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



THE DORMITION OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE MOTHER OF GOD & EVER VIRGIN MARY - August 15 (o/s) - 28 (n/s)

Sermon by Father Stéphane on 19th July 2026

Today's Gospel presents us with two profound encounters with the Lord: the healing of the two blind men who cry out, "Son of David, have mercy on us," and the deliverance of the mute man oppressed by a demon. These moments reveal not only Christ's divine power, but also the way He responds to our faith, persistence, and compassion.

The blind men follow Christ even though they cannot see Him. Their physical blindness does not prevent them from recognising who He truly is, as they call Him "Son of David, have mercy on us" acknowledging Him as the Messiah. This cry echoes our own Jesus prayer. Their plea is humble but insistent. They do not demand a miracle; they beg for mercy.

Christ asks them a question that He also asks each of us: "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Their healing is not mechanical; it is personal. It requires trust. And when they answer, "Yes, Lord," He touches their eyes and says, "According to your faith let it be to you." Their sight is restored, not only physically but spiritually. They see the world anew, illuminated by the mercy of God.

Then we meet the man who is mute because he is tormented by a demon. Christ drives out the darkness, and the man speaks. The crowd marvels, but the Pharisees accuse. We note that the same miracle produces two responses: wonder and rejection. This is still true today. Christ's presence either softens the hearts or exposes their hardness.

The Gospel concludes with the image of Christ going through all the cities and villages, teaching, proclaiming the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every infirmity. We hear the reason for His tireless ministry in the verse that follows the reading of the day:

“He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.”

It is compassion that leads Him to the Cross. And it is compassion that He extends to us in every Liturgy, every confession, every moment of prayer. Christ sees our weariness, our scattered thoughts and our struggles. And He comes to heal and to restore.

So, the Gospel asks a few things of us. Firstly, to cry out for mercy with the persistence of the blind men. Even when we cannot see clearly, we must keep following Christ, trusting that He hears us. Secondly, to believe that He is able to heal us. Not only our physical ailments, but our spiritual blindness, our fears, our sins and our broken relationships. Thirdly, to allow His compassion to shape our own hearts. The world is full of people who are weary and feel abandoned. Christ brings mercy where there is hurt, and hope where there is despair.

May the Lord grant us the faith to cry out and the courage to believe. And may His healing shine through us into the world.

Amen

The Dormition of the Mother of God

Now the summer has almost come to its end; fruits and flowers are beautiful; the leaves are turning gold and red, yet they are still alive. Nature has fulfilled itself, and everything seems to have reached its perfection. And in the midst of this beautiful world, we celebrate , in a joyful way, the death of Mary, and affirm in our hymns that she has not been abandoned in death, for so great was her love, so great was the power of the light she had in herself and of her life with God, that she was taken out of death by Christ; and in this, her assumption, the

resurrection of all of us began. The feast reveals her as the first fruit of Christ's Resurrection. But what happened to her happens to us; her way

is our way. The contemplation of all the feasts of Mary is the contemplation of our own life through her, the perfect human being.

Father Alexander Schmemann

A prayer to the Mother of God

From the Moleben celebrated in her honour

O our most blessed Queen, O Mother of God our hope, guardian of orphans, intercessor for strangers, joy of the sorrowful, protectress of the wronged: thou seest our misfortune, thou seest our affliction; help us, for we are infirm; feed us, for we are strangers. Thou knowest our offence: absolve it as thou wilt, for we have no other help beside thee, no other intercessor, nor good consoler, except thee, O Mother of God. Do thou protect and preserve us unto the ages of ages.

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 June/July newsletter

St Ephraim of Syria, speaking of baptism, says that when a child or an adult is baptised God puts at the core of his being all the kingdom of God, and the task of man is to dig into the deep so that he reaches it, unearths it as one would a treasure, and finds it as the pearl of great price.

In the communion service there is, however. one feature which is unique to it. All the prayers are offered to the Father. And they are not offered

as most prayers in Western celebrations, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, because in His high-priestly conversation with His disciples Christ promised that His disciples would not need to ask of the Father in His name because the Father loves them, because they themselves have recognised and loved the Only-begotten son, so we do not have this most beautiful and very mysterious expression which the West uses so constantly: 'This we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is a prayer which is offered directly to the Father. And yet how mistaken we would be if we thought that we did so `by-passing the Lord, speaking in our own name as when we offer prayers from our sinful lips, from the twilight of our hearts and our minds, in so many other services: morning and evening prayers, matins, vespers, the hours.

Something greater than this happens in the Holy Liturgy, It is the Church which brings forth these prayers, and these prayers are the prayers of Christ Himself. In the situation which we occupy in the Holy Eucharistic Liturgy we are the body of Christ. We are the living limbs, united to the head inseparably, totally. When we think of the Church we tend to think of it - and indeed this is the definition which we find in the beginning of more than one catechism - that the Church is the body of believers knit together by the community of one faith, by the partaking of one sacramental gift, by the structuring of the Church around one unbroken hierarchy. But these are only outer signs which we observe. The Church is infinitely deeper and greater than this. The Church is the place where God and man not only meet, but unite. and unite in the deepest sense of forming a kinship, of belonging together without confusion and yet without separatedness. The Church is not only the visible body of the believers, however sinful, but it is a body directed Godwards. The Church is a mysterious reality simultaneously and equally human and divine. The firstborn of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ, true man and

not only true God. Among the names of the sons of men one name stands out radically and gloriously, that of Jesus of Nazareth. And with

Him, because in Him the plenitude, the fulness of the Godhead abides in the flesh, God Himself is present in the Church.

The gift of Pentecost is an abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. If it is true that each one of us is called to be the temple of the Holy Spirit, it is also true that the Church in its entirety is the place where the spirit of God dwells. In the spirit, in Christ. through this mysterious pervading presence of the spirit which effects our oneness with Christ, we become sons and daughters of the Living God, and God the Father is invisibly, mysteriously present. we see in the Church more than our own sinful, broken humanity. we see in it the humanity of Christ, already the beginning of a new humanity, and we see God -One in the Holy Trinity dynamically alive, creatively present, united with us, at one with us.

Deanery Conference in May 2026 at High Leigh by Ruth Nares

This year's conference, whose theme was 'Peace: Peace I leave with you: My peace I give unto you', was markedly different from last year's one. For a start, last year was, for some reason, undersubscribed. There was even some talk as to if or how it could continue. This year, and under Edith Reyntien's new leadership, it was oversubscribed. Fewer spaces had been reserved at High Leigh, with quite a number of people hence unable to book. (Next year, which will be at a sister centre, Highgate House in Creaton, Northamptonshire, with virtually no limitation on spaces!)

It also had a quite different tone. A grand mix, of 'oldies', who've been part of our Deanery (and previously Sourozh), for many decades, and quite a number of more newly received, often younger, more new Orthodox, from all around the parishes in the Deanery. This gives a new

flavour, allowing these latterly more recent members the space and context to find themselves and ease in.

The website (https://thyateira-deanery.uk/the-conference) has been given a big overhaul, thanks largely to Edith, with the help of carefully thought-out input from some of us). It gives emphasis to our history, origins and form and what these mean. Her organization of these proceeds under headings of the Vision, 'Sobornost vs Democracy, Creating structures, and Making things new. It's about the foundations of who we are and what, in a sense, gives us a certain uniqueness within Orthodoxy. Our gratitude is in our heritage, and ultimately what we do with that.

On that note and on our background, the first talk on the Friday evening was appropriately on Metropolitan Anthony himself, given by Gill Crow, previously Diocesan Secretary of the Diocese of Sourozh under him. She showed the way in which his vision had animated his diocese – that of "an open, outward-looking Orthodoxy, not hidebound by rules and/or clericalism", which has carried forward in our Deanery. She told little stories, and those of us fortunate enough to have grown up with him were able to make further comments.

Saturday morning's talk was with Fr. Antonios Kakalis. Sadly unable to be with us, he gave it instead in a filmed recording, sitting in the beautiful church of the Community of St. Nicholas in Dunblane - a place in itself full of peace.

This followed on well from Gill's previous talk: He referenced Metroplitan Anthony, as a refugee, who "carried Sobornost (or 'spiritual conciliarity') with him". In illustrating this he said "Peace is not about me and you – but a community seeking transfiguration together. "A Christ-centred being together." He reflected on the image of Freedom within the Community. The "Eucharistic togetherness that flows into daily life through serving others and building solidarity." Our own

experience of the bonds formed between ourselves and fellow parishioners also formd a bedrock, and is foundational in our being. One

can well say I think, and as Fr. Antonios put it, we are "an embodied witness to the Church's universal, Eucharistic unity."

Scattered as we are, and as Deacon Philip Scorer commented following this talk, it is "the community that holds the parish together rather than the place."

Mother Sarah, a nun who is part of the parish in Bath, gave a talk that could be said to be the bright star of the conference. I have to give apologies here to other speakers: having only been asked to report on the conference afterwards – had I known - I would have taken more assiduous notes on all the talks. The space given to each is somewhat uneven: somehow I made many more on Mother Sarah's talk.

Titled 'Transmitting Peace – she spoke about the teachings of Elder Tadej of Serbia. Via his teachings she reflected on "how life depends on the kinds of thoughts we nurture". (If we are caught in the whirlpool of our thoughts we can have no tranquility). About how we need to be vigilant, and make a choice about what is going on in our thoughts. "Everything, both good and evil, comes from our thoughts…" About the thoughts and desires we breed, and how "we influence others with our thoughts," and "If our thoughts are good, we radiate to those around us. Divine harmony, peace, and spreads quiet…" (whereas if we spread evil thoughts we radiate that).

She spoke of his remarkable gift – he was Christocentric in his teaching, in simple language, "with no religious jargon". He would choose language the hearer could understand. He never created any mystique about prayer life – his teaching was applied to people in their own lives. He also underlined that peace depends on ascetic effort, but also that in loving ourselves, "we can all be good if within ourselves we unite with God. Without God it is not possible to love oneself (or our enemies)".

At the same time, he does not advocate “a naïve cheerfulness”. Elder Tadej had to struggle – his was a nervous disposition, and he fully

acknowledged suffering. His life was not according to the understanding of the world. His bottom line was that Love is the most powerful defence: everything is defeated by Love.

Unfortunately Archbishop Nikitas was unable to be with us this year. But in his place he sent us his ‘emissary’ (formally titled External Relations Officer for the Archdiocese)– John Shinkwin, who arrived for our early morning Liturgy, and one might say was a breath of fresh air. (He’s Irish!) He also delivered a message from the Archbishop which I will return to. Meanwhile we took part in a truly wonderful Liturgy – with Lisa von Schlippe superlatively conducting a very fulsome choir. It was also a great opportunity for singers from the other parishes, to join in singing in the tradition of our many decades in the Cathedral under our own Fr. Michael Fourtunatto (continuing nowadays at St. Andrews’ Holborn). This gave a real taste for many and felt truly valuable, as well as being such a joy.

After the Liturgy, John Shinkwin read to us the Archbishop’s letter, the latter having asked him to read to us a part of it *twice*. This consisted of three points:

- The Deanery is a distinctive part of the Diocese
- The Diocese is changing, and the Deanery has an important role in these changes.
- Let us not define ourselves in opposition to others.

What he apparently meant was that we are regarded and valued. The percentage of parishes doing their services in English are mainly outside of London. (London parishes are more Greek). But that there is a great

demand, especially with those who are from Eastern European countries, (eg from Bulgaria or Ukraine) who want to hear Slavonic sung. The diocese is becoming much more diverse.

As Fr. Stéphane recently told us – the Archbishop is being very positive about us! With many new people coming to our services and joining our communities, Archbishop Nikitas wants to make the Diocese (and Deanery) truly international. And he is happy to have us and with our services being in both Slavonic and English. It's very nice to hear some good news!

An array of workshops took place on both the Saturday and Sunday afternoons, with a variety for people to choose from. These offered a space for questions, exchange and discussion – allowing for people to open up in smaller groups.

The following – again somewhat unevenly - notes the leaders and very brief comments on each, in no particular order.

Deacon Philip Scorer – on Friendships and Relationships in Orthodoxy:
Deacon Philip has grown up immersed in the Orthodox world in the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias in Exeter – his father, the late (much loved) Peter Scorer serving as Deacon there for very many decades before being ordained as Priest.

This was by all accounts a very lively workshop, based on the pronouncement in the Liturgy: "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess", where the clergy, and in some parishes the laity, kiss each other saying:
"Christ is in our midst." (How much do we truly take this on board?), with the reply "He is and ever shall be." The question posed in this exchange is Who are we embracing? To whom are we expressing our love?

And ‘How does the Church, being Orthodox, affect relationships, within a church community and outside of one? Very pertinent questions.Tony

and Kate Hearn, long time parishioners of the Bristol church of the Nativity of God, where Tony is choir Master. Their starting point reflected a part of the above one. Being an Orthodox Christian in an Orthodox Community in a non-Orthodox environment.

Anthony Brighton’s workshop, along with server Sophrony Bibby – was to be an introduction to the Jesus Prayer, with reflections to ponder.

Some people may have liked to partake in doing the Jesus Prayer, and learning with Sophrony how to tie a prayer-rope knot. A meditative and practical way in itself of focusing the mind.

(Anthony ran the well-stocked bookshop (books from Clapham Parish) along with his beautifully made and varied reproductions of Icons).

Fr. Constantine Litvinenko, a University Lecturer in Physics and Mathematics, having studied at St. Serge Theological Institute in Paris, is Priest-in-Charge of the Eucharistic Community of the Holy Trinity in Guildford. His workshop explored the practical aspects of the sacrament of Confession, addressing what that is, why it is needed how to prepare for it, and what the expected outcome is.
Many people said they found this to be very helpful.

James Johnson studied Theology at Kings College London, and then Late Antique & Byzantine Studies. He is a Hansard reporter as well as part-time lay Orthodox chaplain there. (And a regular Holborn parishioner with his wife Anna and their three beautiful children). He acted as a ‘Micro-workshop Host to a smaller group, deliberately without specific topic where he oversaw a broad-ranging discussion driven by the participants.

Kelsey Cheshire's workshop, along with Andy Sherwood (Godson of our Fr. Michael Fourtunatto), and now parishioner in the Braithwaite parish, Keswick, under Fr. Antonios as well as Fr. David Gill, was on Metropolitan Anthony, with the title 'Peace Through Love is Hard Won'.

We read texts from Metropolitan Anthony's talks and watched two films of him. It was very well attended. Deacon Philip Scorer shared very movingly how he was at times overwhelmed with the love of Christ.

Edith Reyntiens gave a workshop titled 'Being in the Church'.
She presented another, different way of looking at being in the church, simply by making the point that as Orthodox in this country, our Deanery parishes have very few opportunities to allow us to stand in the eschaton, with all the walls painted to reflect the fulfillment of time when all is in all. As a result, she comments, we are being what she termed 'protestantised' by our ('normally') having to worship in a church that is in the space of temporal time rather than eternal time. Being an icon painter herself, she showed a collection of slides of painted interiors of churches to illustrate this, and there ensued a good discussion about what this difference does to us. It's an interesting and relevant idea. (Perhaps we might also think on what this may do to the churches we use or share with our Anglican friends!)

(In this respect I feel we are fortunate worshipping at St. Andrew, Holborn Church (along with its Christopher Wren spacious quality of light): it holds the large Orthodox crucifix, commissioned and installed by Archdeacon Lyle Dennen (Anglican but wholly *sympatique* to Orthodoxy) former Vicar of this church – in memory of the Beslan massacre. (As a point of interest, this church has been a place of worship [initially as a wooden church] since 951 - before the Schism! With Roman remains found when the crypt was excavated, it could possibly be much earlier. It was restored after being bombed and gutted during the Blitz in 1941)

Back to the Conference here – our last talk was given by Karin Greenhead, on Sunday.

Whilst Karin's talk (titled "Not as the World Giveth, do I give unto you") was wide-ranging - sprinkled profusely with scriptural (both Old and New Testament) and liturgical references or quotes - repeatedly bringing us back to these sources. She began by asking us to sit for a minute and recall a time when we felt truly at peace, when all was 'right'. She asked the question "Is freedom from discord the same as peace…" She cited

Metropolitan Philaret (d.1867) of Moscow's prayer at the beginning of the day "Grant me to greet the coming day in peace", and of how (our own) wounds can be a part of our own Gifts – sometimes giving the ability to read the Other.

She referenced the conditions for peace: "There is no peace without righteousness…" the latter being a difficult word currently I think, but meaning 'right relationship'. "The work of righteousness will be peace." And asking what do we understand by being friends of God.

In another sense we are also called to fight for both Justice and Peace. Citing St. Paul, who reminds us to take courage –of the need to be ready, and of a 'sound mind'. Also how rejoicing can be a medicine (see Proverbs 17:22), but also in protecting oneself, as in chapter 3 of Paul's commanding letter to the Colossians. Putting on the armour of God as well as praying in the Spirit as a part of defence . (Likewise in Ephesians 6, the 'belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness. The shoes of peace, the sword of the spirit, the helmet of Salvation.)

Again asking what is the way back, as 1 Corinthians 12 – referencing the body – the body of Christ and members individually. Our gifts being

given for the benefit of all. She quoted Fr. Andrew Louth: “If we don’t take up our Gifts, nobody else can.”

I wonder if some of the above relates to her reference to ‘entanglement’ found in quantum physics – I would like to know or understand more here!

Sunday evening was merry, with the children putting on a wonderful and action-packed play about Saint Panteleimon, (appropriately, the “All-healing”), followed by poems being read, songs and musical recitals and more. Too many to mention, but if allowed - a special mention to Andy Sherwood on violin and Karen on piano – a very happy rendition. Likewise Fr. David Gill’s capitulation with “Mud, Mud Glorious Mud’ – in his own inimitable way - but impossible not to join in! Unfortunately due to being in the marquee whilst the Hall is being refurbished, we had an 11pm curfew.

We missed the Pote family this year – sadly unable to come due to limits on numbers – we look forward to that next year.

We cannot not mention – that this year was to be the last in terms of all the practical aspects of organizing for conference, on the part of Carol Graves. Her tireless work and input has been of inestimable value for decades. A big *Thank you* to her, for *everything*. Again, too much to list. One might almost say - what does she not do.

Some of us had to leave early on Monday morning, and missed the ‘summing up’.

In other years we used to have a ‘round table’ at this time, propagating reflections and further thoughts – both for taking away and for going forward.

Taken as a whole, I felt this year’s conference was a ‘healing’ affair, with a keen sense of potential going forward. As in Archbishop Nikitas’ message, the Diocese is changing, and likewise our Deanery: a growing

number of new people are being received into our parishes and communities. We have an enormously rich heritage, stemming from who we are, largely in our history, origins and form, in growing up with Metropolitan Anthony. What we all need to learn I think is better listening to one another. With our roots established in the fertile soil of

our tradition, and whilst focused on Christ our God, we have the creative capacity to be open, receptive. We each – 'And each and all' - have a lot to give.

TIMETABLE OF SERVICES AT ST ANDREW'S, HOLBORN
(all services are celebrated in Church Slavonic and English)

AUGUST

Saturday 15th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 16th	10:30am	Liturgy The Transfiguration Romans 10:1-10; Matt. 8:28-9:1
Saturday 29th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 30th	10:30am	Liturgy The Dormition of the Mother of God Phil. 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

SEPTEMBER

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

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:

Sunday 2nd August	12:15pm	Liturgy

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)

http://www.orthodoxbromley.org

Saturday 22nd August	9:30am	Liturgy
Saturday 26th September	9:30am	Liturgy
Saturday 24th October	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 (website: https://thyateira-deanery.uk) within the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain (website: http://www.thyateira.org.uk). Parish Clergy:

Archpriest Stéphane Maikovsky
Priest Stefan Strekopytov
Deacon Eugene Gafton
Church Warden
Pierre Kovalev