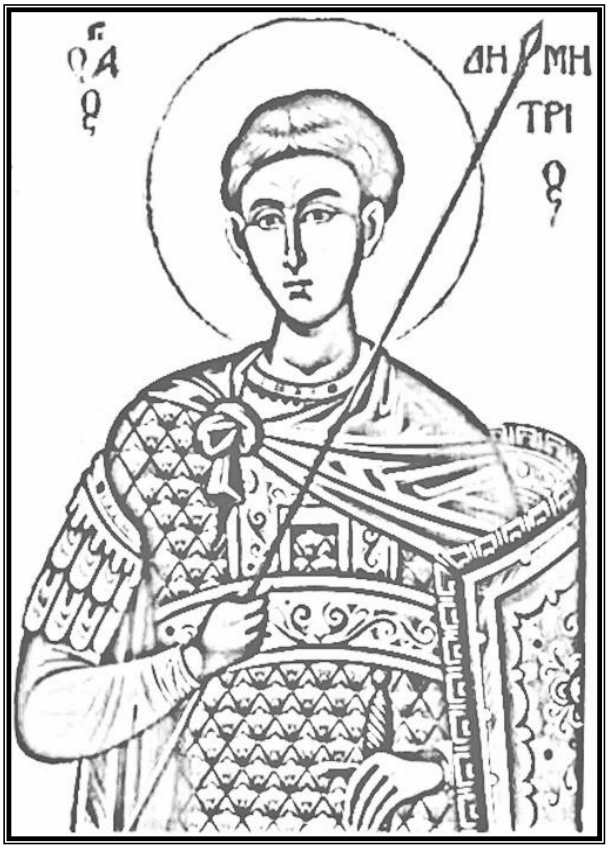
The Dormition of the Mother of God (EP) Parish Newsletter November 2026



Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki
(26 October/8 November)

Sermon by Father Stéphane
18 October 2026 - Luke 6:31-36

Today's Gospel reading contains some of the most beautiful and challenging words that Christ ever spoke: *"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."*

Most of us know this teaching as the Golden Rule. At first sight it seems simple. We all understand what it means to be treated with kindness, patience, fairness, and respect. We know how much a kind word can lift our spirits, and how deeply a cruel word can wound us. Christ asks us to take that understanding and make it the measure of our own behaviour towards others.

But the Lord does not stop there. He goes on to say: *"Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again."* This is where the Gospel moves beyond ordinary human standards. Almost anyone can be kind to those who are kind to them. Almost anyone can love those who love them. But Christ calls His disciples to something greater. He calls us to reflect the very character of God.

The difficulty is that we all encounter people who disappoint us, irritate us, or even hurt us. It might be a difficult colleague, a neighbour, a family member, or someone who has treated us unfairly. Our natural instinct is often to withdraw kindness, to keep score, or to repay hurt with hurt. Yet Christ points us in a completely different direction. He says: *"Be ye therefore* ***merciful, as*** *your Father also is merciful."* He does not

say, "Be right." He does not say, "Win every argument." He says, "Be merciful."

Mercy is one of the clearest signs that God is present in our hearts. Think about how God treats us. Every day we fall short. Every day we forget Him, we neglect Him, we fail to love others as we should. Yet every morning He gives us another day. Every confession is met with forgiveness. Every sincere prayer is heard. God does not love us because we deserve it. He loves us because He is good.

The Christian life is therefore not merely about following rules. It is about becoming more like our heavenly Father. We often imagine that holiness consists in extraordinary spiritual achievements. Yet for most of us holiness is found in very ordinary moments: choosing patience instead of irritation; choosing forgiveness instead of resentment; choosing generosity instead of selfishness; choosing to speak kindly when we could have spoken harshly. These small choices transform the heart. They make us more like Christ.

This week we also celebrated the Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God. The feast reminds us of the vision in Constantinople when the Most Holy Mother of God appeared spreading her veil over the people as a sign of her prayers and protection.

There is a beautiful connection with today's Gospel. The Mother of God does not reserve her love only for the worthy or the successful. Like her Son, she intercedes with compassion for all who come to her. Under her

protecting veil, rich and poor, strong and weak, righteous and sinners alike find mercy. She teaches us what a truly merciful heart looks like.

Every time we ask for her prayers, we are reminded that Christianity is not a religion of calculation but of love. As we leave the church today, let us ask ourselves: how would I like to be treated by others? Christ's answer is simple: then go and treat others in that same way. Our hearts should be generous, forgiving and merciful, not calculating, resentful and judgmental.

Through the prayers of His Most Pure Mother, whose protection we have recently celebrated, may Christ teach us to reflect His love in our own homes, our workplaces, and our daily encounters with one another. If we learn to live in this way, then people will see not merely our kindness, but something of Christ Himself shining through us.

SAINT DEMETRIOS of THESSALONIKI

The Great Martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-gusher of Thessalonica was the son of a Roman proconsul in Thessalonica. Three centuries had elapsed and Roman paganism, spiritually shattered and defeated by the multitude of martyrs and confessors of the Saviour, intensified its persecutions. The parents of St Demetrius were secretly Christians, and he was baptized and raised in the Christian Faith in a secret church in his father’s home.

By the time Demetrius had reached maturity and his father had died, the emperor Galerius Maximian had ascended the throne (305). Maximian, confident in Demetrius' education as well as his administrative and military abilities, appointed him to his father's position as proconsul of the Thessalonica district. The main tasks of this young commander were to defend the city from barbarians and to eradicate Christianity. The emperor's policy regarding Christians was expressed simply, "Put to death anyone who calls on the name of Christ." The emperor did not suspect that by appointing Demetrius he had provided a way for him to lead many people to Christ. Accepting the appointment, Demetrius returned to Thessalonica and immediately confessed and glorified our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of persecuting and executing Christians, he began to teach the Christian Faith openly to the inhabitants of the city and to overthrow pagan customs and idolatry. The compiler of his Life, St Simeon Metaphrastes (November 9), says that because of his teaching zeal he became "a second Apostle Paul" for Thessalonica, particularly since "the Apostle to the Gentiles" once founded at this city the first community of believers (1 Thess. and 2 Thess.).

The Lord also destined St Demetrius to follow the holy Apostle Paul as a martyr. When Maximian learned that the newly-appointed proconsul was a Christian, and that he had converted many Roman subjects to Christianity, the rage of the emperor knew no bounds. Returning from a campaign in the Black Sea region, the emperor

decided to lead his army through Thessalonica, determined to massacre the Christians.

Learning of this, St Demetrius ordered his faithful servant Lupus to distribute his wealth to the poor saying, "Distribute my earthly riches among them, for we shall seek heavenly riches for ourselves." He began to pray and fast, preparing himself for martyrdom.

When the emperor came into the city, he summoned Demetrius, who boldly confessed himself a Christian and denounced the falsehood and futility of Roman polytheism. Maximian gave orders to lock up the confessor in prison. An angel appeared to him, comforting and encouraging him.

Meanwhile the emperor amused himself by staging games in the circus. His champion was a German by the name of Lyaeos. He challenged Christians to wrestle with him on a platform built over the upturned spears of the victorious soldiers. A brave Christian named Nestor went to the prison to his advisor Demetrius and requested a blessing to fight the barbarian. With the blessing and prayers of Demetrius, Nestor prevailed over the fierce German and hurled him from the platform onto the spears of the soldiers, just as the murderous pagan would have done with the Christian. The enraged commander ordered the execution of the holy Martyr Nestor (October 27) and sent a guard to the prison to kill St Demetrius.

At dawn on 26 October, 306 soldiers appeared in the saint's underground prison and ran him through with lances. His faithful servant, St Lupus, gathered up the blood-soaked garment of St Demetrius, and he took the imperial ring from his finger, a symbol of his high status, and dipped it in the blood. With the ring and other holy things sanctified by the blood of St Demetrius, St Lupus began to heal the infirm. The emperor issued orders to arrest and kill him.

The body of the holy Great Martyr Demetrius was cast out for wild animals to devour, but the Christians took it and secretly buried it in the earth.

During the reign of St Constantine (306-337), a church was built over the grave of St Demetrius . A hundred years later, during the construction of a majestic new church on the old spot, the incorrupt relics of the holy martyr were uncovered. Since the seventh century a miraculous flow of fragrant myrrh has been found beneath the crypt of the Great Martyr Demetrius, so he is called "the Myrrh-gusher."

Several times, those venerating the holy wonderworker tried to bring his holy relics, or a part of them, to Constantinople. Invariably, St Demetrius made it clear that he would not permit anyone to remove even a portion of his relics.

It is interesting that among the barbarians threatening the Romans, Slavs occupied an important place, in particular those settling upon the Thessalonian peninsula. Some even believe that the parents of St

Demetrius were of Slavic descent. While advancing towards the city, pagan Slavs were repeatedly turned away by the apparition of a threatening radiant youth, going around on the walls and inspiring terror in the enemy soldiers. Perhaps this is why the name of St Demetrius was particularly venerated among the Slavic nations after they were enlightened by the Gospel. On the other hand, the Greeks dismiss the notion of St Demetrius being a Slavic saint.

The very first pages of the Russian Primary Chronicle, as foreordained by God, is bound up with the name of the holy Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica. The Chronicle relates that when Oleg the Wise threatened the Greeks at Constantinople (907), the Greeks became terrified and said, "This is not Oleg, but rather St Demetrius sent upon us from God." Russian soldiers always believed that they were under the special protection of the holy Great Martyr Demetrius. Moreover, in the old Russian barracks the Great Martyr Demetrius was always depicted as Russian. Thus this image entered the soul of the Russian nation.

Church veneration of the holy Great Martyr Demetrius in Russia began shortly after the Baptism of Rus. Towards the beginning of the 1070s the Dimitriev monastery at Kiev, known afterwards as the Mikhailov-Zlatoverkh monastery, was founded. The monastery was built by the son of Yaroslav the Wise, Great Prince Izyaslav, Demetrius in Baptism (+ 1078). The mosaic icon of St Demetrius of Thessalonica from the cathedral of the

Dimitriev monastery has been preserved up to the present day, and is in the Tretiakov gallery.

In the years 1194-1197 the Great Prince of Vladimir, Vsevolod III the Great-Nest (Demetrius in Baptism) “built at his court a beautiful church of the holy martyr Demetrius, and adorned it wondrously with icons and frescoes.” The Dimitriev cathedral also reveals the embellishment of ancient Vladimir. The wonderworking icon of St Demetrius of Thessalonica from the cathedral iconostas is located even now in Moscow, at the Tretiakov gallery. It was painted on a piece of wood from the grave of the holy Great Martyr Demetrius, brought from Thessalonica to Vladimir in 1197.

One of the most precious depictions of the saint, a fresco on a column of the Vladimir Dormition cathedral, was painted by the holy Iconographer Andrew Rublev (July 4). The family of St Alexander Nevsky (November 23 also venerated St Demetrius. St Alexander named his eldest son in honour of the holy Great Martyr. His younger son, Prince Daniel of Moscow (March 4), built a temple dedicated to the holy Great Martyr Demetrius in the 1280s. This was the first stone church in the Moscow Kremlin. Later in 1326, under Ivan Kalita, it was taken down and the Dormition cathedral was built in its place.

The memory of St Demetrius of Thessalonica is historically associated in Rus with the military, patriotism and the defence of the country. This is apparent by the saint’s depiction on icons as a soldier in plumed armour, with a spear and sword in hand. There is a scroll (in later

depictions) on which is written the prayer of St Demetrius for the salvation of the people of Thessalonica, “Lord, do not permit the city or the people perish. If You save the city and the people, I shall be saved with them. If they perish, I also perish with them.”

In the particular spiritual experience of the Russian Church, veneration of the holy Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica is closely linked with the memory of the defence of the nation and Church by the Great Prince of Moscow, Demetrius of the Don (May 19). “An Account of the Life and Repose of the Great Prince Demetrius of the Don, Tsar of Russia,” written in the year 1393, already regards the Great Prince as a saint, as also do other old Russian histories. Great Prince Demetrius was a spiritual son and disciple of St Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow (February 12), and a disciple and associate of other great figures of prayer in the Russian Land: St Sergius of Radonezh (September 25), Demetrius of Priluki (February 11), St Theodore of Rostov (November 28). The Account states:

He [Great Prince Demetrius] worried much about the churches of God, and he held the territory of the Russian land by his bravery: he conquered many enemies who had risen against us, and he protected his glorious city Moscow with wondrous walls. ...The land of Russia prospered during the years of his reign.

From the time of the building of the white-walled Kremlin (1366) by Great Prince Demetrius, Moscow was called “White-Stoned.”

By the prayers of his Heavenly patron, the holy warrior Demetrius of Thessalonica, Great Prince Demetrius, in addition to his brilliant military victories, also gained the further prominence of Russia. He repelled the onslaught of the Lithuanian armies of Olgerd, he routed the Tatar army of Begich at the River Vozha (1378), and he smashed the military might of all the Golden Horde at the Battle of Kulikovo Field on September 8, 1380 (the Feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos), set between the Rivers Don and Nepryadva. The Battle of Kulikovo, for which the nation calls him Demetrius of the Don, became the first Russian national deed, rallying the spiritual power of the Russian nation around Moscow. The "Zadonschina," an inspiring historic poem written by the priest Sophronius of Ryazan (1381) is devoted to this event.

Prince Demetrius of the Don was greatly devoted to the holy Great Martyr Demetrius. In 1380, on the eve of the Battle of Kulikovo, he solemnly transferred from Vladimir to Moscow the most holy object in the Vladimir Dimitriev cathedral: the icon of the Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica, painted on a board from the grave of the saint. A chapel dedicated to the Great Martyr Demetrius was built at Moscow's Dormition Cathedral.

The St Demetrius Memorial Saturday was established for churchwide remembrance of the soldiers who fell in the Battle of Kulikovo. This memorial service was held for the first time at the Trinity-St Sergius monastery on 20 October, 1380 by St Sergius of Radonezh, in the presence of Great Prince Demetrius of the Don. It is an annual remembrance of

the heroes of the Battle of Kulikovo, among whom are the schemamonks Alexander (Peresvet) and Andrew (Oslyab).

St Demetrius is regarded as a protector of the young, and is also invoked by those struggling with lustful temptations.

(Taken from Lives of the Saints, Orthodox Church in America oca.org)

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, on Sunday 15th November.

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 31st	5:00pm	Vigil

NOVEMBER

Sunday 1st	10:30am	Liturgy Gal 6:11-18; Luke 8:5-15
Saturday 14th	5:000pm	Vigil
Sunday 15th	10:30am	Liturgy Eph 2:14-22; Luk 8:26-39

Followed by the parish AGM with voting, if necessary, for the parish council and Deanery Assembly

DECEMBER

Saturday 5th	5:00pm	Vigil
Sunday 6th	10:30am	Liturgy Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple Heb.9:1-7; Luke 10;38-42;11:27-28
Saturday 19th	5: 00pm	Vigil
Sunday 20th	10:30am	Liturgy Col.3:12-16; Luke 17:12-19

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 1st November 12:15pm Liturgy
Sunday 6th December 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 (07424 724 975) st.strekopytov@gmail.com)

Saturday 14th November 9:30am Liturgy
Saturday 26th December 9:30am Liturgy

There will be a Divine Liturgy in Slavonic and English at the **Greek Orthodox Church of St Athanasios, Cambridge** (154 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 7AJ) at 10am on Saturday 28th November. With the blessing of HE Archbishop Nikitas, Father Stefan will celebrate. (07424 724 975) st.strekopytov@gmail.com)

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