role of women in the Gospel narrative. Tradition has it that he knew the Mother of God and painted an image of her in her lifetime. When she saw it, she said: 'May the grace of Him who was born of me be upon this image.' Saint Luke painted many other images of her and also of the Apostles, and is believed to be the first iconographer, and he became the patron saint of all icon painters. It is fitting that his Feast Day falls very soon after the commemoration of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, that took such a stand for the veneration of the holy icons.

Mother Maria

**PATRIARCHAL GALA BANQUET IN HONOUR OF
HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP NIKITAS OF THYATEIRA
AND GREAT BRITAIN**

The long title is almost the whole story of the event ... well, not quite! On Tuesday 15 September – the feast day of St Nikitas the Goth – a contingent of members of the Deanery joined members of the Archdiocese from all over the country to celebrate our Archbishop's nameday. About 1,000 people assembled in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Park Lane: they included twelve members of Holborn Parish, led by Fr Stéphane Maykovsky. We were presided over by His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, alongside Archbishop Nikitas and other bishops including Maximos of Melitene, Raphael of

Ilion and Iakovos of Claudiopolis, as well as ambassadors and other dignitaries.

The Patriarch entered the Ballroom dramatically to the sound of bagpipes, and was welcomed by Archon Louis Loizou, one of the sponsors of the event, Archbishop Nikitas expressed his greetings to the Patriarch and to all of us who had come to help him celebrate his nameday. He told us a little about St Nikitas, a Goth who lived in the 4th century and was martyred by fire by his own people. Then the Patriarch gave a short address before blessing the food and inviting us to eat.

We were treated to a delicious, four-course meal. The starter was a baked spinach, feta and roasted pumpkin tart, with garnishes, then came slow-roasted lamb shoulder, very succulent, accompanied by fondant potato, with chopped vegetables in a garlic and rosemary jus. For dessert, a warm, mixed-berry brioche pudding, accompanied by mascarpone ice. Quite delicious! With final coffee and petit fours, we felt we had feasted royally.

When the dessert dishes had been cleared, there was a general *mêlée* as people made to find acquaintances at other tables, many of whom were from different parts of the country, whom they had not seen perhaps for years. It was one of those situations where every human being you encounter is a mere obstacle until you find the one you are seeking. Then your faces light up with the joy of meeting again.

We were called to order by Archon Loizou and sat down to attend the speeches. Archbishop Nikitas spoke first. He welcomed the Patriarch to London, then spoke about St Nikitas and his martyrdom “beyond the Danube”. He explained how our Archdiocese is part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and urged us to support the Patriarchate and the Patriarch, pointing out that Patriarch Bartholomew is the longest ever serving Ecumenical Patriarch, having been in that position for thirty-five years.

His Eminence drew attention to the remarkable growth of the Orthodox community in the United Kingdom in recent years and the large numbers of people embracing the faith and coming forward for baptism. He also made reference to the newly-renovated Archdiocesan Chapel, which he had shown to His All-Holiness, particularly pointing out the icons of British saints. He warmly invited us all to visit the Chapel.

His All-Holiness, speaking in a deep, resonant voice and near-perfect English, thanked Archbishop Nikitas for his welcome to “this beautiful city of London”, and expressed his paternal love for the clergy and people of our Archdiocese. He extolled our Archbishop both for his leadership of the Archdiocese, and for his other important work in combatting modern slavery. He expressed his appreciation of how the Archdiocese has grown during the Archbishop’s time here, especially in the numbers of young people as exemplified by those visible at the Banquet.

An exchange of gifts between the Archbishop and the Patriarch brought the speeches to an end.

During the dinner, there was a performance of traditional Greek songs from Kaiti Koullia and her small band. Their music was beautiful, but the volume was too loud.

Eventually, the Patriarch took his leave accompanied by the members of the top table. With that, the vast room gradually emptied, and we made our way home. It had been an edifying but also very enjoyable and memorable evening.

James Heywood

Nominations open for elected lay representatives to the Parish Council and Deanery Assembly

Lisa von Schlippe

Nominations are now open to fill two posts on the Parish Council, and two posts of parish representatives to the Deanery Assembly. All those who are on the parish electoral roll can be nominated for either of these bodies: each candidate needs both a proposer and a seconder. If there are more candidates than places, we will hold elections at the parish AGM.

What is the Parish Council?

The Parish Council is a body which consists of both clergy and laity. Some lay people are members because of the role they have (e.g. Church Warden, Treasurer, Parish Welfare Officer). The other lay members are elected by those on the parish electoral roll.

The role of the Parish Council is to encourage full lay participation in all the practical aspects of Parish life. There is wide scope for people to participate in Parish life – including baking prosphora and altar breads, setting up the church, bringing food to share after the Liturgy, serving food and teas, cleaning the candle stands, singing, serving in the altar, setting up and packing up before and after services, maintaining the parish website, contributing to the Newsletter, mending vestments, staying in touch with fellow-parishioners, maintaining the Electoral Roll, arranging elections, proofreading, arranging flowers, and contributing new ideas to strengthen parish life! The members of the Parish Council are also a conduit for parishioners to make suggestions about the life of the parish. The Parish Council meets 3-4 times a year. The meetings may be online or in person.

The Parish Council members whose terms are now ending are Xenia Bowlby and Ginka Mastoridis.

What is the Deanery Assembly?

The Deanery Assembly is made up of all the clergy of the Deanery to which our parish belongs and two lay representatives from each parish and eucharistic community. It normally meets once a year, and receives reports from the Dean, Treasurer, on safeguarding matters, the Deanery conference and children's camp, and other initiatives. Whenever his diary allows, it is chaired by Archbishop Nikitas.

The Deanery Assembly elects the lay members of the Deanery Executive, the Deanery Treasurer and Secretary.

The Dormition Parish representatives to the Deanery Assembly whose terms are now ending are Anne von Bennigsen and Lisa von Schlippe.

TIMETABLE OF SERVICES AT ST ANDREW'S, HOLBORN

(all services are celebrated in Church Slavonic and English)

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

DECEMBER

Saturday 5 th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 6 th	10:30am	Liturgy

Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple
Heb.9:1-7; Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

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:

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

Saturday 31st October 9:30am Liturgy

Saturday 28th 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